

Submitted online: Feb. 13, 2024 (MaryLee Moulton attended hearing)

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

RE: LB1330 (Murman) – Prohibit public educational institutions from taking certain actions relating to diversity, equity and inclusion.

OPPOSE – *Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB1330.*

Dear Senator Murman and the Members of the Education Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska strongly opposes LB1330 for many reasons, not least of which is that we see its value in our own work. The LWFVNE applies a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lens to our work as a way of examining a program, process, product or other aspects of the organization. This DEI lens encourages us to think about how our work will impact all communities, voices and perspectives, but especially those that have been historically ignored.

DEI also reveals what barriers exist that prevent equitable and inclusive programming and policy for all. We believe the DEI lens provides a benefit, not a hindrance, to cultivate welcoming, collaborative and successful conversations and opportunities.

The benefits of DEI extend to academia and the workforce as a whole.

For example, DEI programming at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln does not just benefit people of color or people who identify as LGBTQ+. UNL's DEI programming provides direct services for students with disabilities, students from low-income households, military-connected students, international students, student-athletes, students affected by sexual harassment or assault, first-generation college students, middle and high school students looking to get a head start for college, those impacted by health disparities or conditions, religious students, first-year students, and those involved in the Office of Academic Success and Intercultural Services – which promotes academic excellence, diversity awareness and social engagement (1).

According to the 2022-23 annual report of UNL's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, students and staff requested more than 100 workshops, trainings and education sessions including topics such as respect, allyship, psychological safety, implicit bias and new employee orientation. These sessions benefit people involved in all aspects of university life at UNL. And those benefits stay with individuals beyond their university experience (2).

Moreover, if Nebraska wants to compete with other states in recruiting and retaining quality, skilled employees, we cannot afford to erase DEI policy. Removing DEI from the state would exclude thousands of Nebraskans from equal employment opportunities and drive young people to move away and work elsewhere. One in 10 of Nebraska residents speak a language other than English at home. There are 100,000 foreign-born residents and 100,000 veterans in Nebraska.

All of these people must be included in our state and our educational institutions if we want to grow our workforce and our economy (3).

In summary, the LWVNE opposes LB1330 because we believe that erasing DEI programming and policy in Nebraska would detrimentally impact students and workers in our state.

Sincerely,

Taylor Sterba, Co-Director of Education Policy, LWVNE
Cat Henning, Co-Director of Social Policy, LWVNE
MaryLee Moulton and Janelle Stevenson, LWVNE

1. Annual Diversity Report 2021. Office of Diversity and Inclusion. University of Nebraska Lincoln. <https://diversity.unl.edu/annual-report-2021>
2. Building Community: A 2022 Annual Report. Office of Diversity and Inclusion. University of Nebraska Lincoln. <https://diversity.unl.edu/annual-report-2022-23>
3. Census Profile: Nebraska. (2022) Census Reporter. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/04000US31-nebraska/>