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February 14, 2024

Senator Raymond Aguilar and Members of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB1321 (Arch) – Change provisions relating to the Public Counsel, the Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare, and the Inspector General of the Nebraska Correctional System

SUPPORT – *Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB1321.*

Dear Senator Aguilar and Members of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports policies and programs that respect the rights, promote the well-being and ensure the safety of those in the state's care, including Nebraska's children, the accused and sentenced offenders, both juveniles and adults.

Additionally, the League supports a responsive legislative process that incorporates, among other factors, accountability, effective performance and transparency.

The availability of a complaint process to investigate citizen concerns is essential to a representative government working with the most vulnerable. The staff work toward resolution of concerns in an unbiased manner. The professional report following investigation provides guidance to all concerned.

Re-designed in response to the concerns of the Nebraska Attorney General, this bill establishes the role of the Office of Public Counsel. Historically, the ombudsman program created by the Legislature provides accountability to the Correctional and Child Welfare services provided by the State of Nebraska. We are especially pleased with the bill's emergency clause that will allow the program to return to its normal operations after the signature of the Governor.

We thank the Executive Board for the extra support it will provide to oversee and assist this program. We implore the board to vote YES and pass this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

Joanna Lindberg, Government Co-Director, LWWNE
Mary Lee Moulton and Janelle Stevenson, Co-Presidents, LWWNE
Rachel M. Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWWNE