



February 25, 2020

Senator Justin Wayne, Chair
Members of the Urban Affairs Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB867

Chairman Wayne and Members of the Urban Affairs Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Elizabeth Everett and I am the Senior Policy Associate with First Five Nebraska, a statewide early childhood policy organization. I am here today to testify in support of LB867 on behalf of First Five Nebraska.

We would like to thank Senator Matt Hansen for introducing LB867. As you know, communities require a strong and diverse infrastructure to thrive economically. This includes elements such as housing, roads, telecommunications and job training. It also includes community assets that attract people and promote economic productivity. High-quality early learning and child care programs are among the most important of these economic assets.

Right now, working parents in Nebraska cannot find enough quality child care programs. Roughly 75% of children under age 6 live in homes where all parents work, yet 84% of counties in Nebraska don't have enough child care slots to meet current demand. With nearly 58,000 available, unfilled jobs in Nebraska, that's a serious obstacle for local and statewide economic growth. Therefore, we believe it makes perfect sense to allow municipalities, if they choose to, the ability to access additional funds for early childhood purposes.

LB867 would allow municipalities to appropriate funds (if approved by voters) from local options sales and/or property taxes levied by the municipality for economic development programs providing financing assistance to child care businesses. This bill is very similar to LB160, which passed last year and allows communities to use local option municipal economic development funds (LB840) for early childhood infrastructure. Since its passage, many communities have looked at ways to access LB840 funds because addressing the quality child care shortage is a top priority for them. We believe LB867 would allow communities that don't have LB840 funds the same opportunity to build or improve their existing quality child care infrastructure.

Again, we thank Senator Hansen for his dedication and leadership on LB867. Access to quality, affordable child care is essential to our workforce. We must continue to find ways to help working parents and communities address this issue.

We hope you will advance LB867 to General File.

Sincerely,

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

Elizabeth Everett
Senior Policy Associate
First Five Nebraska