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Agriculture Committee
September 25, 2014

[LR545 LR558]

The Committee on Agriculture met at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 25, 2014, at NorthStar Foundation, 4242 North 49th Street, Omaha, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LR545 and LR558. Senators present: Ken Schilz, Chairperson; Norm Wallman, Vice Chairperson; Burke Harr; and Jerry Johnson. Senators absent: Dave Bloomfield, Ernie Chambers, Tom Hansen, and Steve Lathrop.

SENATOR SCHILZ: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the NorthStar Community Center and the Ag Committee's hearing today. This afternoon we have an interim study on two resolutions, LR558, which is Senator Harr's resolution, who is sitting here in front of us, to examine ways the state and municipalities can encourage development of community gardens, including providing spaces for gardening on public lands. And then after that, we will go to LR545 by Senator Kolowski, which will be an interim study to examine statewide efforts to be taken to improve Nebraska's access to local food supply and distribution networks. Just a little housekeeping here before we get going. First of all, we would like to thank the folks here at NorthStar, especially Ashten who we worked with to get the facility locked in. It's a great site and we're happy to be here today. And we should mention that as we were going back and looking, it would seem, and we've done a little bit of research, though not a lot, that this may be the first hearing that the Ag Committee has actually held in Omaha. So we're happy to be here. It's been way too long, I guess, but we'll try not to let this much time pass before we're back here again. So thank you very much. I'll let you know how things run a little bit. Senator Harr will go ahead and open up on his resolution. And then after that, if you know about a normal hearing, usually we take proponents, opponents, and then neutral testimony. It doesn't work that way here in an interim study hearing. What we'll do is, we'll just take testimony as it goes. So after Senator Harr is done, then if anybody would like to testify, we would ask that you would fill out a white sheet that's over there on the table or there's one sitting here at the testifier's table as well. And when you're done with that, if you could just set it up here at the table here or leave it on the

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testifier's table, that would be great. But please fill one of those out if you are going to testify. And then whatever comments you have, go ahead and make those. I would ask you though, we only have a set time that we have this room and they want us to be out of here around 3:30 or 4:00, and that doesn't just mean leave the room then, that means everything cleaned up and gone. So keep your comments succinct and focused so that we can move on and get everybody to be able to have their say as they want to and need to. So with that, I don't want to take any more time except to introduce the folks we have up here. I will start here to my far left is Senator Norm Wallman from Cortland. He is also the Vice Chair of the Agriculture Committee. To his right is Senator Jerry Johnson from Wahoo, and then I, of course, my name is Senator Ken Schilz from Ogallala. Off to my right is Rick Leonard, the research analyst for the Agriculture Committee, and to his right is Jamaica Erwin, the committee clerk for the committee. And with that, we will turn it over to Senator Harr to open up on LR558.

SENATOR HARR: Thank you, Chairman Schilz and members of the Agriculture Committee. I am Senator Burke Harr and I'm the state senator who represents midtown Omaha, including Dundee, Benson, and Keystone neighborhoods. I'd first like to second the thank-you for Scott Hazelrigg and the staff at NorthStar for allowing us to come here for this wonderful activity. I'd also like to thank you for coming to Omaha and having this hearing here. It means a lot and I think it shows your sincerity, so thank you for coming. The purpose of this resolution is to show...or is to study how to encourage the development of community gardens, including looking at some of the hindrances that prevent us from having public gardens, for instance, the availability of land and sharing the existence of consistent funding sources and simplifying the bureaucratic requirements. This study will exam best practices and programs for encouraging community gardens from other states and how those states utilize the programs. Let me first start by defining what a community garden is. A community garden is any piece of land, public or private, where plants are grown and maintained by a group of individuals in the community. State leaders and community leaders across Nebraska recognize the need to improve the health of communities by improving access to affordable and

