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Senator Merv Riepe, Chair, and Members of the Business and Labor Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB249 - Change provisions of the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act

SUPPORT

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

Since the 1960s, the League of Women Voters of the United States has supported increasing low- and moderate-income housing and endorsed recommendations which advance the goal that every person and family should have decent, safe and affordable housing. In the same vein, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska endorses LB249, which incentivizes nonprofits to build affordable workforce housing in rural areas.

Dave Rippe, a contributor to the Nebraska 2022 Statewide Housing Needs Assessment (1), noted that rural areas have their own needs, some relating to population decline that has left 17% of existing units vacant, in addition to properties that are old and uninhabitable. Much of rural Nebraska faces lack of access to construction workers. It is estimated that at least 5,000 more workers would be needed to complete construction and renovation projects (2). We agree with Senator Tom Briese, who also remarked in the Omaha World Herald article "that inadequate housing is curtailing economic growth in our state more than we realize" (2).

More than 175,000 of Nebraskans pay over 30% of their income on housing. Since 2014, the median monthly rates renters in Nebraska pay (across both houses and apartments) have increased by nearly 14% (1). By funding LB249, low-income workforce housing can be developed in rural areas by nonprofits.

We are glad to note that this bill is one of several introduced this session which addresses the housing crisis in Nebraska. We support the state administration and Legislature in its coordinated efforts to address the needs of low- and middle-income affordable housing in both rural and urban communities. Build it and they will come! Please advance LB249 to the floor for debate.

Thank you for considering our position and for all you do for Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Jill McDermott, Social Policy Director, LWWNE
Carol Dennison, Social Policy Action Team, LWWNE
MaryLee Moulton, President, LWWNE

1. Strategic Housing Council of Nebraska. (December 2022). *Nebraska's 2022 Strategic Housing Framework*. Nebraska Investment Finance Authority. Available at: [NEStrategicHousingFramework-NoAppendices.pdf \(proteus.co\)](#)
2. Bamer, Erin. (Jan. 23, 2023). Housing needs assessment influences multiple incoming bills in Nebraska Legislature. *Omaha World Herald*. Available at: [Housing needs assessment influences multiple incoming bills in Nebraska Legislature \(omaha.com\)](#)