



January 28, 2026

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

From: Anahí Salazar, Voices for Children in Nebraska

RE: Neutral for 808- Create a child care licensing pilot program under the Child Care Licensing Act

Every child deserves a strong start in life. Voices for Children in Nebraska is a nonpartisan independent organization that advocates for policies that support child welfare, youth justice, health and economic stability. We use data and research to guide our policies, as well as community engagement to make informed decisions. Increasing access to child care across the state has been a focus for state leaders for years. With 8.6% of Nebraska parents changing their job or not taking a job because of child care issues,¹ child care remains an issue to work on. We want to thank Senator Ibach for bringing legislation that could have a positive impact on updating child care regulations through a pilot program. Voices for Children in Nebraska is currently neutral on LB 808, which would create a child care licensing pilot program under the Child Care Licensing Act.

The pilot program would allow the Director of Public Health to waive the requirements for licensure. The waiver also extends to staff within the program. While we strongly support the goal of expanding access to child care for Nebraska families, we are currently neutral because of our concern about the need to have some additional guardrails in ensuring child safety. The bill as drafted could be read to allow for overly broad authority with one individual to waive regulations for particular child care programs, without a set of parameters about what regulations may be waived or to what extent. Waiving a regulation around the number of sinks for 12 children versus 11 is different than waiving a regulation around safe food and breastmilk storage and handling, physical interventions with children, or critical staff-child ratios.

We should also know what we are discerning with the pilot program. As an organization that believes in quality data and using information to inform policy decisions, Voices for Children believes that a pilot program is a great way to test out new methods of achieving results – but we should be clearly identifying what the goal of the program is and evaluating its effectiveness in meeting that goal. We believe that including language about evaluation of this pilot program (or pilot programs) would honor the intent to increase child care

¹ 2022 National Survey of Children's Health, Kids Count Report

availability while maintaining safety and child well-being. Identifying an evaluation part of the pilot would also provide an additional level of oversight - whether that be from an agency, university, or other neutral entity, monitoring program success and child safety and wellbeing.

LB 808 does state that the Director of Public Health has the right to waive certain regulations on a case-by-case basis, and to enact changes to ensure the safety of children. We think having required reporting and a designated, external evaluator to assess pilot program effectiveness could help further establish guardrails and what success looks like.

I did have the opportunity to connect with Senator Ibach's office regarding these ideas, and sincerely appreciate her willingness to work on an amendment that could address them. We want to thank Senator Ibach for her work in making childcare more accessible and the Committee for considering this bill.