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healthy food and increasing physical activity. Community gardens can also be a vital part of developing community and reaching those in need. Many families would like to grow some of their own fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Some want to save money on their food bill while others like the freshness and flavor of homegrown, and still others enjoy gardening itself. Gardening is a relaxing way to exercise and enjoy being outside. There are also families from other cultures who would like to grow traditional foods not available in our supermarkets. Community gardens promote healthy population, thereby reducing healthcare costs. They can provide a sense of community and personal investment in the neighborhoods and create more welcoming and attractive neighborhoods. They can help with the environment by providing habitat for birds and other species filtering air and water pollution and combatting, in certain areas, the urban heat island effect. Again to reiterate, the state and municipalities can encourage the development of community gardens in a variety of ways, including providing space for gardening in a public space in public lands, ensuring the existence of consistent funding sources, and simplifying bureaucratic requirements. Those are the three main purposes. Today, you're going to hear from testifiers. Hopefully, they'll talk to you about some of their successes, some of the best practices they have, but also some of the problems they run into and how they would like to see community gardens increased and enhanced in our community. In my own legislative district I have at least...well, we saw five community gardens. So it's something that's starting to sprout up across the city. People want to do it. It's just a matter of how do we provide that land, how do we provide that water. That's oftentimes as big a problem as anything. And then the issue of liability can also hinder development. Those are the three costs that go into community gardens. So how do we...what do we need to do? And so you're going to hear from testifiers today who will help educate and inform us what we as state policymakers can do. So thank you very much. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Harr. Any questions for Senator Harr? And then, do you plan on closing when you're done? [LR558]

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SENATOR HARR: Yeah, probably a little bit. Thanks. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. At this point we'll go ahead and take the first testifier, please. Oh, and one more thing before we go, when you sit down, if you could say and spell your name, please, for the record, that would be very helpful. Thank you. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: (Exhibit 1) Good afternoon, Senators. I'm Mary Balluff with the Douglas County Health Department and I'm here to testify regarding community gardens and LR558. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Mary, could you please spell... [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: And my name...yes. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: And my name is spelled M-a-r-y B-a-l-l-u-f-f. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: I will dispense with...I have a written testimony that I have provided. I will dispense with going through a definition again since we've already done that and talk just a little bit about the gardens in Omaha. In 2014, through a white paper presented to the city of Omaha, the Metro Omaha Food Policy Council noted background and guidance about leasing community ground for the purpose of community gardens and urban agriculture. Recently, the city has utilized this guidance to develop pilot projects to place community gardens on city-owned lots. But let's talk a little about what it means to be a community garden. Each garden accesses land and water dependent on the circumstances of its origin. Three of the largest community gardens in Omaha have purchased the land for their garden and have been able to

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access water through connections to the city utilities. Many of the smaller gardens have formal and informal agreements that allow them to use the land and to create imaginative solutions in order to access water. For others, specific barriers and potential solutions to land and water access could really benefit the gardens and I will identify some of those. Gardens which use and lease land reside at the pleasure of the landlord and therefore must consider any structural accouterment or soil enhancement projects to assure a realistic return on investment. Many communities nationwide have responded to this concern through the use of city-owned land with multiyear agreements to ensure gardens continuity and investment. The city of Omaha, as I just mentioned, has begun such pilot projects and provides an opportunity to benefit neighborhoods, particularly those with economic need. Beyond the leased opportunity, neighborhoods might also benefit from funds to support the purchase of land. Other issues as already suggested by Senator Harr, which may need to be addressed in the land, are liability and insurance clarification. Fledgling community garden groups may lack the resources to acquire and maintain the insurance policies. Public and private landlords may require policies to protect themselves and their land. Finding a solution that identifies plausible insurance policies and resources to initially...to help initially the new gardens would create a more stable and sustainable early success. Let me talk a little bit about access to water. It's critical and expensive venture for most new gardens. Gardens use a variety of mechanisms to access water, including the use of water tanks, the collection of rain water, borrowing or purchasing water from adjacent landlords, or the installation of water from the utilities district. The cost of installing water ranges from about \$8,000 to \$10,000. Though charitable foundations in this community have been interested in assisting gardens to install water, the caveat often proposed is that the gardens must first own the land. Hence, again, the issue of land ownership. In addition to the expense of installation of water, perhaps more problematic ongoing expense of sewer fees and infrastructure fees required by local utility districts can also be problematic. Gardens are able to have their property identified as a sprinkler site, which can reduce the fees for the sewer use. However, the infrastructure fees are required for every site ongoing every month of the year. Garden's financial capacity, however, is

