

Key Wins for Early Childhood Policy Amid Ongoing Legislative Challenges

The second session of the 109th Nebraska Legislature adjourned sine die April 17, wrapping up a busy 60-day, second session in the biennium. State senators introduced 547 bills this year, adding to the 715 from last year's 90-day session, for a combined 1,262 pieces of legislation for the 109th Legislature. This year, 165 legislative bills became law with an additional 174 bills amended into those signed for a total of 339 bills passed, including one constitutional amendment sent to Secretary of State Evnen for inclusion on the 2026 General Election ballot. Because the biennium ends with the 2026 session, all remaining bills will be indefinitely postponed and would need to be reintroduced next year at the start of a new biennium.

The session was dominated by a worsening budget deficit, forcing lawmakers to make difficult decisions. The state was facing a projected \$471 million deficit when the session began, and that grew quickly as economic forecasts were updated. As the session progressed, the Legislature and Appropriations Committee pursued a mix of spending cuts, fund transfers and potential revenue measures to close the gap. Because Nebraska is constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget, the shortfall shaped nearly every major debate and limited lawmakers' ability to advance new policy initiatives.

Key Wins For Early Childhood

Despite the budgetary challenges, we were able to achieve key wins for early childhood and maternal and infant health this year, including keeping child care within reach for more Nebraska families through passage of [LB304](#). Another significant win was preserving funding levels for Sixpence and providing the Nebraska Department of Education an additional \$2 million in spending authority for the program.

Governor Pillen signed LB304 into law in the final days of the session. Introduced and prioritized by State Senator Wendy DeBoer, it makes the current income eligibility levels to receive child care assistance permanent. This means thousands of Nebraska families can continue to work, provide for their families and help grow vibrant communities across our state. FFN thanks the Governor and state senators for supporting young families. And we especially thank the strong coalition of community organizations and the many individual citizens who came together to help pass LB304. Your dedication was the driving force behind this success, and we are profoundly grateful for your partnership.

Term Limits and Elections

This session there were 10 term-limited state senators and three senators who will not seek re-election. First Five Nebraska thanks these senators for their dedication and service to our state:

Senator Robert Clements (*District 2*)
Senator Machaela Cavanaugh (*District 6*)
Senator Megan Hunt (*District 8*)
Senator Wendy DeBoer (*District 10*)
Senator John Arch (*District 14*)
Senator Ben Hansen (*District 16*)
Senator Christy Armendariz (*District 18*)

Senator Mike Moser (*District 22*)
Senator Jane Raybould (*District 28*)
Senator Myron Dorn (*District 30*)
Senator Tom Brandt (*District 32*)
Senator Dave Murman (*District 38*)
Senator Fred Meyer (*District 41*)

The Nebraska Primary Election was Tuesday, May 12, and the General Election is November 3. A number of offices are up for election this year, including the Nebraska Governor, Nebraska Congressional delegates and state senators.

Interim Studies Introduced

First Five Nebraska worked with state senators to introduce seven interim studies this year on topics like maternal mental health, Head Start and play therapy. Interim studies are one way for senators to explore topics of policy interest, and often lead to future legislation. [Learn more about FFN's 2026 interim studies.](#)

Bill Summaries

In addition to the funding successes for early childhood this session, we also saw other important policy advancement in early childhood and maternal and infant health policy. These were FFN's priority bills this session:

LB304 | Eliminate a sunset date for the federal Child Care Subsidy program and state intent regarding funding

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Wendy DeBoer (District 10)
- › **Summary:** eliminates a sunset date for the current eligibility limits for the federal Child Care Subsidy program and identifies the funding source for the program.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading 43-6-0; approved by the Governor on April 14.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LB721 | Change provisions relating to eligibility for grants under the Intergenerational Care Facility Incentive Grant Program

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dan Quick (District 35)
- › **Summary:** LB721 will help intergenerational care facilities, including for-profit facilities serving Medicaid residents, receive grant funding to help cover expansion costs under the Intergenerational Care Facility Incentive Grant program.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading 49-0-0; approved by the Governor on April 14.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LB773 | Eliminate a sunset date and change provisions of the Nebraska Prenatal Plus Program

