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March 2, 2021

Senator Ben Hansen, Chair
and Members of the Business and Labor Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB 290 (Cavanaugh) Adopt the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act.

Support

Dear Senator Hansen and Members of the Business and Labor Committee:

A primary tenet of The League of Women Voters of the United States is to support programs that assist in meeting basic human needs. Such policies help prevent or reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports LB 290 which would provide Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance to eligible Nebraskans.

As early as the 1920's, the LWVUS has lobbied for legislation that financially supports women and family care, such as the Sheppard-Towner Act which provided funds for infant and maternity care. In the 1970's the LWVUS shifted their support from welfare-style income assistance to programs that encouraged work in conjunction with government support for those who could not find work, those whose earnings were insufficient to meet basic needs, or those unable to work. As part of this philosophy, the LWVUS lobbied for the adoption of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. Income assistance programs, such as Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance, continue this combination of personal responsibility and providing an economic safety net for the benefit of the individual, their family, society, and the economy as a whole.

The temporary physical, practical, and emotional strain of caring for a new child or family members with serious illnesses often places workers in a precarious financial situation. Just as regular preventative medical care significantly reduces risk of serious illness and overall healthcare costs, paid family leave programs allow productive members of society to anticipate this strain and focus on caring for themselves or a family member for a short period of time before returning to their role in the workforce. Without support, this temporary situation can turn into one that has long term effects, potentially resulting in job loss and the need for additional support from the state in other forms, such as SNAP benefits, housing, and unemployment benefits.

Beyond the financial benefits to assist our workforce, LB290 ultimately seeks to temporarily aid those in situations when they most need it. It recognizes that our citizens are not simply economic units, but individuals who are spouses, children, parents, siblings, and who, like anyone, face good times and bad. The Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act gives our fellow Nebraskans the temporary financial support they need in times of health emergencies providing a bridge to full employment.

We kindly request that you advance LB 290 to the floor.

Sincerely,

Rachel M. Gibson, LWVNE, Social Policy Committee
Carol Dennison, LWVNE Director of Social Policy
Linda Duckworth, LWVNE Co-President

Dianne Bystrom, LWWNE Co-President