



Lead the discussion about equity and opportunity in an open and transparent environment, free of lobbying voices who are not superintendents

Educate policy makers regarding the real effect of policy in clarifying the purpose of state aid formula components

Advocate for policy that is understandable and predictable, which promotes cooperation and common ground needs of member schools

Develop and maintain relationships with policy makers based on trust that results in policy supported by best practices of learning

MISSION STATEMENT

“STANCE supports equitable learning opportunities for all Nebraska children”

Proponent Testimony

LB 323

January 25, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is John Schwartz, and I am the Superintendent for the Norris School District. I am here today to testify as a representative of Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education (STANCE) and other organizations in the Nebraska Education Collaboration - Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), Greater Nebraska Schools Association (GNSA), Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA), Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council (ESUCC), and Stand for Schools. Participants in the Nebraska Education Collaboration have a shared goal of implementing evidence-based policies to support a high quality education for every child in every public school in Nebraska. **This testimony is submitted in support of LB 323.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all aspects of life including school operations. This was especially true during the spring semester of the 2019-20 school year when all schools closed for in-person learning on or before Monday, March 23, 2020 by order of the Nebraska Commissioner of Education. The language of LB 323 seeks to correct aspects of the state aid formula which skewed disproportionately when schools stopped operating in-person. By annualizing the data (e.g., transportation miles, early childhood hours, etc.) collected prior to closure it corrects the unintended disproportionate impact within the formula on districts who must travel more miles to transport students to and from school and that serve a proportionately greater number of students in early childhood programs. Components of LB 323 related to summer school also align statutory language with recommendations given to schools to provide virtual summer school programming. Students involved in summer school during the summer of 2020, whether virtual or in-person, meeting the same criteria for days and hours of participation would qualify equally for the “summer school allowance” within the formula for the 2021-22 school year with the passage of LB 323.

We would also ask the committee to consider an amendment to LB 323 for school districts using the “student growth adjustment” within the formula. This is a common formula component used by equalized school districts who are consistently growing in student enrollment. The decision by a school district to utilize this formula factor for the 2020-21 school year would have been made in the early winter months long before the impact on student enrollment for the following school year could be reasonably predicted because of the pandemic. We would ask that you consider extending the “student growth correction” by one year so that districts are still accountable to realize the projected growth, but avoid a correction which in many cases will be offset by a return to more normal conditions the following year. We believe the school finance team with the Nebraska Department of Education would be able to assist in crafting language to account for this situationally specific anomaly.

In conclusion, STANCE and other organizations represented in the Nebraska Education Collaboration are in support of LB 323. We appreciate Senator Walz for proposing this legislation and for the Nebraska Department of Education to have the foresight to recognize the need for these changes due to the unique circumstances.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of STANCE, GNSA, NSEA, NASB, NCSA, NRCSA, and Stand for Schools,

John Schwartz, STANCE President-Elect
Superintendent
Norris School District

<https://sites.google.com/site/stancene/>

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