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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEBRASKA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION**

**AND NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CELEBRATE
GRADE-LEVEL READING WEEK – JULY 22-26**

(Lincoln)—Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and the Nebraska Department of Education are the state co-leads in support of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Nebraska's efforts to improve childhood literacy. From July 22 to 26, we’re celebrating Grade-Level Reading Week to spotlight literacy gaps and encourage participation in virtual events that highlight different aspects of our efforts.

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is crucial for future academic success. Unfortunately, two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders, especially those from low-income families, fail to meet this milestone. This often leads to struggles in later grades and increases the likelihood of dropping out before high school graduation.

The mission of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) is to disrupt the generational cycle of poverty by improving the prospects for early school success for children growing up in economically challenged and otherwise marginalized families.

CGLR advances this mission by focusing on two critical points: grade-level reading by the end of third grade and, more recently, on-track development by the end of kindergarten. CGLR focuses on achieving grade-level reading by third grade and on-track development by the end of kindergarten, both key predictors of long-term academic and career success.

One new way Nebraska is seeking to boost childhood literacy rates is through the Nebraska Growing Readers initiative (NebraskaGrowingReaders.org). Nebraska Growing Readers promotes shared reading and love for books by providing free books aimed at families with children ages birth to five. There has been a phenomenal interest in Nebraska Growing Readers. In its first year, over 1,000 early childcare providers have become book distribution hubs, reaching nearly 34,000 children.

“Reading is the foundation to success in school and beyond for all of Nebraska’s youth,” said Commissioner Brian Maher. “The NDE State Board of Education and the NDE Staff are jointly committed to improving outcomes in this area.  I am truly inspired by what we can do for kids in Nebraska with this focus of our energy, time and talent.”

“We're excited to be part of the Grade-Level Reading Network across the nation," said Josh Cramer, Senior VP of Nebraska Children. "When children are not meeting grade-level reading goals, they are not set up for success in education or beyond. Improving childhood literacy and getting books into the hands of children is not only important for each child but also for Nebraska as those children become our future workforce and leaders."

For more information on Grade-Level Learning Week and the virtual learning agenda, visit

<http://bit.ly/3XmUU5t>.

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Nebraska Children and Families Foundation partners with communities to create a well-being system that strengthens families, supports unconnected young people, creates learning opportunities for Nebraska’s future workforce, and empowers parents to raise healthy children. To learn more about our work, visit [www.NebraskaChildren.org](http://www.NebraskaChildren.org).

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