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February 2, 2024

To: Chairperson Hansen and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Anahí Salazar Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska

**RE: Oppose of LB1003, change a requirement relating to child care licensing in cities, villages, or counties.**

Children in Nebraska thrive when they are in high quality child care. Creating a space that meets the needs of the children they serve requires providers to have low staff-to-child ratio. This ensures safety and enough one-on-one attention is given to children from their teacher or caretaker. Voices for Children in Nebraska opposes LB1003 because it allows cities, villages or counties to change staff-to-child ratios for child care facilities, potentially putting children's lives at risk.

Taking away consistent staff-to-child ratios throughout the state of Nebraska can pose a dangerous situation for all involved. Ratios are there to set safety and preventative measures. They help ensure children's well-being by creating environments where staff are better able to supervise and give care. Having lower staff-to-child ratios aids in creating more opportunities for developing social skills and it has been correlated to having improved verbal interactions.<sup>1</sup>

When teachers are interacting with a smaller group of children their rapport is more likely to be direct and warm interactions.

Nebraska's current Child Care Licensing Act requires staff-to-child ratios that establish safe spaces. The National Fire Protection Association recommends low staff-to-child ratios are essential for fire safety.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing that LB 1003 is aimed at addressing limited staffing in rural areas of our state, we are concerned that changing staffing ratios has the potential to ultimately undercut child safety and development in a geographically disproportionate way.

Ensuring a child's safety and well-being are child care providers responsibility while in their care and low staff-to-child ratios help make sure that happens. We appreciate the intent but would respectfully urge the Committee not to

<sup>1</sup> Caring for Our Children, *National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs. Fourth Edition. Page 30.* [CFOC4 pdf- FINAL.pdf \(nrckids.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Caring for Our Children, *National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs. Fourth Edition. Page 31.* [CFOC4 pdf- FINAL.pdf \(nrckids.org\)](#)

advance LB 1003. Thank you, Senator Hansen and Committee, for your time and attention.