- › **Introducer:** State Senator George Dungan (District 26)
- › **Summary:** LB773 eliminates a sunset date for the Prenatal Plus Program, extends the annual report on the efficacy of the program to 2034 and extends the benefits of the program up to 60 days postpartum.
- › **Bill Status:** Provisions of LB773 were amended into [LB958](#) with [AM2977](#). LB958 passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 48-1-0; approved by the Governor on April 16.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LB891 | Change provisions of the Child Care Licensing Act relating to background checks, a complaint tracking system and staff-to-child ratios

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Ben Hansen (District 16)
- › **Summary:** LB891 streamlines administrative burdens on licensed child care providers and removes regulatory barriers. It streamlines the administration of background checks, delineates self-reported licensing investigations on public records, authorizes qualified volunteers to count in staff-to-child ratios and prevents local regulations from requiring primary residence for family child care home providers.
- › **Bill Status:** Portions of LB891 were amended into [LB912](#) by [AM2224](#). LB912 passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause on a 49-0-0 vote; approved by the Governor on April 14.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief with AM2244](#)

LB903 | Provide for referrals for home visitation services and for early intervention services and eliminate a provision relating to the applicability of the Family Home Visitation Act

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Tanya Storer (District 43)
- › **Summary:** LB903 creates a referral pathway that allows child welfare case managers to refer at-risk families with children under age 2 to home visiting services, enabling home visiting agencies to bill for these services through the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).
- › **Bill Status:** LB903 passed on Final Reading on a 47-0-2 vote; approved by the Governor on April 14.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LR296 | Urge the President of the United States and Congress to make permanent changes to the Child and Adult Food Programs

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Bob Hallstrom (District 1)
- › **Summary:** Legislative Resolution 296 urges the President of the United States and members of Congress to enact permanent changes to the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program to reimburse all participating family child care homes at the higher Tier I reimbursement rate and provide additional reimbursements for meals and supplements.
- › **Bill Status:** LR296 was adopted by the Legislature on a 43–0–5 vote; signed by the President/Speaker on April 10.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#)

Other significant bills we tracked with the potential to impact Nebraska’s youngest children and their families included:

LB13 | Require Nebraska DHHS to file a state plan amendment relating to child care

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Machaela Cavanaugh (District 6)
- › **Summary:** LB13 adjusts the reimbursement for services provided by the Child Care Subsidy program to pay providers based on enrollment instead of attendance.
- › **Bill Status:** Carried over from 2025. Hearing before the HHS Committee was January 22, 2025; did not advance past Select File. It was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#)

LB153 | Require Nebraska DHHS to file a state plan amendment for postpartum coverage

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dunixi Guereca (District 7)
- › **Summary:** LB153 calls on Nebraska DHHS to submit a state plan amendment to CMS for a Health Services Initiative to offer at least six months postpartum coverage for mothers who receive their prenatal care through the “unborn child” option in the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- › **Bill Status:** Carried over from 2025. Hearing was March 14, 2025; did not advance to General File. It was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LB446 | Change provisions relating to release of statistical research information

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dunixi Guereca (District 7)
- › **Summary:** LB446 opens up Nebraska’s vital statistics statute (71–602) to make three changes: 1) Allow a statewide quality improvement collaborative to have access to the aggregate, deidentified data; 2) Create a clear and expedient process for researchers to apply to access the data; and 3) Codify the existing vital statistics dashboard and call for its annual updating.
- › **Bill Status:** Carried over from 2025. HHS Committee hearing was February 27, 2025; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#) | [FFN Policy Brief](#)

LB762 | Require insurance coverage of pediatric autoimmune disorders

- › **Introducer:** State Senator George Dungan (District 26)
- › **Summary:** LB762 requires coverage for the treatment of pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome (PANS) and pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with a streptococcal infection.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading 45–4–0 and approved by the Governor on April 14.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

LB792 | Eliminate an applicability provision of the Family Home Visitation Act

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Jane Raybould (District 28)
- › **Summary:** LB792 eliminates a sentence from the Family Home Visitation Act regarding the frequency of home visits to ensure the Family Connects nurse home visiting program is able to bill Medicaid for its services.
- › **Bill Status:** The HHS Committee heard the bill on January 21; did not advance it to General File. Portions of LB792 were amended into [LB903](#) by [AM1869](#). LB792 was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#)

