



402-597-3100
voicesforchildren.com
317 S. 17th St., Suite 212
Omaha, NE 68102

January 23, 2025

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

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

RE: Support for LB 41- Change blood test requirements for pregnant women

Consistent and effective preventive health care provides children the best start in life, allowing them to grow into healthy adults. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB13 because regular testing for syphilis during pregnancy provides a preventive foundation for both the pregnant person and baby, due to the significant health risks associated with untreated infections.

Pregnant people with untreated syphilis can transmit the infection to their unborn babies, leading to congenital syphilis. This can cause severe health issues such as miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, or lifelong health problems for the baby.¹ Early detection and treatment are best practices to help mothers and baby. Early testing allows for timely treatment with antibiotics, which can cure syphilis and prevent its transmission to the baby. This is especially important as nearly 90% of congenital syphilis cases could be prevented with proper prenatal care and timely treatment.²

Reducing health complications increases the chances of survival for babies and the wellbeing of the pregnant person. Untreated syphilis can lead to serious health problems, including damage to the heart, brain, and other organs. It can also increase the risk of HIV infections.³

Preventative testing helps address health system failures. The rise in congenital syphilis cases highlights gaps in the healthcare system, such as lack of access to prenatal care and timely testing. Improving syphilis testing and treatment can help address these issues and promote health equity for Nebraska children. We want to thank Senator Riepe for introducing such vital legislation and the Committee for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.dukehealth.org/blog/why-you-should-get-tested-syphilis>

² Center for Disease and Control, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/newborn-syphilis/index.html>

³ Duke Health, Why You Should Get Tested for Syphilis, Debbe Geiger, 2032, <https://www.dukehealth.org/blog/why-you-should-get-tested-syphilis>