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March 1, 2022

Senator Lynne Walz, Chair
and Members of the Education Committee
State Capitol
Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: LR278 CA (Linehan) – Constitutional amendment to eliminate the State Board of Education and provide for the Governor to appoint the Commissioner of Education

OPPOSE

Dear Senator Walz and Members of the Education Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska opposes LR278 CA, which would eliminate the elected State Board of Education, substituting it with a single-appointed Commissioner of Education in its place. The LWNNE believes in a representative government at all levels and an electoral system that allows for policy-making bodies to reflect the people they represent.

The LWNNE believes that the elimination of the State Board of Education would undercut representation for communities across the state. It would be ineffective in providing the proper attention and advocacy for the multitude of people served by the Department of Education. An appointed Commissioner of Education would reflect the will and agenda of the governor instead of the needs of the 244 school districts and 363,691 K-12 students in the state of Nebraska. It consolidates the power and responsibility of six people held directly accountable by constituents into a position of one responsible only to the highest state officer.

This policy would move power away from the people and obscure their views, serving to further exacerbate the hostility surrounding education policy in the state. Instead of finding a way to work through differences of opinion in the education policy-making process, this change would center such decisions in one unelected official. After the contentious past few years, this move will further decrease trust in our educational system.

We oppose the consolidation of power proposed in LR278 CA. Please do not move this bill forward.

Respectfully,

Rachel M. Gibson, Director of Education Policy, LWNNE
Taylor Sterba, Education Policy Action Team, LWNNE