February 10, 2022

To: Senator Arch and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director

Re: Support for LB 857

Consistent access to health care for kids is a critical component of healthy development. Voices for Children supports LB 857 because it can help more children access health insurance.

The most recent estimates from the U.S. Census show that of the children who lack health insurance in Nebraska, about 57% are likely eligible for state health insurance but not enrolled. Further, data tracking health insurance coverage for families during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown increased volatility in access to coverage, especially for families with lower incomes. In the last quarter of 2021, 22% of very low-income families in Nebraska – those making less than $25K annually - lacked access to health insurance.

Over the past decade, states across the country have adopted innovations to make it easier for children to enroll in and access health care. This is based on the recognition that the preventative benefits of consistent pediatric care help not only individuals but can also have a positive impact on health care systems and costs. We know that when children receive vaccines and well-checks, more serious health issues can sometimes be prevented. In addition, the screenings embedded in most pediatric practices can also help identify developmental issues that may benefit from early intervention.

Data from the Medicaid program in Nebraska show that while children make up almost 67% of those in the Medicaid, they account for only 27% of program costs. This demonstrates that insuring children is relatively affordable while yielding larger benefits for individuals and health care systems. LB 857 also creates greater administrative efficiency across public programs through information sharing.

Health insurance access is critical for kids. LB 857 will help more Nebraska children access health insurance and we urge the committee to advance the bill. Thank you.