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February 4, 2019

To: Chair Hansen and Members of the Business and Labor Committee
From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director

RE: Support for LB 311 - Adopt the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act

As Nebraska looks for ways to keep our state economy prosperous, we must first think of the important connection between child development and economic development. During a child's early years, relationships with parents and caregivers provide the foundation for brain architecture and learning.ⁱ Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 311 because it ensures that during life's most precious, stressful, or important moments, Nebraska parents don't have to choose between the family they love and the job they need.

Paid leave bolsters the health of babies and children. Research shows that time off after the birth of a child is attributed to several positive health outcomes at birth and beyond. One recent study conservatively estimated that the provision of 12 weeks of paid parental leave in the U.S. would prevent 576 infant deaths and 288 post-neonatal deaths annually.ⁱⁱ Adequate time off after the birth of a new child also results in longer periods of breastfeeding,ⁱⁱⁱ and yields improvements in maternal physical and mental health and financial well-being.^{iv} In Nebraska, the lack of licensed child care options for infants under 6 weeks of age means that parents without access to parental leave are left with few options. The benefits of paid leave continue later in life, allowing parents to care for children with a serious illness such as pediatric cancer, to attend to early medical needs, or to identify potential developmental delays and necessary interventions.

Children and families who most need paid leave are unable to access it. It is estimated that only 50% of working parents in Nebraska are eligible for unpaid leave through the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Of those eligible for federal FMLA, it is further estimated that only 41% can afford to take unpaid leave.^v Access to leave is highly stratified by income, with an estimated 5% of workers in the lowest wage decile having access to paid parental leave.^{vi} The future of job growth is expected to accelerate in low-wage occupations without leave benefits typically held by women, and especially women of color.^{vii} Without meaningful intervention, the unmet need for paid leave will grow exponentially.

An investment in families is an investment in Nebraska's workforce. Demographic and economic shifts have forced impossible decisions upon American workers torn between a paycheck and caregiving needs. The increase in single-parent households has resulted in a rise in child care needs, while a rapidly-aging population creates medical and caregiving needs. Employee turnover, the loss of institutional knowledge, absenteeism and presenteeism, and temporary hiring are all already affecting businesses' bottom line. A recent survey found that 1 in 3 workers have left at least one job due to caregiving responsibilities, and the most experienced and highest-paid workers were most likely to be affected.^{viii}

Family values are at the heart of Nebraska values, and it's time for our state to start valuing families. LB 311 ensures that all Nebraskans can be there for the most important moments in our families' lives, and that our children will have the best start to life. We thank Senator Crawford for her leadership on this issue and respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 311 to General File.

ⁱ "The Timing and Quality of Early Experiences Combine to Shape Brain Architecture: Working Paper #5," National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007, <https://www.hbs.edu/managing-the-future-of-work/Documents/The%20Caring%20Company%20-%20001.17.19.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Dana Patton, Julia F. Costich, and Nicklas Lidströmer, "Paid Parental Leave Policies and Infant Mortality Rates in OECD Countries: Policy Implications for the United States," *World Medical and Health Policy* 9, no. 1 (2017): 6-23, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/wmh3.214>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rita Hamad, Sepideh Modrek, and Justin S. White, "Paid Family Leave Effects on Breastfeeding: A Quasi-Experimental Study of US Policy," *American Journal of Public Health* (2018), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30359107>.

^{iv} Katelin R. Kornfeind and Heather L. Sipsma, "Exploring the Link between Maternity Leave and Postpartum Depression," *Womens Health Issues* 28, no. 4 (2018):321-326, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29729837>.

^v Ipshita Pal, "Work, Family and Social Policy in the United States – Implications for Women's Wages and Wellbeing," Doctoral thesis, Columbia University, <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D87W6C74>.

^{vi} "Working Parents Who are Eligible for FMLA Unpaid Leave (Share)" and "Working Parents Who are Eligible for and Can Afford FMLA Unpaid Leave (Share)," diversitydatakids.org calculations of Current Population Survey, 2011-2014 March Annuals Social and Economic Supplement, Public Use Microdata Files, IPUMS-CPS, <http://www.diversitydatakids.org/>.

^{vii} U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics National Compensation Survey, "Table 32. Leave Benefits: Access, Civilian Workers, March 2018," <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2018/ownership/civilian/table32a.pdf>.

^{viii} Kayla Patrick, Meika Berlan, and Morgan Harwood, "Low-wage Jobs Held Primarily by Women Will Grow the Most Over the Next Decade," National Women's Law Center, August 2018, <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Low-Wage-Jobs-Held-Primarily-by-Women-Will-Grow-the-Most-Over-the-Next-Decade-2018.pdf>.

^{ix} Joseph B. Fuller and Manjari Raman, "The Caring Company," Managing the Future of Work Project, Harvard Business School, 2019, <https://www.hbs.edu/managing-the-future-of-work/Documents/The%20Caring%20Company%20-%20001.17.19.pdf>.