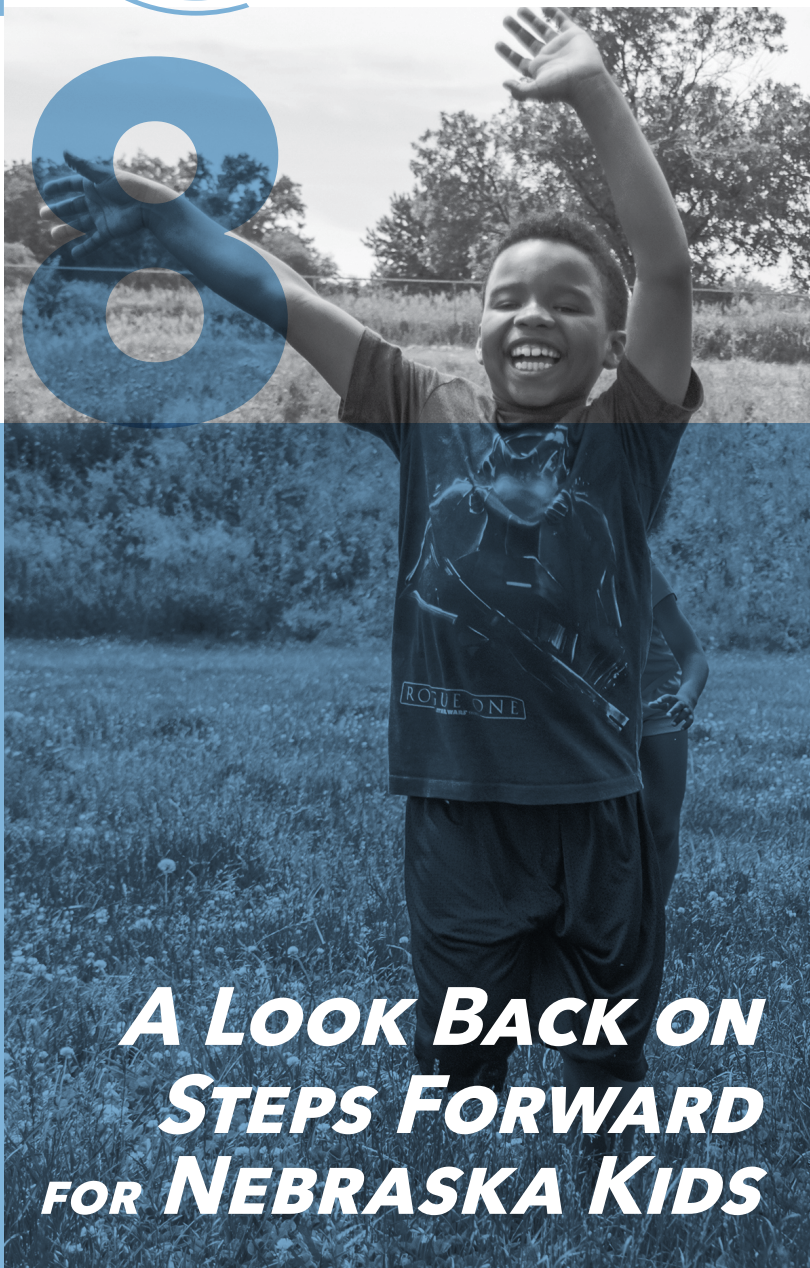


2018



VOICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA  
**IMPACT REPORT**



***A LOOK BACK ON  
STEPS FORWARD  
FOR NEBRASKA KIDS***



# FRIENDS OF CHILDREN:

## A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2018 was a year of both challenges and opportunity in our work on behalf of kids. Overall, we found our policy work facing an increasingly contentious environment, making non-partisan reforms on behalf of kids more challenging. We continued to focus on empowering young people as advocates. Our commitment to addressing inequities based on race and ethnicity for youth has taken on increased urgency as this issue has come to the forefront.

