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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Messaging Campaign Highlights Relationship Between Quality Child Care and Economic Development

LINCOLN, NE—First Five Nebraska launched today *My Nebraska Story*, a statewide messaging campaign inviting business leaders, economic developers and others to become involved in strengthening the availability of quality child care in their communities. The campaign is a collaboration between First Five Nebraska and Communities for Kids, an initiative of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. It was made possible through the federal Preschool Development Grant administered by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The campaign features more than 30 employers, economic developers, child care professionals, working parents and other stakeholders representing 11 Nebraska communities including Broken Bow, Gothenburg, Lincoln, McCook, Norfolk, North Platte, Ogallala, Oshkosh, Schuyler, Stuart and York. The campaign uses public awareness efforts and materials to encourage Nebraskans to reflect on their own role in making quality child care a key element in improving economic opportunity and quality of life throughout the state.

“Every Nebraska community has a story to tell,” said Jason Prokop, director of First Five Nebraska. “These are stories about opportunity—to put down roots, raise a family, build a career, grow a business and start the next generation of Nebraskans off right. The care and education of young children directly affects economic opportunity and the promise of ‘the good life’ our state offers to its residents. Early childhood professionals and working parents aren’t the only ones with a stake in this issue. We want to challenge employers, industry leaders and others to ask themselves, *what’s my role in this story?*”

The launch of *My Nebraska Story* coincides with statewide efforts to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Nebraska’s child care industry was among the hardest hit by the public health emergency. Earlier this month, the Nebraska Department of Labor indicated that child care providers ranked among the top 5 occupations filing for initial unemployment claims between March 21 and June 13.

“Nebraska businesses, chambers of commerce and others have a powerful reason to rally in support of quality child care as an economic asset to their communities,” said Mike Feeken, business engagement associate for First Five Nebraska. “Those efforts can be as simple as coaching child care providers on effective business practices, or as ambitious as sponsoring child care slots in local programs for their own company’s employees. The first step is to help them take an active role in the public conversation about the child care needs of working parents.”

More information about the My Nebraska Story campaign can be found at MyNEstory.org or at FirstFiveNebraska.org.

About First Five Nebraska

First Five Nebraska is a team of public policy, data analysis and communications professionals focused on advancing high-quality early care and learning opportunities for Nebraska's youngest children. The organization promotes farsighted, fiscally responsible policies, the efficient use of public and private resources, and high standards of accountability for Nebraska's investments in children's early learning and development.