



January 25, 2023

Senator Ben Hansen, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB75

Chairman Hansen 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 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 LB75, a bill that creates the opportunity for instances of severe maternal morbidity in the state to be reviewed so recommendations may be made to prevent these critical incidents for mothers and families.

I want to thank Senator Vargas for introducing LB75 and for his commitment to ensuring quality data is used to inform public policy and save lives. LB75 gives the state Maternal Mortality Review team the authority to gather records related to incidents of severe maternal morbidity, but does not obligate them to conduct the reviews.

First, some history: The Nebraska Child Death Review Team was created in 1993 after the state recorded more than 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 that would prevent child and maternal deaths.

Last year, the Legislature considered and passed LB741. This bill gave the state the authority to review stillbirth death outcomes and allows the team, in partnership with Douglas County, to begin to focus on fetal infant deaths. LB741 also included LB626 which clarified in statute the structure, membership and administrative support for mortality review work in the state. Essentially, the teams were split into two groups that share core membership. The work of severe maternal morbidity reviews would fall under the Maternal Mortality Review team.

Instances of severe maternal morbidity are terrifying and tragic. There is merit in allowing the state the authority to review these critical incidents and in future years offer recommendations for prevention to improve the health and well-being of all mothers and families in our state. Thank you for your time and attention this serious matter and for your careful consideration of LB75. 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
Policy Advisor
First Five Nebraska