



February 21, 2025

Senator Rita Sanders, Chairperson  
Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB224

Chairperson Sanders and Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee,

On behalf of First Five Nebraska, I am writing this letter in support of LB 224, Senator Guereca's bill to require paid maternity leave for state employees in Nebraska.

Paid maternity leave offers many benefits to Nebraska families particularly young families. By allowing mothers to focus on bonding with their newborns, attend necessary appointments and provide better care and support during critical early childhood development stages, paid maternity leave shows incredible outcomes for babies in our state.

Further, Nebraska has an emerging crisis in the area of maternal mental health as indicated by the 2024 Maternal Mortality Review Committee Report. In the report it showed that 18% of pregnancy-associated deaths in Nebraska between 2014-2022 had a contributing circumstance of mental health. Paid maternity leave has been shown to reduce postpartum depression and improve mom's ability to bond with her baby.

Mothers who have access to paid maternity leave have significantly increased breastfeeding initiation and duration, which has several benefits for both mom and baby. These benefits can include improving the function of the digestive and immune system of the baby, and for mom longer duration for breastfeeding reduces risk of breast and ovarian cancer, diabetes and obesity.

Finally, much of First Five Nebraska's work has been focused on the challenge of finding quality, affordable child care. According to the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, paid parental leave can save families money they would otherwise have to spend on expensive infant care, and paid leave policies can reduce the demand for limited child care slots in the immediate period after birth.

Because of these and the variety of other benefits for families First Five Nebraska supports LB 224 and would urge its advancement to General File.

Sincerely,

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

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