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usually related to the small plot fees that gardeners charge for each plot on the site. The majority of current gardens are located in low-income neighborhoods where residents have limited spendable income. This year-round utility fee can prove to be prohibitive for some gardens. And just as a note, the Douglas County Health Department staffs the community garden network, and I'm going to provide you this map that shows you where community gardens are across our city. In the city of Omaha...the city of Omaha has additionally...has concerns about lead contamination. Omaha is home to the nation's largest Superfund site and growing produce in lead contaminated soil has been found to contain...the produce grown in lead contaminated soil has been found to contain lead and therefore consideration for human consumption. To rectify this situation, gardens usually choose an alternative gardening method as using clean soil, which may be raised beds. And in some cases, gardeners choose to use aquaponic systems, using water and fish and plants. But both of these methods require gardens to make initial investments to build the infrastructure associated with the methods. Creating a fund to support these methods allows access to community gardens in neighborhoods with limited resource. The produce grown on gardens often is for personal consumption. However, some gardens choose to sell a portion of their produce for their harvest to provide funds for the next season's planting. And current city codes require vendors in some communities to require a license for the sale of this produce. Creating a special low-cost license which allows for the sale of small quantities related to produce might prove beneficial for gardens. Community gardens can be a source of both healthy food items and community gathering space. To assure the development, growth, and sustainability of gardens requires a careful review of local and state zoning requirements, utility fees, insurance options, vendor licensing, and taxing requirements. The creation of a fund source to support the initial investment and longer cost...and the long-term cost may significantly incentivize community gardens. Pilot studies in Omaha have proven to be an excellent model for communities across the state to enhance the garden (inaudible). [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Ms. Balluff. Any questions? Senator Harr, go ahead.

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[LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you, Senator Schilz. You talked about multiyear contracts. How do those work right now? [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: Right now, we only have pilot projects in the city and those are very short term. The longest ones are one year. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Just one year? Okay. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: But there is talk of...perhaps there is speculation that perhaps they could do multiyear. And for a garden, it's a great deal of expense to put in a garden to know that in one year you may be off that site. So that's... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Do you think the counties would be open, or at least Douglas County, open to the idea of, if you sign a five-year contract, we won't charge property tax during that term? [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: I cannot speak for the county (laughter)... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: ...in that regard. I do think that there is something to be considered there. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Senator Johnson. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you. Thank you, Mary, for coming in. Representing

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the health department, if two or three families went together strictly on their own, consumed all of the product off of there, they had an agreement, this year you're going to supply the water, next year I will, type of thing, do you feel or are there any requirements that they register that type of a garden? [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: No, those kinds of requirements are not required...are not required to register in any way. They're using the produce. So if you use the produce for personal use, then you don't need a vendor's license. It's for those small gardens or larger size gardens that might want to sell the produce at another site would need to get either a food permit or at least a vendor's license in this city. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: I can't speak for every city across the... [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Others, okay. Another one, and I've seen it in some other communities where...and I don't know how many churches in Omaha would have this situation where they have empty space and they allow...I don't know if it's their own membership, their own parishioners or how they do it, and set up a garden. Would that be one that's regulated because it's not really set up by...church is a nonprofit as such, but people... [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: Gardens in and of themselves are not regulated. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: So...and there are...and I'm hoping that there are several people in the audience today that are going to talk to you about some of those really creative, wonderful ways that churches and community gardens have worked together. [LR558]

