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February 5, 2020

To: Chairman Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Juliet Summers, Policy Coordinator for Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice
Re: **Letter of support for LB 1169 to Create the Nebraska Integrated Juvenile Data Governing Body and the Nebraska Juvenile Justice Information System to be included in the legislative record**

Nebraska children deserve the most effective services that we can afford with our tax dollars. Data collection, evaluation and analysis of programming options is crucial to ensure that we are getting the results we want with the money we are spending. Voices for Children supports LB 1169 because by 1) creating and providing for the Nebraska Integrated Juvenile Data Governing Body; 2) creating the Nebraska Juvenile Justice Information System; and 3) providing for reports, this bill provide an opportunity for coordination and decision-making across social programs and state agencies, providing Nebraska's youth with effective, comprehensive care.¹

Research demonstrates that youth involved in child welfare are more likely to find themselves in the juvenile justice system during childhood.² Further, crossover youths, or those involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, frequently receive more public services.³ Integrated data systems could identify areas where these children have received redundant services as well as areas where there are needs not being adequately met, saving both time and costs while improving youth outcomes. Additionally, with appropriate measures taken for confidentiality of individual data, integrated data systems could help identify generalizable patterns among youths that could inform our understanding of the connection between child welfare and subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Integrated data systems have allowed other states and jurisdictions to implement and defend substantive reforms supporting child well-being.

¹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2017. *Using Integrated Data Systems to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes: How Two States Are Working to Change Outcomes for Children Through the Strategic Use of Integrated Data*.

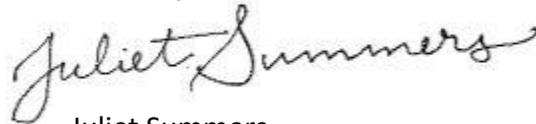
² Cutuli, J. J., Robert M. Goerge, Claudia Coulton, Maryanne Schretzman, David Crampton, Benjamin J. Charvat, Nina Lalich, JessicaA. Raitchel, Cristobal Gacitua, and Eun Lye Lee. 2016. "From Foster Care to Juvenile Justice: Exploring Characteristics of Youth in Three Cities." *Children and Youth Services Review* 67:84–94

³ Ibid

For instance, in Washington, policymakers implemented a program permitting mothers to keep Temporary Aid for Needy Family Benefits (TANF) while their children were placed in foster care, known as a concurrent benefit policy, based on the idea that the continued income would stabilize the family and allow for faster reunification.⁴ Implementation of this concurrent benefits policy required multi-agency collaboration, so integrated data systems were a critical part of this program. When the cost-effectiveness of the program was questioned in light of potential 2013 budget cuts, the State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was able to draw upon the integrated data system to commission a research study analyzing both the program's budget impact and impact on family reunification and child welfare income. Because the integrated data system was in place, DSHS was able to quickly and efficiently determine that the concurrent benefits program resulted in higher, faster, and more successful family reunification rates at an approximately cost neutral rate in relation to the state budget.

As we enter a new decade, integrated data systems are a forward-looking tool we can utilize to enhance outcomes across Nebraska's youth services programs. Voices for Children supports LB 1169 because it provides for these systems. I'd like to thank Senator Cavanaugh for bringing this bill, and the members of the committee for your time and consideration. I would respectfully urge you to advance it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Summers". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Juliet Summers

⁴ Ibid.