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February 4, 2025

To: Chairperson Murman and Members of the Education Committee

From: Katie Nungesser, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska

**RE: Opposition for LB 670- Require schools to adopt a safety plan and provide and change requirements related to training for staff of childcare and schools**

We all share a common goal of ensuring that our schools are safe, supportive environments where all students can learn and thrive. Voices for Children stands in opposition to one provision of LB 670 - the proposed reduction or cap on training for School Resource Officers (SROs). Limiting this training would have serious consequences for students, especially those most vulnerable to the school-to-prison pipeline, and I want to highlight the critical impact of this decision.

Reducing the required training for SROs will have a direct and harmful impact on youth, particularly students of color, students with disabilities, and low-income students, who are already disproportionately affected by school discipline policies.<sup>1</sup> Without comprehensive training in adolescent development, de-escalation tactics, and trauma-informed care, SROs are more likely to resort to punitive and law enforcement-based responses to student behavior—responses that too often result in unnecessary arrests and criminalization of typical adolescent conduct.

Research shows that the presence of SROs in schools, without proper training, leads to an increase in student arrests and referrals to the juvenile justice system, even for minor infractions such as disorderly conduct, disruption, or truancy.<sup>2</sup> These are behaviors that, in a well-trained and supportive school environment, should be addressed through restorative justice practices or school-based interventions rather than legal action. The overuse of law enforcement interventions perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline, where children—especially Black, Indigenous, and Latino youth—are pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system at higher rates.

Moreover, reducing SRO training hours undermines efforts to foster positive relationships between law enforcement and students. Properly trained SROs can serve as mentors and resources, rather than enforcers of discipline. Training in cultural competency, implicit bias, and mental health awareness is essential to ensure that officers understand and respond appropriately to the unique challenges students face. Cutting back on this crucial education will only deepen mistrust between students and law enforcement, making schools feel less safe and more punitive.

Additionally, reducing training requirements contradicts national best practices. Organizations like the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) emphasize that SROs should be trained extensively in school-specific law enforcement, crisis intervention, and conflict resolution.<sup>3</sup> Lowering these standards weakens the effectiveness of SROs and increases the likelihood of negative interactions between students and law enforcement.

We must prioritize policies that support student well-being, not those that increase their exposure to the criminal justice system. If we are serious about ensuring safe and supportive learning environments,



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we should be investing in more comprehensive SRO training, not less. Schools should be places of learning and growth, not gateways to incarceration.

I respectfully urge you to not advance LB 670, which would reduce SRO training hours and instead advocate for policies that ensure SROs are equipped with the necessary skills to engage with students in ways that foster safety, trust, and positive outcomes.

Sincerely,

Katie Nungesser