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February 8, 2023

To: Chairperson Brewer and Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Anahí Salazar, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska

RE: LB277- Adopt the First Freedom Act and authorize the wearing of tribal regalia by students

Thank you Chairperson Brewer and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Anahí Salazar and I am representing Voices for Children in Nebraska.

Schools should provide a safe and welcoming place for every student regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion or other personal characteristic or circumstance. Native American students have a long history of educational contexts stripping them of their cultural and religious heritage, through forced assimilation.¹ Voices for Children supports Section 6 of LB 277, as it affirmatively protects the right to Native American students to fully express their cultural heritage in schools.

The United States also has a long history of marginalizing and undermining Native American culture, with too many incidents of schools not protecting students' rights to express or display their cultural or ethnic heritage. Eight states in the United States have taken legislative steps to ensure Native American students have the affirmative right to wear clothing and accessories reflective of their heritage.² LB 277, Section 6, would ensure that educational settings in Nebraska are a protected space for Native American students to express their cultural heritage if they choose to do so.

Thank you Chairperson Brewer for your commitment to Native American students. We would respectfully urge the committee to advance the provisions encompassed in Section 6 of LB 277. We do not have a position on the other provisions of the bill. Thank you.

¹ Weaver, Heather. "Indigenous Students Should Be Allowed to Wear Tribal Regalia to Graduation." *ACLU*, 7 Apr. 2022, [Indigenous Students Should Be Allowed to Wear Tribal Regalia at Graduation | News & Commentary | American Civil Liberties Union \(aclu.org\)](#). Accessed 5 Feb. 2023.

² "State Resources." *Native American Rights Fund*, [Wearing Eagle Feathers and Regalia at Graduation - Native American Rights Fund \(narf.org\)](#). Accessed 5 Fe. 2023.