



February 20, 2026

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

From: Anahí Salazar, Voices for Children in Nebraska

**RE: Support for LB 970, Require the Department of Health and Human Services to submit a state plan amendment to include a program of early literacy promotion and intervention in well-child visits under the early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment services program**

Early literacy can be an indicator for the long-term academic trajectory of a child. Literacy is a foundational skill. If a child shows early signs of needing additional support, intervention can be life changing. Voices for Children supports LB 970 because integrating literacy checks into routine visits can make a measurable difference in supporting children early in their literacy.

Early and periodic screening of literacy matters because the brain is most adaptable in the early years of a child's life. Early childhood is a period of high neuroplasticity. Interventions introduced early can be more effective. A well-child visit makes sense for this kind of screening because children are already going to these visits consistently. The multiple screenings until the age of five, can prevent children from slipping through the cracks. Without repeated screening, only the most obvious challenges get noticed. Struggling readers often go unidentified until 3rd or 4th grade, when reading demands increase sharply. Interventions later in elementary become more time intensive and less effective and students may develop frustration, avoidance behaviors, or low academic confidence. Identifying ways in which to support children and families early can help not only academically but also with self-confidence.

Screening early literacy skills like letter knowledge, expressive and receptive language, and rhyming and sound awareness, at ages 0–5 helps identify children who may be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Early identification reduces long-term academic gaps providing more equitable outcomes, especially for students from underserved communities. Not all children have equal access to preschool or early learning environments, but nearly all children attend well-child -visits. Screening for early literacy could help families who might not otherwise receive developmental or literacy support, providing resources for parents and caregivers early. When pediatricians discuss early literacy, parents and caregivers can better understand developmental milestones. Parents and caregivers can receive guidance on reading, talking, and playing with their child. Creating a proactive, supportive environment around early learning.

Early literacy screening at well-child visits can identify needed support early, promotes equity, and can strengthen families' ability to support literacy at home. It's one of the most efficient, high impact strategies for improving lifelong learning outcomes. We want to thank Senator Guereca for bringing this legislation forward and the Committee for their time and attention.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). *Screening for Emergent Literacy During Well Visits*. <https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/screening-for-emergent-literacy-during-well-visits>