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To: Chairperson Murman and Members of the Education Committee
From: Anahí Salazar, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska
RE: Support for LB 585- Change a duty of the state school security director and require behavioral and mental health training for certain school personnel.

Thank you Chairperson Murman and members of the education committee. My name is Anahí Salazar and I am representing Voices for Children in Nebraska. Over the course of the last few years, Nebraska schools have increasingly held a safe and significant space for students. School personnel have not only taught academics or provided resources for food and housing, but they have also expanded their roles to provide access to mental and behavioral health support. Voices for Children supports LB 585 because it will help prepare all employees interacting with students with valuable and lifesaving training regarding mental/behavioral health.

We are facing a youth mental health crisis, and promoting greater awareness and early identification of behavioral/mental health signs can help determine how and when to provide students with the responsive care they need. When mental/behavioral health goes undiagnosed, untreated or inadequately treated it can impact the student's ability to learn, grow and develop.¹ It is estimated that 1 in 10 Nebraska children have been diagnosed with a mental/behavioral health condition needing treatment.² According to estimates by the National Survey of Children's Health, anxiety, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and depression are the most prevalent disorders among Nebraska children and youth. With the proper training school personnel can help children and young people stay in school, thrive, and achieve their life goals.³

LB 585 equips school personnel with training focusing on suicide awareness and prevention. This is especially important as such trainings can help prevent tragic events. School personnel interact with students daily to build rapport so students can feel safe and comfortable in school. Training in identifying early mental/behavioral health warning signs and symptoms can better inform school personnel on when and how to intervene. Equipping schools with trauma-informed care and support is another important component; as cases may arise, educators and other school personnel can structure a response that is best supportive to the student and their family.

¹ "Mental Health in Schools | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness." 2021. Nami.org. NAMI. 2021. <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Improving-Health/Mental-Health-in-Schools>.

² "Health 2021 – Kids Count Nebraska." n.d. Accessed February 2, 2023. <https://kidscountnebraska.com/health-2/>.

³ "Health 2021 – Kids Count Nebraska." n.d. Accessed February 2, 2023. <https://kidscountnebraska.com/health-2/>.

LB 585 would ensure that all Nebraska school personnel have training to better support their students and their families when it comes to mental/behavioral health. We want to thank Senator Hughes for bringing this important issue forward. We respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 57.