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From: Eric Reiter, Voices for Children in Nebraska

**RE: Oppose, LB698, Change provisions of the Nebraska Healthy Family and Workplaces Act**

Nebraskans are hardworking and committed to building better futures for themselves and their families. Having access to paid sick leave is crucial for Nebraska families and children. States that have enacted some form of paid leave suggest it enhances economic well-being, increases caregiver engagement, and improves all family members' health.<sup>1</sup>

Access to paid sick leave increases the possibility of workers returning to their jobs instead of dropping out of the labor force. When workers need to care for themselves or others, some are forced to take unpaid time off, work through health problems or quit their jobs. Paid leave benefits businesses because it improves worker retention and productivity. Paid leave also helps individuals with serious health conditions, making it so they can keep their jobs. LB698 excludes agricultural and seasonal workers, workers who help bring food to families across the world. Agricultural work is a physically demanding job, requiring individuals to be healthy in order to fulfill their duties. Without paid sick leave, workers may feel compelled to go to work even when they are sick, risking their health and the health of their colleagues. By providing paid sick leave, families can take the necessary time to recover without the added stress of lost income, which is especially important for low-income families who may be living paycheck to paycheck.

Voices for Children particularly supports this initiative because of its anticipated impact on young people. LB 698 also excludes young people, those under 16 years of age. Many young workers are helping take care of their families or caring for themselves when parents are unable too. Paid sick leave ensures they can take the necessary time off to recover from illness without worrying about lost wages, which is crucial for maintaining their financial needs. Additionally, paid sick leave promotes a healthier work environment. Young people often work in industries with high levels of interaction, such as retail, hospitality and service sectors. By having an option to stay home when they are sick, they reduce the risk of spreading illnesses to workers and customers, not only protecting their own health but that of the community.

Small businesses are crucial for the local economy. Paid sick leave helps caregivers and individuals who work for small businesses take care of their loved ones and themselves. Regardless of business size, employees get sick and their loved ones get sick. Paid sick leave increases the probability that children will receive preventative care. Young children especially need their caretaker to take them to a physician when they are sick. Access to paid leave would allow Nebraska's children to have a caretaker and get the resources they need when sick, not prolonging their sickness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Society for Research in Child Development, Paid Family and Medical Leave Improves the Well-Being of Children and Families, No. 5, July 2019

<sup>2</sup> J.Waldfoegel, E.Doran, J.Pac. Society for Research in Child Development. *Paid Family and Medical Leave Improves the Well-Being of Children and Families*.2019.



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Voices for Children in Nebraska opposes LB698, because it creates barriers of health for young people, some agricultural workers and employees who work for small businesses. Thank you for your consideration, and we respectfully urge you not to advance this bill.