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March 13, 2019

To: Chairman Brewer and Members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator for Economic Stability and Health

RE: Support for LB 436 - Create the Complete Count Commission and provide duties regarding the census

Voices for Children in Nebraska is the independent voice building pathways to opportunity for all children and families through research, policy and community engagement. We work to ensure that all Nebraska kids are able to thrive through statewide advocacy guided by data.

Voices for Children in Nebraska is deeply concerned about the issue of the high net undercount of young children in the Census and supports LB 436 because it is a first step in ensuring that all Nebraska children are counted during the 2020 Census. The 2010 Census missed nearly 1 in 10 children aged 0-4, or about 2 million children.ⁱ Young children had by far the worst undercount of any age group. This trend of missing young children has been growing over the last several Decennial Censuses even as our ability to count other age groups has improved.ⁱⁱ Even worse, the children that are missed most often are children of color.ⁱⁱⁱ

Every year, more than \$2,544,798,214 in federal funds is allocated to Nebraska and localities based on census data, either directly or through Census population estimates and Census surveys that in turn rely on the Decennial Census.^{iv} Here are some of the programs that affect children's lives in our state for which funding is based in whole or in part on census data.^v

- **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)** – \$69,689,000. CHIP was created in 1997 to reduce the number of uninsured children by providing subsidized insurance to children of the working poor through federal grants to states. The federal government pays most of the costs of the program, and the share of costs borne by the federal government varies by state using an enhanced match based on the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP). CHIP covers over 56,197 Nebraska children.^{vi} If many young children are missed in the Census in a state, the state funding for CHIP (and thus the states' ability to provide as comprehensive benefits as possible to as many children as possible) will be reduced.
- **Head Start** – \$53,894,062. The Head Start program provides grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to provide child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. In 2016, 6,378 Nebraska children were served by Head Start and Early Head Start.^{vii} Head Start expansion funds are allocated based on numbers of poor children, so undercounts of young poor children would result in their communities getting less expansion funding for Head Start and Early Head Start.

- **Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** – \$32,309,177. WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and social services to 37,480 low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children to age five in Nebraska who have been determined to be at nutritional risk in our state.^{viii} The American Community Survey that uses the Decennial Census and annual populations estimates based on the Decennial Census to design its sampling frame is used to determine each state’s fair share target for foods funding. (Grants for supplemental food equal about 70 percent of WIC grants to states.) A young child undercount could result in a lower state fair share target funding for supplemental food.
- **Foster Care** – \$15,713,000. The Federal Foster Care Program helps to provide safe and stable out-of-home care for almost 4,012 children in our state until they are safely returned home, permanently placed with adoptive families, or placed in other planned arrangements for permanency.^{ix} An undercount of young poor children would result in a higher total per capita income in a state, and that in turn would result in a lower Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage, and thus lower reimbursements for care for children in foster care. Lower reimbursements tend to affect the level of services available for children.
- **Child Care and Development Fund** – \$21,407,000. The Child Care and Development Fund assists low-income families, families receiving temporary public assistance, and those transitioning from public assistance in obtaining child care so they can work or receive training and education. In state fiscal year 2016, nearly 29,986 children benefited from the Child Care and Development Fund in our state.^x Due to an increase in funding for fiscal year 2018, we expect over 1,258 additional children to receive CCDF-funded child care.^{xi} State funds are allocated based on numbers of children under 13 and state median income, so an undercount of young children would reduce the state’s child care funding.
- **Medicaid** – \$1,115,705,449. Medicaid is a federal-state insurance program that provides health coverage to low-income families and individuals, including children, parents, seniors, and people with disabilities. Almost 75% of Nebraska Medicaid enrollees are children.^{xii} The federal government pays for 52.55% of the costs of Medicaid in Nebraska. The Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage is the formula by which the federal government’s share of a state’s Medicaid costs is calculated. A Decennial Census undercount of state population would result in a higher Per Capita Income in the FMAP formula and so a lower reimbursement rate.

The consequences of an undercount go far beyond the financial, however. If many young children are missed, school demographers will not know which areas need to build schools or add classrooms for when these children enter school, creating overcrowded classrooms and a lower quality of education for children who live in areas with many uncoun­ted children. Health centers and other medical resources are allocated based on the number of people and poor people in a community, with new centers being built or old ones being closed. An undercount of young children will mean inadequate medical resources in the community. Businesses use Census data for planning where to put new enterprises; if a local community is undercounted, that may result in, for example, no business being willing to start a grocery store there and people having less access to healthy food.

We thank Senator Hansen for bringing this issue forward and the members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance the bill to General File. Thank you.

ⁱ KIDS COUNT Data Book 2018, <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf> citing <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/memo-series/2020-report-2010-undercount-children-omissions.pdf>

ⁱⁱ The Undercount of Young Children, 2014, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2014/demo/2014-undercount-children.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ O'Hare, W.P. (2015). *The Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Decennial Census*, Springer Publishers.

^{iv} Counting for Dollars 2020, The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds Report #2: Estimating Fiscal Costs of a Census Undercount to States, <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/GWIPP%20Reamer%20Fiscal%20Impacts%20of%20Census%20Undercount%20on%20FMAP-based%20Programs%2003-19-18.pdf>.

^v Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, Initial Analysis: 16 Large Census-guided Financial Assistance Programs <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/United%20States%2008-18-17.pdf> and <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Special%20Ed%20IDEA%20CFD%2008-18-17.pdf>.

^{vi} Unduplicated Number of Children Ever Enrolled in CHIP and Medicaid, <https://www.medicaid.gov/chip/downloads/fy-2017-childrens-enrollment-report.pdf> and <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/S-CHIP%20CFD%2008-18-17.pdf>.

^{vii} Voices for Children in Nebraska, *2017 Kids Count in Nebraska Report*, <https://kidscountnebraska.com/education/#headstart>.

^{viii} *Ibid*, <https://kidscountnebraska.com/economic-stability/#snap-wic>.

^{ix} KIDS COUNT Data Center, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6243-children-in-foster-care#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18/any/12987>. This is point-in-time data, and the total number of children served in foster care over the course of a year is higher.

^x FY 2015 Preliminary Data Table 1 - Average Monthly Adjusted Number of Families and Children Served, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fy-2015-preliminary-data-table-1>.

^{xi} Child Care in the FY 2018 Omnibus Spending Bill, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/03/Child%20Care%20in%20the%20FY%202018%20Omnibus.pdf>.

^{xii} Voices for Children in Nebraska, *2017 Kids Count in Nebraska Report*, <https://kidscountnebraska.com/health/#healthinsurance>.