

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 390

Introduced by Stinner, 48.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study resolution is to assess the fiscal and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nebraska's early childhood workforce and the early childhood care and education system and to ensure that the early childhood care and education system is stable enough to support children's development during and after this crisis situation and to support families, communities, and businesses while rebuilding the state's economy.

The foundation for this study resolution is an analysis of Nebraska's strengths and challenges across all sectors affecting early childhood care and education as presented in "Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce: Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission," released on January 30, 2020, by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. The science of early childhood development makes it clear that the early years, from birth through the age of eight, are a time of unparalleled human growth and brain development and that healthy development during these pivotal early years requires reliable, positive, and consistent interactions between the developing child and parents and other familiar, caring adults.

In Nebraska, seventy-five percent of children under the age of six live in homes where all adults in their family work outside the home. Most parents of young children who work outside the home rely on early childhood professionals, whether in family child care homes, child care centers, or public or private schools, to provide additional positive interactions and experiences that young children need to thrive. Prior to the pandemic, many communities across the state already lacked sufficient and affordable early childhood care and education options. Eleven Nebraska counties had no licensed child care

facilities and eighty-four percent of Nebraska counties lacked sufficient child care openings to meet the needs of families living in the county.

A survey of Nebraska child care providers conducted by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute in the initial days of the pandemic revealed many of the providers could not survive a closure of any length, decreasing parent options and increasing stress on local economies. Ensuring all families and children have equitable access to affordable high-quality care is key to both the healthy growth and development of Nebraska's children as well as the economic vitality and prosperity of communities and the state.

This study shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of the following:

(1) The fiscal and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the early childhood workforce and the early childhood care and education system;

(2) Federal and state investments and expenditures in Nebraska's early childhood care and education system;

(3) The funding gap between current investments and the total investments needed to fully fund a high-quality early childhood care and education system; and

(4) Financing options for closing the funding gap for a high-quality early childhood care and education system, including state and community-based models.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.