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More Nebraska families will benefit from \$2.5 million for home visiting programs

Lincoln, NE—More Nebraska families with young children will gain access to home visiting services thanks to \$2.5 million allocated in the state budget bill, LB1412, which Governor Pillen signed into law on April 2. The budget was amended to include additional funding for evidence-based home visiting programs from two separate bills introduced earlier this session. LB1124, introduced by State Senator Tony Vargas (District 7), sought an appropriation of \$900,000 in FY2023-24 and \$900,000 in FY2024-25 for early intervention home visiting programs. A second bill, LB1125, introduced by State Senator Anna Wishart (District 27), would appropriate \$500,000 for nurse home visiting programs.

Home visiting is a voluntary service that matches families with trained professionals—nurses, social workers or early childhood educators—to support the health and well-being of families with young children. These trained professionals form trusting relationships with parents and tailor services to help families meet their goals in child development, family health, school readiness and more.

The budget bill's home visiting provisions appropriate funds from the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS). Created by the Nebraska Legislature in 2020, the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund is comprised of funds returned to the state and is intended to offset losses in the Medicaid program. Using these funds allows Nebraska to meet federal matching requirements associated with the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, reauthorized in December 2022.

Senator Vargas, who introduced LB1124, emphasizes the importance of funding these evidence-based services. "These dedicated investments will pay off throughout families' lifetimes through healthier pregnancies and improved maternal care, stronger parent-child relationships, better academic and social outcomes for children and fewer incidents of child abuse. I commend my colleagues for expanding these services to reach more families."

"Healthy moms and babies are critical to the long-term success of children and families in our state," said Senator Wishart, who has seen the benefits of these programs firsthand in District 27. "Nurse home visiting programs, like Lincoln's Family Connects, pair families with trained health care professionals beginning three weeks after a child's birth, offering maternal and infant health support, breastfeeding guidance and assistance navigating local resources. These evidence-based programs have proven results for the long-term health and well-being of Nebraska's youngest children."

Sara Howard, First Five Nebraska maternal and infant health policy advisor, worked closely with Senators Wishart and Vargas to advance the home visiting bills. She said these evidence-based supports have a long history of bipartisan support in Nebraska. "Evidence-based home visiting programs have been helping Nebraska

families since they were first added to the annual budget in 2007,” she said. “We are grateful to Governor Pillen, Senator Vargas, Senator Wishart and all Nebraska lawmakers for ensuring these vital services are available to our most vulnerable babies, moms and families.”

About First Five Nebraska

First Five Nebraska (FFN) is a non-partisan public policy organization established in 2011 to strengthen the state’s early childhood system as a key driver of social, educational and economic opportunity for all Nebraskans. FFN works with officials in local, state and federal government, business and economic leaders, early childhood professionals and other stakeholders to identify, research and promote well-informed, fiscally responsible policies and solutions addressing the care, education and healthy development of young children at home or in out-of-home settings. For more information, visit www.FirstFiveNebraska.org.

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