



*5,000 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law
Enforcement Leaders, and
Violence Survivors*

February 3, 2014

Dear Senator Mello and members of the Appropriations Committee,

As sheriffs of Douglas County and Cass County, we are writing on behalf of the nearly 70 Nebraska members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, who know from experience on the front lines that research-based investments in kids help prevent crime and make our communities safer.

High-quality early learning programs have positive effects on children's school readiness, helping at-risk or disadvantaged children start school ready to learn and succeed academically in later years. These programs *also* have a profound impact on reducing later crime and violence.

One 40-year study of at-risk children found that those who were left out of a high-quality preschool program were five times more likely to be chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than their peers who participated in the program. Another study showed that children who did not participate in a high-quality early care and education program were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Therefore, we urge you to support Legislative Bill 944, which would provide \$400,000 in additional funding to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Nebraska Department of Education to expand an existing program that provides helpful 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 with challenging behaviors.

Currently 46% of Nebraska's infants and toddlers live in low-income families, and 61% have at least one risk factor known to increase the chance of poor health, school, and developmental outcomes. Legislative Bill 944 is designed to provide additional funding for mental health screening, assessment, individualized program plans, staff training, curriculum development, and program evaluation. These services can help ensure Nebraska's children are given appropriate support for risk factors commonly associated with failure in school – and later criminal activities.

Supporting LB 944 will help more of Nebraska's children get a good start to being successful, law-abiding citizens of our state. Thank you for your dedication to ensuring Nebraska's future is safe and strong!

Respectfully submitted,

William Brueggemann
Sheriff, Cass County

Timothy Dunning
Sheriff, Douglas County