



February 8, 2024

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

RE: LB1054

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Mitchell Clark, and I am a Policy Advisor for First Five Nebraska, a statewide public policy organization invested in the care, early learning and well-being of Nebraska's youngest children. I am here today to testify in support of LB1054 and would like to thank Senator Walz for her leadership in advocating for the safety and security of children in child care programs.

As you've heard first-hand from Lincoln Littles, the Lincoln-area effort to standardize emergency preparedness for child care providers is effective, and gives us a model to follow with LB1054. This work requires effective coordination among key partners like Lincoln Public Schools and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. While it does not necessarily need to look exactly like the Lincoln-area effort, LB1054 allows communities to establish partnerships which operate the various components of the safety and reunification preparedness and response efforts.

LB1054 is a unique model to address the need for standardizing the approach to emergency preparedness and response for child care providers. While participation is voluntary, it provides the opportunity for communities to establish their own procedures for emergency preparedness. Federal and state regulations do require a written emergency preparedness and response plan for licensed programs and those license-exempt programs accepting child care subsidy. Other federal programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start also require emergency preparedness plans. However, the current requirements are siloed among these various programs.

As you've heard today, the missing components are the emergency response notification system and a standardized approach to coordination with local law enforcement. An emergency response notification system is the link between emergency preparedness plans, training of staff, age-appropriate procedures for children and notification of local area law enforcement. A key benefit of the emergency response notification system is that it allows for the geolocation of emergency incidents—whether it is a weather event, fires, accidents, or violent incidents and intruders—and can notify providers within a specific area.

The safety and security of children under the care of child care providers warrants the need for emergency preparedness and response in the same manner that exists in the K-12 school system. LB1054 provides the crucial link to that needed infrastructure.

Thank you, Chairman Hansen and members of the Committee for your time and attention today. I urge you to advance LB1054 to General File. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mitchell Clark".

Mitchell Clark
Policy Advisor
First Five Nebraska