

**Position Comments for Public Record on LB 589**  
**Wednesday, February 1st, 2023**

Senator Briese and members of the Revenue Committee, for the record my name is Bill Robinson, and I am the Associate Superintendent of Finance, Facilities and Maintenance for Norfolk Public Schools.

I am writing in opposition to LB 589. My opposition to this bill is for the following reasons:

- State statute 13-501 through 13-513 (Nebraska Budget Act) already provides provisions for public oversight.
- Boards levying taxes at the local level are already required to have a public hearing scheduled to hear opposition, support or other comments related to the proposed budget for that fiscal year.
- The budget must be published prior to the meeting for the public to review, and the hearing has no time limits set on them, this process is already in place.
- LB 644 which was put in place this past year provided local taxpayers information concerning their property taxes directly mailed to them via a pink post card
- LB 589 also changes the percent of majority in a special election or percent of school board members vote. I am concerned when government starts adjusting these percentages on specific issues.
- Any local patron can contact a local board member to discuss any item at any time not just at a public hearing
- The percentages of tax increases set forth in the bill have no adjustments for inflation or current CPI index. Labor cost for PK-12 education is our biggest budget at 82.5% of our general fund budget. We are in the midst of a major teacher shortage and must increase wages and benefits in order to compete for the few teachers that are available. We also need to compete for custodians, bus drivers, secretaries and other positions that are paid more within our community. Caps like this would put us in an impossible situation where we cannot fill open positions.
- LB 589 also needs to consider timelines that are already in place. Currently valuations are not certified until August 20<sup>th</sup> each year. So, if additional steps would be added for districts to go over their tax increase percentage, dates would need to be looked and possibly adjusted in order for public school districts to meet their Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> filing deadline for all budget documents.

In closing, LB 589 would create a mechanism that takes away control of locally elected school boards. As stated earlier any taxpayer can contact their local official(s) at any time to discuss not only the budget but any other item or come to any of the already scheduled public meetings. If the concern is that citizens are not participating in the process creating additional legislation will not solve that issue.

Thank you for your time and service to our state as Senators. We have a strong public education system in Nebraska which is an asset we do not want to compromise.

Educationally Yours,

Bill Robinson, Ed.D

Associate Supt. / Norfolk Public Schools