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7521 Main Street, Suite 103 Omaha, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100

www.voicesforchildren.com

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To: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Aubrey Mancuso

**Re: Support for LB 533 to extend the sunset on funds for research counting against eligibility for public support programs**

Research on the impact of policy interventions is essential to making sound decisions on where and how to invest limited public resources. Voices for Children supports LB 533 to ensure that the research currently being conducted in Nebraska through the Baby’s First Years Study can continue in spite of disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Baby’s First Years Study is a national study being conducted in four cities, including Omaha. I currently serve on the local community advisory board for this study. The study aims to look at the impact of additional income on brain development for infants in lower income families.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers were temporarily unable to move forward with portions of the study that required in-person contact. LB 533 extends the temporary four thousand dollar per year exclusion in income received for participation in grant-funded research on child development when determining eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the child care subsidy program from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2026.

Growing up in poverty creates significant barriers to opportunity for children. In 2019, 11% of Nebraska children were living below the poverty line, which in 2021 is $26,500 annually for a family of four[[1]](#footnote-1). Poverty is associated with a variety of negative consequences for children including longer term impacts on health and education.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In a well-resourced country, poverty is also a problem that can be solved. For too long, programs designed to address poverty have prioritized political solutions above research-based interventions. This neither serves children nor taxpayers when public funds are used to finance programs that are ineffective in meeting their goals.

Studies like Baby’s First Years are a promising step forward in understanding the impact of poverty on child development and how to invest in solutions that work. LB 533 is a simple and no cost bill that will ensure this research can continue to move forward. We urge the committee to advance this bill. Thank you.

1. *Kids Count in Nebraska Report* 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Murphy and Redd (2014) *Five Ways Poverty Harms Children* available*: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/5-ways-poverty-harms-children* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)