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February 6, 2025

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

From: Katie Nungesser, policy coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska

Re: LB 46, Establish a Restaurant Meals Program under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Access to nutritious food is essential for the health and well-being of Nebraska's children. Voices for Children is supporting LB 46 as it is a critical step toward closing gaps in the SNAP program, making food assistance more equitable, dignified, and accessible for vulnerable populations. By implementing the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program, this bill would provide much-needed support to children in households with seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness.

While SNAP has long been a vital resource for families, it falls short for those without access to a kitchen or the ability to prepare meals. LB 46 recognizes this limitation and ensures all families, regardless of their living situation, have access to nutritious meals.

The need for this policy change is clear. In 2021, the Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program reported that over 3,500 families with children were homeless, with another 2,229 at risk.¹ For families without a kitchen, the ability to purchase a ready-made meal can mean the difference between going to bed hungry or nourished.

One Nebraska mother shared her experience of homelessness with her children. Forced to leave the emergency shelter during the day, she spent hours on buses and in parks, feeding her kids dry goods from gas stations—often lacking protein and key nutrients. The changes proposed in LB 46 would have allowed her to provide her children with a hot, healthy meal instead.

The need extends beyond homelessness. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, more than 30% of SNAP participants in Nebraska live in households with a senior or a person with a disability, this includes children living with disabled adults.² Many of these families struggle not just with the cost of food but with the physical challenges of meal preparation. LB 46 does not replace traditional EBT use at grocery stores but complements it by allowing for the purchase of hot meals, removing key barriers to food access.

This bill is a compassionate, practical solution to ensure children in Nebraska have access to the nutrition they need to thrive. We appreciate Senator McKinney's leadership in bringing this bill forward and urge you to support LB 46 for the long-term well-being of our state's children and families.



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