



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

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To: Chairperson Hardin and members of the Health and Human Services Committee
From: Anahí Salazar, policy coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska
Re: **LB 95, Provide for a pilot program under the federal Child Care Subsidy program**

Nebraska is full of hard-working caretakers who are determined to better the lives of the children they look after. Yet, caretakers are faced with difficulty when it comes to finding quality and affordable child care. In order to keep families in Nebraska there needs to be affordable and accessible high quality child care for every child. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 95 because it creates a pilot program for the child care workforce, helping eligible child care professionals with their own children's child care costs.

11 Nebraska counties are deemed child care deserts with no licensed provider, and only 7 counties in the state have enough child care facilities in order to provide for all the children in the county.¹ A child care desert is an area where there is a lack of licensed child care options. These deserts have a negative impact not only on parents and children but also on the economy. Parents have to make difficult decisions to either quit their jobs or reduce their hours, which in turn affect family income and career prospects. Employers may face challenges in attracting and retaining workers who need reliable high quality child care. And lastly children may miss out on quality early learning opportunities.

Child care is a necessity for working parents, yet the cost often places it out of reach for many households. Creating a pilot program to help eligible child care employees with child care assistance can help attract and retain professionals. The federal child care subsidy program would help increase accessibility across the state, expanding the child care availability for parents. LB 95 would help early childhood professionals stretch their household budget further. Recruiting and retaining a qualified child care workforce allows parents in Nebraska to continue working. In 2021, 9,102 Nebraska parents of children 0-5 quit, did not take, or greatly changed their job because of child care problems; in 2022 that number grew to 12,912 parents.²

LB 95 would provide child care professionals with the opportunity to have their children's child care costs covered, in turn creating a classroom where parents, such as myself, can rest assured their little ones are in a safe environment. Thank you to Senator Fredrickson for bringing forward legislation providing a piece of the solution to Nebraska's child care crisis, and the Committee for your time and attention. I would urge your support.