



February 5, 2026

Senator Brian Hardin, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB773

Chairman Hardin and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sara Howard, spelled S-A-R-A H-O-W-A-R-D and I am a policy advisor at First Five Nebraska. First Five Nebraska is a statewide public policy organization focused on promoting quality early care and learning opportunities for Nebraska's youngest children. My position at First Five Nebraska is focused on the area of maternal and infant health policy, because we know that healthy moms and babies are critical to ensuring the long-term success of children in our state. I am here to testify in support for LB773.

First, I want to thank Senator Dungan for his support of families in Nebraska, and his commitment to innovative solutions to ensure that every baby has the best start as possible. LB773 is a continuation of work that this committee did in 2024 to create the Nebraska Prenatal Plus Program. At the time, our efforts were focused on two goals for the program. The main aim was to reduce Nebraska's preterm and low birth weight rates, particularly for mothers covered by Medicaid. In 2023, nearly 50% of mothers covered by Medicaid in Nebraska experienced adverse birth outcomes like preterm and low birth weight, among others. The second aim was cost savings. From the Colorado version of Prenatal Plus, a study showed that for every \$1 spent on the program, \$2.48 was saved in Medicaid costs annually, resulting in an estimated \$2.7 million savings for the state.

The Benefits of Prenatal Plus

The Prenatal Plus program in Nebraska began on January 1, 2025, and identified mothers at risk of an adverse birth outcome, specifically low birth weight or preterm birth, and offered those pregnant women additional resources to help prevent those outcomes. According to a report from Nebraska DHHS about Prenatal Plus, the main service in the program that has been utilized by every participant is targeted case management. Targeted case management connects pregnant women to the supports they need outside of the clinical setting, and its 100% utilization is very telling that what pregnant women need is connection to resources.

Continuing Important Work for Nebraska Mothers

LB773 is intended to ensure that the supportive services offered by the Prenatal Plus program in Nebraska continue beyond its sunset date of June 30, 2028. The sunset date was part of a compromise offered on the floor during debate and allowed the program to prove its efficacy before it became a long-term addition to Nebraska's Medicaid program. LB773 removes this sunset date and ensures that mothers who receive their health care coverage through the Medicaid program and are at risk of an adverse birth outcome will have access to this program into the future. The bill also ensures there is continued reporting on the impact of the Prenatal Plus program until December 15, 2034.

Building on What Works: Growing the Prenatal Plus Program

LB773 also builds on the existing program by ensuring mothers may receive at least two breastfeeding sessions during the prenatal period. This supports breastfeeding rates for these at-risk mothers, which we know is the optimal, tailored nutrition for newborns, building immunity against illness and supporting emotional bonding.

Finally, LB773 extends the services of Prenatal Plus to 60 days postpartum, a critical time for new mothers and their babies. Most mothers will see their health care provider at six weeks postpartum, so offering continued supportive services like targeted case management during that time could offer significant benefits for both mom and baby.

Conclusion

I want to commend Senator Dungan for his commitment to mothers and families, and for his willingness to champion mothers and babies in our state. The Prenatal Plus program truly supports pregnant women and I urge the committee to seriously consider advancing LB773. I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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

Sara Howard
Policy Advisor
First Five Nebraska