

January 30, 2020

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

RE: LB1061

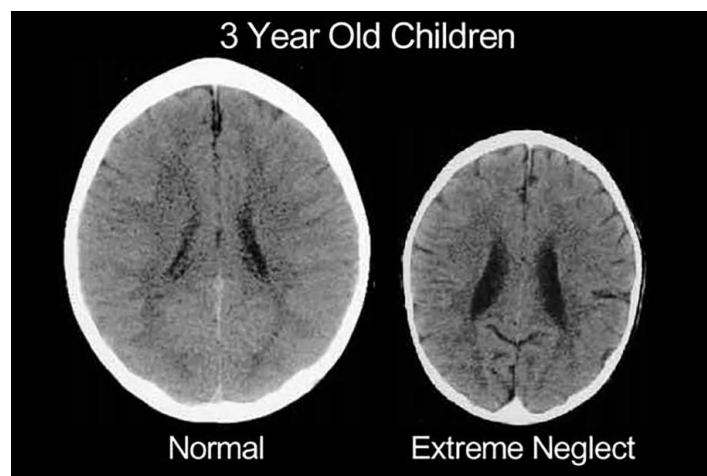
Chairwoman Howard and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I want to thank Senator Sue Crawford for putting in all the hard work necessary to introduce this bill. I also want to thank the Committee members for your efforts to understand these important, complex issues in order to make more informed decisions.

First Five Nebraska supports LB1061 because we need transparent, consistent procedures in cases of abuse and neglect that take into account what is best for Nebraska's children. We also need robust oversight of these cases to ensure proper procedures are followed. The procedural and reporting requirements of LB1061 represent a commitment to these principles.

The Foster Care Review Office's 2019 report stated that 41.1% of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services wards in care were ages 0-5, demonstrating that a substantial portion of cases of abuse and neglect occur during early childhood. The early years of a child's life are a time of rapid brain growth and development. Positive relationships and stimulating environments build a strong foundation for future success.

Conversely, toxic stress associated with strong, frequent and/or prolonged adversity, such as abuse or neglect, disrupts brain development. This disruption can have long-term consequences for behavior, learning, health and mental health. The image below shows just how devastating this disruption in developing healthy brain architecture can be.



Bruce D Perry/The Child Trauma Academy

Sound alternative response data will help policymakers plan for the needs of affected children and address the underlying causes of prolonged abuse and neglect. It is also important that we understand how successful interventions can limit the duration of adversity, which limits disruption in brain development.

LB1061 is an important bill in support of these goals, and we hope you will support it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Prokop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jason" and the last name "Prokop" clearly legible.

Jason Prokop
Director
First Five Nebraska