



January 25, 2022

Senator Adam Morfeld, Vice Chair
Members of the Education Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB890

Vice Chair Morfeld and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My Name is Elizabeth Everett and I am the Deputy Director of First Five Nebraska, a statewide public policy organization focused on supporting policies that promote quality early learning environments for our youngest Nebraskans. I would like to thank Senator Walz for introducing LB890 and am here today to testify in support of the early childhood components of this bill.

As you know, the first five years of a child's life are a crucial period in brain and skill development. Early experiences, interactions and environments create the neural wiring necessary for children to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. Studies show that investing in quality early care yields significant, ongoing returns in academic achievement, positive social outcomes and even long-term health and wellness. The bottom line is simple—high-quality early childhood programs can set more children up for success in school and are critical in an individual's development of skills they will use throughout their lifetime.

These benefits offer a compelling reason for us to consider how we can better use existing structures such as the Tax Equity & Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA) formula to promote development of our youngest learners. Currently, TEEOSA only reimburses schools at 60% for pre-kindergarten programs on the basis that the school day for preschool is typically shorter than that of K-12 students. However, very young children have specific needs for their care and early learning that include lower teacher-to-child ratios, classroom resources and health and safety measures among other factors. As a result, the actual costs of delivering quality pre-kindergarten services are much closer to the costs of full-day services for older, K-12 children. LB890 proposes to address this discrepancy by increasing early childhood student aid from 60% to 100% of the normal student reimbursement, thereby incentivizing more schools to offer quality pre-kindergarten programs in their districts.

Again, thank you for your time and attention today and thank you to Senator Walz for her foresight in introducing this important legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have now or after today's hearing.

Sincerely,

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

Elizabeth Everett
Deputy Director
First Five Nebraska