

The First Five Years

Nebraska's Early Childhood Business Roundtable



February 5, 2014

Senator Heath Mello, Chair
Appropriations Committee

Senator Mello and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing in support of LB 944 on behalf of Nebraska's Early Childhood Business Roundtable. We thank you for your consideration of this measure and thank Sen. Bolz for introducing it.

The Business Roundtable is a growing group of statewide business leaders that believes early childhood education needs to be a top priority for our state. And while there are many reasons why this should be the case, our main interests include economic development, workforce development, and return on investment.

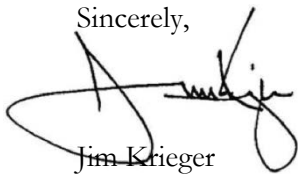
Nationally, the average employee misses 8-9 days per year due to child-related absences costing employers \$3 billion per year, 20 percent of today's workforce is functionally illiterate, and 50 percent of kindergarteners start behind in school and typically stay behind. And with today's economic research indicating that we can achieve up to a 10 percent rate of return on investment when we reach kids most in need with quality early education we feel compelled to raise awareness of this important issue and participate in a solution.

LB 944 would provide an additional \$400,000 in funding to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Nebraska Department of Education to expand an existing program that has been successful in providing training for parents, child care providers (home-based, church-based, non-profit, and for-profit), and elementary school teachers who work with children birth to age 8.

The skills necessary to succeed in school, make good life choices, and build healthy relationships are developed in early childhood. Proper development of these skills like self-control, confidence, and the capacity to communicate are the types of skills potential employees must exhibit and are the basic skills that all Nebraska employers seek. Assisting childcare providers, teachers, and parents to cultivate these traits early is a worthwhile investment that produces the return on investment we would like to see of all economic and workforce development programs.

Great potential in our state exists surrounding the issue of early childhood education between the efforts of state government, the legislature, the business community, the University, the philanthropic community, and various other entities and providers. We hope you'll consider advancing LB 944 and including it in the budget to continue our momentum.

Sincerely,



Jim Krieger
CFO and Vice-Chair, Gallup
Chairman, Nebraska's Early Childhood Business Roundtable