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To: Chairwoman Sanders and members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Eric Reiter, Voices for Children in Nebraska

Re: Opposition to LB 89, adopt the Stand with Women Act.

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Sanders and members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs committee. My name is Eric Reiter and I'm speaking today on behalf of Voices for Children in Nebraska in opposition to LB 89.

In the many conversations we've had with youth across the state, there are several recurring needs they've named as ways to improve the lives of young Nebraskans:

- Access to resources that improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- Community programming that provides them the opportunity to be active and enjoy their youth.
- Support for immigrant and refugee communities.
- Measures to address the climate crisis.
- A justice system focused on intervention and rehabilitation, rather than one that locks away their friends, family members, and peers.

Never has a young person mentioned wanting to restrict their transgender classmates' access to the bathroom, locker room, or ability to participate in athletics and activities according to their gender identity.

Research indicates that transgender students will benefit from participation in sports and activities in terms of health, academic achievement, and social relationships. Being prevented from participating in sports in a gender-affirming manner will likely add to the already challenging environments that transgender students face at school, including high levels of harassment, discrimination, and exclusion, which lead to poorer health and other negative outcomes.

Every child deserves to feel valued and supported for who they are. Schools should foster inclusive environments where all students—regardless of race, religion, gender identity, or personal circumstances—can thrive. In Nebraska, young people should be able to focus on what brings them joy and fulfillment. Participating in sports and activities not only promotes physical and mental well-being but also builds a sense of belonging among peers and teaches them lifelong leadership skills.

To help transgender youth thrive, we must implement policies and practices that affirm their identities. Nebraska's schools, sports programs, and communities should be focused on fostering inclusivity, ensuring every student can participate without fear. Every young person deserves to play, compete, and grow alongside their peers. For all these reasons, Voices for Children in Nebraska opposes LB 89 and urges the committee to not advance the bill.