



Greater Nebraska Schools Association

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DATE: 2/2/2021
TO: Education Committee, Senator Lynne Walz, Chairperson
RE: LB 132

Senator Walz and members of the Education Committee,

My Name is Kyle Fairbairn, and I represent the Greater Nebraska Schools Association (GNSA) which is an organization that represents 24 of the largest school districts in the state of Nebraska. These 24 districts represent about 75% of all the children in the state attending public schools.

GNSA stands in support of LB 132, but with reservation. This bill would create a commission to look at the effectiveness of the current state funding of schools in the state. There has been a commission in place in the past and this would give legislators a chance to hear from an independent group on the stability and effectiveness of the current financing system in the state. With this group there may be many issues on the table including new state revenue sources to take away some of the reliance on property taxes. In the past few years there have been several bills brought forward to the body by different legislators, in an attempt to change the current funding system. With no commission to look at the ideas before becoming drafted bills it has been exceedingly difficult to get school organizations on board to major changes to the current law.

GNSA does have some serious concerns about the make-up of the commission in the current form of LB132. It is the organizations believe that all classes of schools should be represented on the commission. It makes little sense to put a commission in place that has an extremely limited number of schools that receive state aid currently or possibly no schools that need the current funding formula to survive. GNSA schools currently depend on state aid to function as they do not have the local property values to fund all the needs of their children. The commission should have a mix of school districts and include the largest districts in the state to make sure the voice of all children is heard when it comes to the funding of our schools. If there are not changes to the commission makeup it will be very difficult to support the current language.

GNSA would like to thank Senator DeBoar on her efforts to bring a commission to the state over the past two years. We do hope that there is an opportunity to include all classes of schools in the makeup of the commission. Bringing a wide range of ideas about school funding can do nothing but help the overall ability of the commission.