



February 21, 2020

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

RE: LB837

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, an early childhood policy organization dedicated to ensuring all children have access to quality early childhood environments. On behalf of First Five Nebraska, I'm here to speak in support of LB837 and thank Senator John Arch for introducing this bill.

Last session, you heard our testimony supporting LB459, which was amended into LB460 and passed. It brought Nebraska closer to compliance with the fingerprint background check components of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization of 2014. We supported LB460 and thank you for your work on this issue. Had LB460 not passed, Nebraska would have taken a 5% cut in those federal dollars.

That legislation was necessary, but the cost of the fingerprint background check became a great concern within the provider community. Yesterday, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services announced they will cover the cost of background checks for existing child care employees and adults living in family child care homes. This announcement shows the agency's commitment to supporting early childhood educators, and we'd like to thank DHHS for that support. Without this funding, either child care businesses, which operate on thin margins, would have to absorb the cost which likely would have to be passed along to parents who are struggling with the cost of child care, or employees, who face compensation challenges when entering and remaining in the early childhood field, would cover the cost.

Rigorous background checks are critical in ensuring the safety of our youngest children, and as a state we should do everything possible so parents and early childhood educators do not have to shoulder that burden alone. While yesterday's announcement was welcome news for existing providers, this bill is still critical for future child care providers, and we urge you to move it to General File. We applaud Senator Arch's effort with LB837 to offer providers assistance moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Feser".

Adam Feser  
Policy Associate  
First Five Nebraska