



# 2021 Early Childhood Policy Highlights

## 107<sup>th</sup> Nebraska Legislature | First Session

The first session of the 107th Nebraska Legislature adjourned *sine die* May 27. During the scheduled 90-day session, senators debated and passed critical pieces of legislation, including a biennium budget, a Social Security tax cut and a bill to temporarily expand income eligibility limits for Child Care Subsidy. In total, Nebraska lawmakers passed 200 bills this session. Because this was the first session of the two-year biennium, remaining bills will be carried over to the next session.

Senators will return for a special session in the fall for redistricting, the process of adjusting Congressional and Legislative district boundaries every 10 years based on new Census data. Before adjourning, policymakers debated LR134 to set guidelines and policies for the complicated redistricting process.

### Interim session

Senators will conduct a number of studies during the interim. First Five Nebraska was fortunate to work with several senators to introduce legislative resolutions for five interim studies. We look forward to engaging relevant stakeholders in this important work during the upcoming months with these interim studies:

- **LR142**, introduced by Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, will determine whether legislation should be enacted to provide for additional supports and further address the issue of maternal depression in Nebraska.
- **LR162**, introduced by Senator John Stinner, will examine the School Readiness Tax Credit Act.
- **LR181**, introduced by Senator Lynne Walz, will study home visitation for Nebraska families.
- **LR190**, introduced by Senator John McCollister, will look at work participation requirements in the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in Nebraska.
- **LR221**, introduced by Senator Tony Vargas, will study maternal and infant mortality and morbidity.

The 107th Legislature, Second Session, is tentatively set to convene January 5, 2022. As always, First Five Nebraska looks forward to working with senators to promote sound, fiscally responsible policies that promote quality early learning experiences for children in Nebraska.

Jason Prokop  
Director  
First Five Nebraska



### **LB68 | Change provisions relating to reimbursement provided by the federal Child Care Subsidy Program**

Introduced by Senator Jen Day, LB68 allows child care providers to bill for children utilizing the child care subsidy based on enrollment rather than attendance. The bill harmonizes billing practices for subsidy payments with standard practices most used by child care providers. LB68 remains in the Health and Human Services Committee and will carry over to the 2022 Legislative session.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB68](#)

### **LB137 | Require reporting to the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS)**

LB137 requires employees of licensed child care professionals to report their educational degrees, professional credentials, relevant training and work history using the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System. Introduced by Senator Tony Vargas, LB137 is on General File with AM347 which requires providers to report their information by June 30, 2023, and states that the Nebraska Department of Education will help any licensed provider comply with this requirement.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB137](#)

### **LB342 | Appropriate funds to the State Department of Education**

Appropriations Committee Chair Senator John Stinner introduced LB342 to appropriate \$5 million over two years to the Department of Education for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund, which funds Sixpence programs throughout the state. With the additional funding, Sixpence has the opportunity to expand current programs or approve new programs to reach more Nebraska parents and young children. LB342 was amended as AM393 into LB380, the mainline budget bill for the biennium ending June 30, 2023. LB380 passed Final Reading on a 47-0-0 vote with an emergency clause; Governor Ricketts signed it into law April 26.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB342](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's press release on LB342](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's policy brief on LB342](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's blog post on LB342](#)

### **LB351 | Change provisions relating to quality scale ratings in Step Up to Quality**

LB351 was introduced by Senator Lou Ann Linehan to allow licensed child care providers to retain their quality rating in Nebraska's QRIS, known as Step Up to Quality, if they acquire a new license type. The change is intended to encourage more child care providers to remain committed to improving the quality of their programs. LB351 passed Final Reading with a vote of 41-0-0 and Governor Pete Ricketts signed it into law April 7.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB351](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's press release on LB351](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's policy brief on LB351](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's blog post on LB351](#)

### **LB380 | Mainline Budget Bill**

Introduced by Speaker Mike Hilgers at the request of the Governor, LB380 is the main appropriations bill for the July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023, biennium. It passed Final Reading on a 47-0-0 vote with an emergency clause, and will become law July 1. All early childhood budget lines remained intact for the new biennium.

### **LB416 | Require implicit bias training under the Uniform Credentialing Act and provide for duties and funding relating to postpartum care and maternal health**

Introduced by Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, LB416 will reduce or eliminate the factors and biases that cause disparities in health outcomes for women of color who are pregnant or postpartum.

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“Sixpence is a national example for how state agencies, nonprofits, service providers and the private sector can work together more effectively and efficiently. Including enhanced funding for Sixpence in the biennial budget reflects our state's ongoing commitment to accountability for effective, public-private investments in the early development of young Nebraskans.”

*Elizabeth Everett  
Deputy Director  
First Five Nebraska*

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It also requires the state to apply for a Medicaid waiver to extend coverage for eligible women to 12 months postpartum and creates and funds the Maternal Health Care Cash Fund. LB416 remains in the Health and Human Services Committee and will carry over into the 2022 Legislative session.

- [First Five Nebraska's letter supporting LB416](#)

### **LB485 | Change provisions relating to child care assistance**

Introduced by Senator Wendy DeBoer, LB485 changes eligibility for the child care subsidy from up to 130% federal poverty level to 185% federal poverty level and eligibility for transitional child care from 185% federal poverty level to 200% federal poverty level. AM1057 was adopted on General File which states that no general funds shall be used to pay the costs of LB485. AM764 was also adopted on General File which requires DHHS to work with a private early childhood organization to conduct an impact study on the changes implemented by LB485. AM1187 was adopted on Select File which sets a sunset on the bill of 27 months. The bill passed Final Reading on a 31-6-5 vote; Governor Ricketts signed LB485 on May 24.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB485](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's press release on LB485](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's policy brief on LB485](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's blog post on LB485](#)

### **LB531 | Adopt the Nebraska Child Care Contribution Tax Credit Act**

LB531, introduced by Senator Tom Briese, would adopt the Nebraska Child Care Contribution Tax Credit Act and enable taxpaying individuals and businesses to claim a nonrefundable income tax credit for qualifying contributions that promote quality child care programs in Nebraska. The tax credit program would be available from January 1, 2022, to January 1, 2027, with \$15 million available each taxable year. An amended version of LB531 was included in AM762 which was placed on General File with LB364, but that bill did not advance. LB531 remains in the Revenue Committee and will carry over into the 2022 Legislative session.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB531](#)
- [First Five Nebraska's blog post on LB531](#)

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“[LB485] is about making it easier for working parents to keep pace with the rising costs of child care while remaining actively and productively involved in the labor market. No Nebraska parent who is willing and able to pursue employment should have to decline an opportunity to provide for their family because they can't afford child care.”

*Senator Wendy DeBoer  
District 10*

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### **LB625 | Impose a surtax on certain taxable income and use the tax proceeds for early childhood education**

LB625, introduced by Senator Tony Vargas, would impose a 4% income surtax on high-income individuals for the purpose of providing funds for early childhood education in Nebraska. A hearing was held by the Revenue Committee; the bill was indefinitely postponed.

- [First Five Nebraska's neutral letter for LB625](#)

### **LB677 | Change provisions relating to eligibility for transitional child care assistance**

Senator Lou Ann Linehan introduced LB677 to adjust the family income for transitional child care assistance from 185% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 200% FPL. The bill remains in the Health and Human Services Committee and will carry over to the 2022 Legislative session.

- [First Five Nebraska's testimony supporting LB677](#)