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January 31, 2023

Senator Dave Murman, Chair,
and Members of the Education Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB71 (Sanders) – Change provisions relating to parental involvement in and access to learning materials in schools

OPPOSE – *Please include this position statement from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB71.*

Dear Senator Murman and Members of the Education Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska strongly opposes passage of LB71, which amends current law pertaining to the role of parents and guardians in schools. Since the 1960s, the League has promoted policies that advance the goal of equality in education. Additionally, the League has always been a strong proponent of protecting individual liberties. In the 1950s, when fears of communism led to accusations within communities, including in schools, the League spearheaded a Freedom Agenda to educate communities about our constitutional right to freedom of speech.

The League agrees that parents play an important role in their child's education, but empowering them to police the choices of professional educators infringes on the rights of others and denies students' access to an equal education.

LB71 requires schools to accommodate parental requests to "attend and monitor courses, assemblies, counseling sessions, and other instructional activities." Allowing outside adults to join instructional programming would jeopardize freedom of speech for educators and students and inhibit learning as a whole. The presence of an unfamiliar or overbearing adult could influence the willingness of students to participate and compromise the safety they feel to express certain views.

Additionally, parents with personal objections might censor teachers who have been trained and certified by the state to instruct students in their field of expertise through intimidation or fear tactics. LB71 also gives parents and guardians the right to exempt their child from curricular activities or learning materials with which they disagree. Allowing for those exemptions might hinder a child's ability to master the content and skills that are outlined in the Nebraska Board of Education's state standards and, ultimately, the student's potential for long-term economic success. Furthermore, creating a learning environment in which not all students are held to the same standards results in inequalities that disadvantage everyone.

For these reasons, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska opposes LB71.

Sincerely,

Emily Block, Education Policy Action Team, LWWNE
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Rachel Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWWNE