



January 30, 2018

Senator Mike Groene, Chair
Members of the Education Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB877

Chairman Groene and Members of the Education Committee,

I represent First Five Nebraska, and we are submitting this letter today in a neutral position. LB877 would make two changes in the state aid formula related to early childhood. It would allow school districts to count 3-year old's in their TEEOSA formula in addition to changing the weight of an early childhood student from 0.6 to 1.0.

In Nebraska, approximately 60,744 children ages 0-5 are at risk of entering kindergarten behind their peers. We know that high-quality early childhood experiences can help offset the kinds of obstacles known to threaten young children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. In principle, First Five Nebraska supports early childhood students being counted at a full 1.0 weight in the TEEOSA formula. We also support efforts to ensure 3-year old's receive high quality experiences wherever they are. However, in our current budget climate, we believe public resources should be targeted toward children who are most at risk and will benefit the greatest from high quality investments.

Research shows that 90% of a child's brain circuitry is formed during the first five years of life. These neural foundations support successful cognitive and behavioral development that set the stage for a child's success in education and in life. When children have a strong foundation for learning, they are less likely to drop out of school, develop behavioral problems, or become involved in the criminal justice system. With the benefit of positive early experiences, they are more likely to become productive members of society and help drive Nebraska's economy.

Again, we are grateful for Senator Kolowski's leadership and his dedication to ensuring that our youngest learners have the resources they need to succeed. We appreciate the opportunity to share our views and we look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature on this important policy issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Lopez Everett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Lopez Everett
Policy Associate
First Five Nebraska