LB805 | Require insurance coverage for infant cranial helmets

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dan Lonowski (District 33)

- › **Summary:** LB805 clarifies that medically necessary cranial helmets for infants up to age 1 are required to be covered by insurance.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing in the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee was on February 24; it did not advance to General File. It was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

[LB808](#) | Create a child care licensing pilot program under the Child Care Licensing Act

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Teresa Ibach (District 44)
- › **Summary:** LB808 creates a child care licensing pilot program to waive licensure requirements on an individual basis and grant an alternative license for five years.
- › **Bill Status:** The HHS Committee heard LB808 on January 28; did not advance it to General File. It was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#)

[LB812](#) | Provide requirements for Nebraska DHHS relating to Medicaid eligibility redeterminations and community engagement

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Eliot Bostar (District 29)
- › **Summary:** LB812 requires Nebraska DHHS to implement processes for eligibility for renewals of coverage and work requirements for the Medicaid expansion population.
- › **Bill Status:** LB812 had a hearing in the HHS Committee on February 4; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

[LB843](#) | Require Nebraska DHHS to file a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program waiver for refugees and immigrants

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Victor Rountree (District 3)
- › **Summary:** LB843 instructs Nebraska DHHS to request a waiver in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure eligibility for certain immigrant populations.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing in the HHS Committee was February 19; the bill did not advance to General File. It was indefinitely postponed April 17.

[LB856](#) | Adopt the Community Reinvestment and Equity Act, establish an excise tax, and create a fund and a grant program

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Terrell McKinney (District 11)
- › **Summary:** LB856 creates a targeted economic reinvestment framework for distressed areas by taxing certain retail receipts and using the revenue to fund community benefit grants that address service gaps in health, housing, food access, child care and other critical areas.
- › **Bill Status:** LB856 had a hearing in the Revenue Committee on February 18; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

[LB858](#) | Appropriate funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for federally qualified community health centers

- › **Introducer:** State Senator John Fredrickson (District 20)
- › **Summary:** LB858 increases the transfer from the Nebraska Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund to the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund by \$500,000 for FY2026–2027 and annually thereafter to increase aid funding for federally qualified health centers in Nebraska.
- › **Bill Status:** The Appropriations Committee heard LB858 on February 10; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

[LB862](#) | Change intent relating to appropriations under the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Jason Prokop (District 27)
- › **Summary:** LB862 extends funding under the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act for evidence-based reading instruction, including prekindergarten programs.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing was held by the Appropriations Committee on February 3; it did not advance to General File. Portions of LB862 were amended into [LB1072](#) by [AM2165](#). LB862 was indefinitely postponed April 17.

[LB865](#) | Provide for exemption from sales tax for purchases of child care supplies, clothing, footwear and school supplies for a prescribed period

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Jason Prokop (District 27)
- › **Summary:** LB865 provides a temporary sales tax exemption on certain consumer goods, including infant and child care products.
- › **Bill Status:** LB865 had a hearing before the Revenue Committee on January 22; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

LB867 | Change provisions relating to special needs trusts, fingerprints under the Uniform Credentialing Act, child care grants, the Title IV–D Division Customer Service Unit, eligibility for young adults in the bridge to independence program, licensed and self-funded insurers under the Medical Assistance Act, Medicaid nursing facility rates, assistance to aged, blind, or disabled persons, and the state Commodity Supplemental Food program; provide for a money follows the person program for Medicaid benefits, a youth afterschool eligibility letter for child care employment, use of wholesale drug distributor license fees for the prescription drug monitoring program, and maintenance of epinephrine by certain schools; change provisions of and rename the Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementia Support Act, the Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementia Advisory Council, the State Advisory Committee on Mental Health, the Division of Developmental Disabilities of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Director of Developmental Disabilities; and eliminate provisions relating to divisions of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Medicaid and Long–Term Care Advisory Committee on Aging, the Maternal and Child Health and Public Health Work Fund, and an obsolete Nurse Licensure Compact

- › **Introducer:** Health and Human Services Committee
- › **Summary:** LB867 changes and eliminates programs administered by Nebraska DHHS. Section 5 removes the \$10,000 cap on the Child Care Start-Up and Expansion Grant and allows more federal funds to be used for the grant, if funding is available.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 49–0–0; approved by the Governor on April 14.

