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To: Chairperson Kauth and Members of the Business and Labor Committee

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

RE: Support for LB 189- Adopt the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act

Nebraskans are hardworking and committed to building better futures for themselves and their families. A new baby. A family member returning from military service with a critical injury. A car accident. A parent starting to show signs of Alzheimer's. A child diagnosed with Leukemia. These are all common and significant moments for a family that can create challenges for family well-being. Under our current law, these moments can also be a financial crisis. Nebraskans also have a strong value of caregiving: taking care of our children and taking care of our loved ones as they age. It is important to consider the relationship between caregiving and workforce participation in order to ensure that grown-ups can be there for children during life's most treasured, stressful, or critical moments. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 189 because Paid Family and Medical Leave means Nebraskans don't have to choose between family and secure employment.

Paid leave helps families build secure relationships with their babies that are so important to children's long-term learning and success. Allowing birthing parents to stay home can have a significant impact on Nebraska's infant care and the birthing person's well-being. Since the enactment of paid leave policies in other states, there is ample evidence that paid family leave contributes to lower rates of infant mortality and decreases post-neonatal mortality.¹ Paid leave allows parents to stay home and care for their child, which is imperative for both the baby and birthing persons health and well-being. Adequate time off after birth also results in longer periods of breastfeeding, which can have a beneficial impact for both the parent and the baby.² The benefits also accrue for children who join families through foster care or adoption. Paid leave ensures families have time to care for new children and seamlessly integrate them into family, without sacrificing long-term economic security.

Children and families who most need paid leave are currently unable to access it. Currently, families across Nebraska have difficult decisions to make. Do they take care of their newborns, new children, sick children, ill family members, even themselves, or do they go back to work because they need the money for their basic and or medical needs? Only about 40% of families in Nebraska can afford to take unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).³ Access to leave is highly determined by

¹ We Know Paid Family Leave Saves Infant Lives – So When Will Policy Makers Catch Up? Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Policy Lab, December 2020. Available at: <https://policylab.chop.edu/blog/we-know-paid-family-leave-saves-infant-lives-so-when-will-policy-makers-catch> . See also: Diana Montoya-Williams. The impact of paid family leave in the United States on birth outcomes and mortality in the first year of life. Health Services Research, April 2020. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1475-6773.13288>

² Id.

³ Working adults who are eligible and can afford FMLA unpaid leave (percent) by race/ethnicity. 2022. Available at: https://data.diversitydatakids.org/dataset/fmla_a_eligaff_re_p-working-adults-who-are-eligible-and-can-afford-fmla-unpaid-leave--percent--by-ra?_external=True

income, and those in the lowest wage jobs do not have the financial capacity to take the needed time from work.

Investing in families is an investment in Nebraska's workforce. Employee turnover, the loss of institutional knowledge, absenteeism and presenteeism, and temporary hiring are all already affecting businesses' bottom line. A survey found that 1 in 3 workers have left at least one job due to caregiving responsibilities, and the most experienced and highest-paid workers were most likely to be affected. Paid family leave policies do not adversely impact business productivity or profitability. Recent studies have shown that paid leave saves employers from needing to hire replacements and reduces turnover costs – in fact, improving job continuity.⁴

Family values are at the heart of Nebraska values. LB 189 would ensure that all Nebraskans can be there for the most important moments in our families' lives, and that our children will have the best start to life. Thank you, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, for your leadership in this important issue and thank you Committee for you time and attention. We respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 189.

⁴ Joseph B. Fuller and Manjari Raman. *The Caring Company*. Managing the Future of Work Project, Harvard Business School, 2019. Available at: <https://www.hbs.edu/managing-the-future-of-work/Documents/The%20Caring%20Company%20-%2001.17.19.pdf>.