



January 19, 2022

Senator John Arch, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee
Nebraska Legislature

Re: LB741

Chairman Arch and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sara Howard and I am a policy advisor at First Five Nebraska. First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization focused on promoting quality early care and learning opportunities for Nebraska's youngest children. My work at First Five Nebraska is focused on maternal and infant health policy, a new area of focus for the organization, and recognizes what we all know already: that healthy moms and babies are critical to ensuring the long-term success of children in our state. I am here to testify in support for LB741, a bill to ensure that stillbirth deaths in the state are reviewed so recommendations may be made to prevent these heart-breaking birth outcomes.

I want to thank Senator DeBoer for introducing LB741 and for her commitment to ensuring quality data is used to inform public policy and save lives. LB741 gives the state Maternal and Child Death Review team the authority to gather records related to stillbirth deaths, but does not obligate them to conduct the reviews themselves.

First, some history: The Nebraska Child Death Review team was created in 1993 after the state recorded over 300 child deaths in the year prior, and the statute remained unchanged until 2013 when revisions were passed which included definitional changes and the addition of reviews of maternal deaths, defined as the death of a woman during pregnancy or the death of a postpartum woman up to one year after she ceases to be pregnant. Those revisions were implemented in 2014. The original core purpose of the Maternal and Child Death Review team was to advise the Governor, the Legislature and the public on changes to law, policy and practice to prevent child deaths.

Prior to the 2013 revisions to the Nebraska Maternal and Child Death Review team statute, the state was utilizing its subpoena authority to gather records for both stillbirth and child deaths in the state. Through an agreement with the Douglas County Health Department, the state allowed the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review group, or FIMRs, to act as an agent of the state and gather records relative to stillbirth and child deaths. After 2014 when the new law went into effect, the state realized it no longer had the authority to gather stillbirth data. Since then, these records have not been collected or reviewed, and no recommendations have been made regarding prevention or trends for stillbirth deaths in either Douglas County or in Nebraska. LB741 seeks to rectify this

oversight and gives the state authority to enter into an agreement with Douglas County to act as their agent and collect stillbirth records for review.

Stillbirth deaths are tragic and painful for Nebraska families. Allowing the state to gather these records, analyze if they were preventable and identify disparities shows that these deaths matter. Thank you for your time and attention to this serious matter and for your careful consideration of LB741. I'm happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Howard
Public Policy Advisor
First Five Nebraska