January 24, 2020

To: Senator Hansen and Members of the Committee

 From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director

 Re: Support for LB 869

All children deserve a safe and loving family. Adoption is an important path to creating a family for children who experience a loss of or challenges with a birth family. Voices for Children supports LB 869 because is a simple change to state law that supports the adoption of older children and creates greater equity for families in that circumstance. This bill would ensure that when parental leave is provided by an employer, the same leave will apply regardless of the age of the child adopted. Although older children may not have the same level of basic caregiving needs, adoptive families of older children still need time and space to bond and adjust to changes.

Data from 2019 show that about half of children awaiting adoption in Nebraska were over the age of 8 and about 25% of children adopted from foster care were over age 8. Further, children who enter the child welfare system after the age of 12 are more likely to end up being emancipated. This means that they essentially age out of the system without legal family ties and it is not typically considered an ideal outcome because young adults are still likely to need financial or emotional support from a family. Nebraska should do everything possible to encourage and support the adoption of older children.[[1]](#footnote-21631)

LB 869 ensures that our laws allow provides for parity when there is a parental leave policy in place and removes any unintentional disincentive to adopt an older child under our state law.

We urge the committee to advance this bill. Thank you.

1. https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/pdf/nebraska.html [↑](#footnote-ref-21631)