



## 2020 Early Childhood Policy Highlights

### 106<sup>th</sup> Nebraska Legislature | Second Session

The Nebraska Legislature adjourned sine die August 13, ending this year's 60-day session which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic mid-March. Senators debated several important issues this year, including the impact of the pandemic, racial equity, budget sustainability, property taxes and the business incentive package. Despite the unprecedented nature of the session, senators were able to come together and pass a budget, a property tax/business development tax incentive compromise and several early childhood bills.

Now that the legislative session has adjourned, policymakers are focused on interim studies, the November election and the 107<sup>th</sup> legislative session.

#### **Interim studies**

First Five Nebraska worked with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and Senator John Stinner to introduce LR390, an interim study to assess the fiscal and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nebraska's early childhood workforce and the early childhood care and education system. FFN also worked with Senator Wendy DeBoer to introduce LR387, an interim study to examine the processes by which children who are the victims of a substantiated cases of abuse or neglect, are able to access services through Nebraska' Early Development Network under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. Be sure to visit our website throughout the fall for updates on these interim studies.

#### **Thank you to departing senators**

The November election is right around the corner. This session there were six term-limited senators: Speaker Jim Scheer (District 19, Norfolk), Senator Kate Bolz (District 29, Lincoln), Senator Ernie Chambers (District 11, Omaha), Senator Sue Crawford (District 45, Bellevue), Senator Sara Howard (District 9, Omaha) and Senator Rick Kolowski (District 31, Omaha). All were strong proponents of policies supporting quality early learning environments. FFN thanks these senators for their hard work and support of early childhood issues, and wishes them the best on their next great adventure.

The 107<sup>th</sup> Legislature, First Session, will convene Wednesday, January 6, 2021. As always, First Five Nebraska will work with senators to promote sound, fiscally responsible policies that promote quality early learning experiences for children in Nebraska.

The following pages outline early childhood bills FFN supported this session. Because 2020 is the second year of the biennium, all bills that were not passed were indefinitely postponed and will not carry over to the 2021 session.



## **LB266 | Change the School Readiness Tax Credit**

LB266 was introduced by Senator Brett Lindstrom to fix eligibility problems with the School Readiness Tax Credit by redefining eligible child care employees and child care providers. LB266 makes self-employed individuals eligible for the refundable tax credit and child care providers, classified as S-corporations, eligible for the nonrefundable tax credit. LB266 passed on Final Reading with 47-0-0 vote and was approved by Governor Ricketts August 17. LB266 was FFN's priority bill.

- [FFN's testimony supporting LB266](#)
- [FFN's blog post on LB266](#)

## **LB837 | Change provisions relating to background checks under the Child Care Licensing Act and the Children's Residential Facilities and Placing Licensure Act**

Introduced by Senator John Arch, LB837 requires the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to seek the maximum amount of federal funding to help child care providers and child care staff with the costs of the fingerprinting and national criminal history record information check. LB837 was amended into LB1185, which passed on Final Reading with a 48-0-0 vote and was approved by Governor Ricketts on August 7.

- [FFN's testimony supporting LB837](#)

## **LB867 | Adopt the Local Option Municipal Childcare Financing Act**

LB867 was introduced by Senator Matt Hansen to give cities the option to increase their local option sales tax, property tax or any other general tax to pay for

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"Self-employed early childhood professionals are critically important to our state, especially in rural communities where they may be the only care provider available. Passage of LB266 ensures these providers have access to supports that can make a difference to their bottom lines."

Kim Chase  
Nebraska Family  
Child Care Association

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early childhood infrastructure as part of an economic development plan. LB867 was not voted out of the Urban Affairs Committee.

- [FFN's testimony supporting LB867](#)

## **LB901 | Appropriate funds for the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative**

LB901 was introduced by Senator Machaela Cavanaugh. It would appropriate \$200,000 from the General Fund for the FY2020-21 to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to be used to contract with the University of Nebraska Medical Center for the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative. The department shall secure federal matching funds for this purpose. LB901 was not voted out of the Appropriations Committee.

