



# NEBRASKA RURAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

455 S. 11th St, Ste B  
Lincoln, NE 68508

*32 million  
155 school districts*

## 2020-21 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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#### **Jack Moles**

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Chairperson Walz and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jack Moles. I am the Executive Director for the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, also referred to as NRCSA. NRCSA is an organization of 213-member public school districts, Educational Service Units, and a few colleges, representing the interests of almost 83,000 rural public-school students. Today I am also speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education (STANCE), and Greater Nebraska Schools Association (GNSA).

On behalf of these groups, I wish to testify in opposition to LB 623. We believe that Sen. Vargas is well-intentioned, but we do not believe there is a need for this bill.

Briefly, some of the objections these groups have with LB 623 include:

- Daily burdens could be placed on teachers if the virtual school option is required to be available for students who are ill or if there is a snow day.
- The process required for adoption of a remote learning plan is more detailed than even for the adoption of curriculum.
- Costs to the district will be generated by the bill including teacher training, devices, technical support, and publication costs.
- Districts will be required to ensure that students have access to internet connectivity. There are still many places in this state without such connectivity.
- It is mandated that remote learning be part of the negotiations process.
- The bill takes away local control from locally elected Board of Education.

Last spring, the Coronavirus pandemic caused school districts to go into a remote learning mode for which many were under-prepared. Not all schools had enough devices. Not all of their teachers knew how to run remote platforms such as Zoom. Many families either had poor internet connections or no connections at all. In spite of all this, I believe most districts made great efforts in providing quality remote learning opportunities.

This fall, in a discussion with Commissioner Blomstedt, we decided that more was needed to help teachers and administrators in developing quality remote learning programs. NRCSA and ESUCC joined together to work on



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this project. Over 70 rural educators worked to develop two documents: a teacher resource site ([bit.ly/TeacherRemoteSupport](http://bit.ly/TeacherRemoteSupport)) and an administrator resource site ([bit.ly/AdminRemoteSupport](http://bit.ly/AdminRemoteSupport)). This is excellent work that I encourage members of this committee to review. The thing I want to stress here is schools are working to develop quality programs. We encourage you to let them work through these issues on the local level.

In closing, we encourage you to not advance LB 623 from committee.

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