**Joint Letter of Support**

TO: Nebraska State Senators

DATE: April 18, 2017

RE: LB 427

Dear Honorable Senators,

As child welfare, civil rights, and educational organizations, we strongly support LB427 which would ensure young families can continue their education while pregnant and parenting in our schools. Young families should not have to choose between completing their education and taking care of themselves and their children. We thank Senator Tony Vargas for his leadership in introducing and prioritizing this important legislation. We thank Senator Laura Ebke, Senator Lynne Walz, and Senator Justin Wayne for cosponsoring these measures. We are grateful to members of the Education Committee who advanced these bills with strong support. We are grateful the bill passed general file with strong support. We urge your favorable consideration through Select file and Final reading.

Pregnant and parenting students face enormous challenges in accomplishing their educational goals. Approximately 70% of young women who give birth leave school, which impacts their financial and educational future as well as the financial and educational future of their children. Schools have a legal obligation to help pregnant and parenting teens stay in school. Pregnancy is a gender equity issue covered by Title IX. As such, under federal law, schools may not exclude or discriminate against young families who are pregnant or parenting. Additionally, on the state level, Nebraska has enacted the Equal Opportunity in Education Act which prohibits “the application of any rule which discriminates on the basis of pregnancy of any person” in “any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other program or activity.”

While there are some school districts in Nebraska which are meeting or exceeding best practices in this area many school districts lack clear policies to ensure all young families are appropriately supported. These measures will help school districts across the state establish clear policy guidance to support pregnant and parenting students.

Our great state should be doing all that we can to ensure young parents and their children are given the opportunity to succeed which benefits all Nebraskans now and for generations to come. Thank you in advance for your service and your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Nebraska

Community Action of Nebraska

D2 Center

Holland Children’s Movement

Latino American Commission

MilkWorks

Nebraska Appleseed

Nebraska Children's Home Society

Nebraska Medical Association

Nebraska State Education Association

Omaha Home for Boys

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland

Stand for Schools

Women’s Fund of Omaha

Voices for Children Nebraska