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Thank you Senator Arch and members of the committee. My name is Julie Erickson and I am representing Voices for Children in Nebraska in support of LB 129.

Ongoing access to health care for kids helps support healthy development and longer-term success. Prior to 2002, Nebraska children in lower income families participating in Medicaid were eligible for a period of 12 months after enrollment regardless of changes in circumstances. Nebraska then took a step backwards in ensuring that children have ongoing access to health care by shortening this time period to 6 months.  This change increased the administrative burden for both families and Health and Human Services staff and decreased the likelihood that children would maintain consistent health insurance coverage. Half of all states currently recognize the benefit of health care stability for kids and have implemented 12-month continuous eligibility in their state health insurance programs.

Health care access for children plays a critical role in healthy development.  Children need continuous health care coverage to ensure that they receive timely access to immunizations, developmental screenings, and preventative services.  Preventative health visits for kids can also save money by ensuring early identification and treatment of issues and avoiding costly emergency room care. It also supports the establishment and maintenance of a health home so that a doctor has an ongoing relationship with a child that supports positive health outcomes.

Voices for Children believes that every child in the state should have ongoing access to quality affordable health care.  Moving children on and off health insurance increases the administrative burden in our public health insurance program and produces poor child health outcomes. We urge the committee to advance LB 129. Thank you.