



February 13, 2025

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

RE: LB346

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit online comment for the public record in opposition to Section 18 in LB346, which would change the composition of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC), inadvertently making Nebraska noncompliant with federal requirements for state advisory councils. I would like to thank the Governor and this committee for considering First Five Nebraska's concerns.

The ECICC was created in 2000 with the passage of LB1135 to advise and assist state agencies in complying with early childhood provisions of federal and state statutes. Two federal statutes I would like to highlight are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Head Start for School Readiness Act. What is unique about Nebraska's approach since 2000 is that it consolidates two federally required state advisory councils into one, providing efficiencies in the representation of state councils.

To qualify for federal early intervention IDEA Part C funds, states must have an Interagency Coordinating Council with a diverse representation of state agencies, service providers, parents and others involved in early intervention services. Additionally, the ECICC serves as Nebraska's State Advisory Council under the federal Head Start for School Readiness Act, which requires broad statewide representation from child care, state government, Head Start, early intervention services, etc.

The ECICC plays a crucial role in our state's early childhood system. The Council gathers information and provides recommendations in policy, funding and resources, data enhancements, gaps and barriers in services, and coordination and collaboration among early childhood programs. Changes under Section 18 in LB346 risk the loss of federal early intervention IDEA Part C funding and Head Start grant funding because it removes several federally required representatives from the ECICC membership. Therefore, I would ask the Committee to adopt an amendment to keep Nebraska in compliance with federal law. This would change First Five Nebraska's stance to neutral on LB346.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Sincerely,

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

Mitchell Clark

Policy Advisor

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