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February 7, 2024

Senator Ben Hansen, Chair, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB857 (Dungan) – Create the Nebraska Prenatal Plus Program

SUPPORT: *Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB857.*

Dear Senator Hansen and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The League of Women Voters believes that every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality health care. We support a health care system that provides a basic level of quality health care to all residents – including prenatal and reproductive health – and that policy goals relating to health care should include equitable distribution of services.¹ Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports LB857.

The 2023 March of Dimes Report Card² gave Nebraska a D- as measured by preterm birth rates. Dig a little deeper and it is clear that specific populations and communities are disproportionately affected. Vulnerability to poor outcomes vary widely across the state. On a scale of 1 to 100 with 100 being the most vulnerable, scores range from .1 in Hamilton County to 67.2 in Thurston County, with three additional counties over 35 – Kimball, Sheridan and Dakota,

The disparities are not only geographic. According to the March of Dimes Report Card, the preterm birth rate is 1.5 times higher among Black Nebraskans than all other babies in Nebraska. The infant mortality rate was well over twice as high for Black Nebraskans and three times as high for American Indian/Alaska Native people compared to the statewide rate.³

In addition to focusing support for individuals most in need, LB857 addresses prenatal as well as postpartum care, which is clearly needed considering maternal mortality in Nebraska was 26.2 per every 100,000 births, compared to the national average of 23.5.⁴

Finally, LB857 recognizes the many factors that can contribute to healthy babies and mothers. It aims to both reduce illness and adverse health outcomes for pregnant women and those who are postpartum, while also providing support and reimbursement for services that provide education and support to women and newborns. By providing additional support for those who are deemed at-risk, Nebraska will take a data-informed approach to improve maternal and infant health.

Because of the intent of this bill and its alignment with the values of our organization, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports LB857.⁵

Sincerely,

MaryLee Moulton, Co-President, LWWNE
Sarah Starkey, Health Policy Action Team, LWWNE
Amber Brown Keebler, MD, Director of Health Policy, LWWNE
Rachel M. Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWWNE

¹League of Women Voters. (2022). Health Care Reform. <https://www.lwv.org/other-issues/health-care-reform>

²2023 March of Dimes Report Card for Nebraska. (2023). <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/reports/nebraska/report-card>

³ibid.

⁴ibid.

⁵Note: The March of Dimes uses birthing people in their report. The committee may want to add inclusive language to the bill to better encompass all Nebraskans.