



February 17, 2026

To: Chairperson Murman, and members of the Education Committee
From: Anahí Salazar, Voices for Children in Nebraska

RE: Support for LB 1034, Prohibit school staff from allowing federal immigration enforcement officers to access schools without a judicial warrant

At its core, LB 1034 affirms a simple but powerful principle: schools must remain safe, stable places for children to learn. By requiring a judicial warrant before federal immigration enforcement can access Nebraska schools, this bill establishes a clear, reasonable safeguard that protects students not only legally, but emotionally and academically. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1034 because it supports the wellbeing of students, educators and school staff.

We know from research that highly visible and far-reaching immigration enforcement actions create fear, hypervigilance, and mistrust across entire communities, regardless of immigration status¹. When U.S. citizens, immigrants, or asylum seekers are detained, the ripple effects are immediate. Fear spreads quickly, disrupting schools, health care access, workplaces, and community life, and weakening the social connections that protect mental health.

A 2018 study in the *American Journal of Community Psychology* found that fear of immigration enforcement leads families to withdraw from community life and isolate their children, negatively affecting child development. When parents fear family separation, they are more likely to keep their children home from school.²

More recent evidence reinforces this concern. A 2025 study by Stanford researcher Thomas Dee examining five school districts in California's Central Valley found that expanded immigration raids significantly increased student absences, not just among immigrant families, but across entire school communities. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, more than 27,000 students were absent the first school day after Border Patrol agents arrived in the city, nearly triple the number from the week before.

The consequences extend well beyond attendance. High school principals interviewed by researchers at UCLA reported that when families sheltered at home to avoid enforcement activity, children did not eat regularly. Some teenagers suddenly became caretakers for younger siblings after a parent was detained. Many struggled to complete schoolwork. While some districts attempted to offer online options, we know from the pandemic that virtual instruction is not an adequate substitute for in-

¹ Filges, T., Bengtson, E., Montgomery, E., & Kildemoes, M. W. (2024). The impact of detention on the health of asylum seekers: An updated systematic review: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 20, e1420. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1420>

² Dee, Thomas S.. (2025). Recent Immigration Raids Increased Student Absences. (EdWorkingPaper: 25,1202). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/a62e.h526>

person learning for many students, particularly those without reliable internet access or appropriate devices.³

Educators across Nebraska work every day to build environments rooted in trust and belonging. LB 1034 reinforces that work. It does not block lawful enforcement actions. It simply ensures that schools are not treated as open-access enforcement zones and that any action taken meets the standard of a judicial warrant, a basic due process protection.

Children who experience immigration-related fear and family instability face higher levels of toxic stress, depression, and academic disruption. We should not compound that harm inside our schools. Schools are for learning, growth, and connection, not fear.

LB 1034 protects student well-being, educational stability, and constitutional safeguards. It ensures that every child, regardless of their family's immigration status, can walk through the school doors knowing they are entering a place of safety.

We want to thank Senator Dungan for this important legislation and the Committee for your consideration. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to advance LB 1034.

³ Mitra Naseh, Yingying Zeng, Eunhye Ahn, Flora Cohen, Mustafa Rfat, *Mental Health Implications of Family Separation Associated with Migration Policies in the United States: A Systematic Review*, Social Science & Medicine, Volume 352, 2024, 116995, ISSN 0277,9536, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116995>.