



7521 Main Street, Suite 103  
Omaha, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100  
www.voicesforchildren.com

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February 25, 2019

**To:** Chairman Groene and Members of the Education Committee  
**From:** Juliet Summers, Policy Coordinator at Voices for Children in Nebraska  
**Re:** LB 165 – Adopt the Too Young to Suspend Act

Education is a key indicator of future opportunity for children, and we should make every effort to ensure that our education system is setting students up for success. When disciplinary processes are structured to maximize time in the educational environment, students are set up to succeed in their education. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 165, because it will protect very young children from the harmful effects of exclusionary school discipline, setting them on a course of academic success.

All children deserve a meaningful opportunity to thrive in their educational environment starting from a young age, and we all benefit when they do so. Procedures and policies that rely too heavily on exclusion from school result in lower educational attainment not only for suspended or expelled students,<sup>1</sup> but for the student body as a whole. Studies have shown that schools with a higher reliance on exclusion as a form of discipline actually score lower on academic achievement tests among the total student body, even when controlling for socioeconomic and demographic factors.<sup>2</sup> Because early childhood education is the foundation of future learning, keeping small children involved in their classroom is crucial to building their future success in school and in life.

Nebraska is not alone in considering this policy. In fact, other states and jurisdictions have already adopted the approach of prohibiting suspension and expulsion except in cases of violence or danger. To name a couple of examples, Texas passed a law in 2017 prohibiting the use of discretionary out-of-school suspensions for children pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.<sup>3</sup> Washington D.C. banned the suspension of pre-K students in 2015, and in 2018 enacted an ordinance that will roll out in 2020, prohibiting suspensions for K-8th grade except in cases of bodily injury, and starting in 2021, limiting suspend-able offenses for 9-12th grade.<sup>4</sup>

LB 165 will ensure that small children remain in the educational environment that will set the course for their future. I'd like to thank Senator Hunt for bringing this legislation, and the members of this Committee for your thoughtful consideration. I would urge you to advance it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Summers".

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<sup>1</sup> Skiba et al. *Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? A Report by the American Psychological Association Task Force* 63. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Boccanfuso, C. and Kuhfeld. M. *Multiple Responses, Promising Results: Evidence-Based, Nonpunitive Alternatives to Zero Tolerance* (Publication #2011-09). Child Trends. 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Texas H.B. 674. 2017. Text available at <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/85R/billtext/pdf/HB00674F.pdf#navpanes=0>

<sup>4</sup> D.C. Act 22-398. July 12, 2018. Text available at <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/39259/B22-0594-SignedAct.pdf>