



January 23, 2024

To: Chairperson and Members of the Urban Affairs Committee
From: Katie Nungesser, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska
RE: Support of LB 840, Adopt the Poverty Elimination Action Plan Act

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Thank you, Chairperson McKinney and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Katie Nungesser and I am representing Voices for Children in Nebraska in support of LB 840 as we are concerned about the well-being of children and families in Nebraska, as reflected in the recent poverty data including 2023 Kids Count Data.

The data reveals that just under 60,000 children in our state are living in poverty, with almost half of those living in extreme poverty.¹ Notably, there has been an increase in the number of parents lacking secure employment and an increase in the number of children living in households with a high housing cost burden. These statistics underscore the urgent need for proactive measures to address poverty at the local level.

Poverty significantly elevates a child's risk of facing behavioral, social, emotional, and health challenges. Academic outcomes are adversely affected, impacting a student's ability to learn and graduate. The Annie E Casey Foundation's 2024 Race for Results report indicates a stark disparity, with Nebraska's white children ranking eighth while children in non-white racial and ethnic groups place thirteenth or lower on national rankings².

In Nebraska, your geographic location and race both can increase the likelihood of experiencing poverty. The 2022 University of Nebraska Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research report on poverty in Nebraska, gives more insight to the racial disparities in Nebraska when it comes to poverty. It found that 24.9 percent of Native of Americans, 23.7 percent of black Nebraskans and 18.4 percent of Latinos are living in poverty in Nebraska compared to only 8.1 percent of white residents³.

It is crucial to recognize that where a child grows up significantly influences their future development. Research highlights the correlation between neighborhood poverty rates and a child's economic success later in life. Concentrated poverty, especially when 20 percent or over in a neighborhood, can have compounding negative effects on children. Current and historical practices in Nebraska have created high poverty neighborhoods and the issue is worsened by chronic disinvestment in those neighborhoods and communities.

I urge you to support LB 840 so Nebraska can begin to address poverty at a local level and pave the way for a brighter future for Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Katie Nungesser

¹ "2022 Kids Count Report." *Voices for Children in Nebraska*. Jan20.2024, voicesmain.wpenginpowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Final_KidsCount2022.pdf. Accessed 1AD.

² "2024 Race for Results." *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*, 10 Jan 2024, www.aecf.org/resources/2024-race-for-results. Accessed 20 Jan 2024.

³ "2022 Poverty in Nebraska" *Center for Public Affairs Research UNO*, www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/center-for-public-affairs-research/documents/poverty-infographic.pdf Accessed 20 Jan 2024.