



February 2, 2023

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

RE: LB64

Chairperson Hansen and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Dr. Katie Bass and I am the Data and Policy Research Advisor representing First Five Nebraska. First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization focused on supporting policies that promote quality early care and learning experiences for young children in Nebraska. I am here today to testify in support of LB64. I want to thank Senator Day for introducing this legislation, and for reaching out to First Five Nebraska when the parents who testified today approached her with their concerns.

This past interim, LR266 examined the notification processes around child abuse in licensed child care, revealing gaps in who receives information and when. LB64 creates a notification requirement for parents whose children attended licensed child care where abuse or neglect occurred. The notice would be mailed by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) after the abuse has been substantiated, or found to be true, by NDHHS or the court. It would not provide information about the type of abuse, victim or perpetrator, but include the date the incident occurred. The NDHHS Serious Injuries and Deaths Report indicates three-six cases of substantiated child abuse in licensed child care per year from 2017 to 2021.

The goal of the notification is two-fold. First, this notification empowers parents to make informed decisions about their child care. The vast majority of the licensed child care providers in our state would communicate with the parents of children in their care about any investigation or allegation as serious as child abuse, and the notification we are talking about today would serve as closure to that conversation. However, as we've learned today, there may be situations where that information is withheld from parents. This notification requirement would ensure all parents were aware of the abuse or neglect.

Second, one of the more disconcerting elements of abuse allegations in child care is that the children involved may be too young to communicate what has happened to them. A parent may notice behavior changes in their child that concern them, but assume these changes are related to growth and development or changes in routine. For a parent in this situation, receiving a notification about a case of abuse may be a reason to ask more questions about their own child and their experiences.

Parents seek out child care that is licensed because they know that licensed providers are held to high standards in Nebraska, and that there is oversight of those standards. When an incident as severe as child abuse or neglect occurs in licensed child care, that oversight should include direct communication from NDHHS to parents. Thank you for your time today and for your consideration of LB64. I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Bass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "K" and "B".

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