We know that when young people are given the tools and resources they need, they can help us create a better future. Our juvenile justice fellowship program, which empowers youth in our justice system to become advocates on their own behalf, entered its third year. We continue to be impressed by the ideas and insight young people have on how to improve our systems to better support youth in getting back on a path to success.

We also continued to provide paid internship opportunities for youth impacted by our work. This year, our intern -- a remarkable young woman who tried to leave an abusive home environment at the age of 18 only to find that the law offered her no protections -- helped to change state law. We worked with her to successfully

establish a new law that gives older youth living independently the right to petition a court for emancipation, a right that they previously lacked under Nebraska law. In 2019, we will continue to focus on youth empowerment and letting our young people guide us forward.

On juvenile justice reform, we saw both progress and disappointment. We helped support the passage of an important new law which will reduce the use of costly and ineffective incarceration for young people who don't pose a risk to themselves or others. Perhaps our greatest disappointment this year was the failure to pass a bill which would have strengthened the right to counsel for youth in our juvenile justice system by ensuring that an attorney is appointed when charges are filed. This bill was subjected to a filibuster and fell just two votes short of what it needed to advance.

Data and research remain at the center of our work and our Kids Count in Nebraska Report turned a quarter of a century old this year. The longevity of this report shows how it has continued to evolve to remain a valuable community resource.

We thank you for all you did to support and advocate for kids last year and we hope you will continue to join us in standing up for our kids in 2019 and beyond.

Best regards,



*Aubrey Mancuso*

Aubrey Mancuso, MSW  
Executive Director

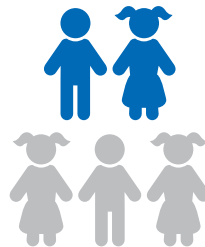
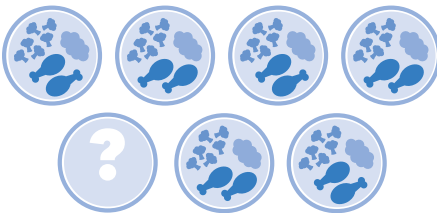


# RESEARCH

In 2018, we published our 25<sup>th</sup> annual *Kids Count in Nebraska Report*. This publication serves as a trusted resource for Nebraska researchers, service providers, and educators and provides pertinent information on the well-being of all Nebraska children in areas of health, education, economic stability, child welfare, and juvenile justice. A special commentary highlighted Nebraska children with disabilities. We are proud to say that for 25 years and counting, each *Kids Count* cover page features real Nebraska kids. For the second year, we published all the data contained in the hard copy of *Kids Count* on *NEteractive* – a searchable, easy to navigate online tool optimized for use on the go.

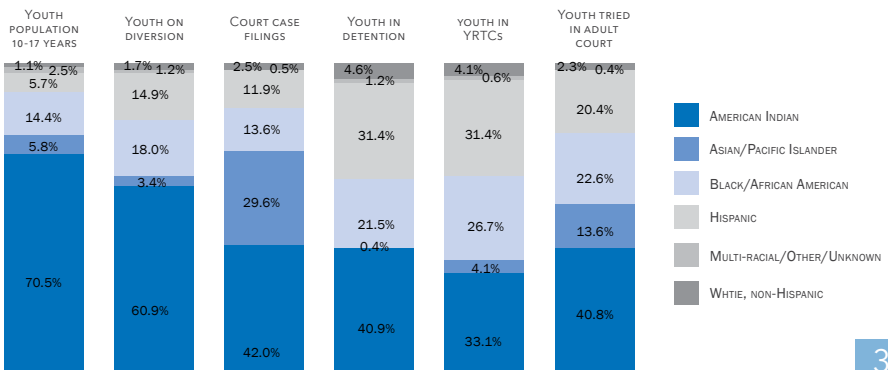
You can explore *NEteractive* by visiting [www.kidscountnebraska.com](http://www.kidscountnebraska.com).

