February 3, 2022

To: Senator Stinner and Members of the Appropriations Committee

 From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director

 Re: Support for LB 1111

An effective juvenile justice system addresses the challenges kids are facing and allows them to move toward a brighter future.

When young people engage in problematic behavior, we are all better served when they receive needed intervention swiftly and fairly, in ways that create positive change without leaving lasting damage. Since most adolescents will naturally age out of risky criminogenic behaviors without any intervention at all,1 lengthy court processes and unnecessarily heavy-handed responses can backfire to *produce* rather than *prevent* recidivism. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1111, as it would increase access to alternative, restorative justice responses to youth misbehavior.

Restorative justice is an alternative approach to American criminal justice when a violation against a community has been committed. Rather than asking who committed a crime and how they should be punished, restorative justice models ask who has been harmed and how that harm can be repaired. They are based on respect for the fundamental human value of all parties, including the offender. Usually they involve some form of conferencing or mediation to seek a result which will make things right. The mediator, victim, offending youth, and their respective families or support persons, will sit in a circle to come to a reconciliation plan. Studies and meta-studies of restorative justice practices have shown promising results in terms of recidivism, perceptions of fairness by the youth offender, and simultaneously, satisfaction and perception of fairness by the victim.2

As the legislature considers how to address our overcrowded prison system, investing in alternative strategies that produce positive outcomes for individuals while protecting community safety is a sounds approach. We urge the committee to advance LB 1111. Thank you.