



319 S 17<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 212  
Omaha, NE 68102

(402) 597-3100  
www.voicesforchildren.com

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February 6, 2024

To: Chairperson Riepe and Members of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee

From: Katie Nungesser, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska

**RE: Support for LB 1416, Adopt the Child Care Capacity Building and Workforce Act.**

Child care is the work that facilitates all other work. Scarce child care across the state has made it harder for parents and caretakers to enter or remain in the workforce. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1416 because it would invest in building up the child care industry and the committed individuals who take care of our children.

**Child care educators should be paid their social value and supported in the important work they do.** They take care of our smallest children, ensuring safe and nurturing environments for children to thrive. Child care educators across the nation often have difficulty paying for their own food and utility bills.<sup>1</sup> Creating incentives and providing financial support for educators will not only help attract child care educators but it will also retain them, helping build strong relationships with the children they look after.

**Everyone benefits from high quality affordable child care.** Access to early childhood education is fundamental for preparing young learners for school.<sup>2</sup> Connection exists between a child's learning experiences and success before entering school if their child care was of high quality. Parents and caretakers are able to enter or remain in the workforce and jobs are created when we expand child care programs.

While the benefits are many we must also remember that child care affordability continues to be a barrier to child care access in line with providers themselves. In addressing the child care gap, we must also highlight and solve the economic factors that prevent providers from thriving and families from accessing child care in certain communities.

**LB 1416 would help establish child care programs across the state of Nebraska.** 91% of counties in Nebraska do not meet the local child care demands. 11 Nebraska counties are deemed child care deserts with no licensed provider, and 10 counties can accommodate less than 100 children.<sup>3</sup> A child care desert is an area where there is a lack of licensed child care

<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [How the High Cost of Child Care Hurts Families, Workers and the Economy - The Annie E. Casey Foundation \(aecf.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Kids Count Report 2022. *Education*. [Education 2022 – Kids Count Nebraska](#)

options. These deserts have a negative impact not only on parents and children but also the economy.

The children, caretakers, and workforce of Nebraska are seeking solutions to the child care crisis. Investing in the early childhood educators and child care programs across the state is one potential solution. Thank you Senator Bostar for your leadership in bringing this important issue and thank you Committee for your time and attention. We respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 1416.