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To: Chairperson Hardin and members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Eric Reiter, Voices for Children in Nebraska

Re: LB LB367 - Prohibit conversion therapy and provide for disciplinary sanctions and a deceptive trace practice

Every child in Nebraska deserves to be loved for who they are and feel supported in their identities. For these reasons, Voices for Children in Nebraska strongly supports LB 367, which seeks to prohibit the harmful practice known as “conversion therapy.”

Conversion therapy is a discredited and harmful practice that attempts to change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For decades, hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ individuals have been subjected to conversion therapy under the false belief that being LGBTQ+ is a mental illness. Studies have consistently shown that it does not work as intended and instead leads to serious consequences, including depression, anxiety, substance use, homelessness, and suicide. The damage to self-esteem can have a lasting impact on a young person’s emotional and physical well-being.

Leading medical and mental health organizations—including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry—have condemned conversion therapy as ineffective, discriminatory, and harmful. The American Psychiatric Association warns that conversion therapy can reinforce self-hatred, especially in children still developing their sense of identity. The consequences can be devastating.

There is nothing to fix about Nebraska youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, or any other identity. Nineteen states, along with Washington, D.C., have already banned conversion therapy. Nebraska can become the 20th state to protect children from this dangerous practice.

We sincerely thank Senator Hunt for championing this important issue and appreciate the Committee’s time and consideration.