



February 6, 2024

Senator Julie Slama, Chair
Members of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB1416

Chair Slama and Members of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Elizabeth Everett, and I am the Deputy Director of First Five Nebraska. First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization focused on supporting policies that provide quality care and learning environments for our youngest Nebraskans. I am here today to testify in support of LB1416. I would like to thank Senator Bostar for his leadership on this important legislation and Governor Pillen for prioritizing child care as part of his administration's goals.

Quality child care is an instrumental component to our state's economic stability and growth. Access to these programs helps create employment opportunities for working parents, improves workplace productivity for employers and increases our state's revenue. Unfortunately, our state does not have enough quality care options to meet the demand of all working parents.

LB1416 creates two separate grant programs, administered by the Department of Economic Development, to increase the number of child care programs and to support the child care workforce.

First, it creates the Child Care Capacity Building and Workforce Grant Program. To receive a grant, the city, town, nonprofit organization or community foundation must conduct a needs assessment and provide a one-to-one match. The match can be monetary or an in-kind donation such as equipment, classroom space or materials. The grant can be used for a variety of purposes such as supporting the child care workforce, expanding an existing child care program, remodeling a building for child care purposes and more. The hope is that by providing this flexibility, grant recipients can choose an option that best fits their child care needs.

Additionally, LB1416 creates the Family Child Care Home Grant Program. Funding provided through this program would be used to support micro-centers, a new form of care in Nebraska that has already been successful in other states. A micro-center is a small, one- or two-classroom licensed child care program located in a residential or commercial setting with an off-site entity, or regional facilitator hub, providing administrative and business support. Several micro-centers can be in the same area and served by the same regional facilitator hub. These micro-centers are ideal for rural areas where it might be difficult to build or remodel a building for child care purposes. While a micro-center can serve children ages birth to 5-years-old, it is ideal for infant and toddler care, which is in short supply in Nebraska.

In closing, funding provided through these permanent grant programs would significantly help Nebraska families and make quality, affordable child care more accessible throughout the state. Again, thank you for allowing me to testify today and I urge you to move this bill to General File. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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