LB878 | Require paid parental leave for state employees

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dunixi Guereca (District 7)
- › **Summary:** LB878 places the current state maternity leave policy in statute and extends the same benefits to parents who adopt a child.
- › **Bill Status:** The bill passed Final Reading with an

Emergency Clause 41–7–1. The Governor vetoed it on April 16. It failed to become law notwithstanding the objections of the Governor.

- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

LB911 | Provide requirements for licensed behavior analysts, certain child care licensing facilities behavior analysis services under the Medical Assistance Act and the Department of Health and Human Services

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Brian Hardin (District 48)
- › **Summary:** LB911 aims to separate medical therapy programs from child care in an effort to improve oversight of applied behavior analysis (ABA) services.
- › **Bill Status:** The bill was heard by the HHS Committee on February 4. It did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

LB912 | Adopt the Community Health Worker Training Endorsement Act, the Athletic Trainer Compact, and the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact, change provisions relating to child care licensing and the practice of athletic training, respiratory care, massage therapy, medical radiography, nurse practitioners, pharmacy, and pharmacists, provide for liens for physical therapy services and automated pickup kiosks for certain prescription medication, and eliminate provisions relating to physician liability for physician assistants

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Brian Hardin (District 48)
- › **Summary:** LB912 creates an endorsement for community health workers to support billing public and private insurance for their services. [AM2224](#), which amended LB891 into LB912, streamlines administrative burdens on licensed child care providers and removes regulatory barriers. [See the FFN priority bills for more information.]
- › **Bill Status:** LB912 passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 49–0–0; approved by the Governor on April 14.

LB920 | Change provisions relating to the advertisement, operation, use and taxation of cash devices, the distribution of tax proceeds and violations under the Mechanical Amusement Device Tax Act and create the Nebraska Child Care Aid Fund

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Ashlei Spivey (District 13)
- › **Summary:** LB920 updates state law governing mechanical amusement devices and directs a portion of related tax revenue to early childhood care through creation of the Nebraska Child Care Aid Fund.
- › **Bill Status:** LB920 was heard by the Revenue Committee on January 28; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

LB926 | Change provisions relating to cash assistance under the Welfare Reform Act and transitional assistance under the aid to dependent children program

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Bob Andersen (District 49)
- › **Summary:** LB926 shortens how long families can receive cash assistance and tightens eligibility rules. The bill reduces the maximum time a family can receive assistance from five years to three years, ends temporary transitional benefits after assistance stops, limits which family members are counted and lowers the income limit for who can qualify.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing was in the HHS Committee on February 5. It did not advance from General File and was indefinitely postponed on April 17.

LB929 | Provide for managed care organizations to pay the deductible, cost sharing, or similar charges on behalf of Medicaid enrollees

- › **Introducer:** State Senator John Fredrickson (District 20)
- › **Summary:** LB929 prohibits Nebraska DHHS from requiring Medicaid enrollees to pay any cost-sharing that is not required by federal law. It also requires the Department to set the new cost-sharing for Medicaid expansion enrollees required by H.R. 1 at the lowest amount possible.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading 31-18-0 and was vetoed by the Governor on April 16. It failed to become law notwithstanding the objections of the Governor.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

LB970 | Require the Department of Health and Human Services to submit a state plan amendment to include a program of early literacy promotion and intervention in well-child visits under the early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment services program

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Dunixi Guereca (District 7)

- › **Summary:** LB970 calls for the creation of a literacy program utilizing Medicaid reimbursement.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing in the HHS Committee was held February 20; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed on April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

LB1053 | Eliminate the prohibition regarding spending a student that is in prekindergarten through second grade

- › **Introducer:** Education Committee at the request of the Governor
- › **Summary:** LB1053 allows suspension of prekindergarten students
- › **Bill Status:** The Education Committee held a hearing for LB1053 on January 27; it did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed on April 17.

