



LB446 | Amend statutory language governing access to maternal and infant health data

Policy Brief | 2025

Simple changes to statutory language would increase the availability of crucial data needed to help deliver timely, high-quality interventions to promote the well-being of Nebraska's mothers and babies.

LB446 builds upon existing resources to help ensure continuity of access to aggregate health data about this vulnerable population, now and in the years ahead.

■ Background

Timely access to data plays a critical role in promoting policies and interventions that help ensure the health and safety of Nebraska's mothers and infants. This pertains especially to the accessibility of aggregate health data. Since 1989, the collection of vital statistics in Nebraska has been governed by state statute (71-602). The use of this information was subsequently addressed in 1993 when the Legislature established a framework for releasing aggregate health data to advance research that would "protect the health and safety of the citizens of Nebraska."

In 2024, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services launched a vital statistics dashboard that revealed, among other things, much about the health outcomes of our state's mothers and babies. The intent of NDHHS was to update this dashboard annually.

■ Obstacles to the use of aggregate health data

Despite the availability of the vital statistics dashboard, the dissemination of aggregated vital statistics data has been hampered by a lack of specificity in the statutory language of 71-602. In particular, statute fails to clearly define the application process to determine who is authorized to access this data for research purposes. Statute also makes no allowances for the use of aggregate data to drive quality improvement in the delivery of services.

Researchers already face a three-year lag time in accessing this state-level data due to the fact that it must first be submitted to the Centers of Disease control. Left unaddressed, the existing statutory language of 71-602 is likely to further delay the implementation of policy and interventions urgently needed to help Nebraska mothers and babies.

□ LB446: Improving accessibility of aggregate health data for mothers and infants (Sen. Dunixi Guereca, Dist. 07)

LB446 amends the statutory language of 71-602 to:

- ▶ Require the creation of an application process for individuals and entities wishing to be designated as researchers;
- ▶ Allow for the use of data for quality improvement purposes, and;
- ▶ Specify that the existing vital statistics dashboard be updated annually, enabling it to function as a more effective information resource.