



Contact: Michael Medwick
Strategic Communications Manager
mmedwick@firstfivenebraska.org
402.617.0350

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Passage of LB351 Promotes Child Care Quality, Capacity in Nebraska

Child care providers have an easier path to meeting the needs of working parents and their communities with passage of LB351 in the Nebraska Legislature. Introduced by State Senator Lou Ann Linehan and signed by Governor Pete Ricketts today, the bill allows child care providers to retain their program rating in Step Up to Quality when transitioning to a new license type to serve more children.

Step Up to Quality, Nebraska's quality rating and improvement system, offers training and resources to child care professionals to improve the services they provide for children and families. Providers previously were required to operate on a provisional license and drop to Step 1 quality level with a new license.

Nebraska's working parents rely on quality child care. "Nebraska has a shortage of quality child care slots available for families," said Adam Feser, First Five Nebraska policy advisor. "We need to do everything we can to encourage child care providers committed to quality to grow and to remove barriers standing in their way."

Even before the pandemic, 91% of Nebraska counties lacked adequate child care options to meet the need of their workforce, producing wide-ranging impacts on Nebraska's economy and quality of life. Removing a barrier to growth enables more providers to expand their businesses and increase available child care slots.

"What a relief to know LB351 has passed. This is the reason I have held off on expanding my business for two years," said Holly Clouse, owner of Trucks N Tiaras Family Childcare in North Platte. "Now I can move forward with being able to better serve my community. Knowing all of my hard work in Step Up to Quality still follows me is an amazing way to start my summer."

First Five Nebraska commends Senator Lou Ann Linehan for her leadership, the full legislative body for its support of this bill and Governor Ricketts for signing it into law. The legislation marks a step forward for Nebraska's child care industry and the critical role it plays in building strong families, vital communities and a growing state economy.

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.