



7521 Main Street, Suite 103
Omaha, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100
www.voicesforchildren.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eric Johnson
President

Katie Weitz, PhD
Vice President

Lorraine Chang, JD
Secretary

Bruce Meyers
Treasurer

Amy Boesen
Gary Bren
Wes Cole, MBA
Al Davis
Jeremy Fitzpatrick, JD
Aaron Ford, MBA, MSW
Noah Greenwald, JD
Gatsby Gottsch Solheim, JD
Susan Mayberger, MA
John Stalnaker, JD

Aubrey Mancuso, MSW
Executive Director

February 1, 2019

To: Chairman Hansen & Members of the Business and Labor Committee
From: Juliet Summers, Policy Coordinator for Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice
Re: Support for LB 254, to adopt the Fair Chance Hiring Act

Dear Chairman Hansen & Members of the Business and Labor Committee,

Children need stability to thrive, and parents provide the foundation for child wellbeing. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 254 because it removes a significant barrier to a strong family foundation for many Nebraska children who are already facing other adversities.

Fair-chance employment policies are an essential feature of a fair system that does not construct roadblocks against Nebraskans who were formerly incarcerated or convicted and are walking the path to re-entry. Such barriers are counterproductive to strong communities and they are also harmful to the many children of parents who have a conviction history.

Children have paid a hidden and heavy cost for mass incarceration in our state. It is estimated that at least 41,000 Nebraska children, or nine percent of all children in our state, have had a parent in jail or prison at some time in their childhood. The loss of a parent under any circumstance is devastating, and the developmental science research tells us that there is much cause for concern. Without proper intervention, children who experience severe adversity and trauma in childhood suffer a lifetime of poor outcomes by several dimensions—physical and mental health, educational achievement, economic stability, and justice involvement. Parental incarceration leaves a dramatic ripple effect on children and the communities in which they live.

There are many opportunities to ensure that children who have been affected by the justice system are positioned for long-term success. As a state, we can continue to invest in and support our children through the support systems on which they rely. Parental employment is crucial to household stability and allows parents to be able to provide the care that every child needs and deserves. Whenever a parent is incarcerated, families are presented with challenges to meeting children's basic needs. LB 254 is an important step to ensuring that such challenges do not continue upon re-entry.

We thank Senator McCollister for bringing this important issue forward and this committee for your time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance LB 254.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Summers".