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February 10, 2020

To: Members of the Agriculture Committee

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

**RE: Support for LB 1040 - Provide for a state food insecurity nutrition incentive grant program**

Children are Nebraska's greatest resource, and when all children can reach their full potential in adulthood, our state and economy are better off. Today, over 17 percent of Nebraska's children do not have reliable and adequate access to nutritious food.<sup>i</sup> Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1040 because it would put more nutritious produce on the dinner plates of Nebraska children in low-income families.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is one of the most effective antipoverty programs in our nation, providing food assistance to nearly 85,000 Nebraska children.<sup>ii</sup> It is estimated that SNAP moved 8,600 Nebraska families out of poverty.<sup>iii</sup> The vast majority of SNAP participants in Nebraska are working families who are struggling to make ends meet (54 percent of SNAP recipients), or families with household members unable to work due to age or a disability (29 percent of SNAP recipients).<sup>iv</sup> Benefits are calculated by need, with benefit amounts decreasing as family income increases.

Food assistance meets a critical need for more and more Nebraska families that are working, but still struggling to support their family and get ahead. Research shows that lower-income families receiving SNAP are more likely to eat nutritious food than higher-income families. The reality is that families with tight household budgets are oftentimes forced to select food options that are cheaper and higher in calories, but lower in nutritional value.<sup>v</sup> Indeed, the average SNAP benefit is estimated to only cover 43 to 60 percent of the actual cost of a healthy diet, and families with growing teenagers may struggle in particular to put enough food on the dinner table.<sup>vi</sup>

LB 1040 leverages federal funding towards a solution with a double bottom line making nutritious produce more affordable for SNAP recipients, while also supporting local farmers and producers. Food insecurity nutrition incentive (FINI) grants are matched 1:1 by federal dollars and can be made to nonprofit and government agencies as lead organizations.<sup>vii</sup> Many of these incentives have been used to create a Double Up Bucks program, which doubles the value of SNAP benefits at local farmers markets—this program currently exists in Lincoln and Omaha at participating markets and grocery stores thanks to some private funders.<sup>viii</sup> The investment of state funds towards a grant program would provide opportunities for other Nebraska communities to benefit from a similar Double Up Bucks program.

We thank Senator Vargas for his leadership on this issue and this committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance LB 1040. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Voices for Children in Nebraska, *Kids Count in Nebraska 2019 Report*, 56.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>iv</sup> “Nebraska: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, December 2018, [https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap\\_factsheet\\_nebraska.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_nebraska.pdf).

<sup>v</sup> Tatiana Andreyeva, Amanda S. Tripp, and Marlene B. Schwartz, “Dietary Quality of Americans by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Status: A Systematic Review,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 49, no. 4 (2015): 594-604, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.04.035>.

<sup>vi</sup> Kranti Mulik and Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, “The Affordability of MyPlate: An Analysis of SNAP Benefits and the Actual Cost of Eating According to the Dietary Guidelines,” *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 49, no. 8 (2017): 623-631, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2017.06.005>.

<sup>vii</sup> “The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program: 2019 Request for Applications (RFA),” United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, April 2019, <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rfa/fy-2019-gus-schumacher-incentive-program-rfa-revised-20190509.pdf>.

<sup>viii</sup> “SNAP Recipients Double Up On Purchases At Some Farmers Markets, Grocers,” Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services News Release, June 2019, <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/SNAP-Recipients-Double-Up-on-Purchases-at-Some-Farmers-Markets,-Grocers.aspx>.