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Juliet Summers, J.D.
Executive Director

January 23, 2024

To: Chairperson Wayne and Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Juliet Summers, Executive Director of Voices for Children

RE: Support for LB 945, to Require Certain Documents be Provided for Youth Leaving Care

Young adults leaving our state child welfare system deserve the best possible supports to set them up for success following system involvement. When our state has failed to achieve permanency for a young person, all too often they are set adrift without adequate family support or guidance to navigate adulthood. Voices for Children supports LB 945, because it eases this transition through strengthening our statute enumerating the materials which our state agency must provide to young people aging out.

Family support is key to any successful transition into adulthood, especially for youth who may have been exposed to trauma. Learning to be self-reliant in seeking employment and housing, managing finances, or seeking healthcare can be daunting without a parent or trusted adult to rely on for help. For youth who have been in foster care who do not exit the system to a family, ensuring a strong system of support in this transition is key. At a minimum, young people exiting state care should have access to their important documents, court orders, medical information and photos from childhood – all items that most of us, when we were young adults, would simply call our parent to ask for. Under LB 945's provisions, the agency would be required to provide these materials to young people aging out at 19 or upon leaving the Bridge to Independence extended foster care program at age 21. The bill would impact a couple hundred youth every year; in 2021, 123 youth were in out-of-home care when they reached their 19th birthday, and 143 young adults left Bridge.¹

Voices for Children particularly lauds the youth advocates who have collaborated on and worked for this bill. When young people share their lived expertise of our state systems, we should all listen. Thank you to Senator Hughes for listening and bringing this legislation, and the Committee for your time and attention. I would urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juliet Summers", written in a cursive style.

Juliet Summers
Executive Director

¹ According to data provided by the Department of Health and Human Services for the 2023 Kids Count in Nebraska Report. Voices for Children in Nebraska. Available at: [Child Welfare 2022 – Kids Count Nebraska](#)