



January 28, 2022

Senator John Stinner, Chair  
Members of the Appropriations Committee  
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB782

Chairman Stinner and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of First Five Nebraska, I am writing in support of LB782, Senator Vargas's bill to increase funding for the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative (NPQIC). First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization focused on promoting quality early care and learning opportunities for Nebraska's youngest children.

In Nebraska, NPQIC is a leader in addressing critical issues for moms and babies and has focused on severe hypertension in pregnancy, preterm birth, neonatal sepsis screenings, breastfeeding practices and more. NPQIC is currently working on a three-year statewide maternal depression screening and referral project with First Five Nebraska. This project aims to establish perinatal depression screening as the standard of care and to identify statewide treatment referral systems with the goal that every mother in the state be screened for mental health disorders prenatally, postnatally and at their baby's well child visits. As part of this project, NPQIC conducted a survey in early 2021 to ask clinics if they screened pregnant women and mothers and their findings were revealing. NPQIC discovered that only 65% of Nebraska providers conduct mental health screenings prenatally, 78% at the first postpartum visit and 43% at the first well-child visit. NPQIC is the only organization that could conduct this type of research for Nebraska and assist policymakers and providers to move our state toward universal mental health screens for mothers.

I want to thank Senator Vargas for introducing LB782 to provide additional support to NPQIC. The opportunity to expand NPQIC's funding would make a critical difference for mothers and babies in our state.

Sincerely,

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

Sara Howard  
Policy Advisor  
First Five Nebraska