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January 27, 2014

Senator Kate Sullivan, Chairperson – Education Committee
Room 1107, State Capitol
Lincoln NE, 68509

Re: Support for LB 872 – Strengthening School Safety

Dear Chairperson Sullivan and Members of the Education Committee,

All of our children deserve to have access to a quality education. In order for Nebraska's children to learn in school and have a chance to succeed, they have to both be and feel safe. I am writing you today in support of LB 872 on behalf of Voices for Children in Nebraska. This bill would create the position of the state school security director at the Department of Education, which we believe would be an important first step in identifying and helping to address the varied safety and security needs at schools across our state.

We are especially encouraged that LB 872 recognizes the importance of looking at safety and security comprehensively and preventatively. National studies have shown that **nearly two of every three children** will be impacted by violence, crime, abuse, or psychological trauma each year. While most of these threats to children's safety occur outside of school, students bring their experiences with them to the classroom. Charging the state school security director with assisting to implement research-based programs and practices that help address the underlying causes of school safety challenges is crucial to making our schools safe in the long-term.

As an organization that is committed to using data to tell the whole story of how children are doing in our state, we would also urge the committee to consider adding elements of data gathering and reporting to the duties of school security director. By gathering information about arrests, suspensions, and expulsions, among other indicators, Nebraska will better be able to identify the schools that struggle most with safety and security issues, as well as match specific best practices and research-based programs to the right schools.

We would like to thank Senator Kolowski for his leadership in making sure that schools are safe for our children and those that serve them. We urge you to advance this bill and take an important first step in making our schools safe places for children to thrive, grow, and learn.

Sincerely,

Sarah Forrest, Policy Coordinator – Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice