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February 10, 2020

Senator Wayne, Chair – Urban Affairs Committee
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: LB 794 - Adopt the Missing Middle Housing Act and provide zoning regulation requirements for certain cities

Dear Chair Wayne and Members of the Urban Affairs Committee,

Children need a safe and stable home in order to thrive. For children living in low-income families, access to affordable housing ensures that families can still budget for food, education, childcare, utilities, and healthcare. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 794 to adopt the Missing Middle Housing Act.

Nearly a quarter of all Nebraska children (104,000 children) live in a family with a high housing cost burden, where more than 30% of monthly income was spent on housing.ⁱ Half of all Nebraska children in low-income families (88,000 children) were in families with a high housing cost burden.ⁱⁱ Research has linked unstable or substandard housing in childhood to emotional stability and physiological stress.ⁱⁱⁱ For parents, material hardship and financial instability can take a toll on parenting behaviors, which ultimately creates another source of stress for children. Kids living in low-income households are particularly vulnerable to this dynamic of economic instability where parents must make tough decisions between household essentials like rent, food, or utilities.

Residential instability is one of the most detrimental sources of stress in a child's life, with links to long-term consequences for mental and behavioral health, the ability to cope with stressors, and poor academic performance. Children in our state can't succeed if their families lack access to affordable and quality housing. We thank Senator Hansen for bringing this important issue forward and respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 794. Thank you

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Isaacs Tse".

Julia Isaacs Tse, Policy Coordinator

ⁱ Voices for Children in Nebraska, *Kids Count in Nebraska 2019 Report*, 55.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Rebekah Levine Coley, "Poor Quality Housing is Tied to Children's Emotional and Behavioral Problems," MacArthur Foundation, September 2013, https://www.macfound.org/media/files/HHM_Research_Brief_-_September_2013.pdf.