

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

March 19, 2020

Dear Senators:

Disability Rights Nebraska is the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska, writes to support consideration of LB 998.

We support providing increased behavioral/mental health training for teachers and school personnel. LB 998 is a preferable alternative to the “control student behavior by physical force” approach. Teachers need to be trained and equipped with other tools than physical force to resolve issues. Schools should be knowledgeable of other services and supports in the community which could be used to help students with behavioral and/or mental health issues.

However, we would suggest that a couple of revisions be made to the bill, either as originally introduced or amended with AM 2214. First, in addition to the requirement that the behavioral awareness and intervention training reflect the content of the Student Discipline Act (page 9, lines 3-10) we would strongly encourage the legislation also require teachers and school personnel listed in the bill be made aware of their school district’s existing policy on the use of restraint¹. The process for handling issues relevant to LB 998 and to the Student Discipline Act, as well as many protections for students and school personnel, are already spelled out in the district’s restraint policy—a policy which is required by Rule 10.

Disability Rights Nebraska recommends advancing LB 998, amended with our above suggestion. At a minimum, given the unique nature of this truncated session, the legislature should give robust discussion of the proposal components in a subsequent session or over the interim.

If there are further questions or comment, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience: brad@drne.org or 402-474-3183.

Sincerely,

Bradley A. Meurrens, MPA
Public Policy Director
Disability Rights Nebraska

¹ For example, Omaha Public Schools [restraint policy](#) (Policy No. 5421, pages 547-550); District 66 restraint policies [5320](#) and [5320-R](#); North Platte Schools [restraint policy](#).