

# **One Hundred Ninth Legislature - First Session - 2025**

## **Introducer's Statement of Intent**

### **LB481**

---

**Chairperson: Senator Brian Hardin**

**Committee: Health and Human Services**

**Date of Hearing: February 12, 2025**

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB481 establishes the Foster Child Scholarships Act, creating the HOPE Scholarship Program to provide scholarships for Nebraska's foster children and their biological siblings. These scholarships will enable students to attend approved nonprofit private schools in Nebraska.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will oversee scholarship distribution and ensure compliance with eligibility requirements. Eligible students include foster children currently in the Nebraska foster care system and their biological siblings (even if not in foster care) if they were eligible to attend public school in the prior semester or are starting school for the first time. Students must attend an approved nonprofit private school that meets state accreditation and health/safety standards. Scholarship recipients will remain eligible until they graduate high school or reach the age of twenty-one, regardless of changes in foster care placement. DHHS will submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature detailing program participation, scholarships awarded, and recipient demographics.

The bill appropriates two hundred thousand dollars annually for fiscal years 2025-26 and 2026-27 to fund the program.

**Principal Introducer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Senator Beau Ballard**