



February 8, 2019

To: Senator Howard, Chair – Health and Human Services Committee
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE, 68509

Re: Support for LB 329 – Change provisions relating to child care assistance and licensure

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Nebraskans value hard work and family, and parents need to know that their children are in a safe and enriching environment while they are working. The child care subsidy program helps put child care costs within reach for working parents who are struggling to make ends meet, but current policy prevents many Nebraska parents from accessing it.

While hard work should be enough to provide for those you love, too often, families are forced to make tough decisions as wages stagnate and the cost of raising a family increases.¹ Child care costs can easily outweigh the paychecks offered by low-wage work, sometimes resulting in parents declining pay increases or extra hours. At a time when workforce shortages continue to hold the state economy back, Nebraska can't afford to continue disincentivizing work for parents.

In listening sessions with Nebraskans, many parents expressed feelings of being trapped in a cycle of poverty that forces them toward bad outcomes at every turn. A young Lincoln mother sharing about her experience with losing access to child care assistance stated, “The system is designed not to advance you, but to keep you stuck, “and you’re just backtracking because as soon as you’re starting to get ahead, you find out your income exceeds standards for this, this, and this.”

When faced with a loss of child care assistance, several parents made difficult decisions that allowed them to make ends meet in the short-term—cutting back on hours, taking on debt, declining raises at work—but brought little long-term benefit. “I don’t want to lose benefits, but I want to work more,” said one mother, while another shared that after realizing she would lose her subsidy with a small increase in her wages, she returned to her boss and told him, “Don’t give me a raise.”

Another single mother, faced with losing her subsidy, made the decision to start working part-time, knowing she would be unable to afford quality child care on her full-time wages without assistance. “I wanted my son to be in a better environment, especially if I was going to be away for nine hours out of a day,” she said, “I wanted him to be in an environment where he was really taken care of.”

Raising the initial income eligibility level to be in line with a wage that is family-sustaining ensures that parents are not forced to choose between advancing at work and affording safe and quality child care. These stories illustrate the overwhelming barriers that working parents in our state face as they struggle to find

¹ Elise Gould, “The State of American Wages 2017,” Economic Policy Institute, March 2018, <https://www.epi.org/files/pdf/141575.pdf>.

quality, affordable care for their children while they work. Policy changes that support parents in accessing child care as they work toward a better future for their children is good for kids, communities, and the state's workforce.

We respectfully urge you to advance LB 329. Thank you Senator Bolz for your commitment to supporting children and families and this committee for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Taylor Givens-Dunn".

Taylor Givens-Dunn, Community Engagement Specialist