

February 13, 2007

Senator Ronald Raikes, Chairman  
Education Committee of the Nebraska Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 1110  
Lincoln, NE

RE: LB 316

Dear Senator Raikes,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc., the Center for Disability Rights, Law, and Advocacy. We are the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska. Although we are taking a neutral position regarding LB 316, we support the examination of special education services in Nebraska. The Special Education Services Task Force proposed in LB 316 is a worthy effort; however, we would like to offer two recommendations that we believe would strengthen the Task Force and improve the quality of its work.

**1. Consumer, Family and Advocate Inclusion:**

Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc. has a strong, long-standing commitment to securing the inclusion of consumers, family members and advocates in all policy-making efforts that affect them directly. We urge the Committee to add the following specific language to section 1:

- (17) One representative of a private provider of special education services; and
- (18) One representative of postsecondary special education; and
- (19) Five former students of special education services;
- (20) One representative of a disability advocacy organization; and
- (21) One representative from the Parent Training Institute.

**2. Two Additional Issues Require Examination:**

We also recommend including two additional areas to the list of areas identified for examination in Section 3. The first additional area to examine is the overrepresentation of minority students in special education Nebraska. Preliminary research that we have

conducted indicates that percentage of minority students enrolled in special education is significantly disproportionate to their percentage in the general population. It is critical to examine not only the cause of such overrepresentation, but also to examine what policies are necessary in order to remedy or prevent minority overrepresentation. The second additional area to examine is the provision of transition services for special education students, especially those who graduate prior to age 21. Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc. receives a significant number of requests for assistance with the process of transition from special education to adult services. We recommend revising Section 3 as follows:

(6) The use of private providers of special education services by private citizens;  
and

(7) The provision of special education services for wards of the state or wards of the court- ;

(8) The overrepresentation of minority students in special education services;  
and

(9) The transition of students from special education services, with special attention to students who graduate prior to the end of their eligibility for special education services.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our concerns and recommendations with the Education Committee. If the Committee agrees to the changes we are proposing, we would consider supporting the amended version of LB 316. If you have further questions regarding our position and recommendations, please contact Brad Meurrens, Public Policy Specialist at Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc.

Sincerely,

Eric A. Evans  
Director of Governmental and External  
Relations  
Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc

CC: Sen. Kopplin, Sen. Adams, Sen. Ashford, Sen. Avery, Sen. Burling, Sen. Howard, Sen. Johnson, Sen. Friend