LB1071 | Provide, change and eliminate provisions related to appropriations for the expenses of Nebraska State Government for the biennium ending June 30, 2027

- › **Introducer:** Speaker John Arch (District 14) at the request of the Governor
- › **Summary:** LB1071 is the Governor's 2026 mid-biennium mainline budget bill. It reduces the annual General Fund appropriation to the Early Childhood Education Grant Program 0-3 (Sixpence) by \$1 million and implements an annual cash fund transfer from the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund by \$1 million. It also reduces Nebraska DHHS funding by \$17.8 million, which includes funding for the child care subsidy program. The Appropriations Committee amended the bill ([AM2162](#)), removed the cut and approved the Nebraska Department of Education to have an additional \$2 million spending authority for Sixpence. This change was maintained through all rounds of debate.
- › **Bill Status:** LB1071 passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 35-13-1; approved by the Governor on April 7.

LB1072 | Provide for and change transfers from the Cash Reserve Fund and provide, change,

and eliminate provisions relating to fees, funds, fund transfers, agency powers and duties, and various statutory programs

- › **Introducer:** Speaker John Arch (District 14) at the request of the Governor
- › **Summary:** LB1072 is the Governor's 2026 cash funds budget bill. The bill accelerates the sunset date for the current child care subsidy income eligibility limits. As a result, starting July 1, initial income eligibility would decrease from 185% of the federal poverty level to 130%, and transitional eligibility would drop from 200% to 165%. The Appropriations Committee amended ([AM2165](#)) the bill and removed that language. This language change was maintained through all rounds of debate.
- › **Bill Status:** LB1072 passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 35-13-1; it was approved by the Governor on April 7.

[LB1165](#) | Adopt the Grow the Good Life Act, provide an income tax credit, change provisions relating to the Convention Center Facility Financing Assistance Act, the ImagiNE Nebraska Act, the Nebraska Advantage Act, and the Site and Building Development Act, and create grant programs to help employers retain or attract employees and to assist cities of the first class impacted by private entity closure or downsizing

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Brad von Gillern (District 4)
- › **Summary:** In addition to other items, [AM2504](#) expands the use of tax incentives under the ImagiNE Nebraska Act to allow companies to use the tax incentives to provide child care to employees offsite. Employers may pay up to 50% of employees' child care costs using the credit.
- › **Bill Status:** Passed on Final Reading with an Emergency Clause 42-7-0; approved by the Governor on April 16.

[LB1177](#) | Create the Child Care Cash Fund

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Wendy DeBoer (District 10)
- › **Summary:** LB1177 establishes the Child Care Cash Fund as a dedicated fund for Nebraska expenditures related to child care subsidy.
- › **Bill Status:** Hearing in the Appropriations Committee was on February 10; the bill did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Hearing Testimony](#)

[LB1189](#) | Create a pilot program to raise awareness of the earned income tax credit

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Danielle Conrad (District 46)
- › **Summary:** LB1189 would create the "You Earned It Pilot Program" within the Nebraska Department of Revenue to increase awareness of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.
- › **Bill Status:** The Revenue Committee heard LB1189 on February 11. It did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.
- › **Resources:** [FFN Letter of Support](#)

[LB1234](#) | Adopt the Freestanding Birth Center Act

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Ben Hansen (District 16)
- › **Summary:** LB1234 allows freestanding birth centers in the state of Nebraska. Freestanding birth centers are those with a low volume of deliveries and a home-like atmosphere outside of a hospital setting.
- › **Bill Status:** A hearing in the HHS Committee was held February 12; LB1234 did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.

[LR303CA](#) | Constitutional amendment to provide for paid family medical leave

- › **Introducer:** State Senator Machaela Cavanaugh (District 6)
- › **Summary:** LR303CA is a proposed amendment to the Nebraska Constitution that employers would need to provide a minimum of six weeks paid family medical leave for their employees as of October 1, 2027, and a minimum of 12 weeks of paid family medical leave as of October 1, 2028. If passed, LR303CA would be placed on the 2026 ballot for consideration by Nebraska voters.
- › **Bill Status:** The Business and Labor Committee held a February 2 hearing. The resolution did not advance to General File and was indefinitely postponed April 17.