1 IN 7 NEBRASKA HOUSEHOLDS DON'T KNOW WHERE THEIR NEXT MEAL IS COMING FROM



60% OF UNINSURED NEBRASKA KIDS ARE LOW-INCOME AND LIKELY ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICAID/CHIP

YOUTH INTERACTION WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2017)





# POLICY VICTORIES

When you change laws, you change lives, not just for one kid at a time, but for thousands all at once. Voices for Children works to educate policymakers on best practices in the areas of child welfare, economic stability, health, and juvenile justice to ensure that our policies account for the needs and issues facing the next generation. When a policy is good for kids, we support it. If a policy is bad for kids, we oppose it. And when a policy is missing, we create it. Here are some of the ways we worked with supporters this year to make policy improvements on behalf of kids:



## JUVENILE JUSTICE:

- LB 670 reduces the use of incarceration for young people who are not a risk to themselves and others and creates new requirements and flexibility for the use of community-based aid funding that supports alternatives to detention



## CHILD WELFARE:

- LB 714 allows older young people living independently to petition a court for emancipation when circumstances are appropriate
- LB 1078 ensures that the Legislature has oversight in cases of sexual abuse when kids are in the care of the state and strengthens sibling placement and visitation rights for kids in foster care



## ECONOMIC STABILITY:

- LB 194 creates new reporting requirements for payday lenders
- LB 776 makes phone calls and videoconferencing more affordable for inmates, which helps children maintain communication when parents are incarcerated

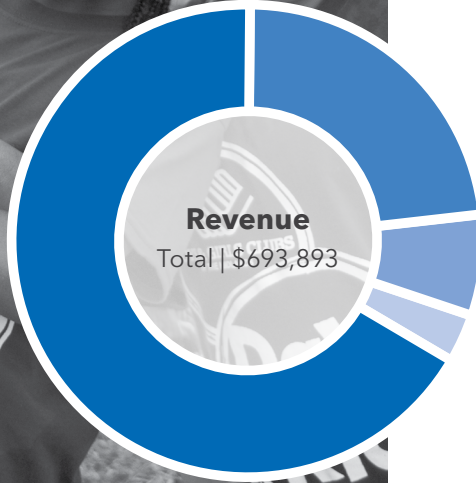
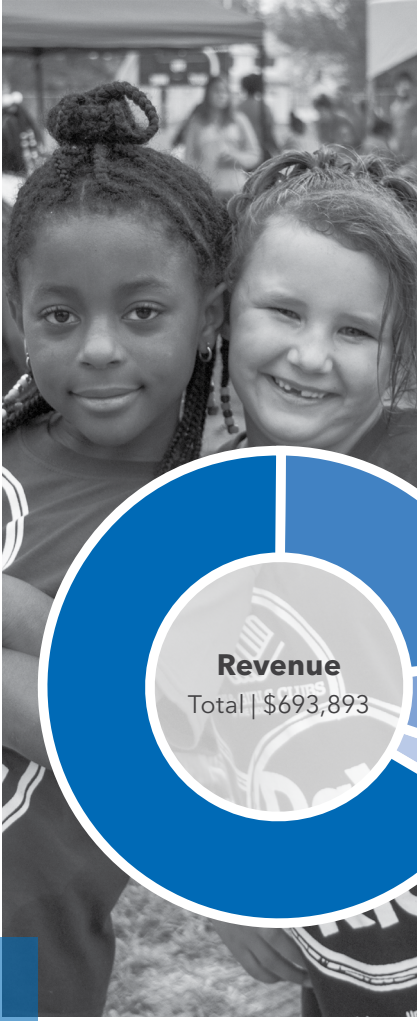


## HEALTH:

- LB 931 creates new protections to prevent the overprescribing of opioids to young people



