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

From: Katie Nungesser, Director of Youth Justice and Child Welfare Policy

**Re: LB 903, Provide for a referral for home visitation services**

Every child deserves a safe, supported start. Voices for Children is in strong support of LB 903 because we believe families should be connected to resources in their community that strengthen their abilities to care for their children through a robust network of evidence-based services that meet families where they are at. Voices is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the well-being of Nebraska's children through research, policy analysis, and advocacy grounded in data and lived experience and much of this work is focused on the child welfare system in Nebraska.

Nebraska's child welfare system works best when it intervenes early, strengthens families, and prevents unnecessary system involvement. LB903 takes an important step in that direction by creating a clear and flexible referral pathway that allows child welfare case managers to connect at risk families with children under age two to voluntary home visiting services.

Home visiting programs are proven, evidence-based supports that help families build strong foundations during the most critical years of a child's development. These services improve child safety, support healthy development, and reduce the likelihood that families will experience deeper involvement with the child welfare system. Despite their effectiveness, current policy creates a barrier by limiting home visiting agencies' ability to access Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) funding without formal referrals from case managers, even when families would clearly benefit.

LB903 removes this unnecessary barrier while preserving professional discretion. By making referrals permissive rather than mandatory, the bill respects case managers' expertise and judgment while increasing awareness of available prevention supports. At the same time, it allows home visiting agencies to bill FFPSA reimbursement appropriately, ensuring that federal prevention dollars are used as intended to support families before crises occur.

For infants and toddlers, early intervention matters. Connecting families to voluntary, supportive services at the earliest signs of risk can prevent trauma, promote stability, and keep families safely together. LB903 aligns with Nebraska's commitment to prevention, family preservation, and the well-being of our youngest children.

We urge the committee to advance LB903 and invest in a child welfare system that prioritizes prevention, partnership, and better outcomes for Nebraska's children. We thank Senator Storer for her work to make Nebraska better for all kids. We appreciate this committee's time and consideration on this matter.