



February 21, 2020

Senator Sara Howard, Chair  
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee  
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB1049

Chairwoman Howard and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Adam Feser and I am a policy associate representing First Five Nebraska. We are an early childhood policy organization dedicated to ensuring all children have access to quality early childhood environments. On behalf of First Five Nebraska, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of LB1049 and thank Senator Kate Bolz for introducing this bill. We believe LB1049 presents an exciting opportunity to have a huge, positive impact on Nebraska's children, families and communities.

Research shows that access to the child care subsidy results in a range of long-term benefits for Nebraska children and their families, and given the workforce realities facing our state, increasing access to the subsidy would also benefit our communities. With stable, quality early care, children are on their way to realizing their full potential, parents can work or seek education to improve their family's future and employers have access to a larger workforce that includes parents who aren't struggling to find reliable child care. All these needs must be addressed for our communities, families and children to thrive, and the pool of unused TANF funds presents an opportunity for us to do just that.

LB1049 will allow many more children access to quality environments. But to guarantee providers who accept the subsidy offer quality care, we must ensure that the subsidy pays for the actual cost of quality. We applaud the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' openness to examining the utility of a hybrid approach to setting subsidy reimbursement rates which takes into account the costs of providing quality care in addition to the market prices charged.

For this bill to have the largest impact, we must also eliminate the obstacles preventing quality providers from serving children utilizing the subsidy. I would like to recognize the work of Nebraska's Child Care Development Fund Administrator, Nicole Vint, and her team in support of this goal. The proposed Child Care Development Fund Plan offers many exciting changes that will benefit child care providers serving families using the child care subsidy, and we hope it will encourage more providers to do so. Graduated phaseout implementation, billing for up to five absences per month, billing for a half day or full day instead of hourly, 12-month eligibility are among the changes that will directly benefit providers and families.

For our youngest children most in need and their families, access to reliable, quality child care can improve their lives immediately and in the long term. For employers, this represents greater access to a dependable workforce. We ask you to advance LB1049 to General File.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AF', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Feser  
Policy Associate  
First Five Nebraska