



March 1, 2022

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

RE: LB1131

Chairman Stinner and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Everett, and I am Deputy Director of First Five Nebraska. First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization that supports policies that promote quality early learning environments for all children in Nebraska. I am here today to testify in support of the child care components of LB1131 and would like to thank Senator Morfeld for his leadership on this issue.

Nebraska's early childhood professional workforce is the crucial element in delivering the quality child care programs Nebraska families, communities and employers need. Yet, the supply of quality child care persistently lags far behind the demand for these services in all parts of our state. That gap between supply and demand is largely driven by the fact that child care requires a great degree of professional commitment in a highly regulated field in exchange for extremely low wages and limited financial security and benefits. As a result, more and more early childhood professionals are leaving this industry to seek employment elsewhere.

We all pay the price when early childhood professionals leave their careers and child care options disappear. A study commissioned by First Five Nebraska from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Bureau of Business Research calculated that low availability of child care cost Nebraska \$745 million annually in direct, pre-pandemic losses. Those losses represent decreased family earnings, employer productivity and state revenues. Since then, COVID-19 has made an already difficult situation even worse by further destabilizing the child care marketplace and driving more early childhood professionals to close their businesses or leave their places of employment. This is a situation that working parents, their employers and our state as a whole cannot afford to continue.

LB1131 contributes to broader efforts to help address attrition in Nebraska's early childhood professional workforce by providing a \$1,000 bonus for every child care worker in the state. In an industry where the average hourly wage is \$12.03¹, a \$1,000 bonus would go a long way for the professionals working parents and employers depend upon. It could help pay rent, buy food, help with family expenses and more. Although more financial supports are needed to provide long-term stability, LB1131 is a step in the right direction.

Again, thank you the opportunity to testify today in support of LB1131. I am happy to answer any questions.

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

ⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). "May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Nebraska." Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ne.htm#00-0000.