



February 22, 2023

Senator Justin Wayne, Chair
Members of the Judiciary Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB271

Chairman Wayne and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of First Five Nebraska, I am writing in support of LB271, Senator McKinney's bill to change mandatory reporter laws in Nebraska. First Five Nebraska supports the inclusion of employees of licensed child care on the list of mandatory reporters. Our early childhood educators care deeply about the children in their care and have a responsibility to report when they have knowledge of abuse.

LB271 takes an important step for mandatory reporters by including a training requirement for professions working with children. This training is crucial to those tasked with such an important obligation, ensuring they can properly identify what is and is not child abuse and neglect. This training also recognizes that child abuse and neglect are preventable, and connecting families to services may be a more appropriate option. Requiring this training for mandatory reporters, including child care providers, will allow them to feel confident in their decision—whether it be a report to the hotline or a connection to service—so children can be protected.

It is our understanding that Senator McKinney will offer an amendment to the current language, and our support is tied to this amended version of the bill. As initially proposed, the bill includes exceptions to the mandatory reporting requirements. The amendment eliminates those exceptions, and First Five Nebraska agrees—there should be no exceptions for mandatory reporters.

Additionally, the bill as originally drafted allowed agencies or institutions to designate a mandatory reporter among staff. The amendment changes this to require the person with knowledge of the alleged abuse or neglect to make the report. First Five Nebraska supports this change. We acknowledge that while child abuse and neglect most frequently occur within the family unit, we are aware of child abuse cases occurring at a licensed child care, and if employees had reported only to designated staff members instead of directly to the child abuse hotline, those cases may have remained hidden. Direct reporting by individuals with direct knowledge of the alleged abuse is necessary.

Thank you for your consideration of LB271 and we encourage the committee to support this bill with the amendment.

Sincerely,

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

Katie Bass, Ph.D.
Data and Policy Research Advisor
First Five Nebraska