January 27, 2022

To: Senator Lathrop and Members of the Committee

From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director

Re: Support for LB 886

Every child deserves to experience healthy, loving relationships from the moment of birth, and every mother deserves the supports we can offer to foster and sustain that relationship. Voices for Children supports LB 886 because it protects this under law for incarcerated mothers and their babies.

In Nebraska, when a pregnant woman is incarcerated at the Nebraska Women’s Correctional Facility in York, if she meets certain qualifications she has access to the Parenting Program, which includes parenting education and day and overnight visitation. For women who are pregnant while incarcerated, this can also mean staying with their babies in the specially designed nursery program after birth up to 18 months. Ensuring a positive birth experience is consistent with this already available programming that recognizes the importance of preserving parental relationships for both mothers and babies.

Parenthood can be a protective factor for women who are incarcerated, and we should do everything we can to ensure the bonding and preservation of families when parents are incarcerated. Ensuring a healthy and supportive birth experience for incarcerated mothers is a positive first step in this regard. As Nebraska looks to reduce our reliance on incarceration, doing all we can to support the children of incarcerated parents is an important component.

We urge the committee to advance LB 886.