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

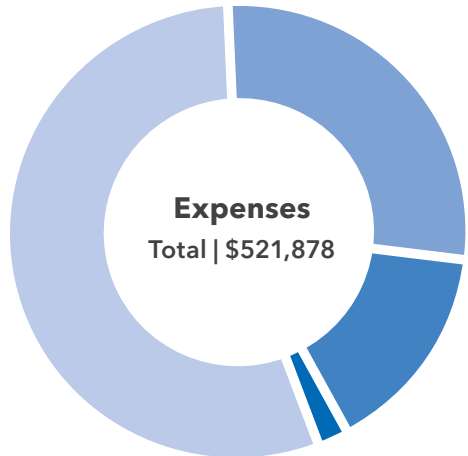


## REVENUE

Grants	\$461,090
Special Events	\$160,206
Individual Donations	\$48,229
Organization Contributions	\$21,859
Other	\$2,509*

## EXPENSES

Research, Education, & Community Engagement	\$286,796
Management & Administration	\$147,328
Fundraising	\$80,635
Lobbying	\$7,119



\*Not included in chart.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

We welcomed our first-ever Community Engagement Specialist, Taylor Givens-Dunn. She will lead our work fostering and maintaining relationships with communities and youth impacted by juvenile justice, child welfare, economic stability, and health care access and we are so pleased to have her on our team!

## NEBRASKA YOUTH JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Our semester-long Nebraska Youth Justice Fellowship Program helps youth currently involved in the Nebraska juvenile justice system learn how to use their experience and voice to inform stakeholders about how to better serve young people with similar backgrounds. This year's class of 9 fellows discussed major issues in juvenile justice and learned about policy advocacy and how to help drive systems change. At their graduation ceremony, they presented their proposals for policy change to system stakeholders. They continue to speak on panels and to state leaders about how to improve our justice system to better serve youth.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout the year, we hosted and co-hosted several events to engage Nebraskans on pressing issues. These included film screenings of "Healing Justice", which focuses on establishing a new justice model called "restorative justice" and "Zero Weeks", which focuses on the lack of paid family and medical leave in the United States. We co-hosted a rally standing up for immigrant families being separated at the border. We also hosted and co-hosted several listening sessions across the state on access to affordable child care and disparities based on race and ethnicity in our child welfare system.



## CHANGEMAKERS HONORED AT 2018 SPOTLIGHT GALA

On Friday, September 28, over 400 guests of the Spotlight Gala helped us raise over \$150,000 to support our work. After celebrating our 30th birthday in 2017, the gala returned to its traditional format of honoring individuals in the community who are making a difference on behalf of kids. We were pleased to honor former state senator Paul Hartnett with the Champion for Children award. Also honored were Faith Walker, a young person who turned challenges in her own life into policy change, and the Omaha Public Schools THRIVE Club, a group that demonstrates the power of young people from immigrant communities coming together to support one another. Lorraine Chang served as the honorary chair for the evening. For the first time, a young person served as at the event's master of ceremonies. Jude Glaser, a middle-schooler from Papillion, did an excellent job in this role.

**Save the Date:** the 2019 Spotlight Gala will be held on Friday, October 4, at the Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District. Stay tuned for further details!

## VOTE KIDS

In the 2018 election season, we continued our outreach to legislative candidates on children's issues. We surveyed our state legislative candidates on where they stand on issues impacting kids and shared this information with the public to help empower voters to vote for kids in the 2018 election and beyond.





# STAY CONNECTED



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**Sign up for the *advokID*  
e-newsletter**



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voicesforchildreninnebraska**

The *advokID* alert is an email newsletter that contains updates about legislative action, news, and analysis from Voices for Children.

**[http://voicesforchildren.  
com/advokid/](http://voicesforchildren.com/advokid/)**

## **A Sincere and Special Thanks**

to our 2018 Children's Circle members for helping strengthen our work on behalf of kids.

Lozier Foundation  
Katie Weitz, Ph.D.  
Barbara Weitz  
Cindy Heider  
Elizabeth Enyon-Kokrda  
Joe Frost