- [FFN's written testimony supporting LB901](#)

## **LB935 | Change the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act to authorize expenditures for an officeholder's child care services**

LB935 was introduced by Senator Megan Hunt and would allow public officials to use campaign funds to pay for child care services incurred by an officeholder for members of his or her immediate family when involved in activities related to the duties of his or her public office. It was not voted out of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee.

- [FFN's written testimony supporting LB935](#)

## **LB1008 | Main Budget Bill**

LB1008 was the main budget bill that passed on Final Reading with a vote of 43-3-3 and was approved by Governor Ricketts on August 6. There were no cuts to early childhood budget lines.

## **LB1049 Provide for participation in federal Child Care Subsidy child care assistance as prescribed**

LB1049 was introduced by Senator Kate Bolz and would increase eligibility for the child care subsidy program and use carryover funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to offset expenses incurred, including any administrative costs. It was not voted out of the Health and Human Services Committee.

- [FFN's testimony supporting LB1049](#)

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## **LB1051 | Create the Intergenerational Care Facility Incentive Cash Fund and provide grants**

LB1051 was introduced by Senator Anna Wishart and would create the Intergenerational Care Facility Incentive Cash Fund. The fund would consist of General Fund transfers and any private donations. The Legislature would transfer over \$300,000 for FY2020-21. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services would award grants to nursing facilities for one-time startup costs to provide child care in nursing facilities. It was not voted out of the Health and Human Services Committee.

■ [FFN's testimony supporting LB1051](#)

## **LB1061 | Change provisions relating to alternative response to reports of child abuse or neglect**

LB1061 provides guidance for the types of child welfare cases that can utilize alternative response, gives the department certain responsibilities for developing procedures, rules, and regulations for these cases, and how they must be reported. It passed on Final Reading with a 46-0-2 vote and was signed by Governor Ricketts on July 24.

■ [FFN's testimony supporting LB1061](#)

## **LB1107 | Adopt the ImagiNE Nebraska Act, Key Employer and Jobs Retention Act, Renewable Chemical Production Tax Credit Act, Customized Job Training Act, Nebraska Transformational Projects Act, and Nebraska Property Tax Incentive Act and change and provide other related provisions**

LB1107 includes property tax reform, an updated business incentive package and a state funding commitment for the University of Nebraska Medical Center NExT project. LB1107 passed on Final Reading with a 41-4-2 vote and was approved by Governor Ricketts on August 17.

## **LB1160 | Adopt the Nebraska Workforce and Education Reporting System Act**

LB1160 was introduced by Senator Matt Hansen and would require the Legislature to develop a plan to develop establishment of the Nebraska Workforce and Educational Reporting System, a lifelong learning and workforce longitudinal data system. The Nebraska Workforce and Educational Reporting System will be a comprehensive, sustainable, robust, data system to enable training of

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“Frequent and prolonged abuse and neglect are commonly associated with disruptions in early brain development and devastating, long-term consequences for behavior, learning, and mental health. LB1061 represents a stronger commitment to procedural transparency, consistency and oversight in the way cases of abuse and neglect are handled.”

Jason Prokop  
*Director, First Five Nebraska*

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tomorrow's workforce, today. As part of this system, the Nebraska Department of Labor will identify the long-term return on investment from early education programs. It passed on Final Reading with a 33-5-9 vote and was approved by Governor Ricketts on August 10.

■ [FFN's written testimony supporting LB1160](#)

## **LB1185 | Change provisions relating to criminal history record information checks for child care staff members**

LB1185 was introduced by the Health and Human Services Committee to require license-exempt child care providers seeking to accept the child care subsidy to meet federal background check standards. LB1185 was passed on Final Reading with a vote of 48-0-0 and was approved by Governor Ricketts on August 7.

■ [FFN's testimony supporting LB1185](#)

## **LB1206 | Require reporting to the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System**

LB1206 was introduced by Senator Tony Vargas and would require child care professionals to report their educational degrees, professional credentials, relevant training and work history to the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System. It was not voted out of the Education Committee.

■ [FFN's testimony supporting LB1206](#)