

LB533 NIH Study Sunset Pushback

Nebraska is currently among the states participating in a groundbreaking study on the link between income and child brain development

Since 2016, 250 Nebraska residents have played a key role in a national study of the impact that income levels have on the development of a child's brain, which is now known as *Baby's First Years*. This National Institutes of Health (NIH) study is the first causal study to test connections between poverty reduction and brain development among very young children in the United States. The study covers several urban cities, and is a multi-million dollar research investment, funded through an NIH grant and a number of private foundations.

In order to participate in the study, in 2016 the Legislature unanimously passed¹ a temporary exclusion of income of \$4,000 per year participation in grant-funded research on child development. This income exclusion applies to TANF, SNAP, energy assistance and the child care subsidy program. Without this exclusion, the income gained that is being studied would be offset by reductions in benefit eligibility, making research in this area impossible.

COVID-19 has disrupted the study, delaying the completion date beyond the current 2022 income disregard sunset

The Baby's First Years study involves significant in person data collection involving children's cognitive, emotional and brain development, as well as measures of health, stress and behavior. This data collection was being done through in-home visits and university labs. With the outbreak of COVID-19, both methods of data collection were temporarily paused to ensure the health and safety of study participants and researchers. However, this has meant that the study will no longer be completed before the December 31, 2022 expiration of Nebraska's temporary exclusion of income gained for participation in the study.

LB533 moves the sunset on Nebraska's research-grant income exclusion back from 2022 to 2026, allowing research to continue

Researchers (a team of doctors from various universities, including Stanford, Columbia and University of Wisconsin) have gained commitments for extended funding from the private donors, but also need the sunset to be extended in order to continue research without the participants' study income being offset by Nebraska benefit-program eligibility limits. LB533 would allow this research to be completed by moving the income disregard from income gained from the study back to December 31, 2026.

LB533 has no fiscal impact

Since LB533 is an income disregard, it does not require the state to increase aid payments in any way, nor does it change any other eligibility requirements, such as participation in the workforce. Participants in the study receive the income being used for the independent variable from the private foundations that fund the study.

LB533 continues Nebraska's participation in the Baby's First Years study, which will provide foundational knowledge on the impact that income levels have on childhood brain development

¹ LB1081 (2016)

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