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SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. I'll hold the rest of my questions then. Thank you, Mary. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: All right. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Mary, I have a couple of questions for you. You talked about the liability and insurance issue. And when you talk about that liability, is it the landowner's liability that becomes an issue, or is it the liability of the people that have the garden, or is it both? I mean, how... [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: It probably is some combination of both. But for gardens, the issue is that many landlords may, if they enter into an agreement with them, may require them to have their own insurance. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Uh-huh. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: And we actually have a community garden tool kit that helps you set up a garden... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Right. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: ...on the Douglas County Web site. And we do recommend that people get liability insurance... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: ...because you're going to have people on that property doing things and they could be injured. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: If there were a bill or a law that was out there that would take care

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of some of that recreational liability that was there for folks, that would help landowners so they wouldn't have to do that if other people were coming on to that, even if they were paying to come on to that, would that make some sense? [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: I believe that insurance is an expense for all of these small groups... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: ...and it's an ongoing expense, so that anything that we can do, because most of the community garden groups are very small groups. They are not even probably registered as a 501(c)(3). They're a group of people who come together, work together. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Right. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: And so each of these expenses increases the amount that the garden must collect from those who have a plot there. And many gardens try to use \$5, \$10, or \$25 a year to have that plot, because the reason people want to garden is both for recreation but also for access to healthy foods. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. Absolutely. Thank you very much. [LR558]

MARY BALLUFF: All right. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Good afternoon. Welcome. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: (Exhibit 2) Good afternoon. Thank you. My name is Mary Green, Green just like the color, G-r-e-e-n. I'm the president of the Dundee Community Garden which is in Senator Harr's district. Dundee Community Garden started five years ago in the

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Dundee neighborhood. We just celebrated our fifth anniversary with a birthday party attended by about 150 people, so, obviously, we feel very supported by our community. I was asked to talk about some of the benefits of community gardening. I was going to talk about that today. As Senator Harr mentioned, there's many health benefits including, first of all, nutrition, by providing gardening space for allowing people to grow their own food. And from personal experience, this enables people to really increase their consumption of fresh vegetables. When you're bringing home bags and bags of produce, especially when you're growing lots of greens in the spring, you feel like you've got to eat all this produce. And in the age of an obesity epidemic, a garden provides a direct health benefit to its members. Our garden, Dundee Community Garden, has 41 member plots, so we're impacting, in general, 41 families or groups. So I'm estimating about 100 people directly impacted in that way. Just a small individual plot, and our plots are 4'x10' plots, that can have a big impact on a family's food intake. And, as well, there's the economic impact. Fruits and vegetables are relatively expensive especially organic produce, so there's definitely a cost-saving benefit. Part of our mission is to donate produce to underserved populations. Initially we were donating produce to a food pantry downtown, but after our second year we started donating food to the Underwood Tower, which is an Omaha Housing Authority property for low-income people, right across the street from the garden. We donate about 10 percent of our produce and we have donated well over 3,000 pounds of produce in our five years. The residents of the Underwood Tower know when we're coming and they are often waiting for us with their bags in hand. So we know they're eager to get the produce and we're having a direct impact on the health of some of our low-income Dundee neighbors. And again, there's the economic benefit as well for those residents. Another health benefit is the exercise. Working in a community garden is a good way to get healthy physical outdoor activity as part of your routine. My husband and I go to the garden every Saturday for our community work days and put in several hours. I never run out of tasks. There's always plenty to do outdoors at a garden. So there's endless physical activity and it's a fun and rewarding way to get exercise. It's really a lot more pleasant than going to the gym for a workout. Another, what I consider a health benefit, is the

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social/emotional kind of health benefit. Being involved in the garden is a great way to get to know other people, both members who have garden plots, and also there's often people visiting the garden, stopping in. The garden brings together people who otherwise might not have the opportunity to meet and get to know each other. My family has certainly experienced a significant increase in our connectedness to others in our community. The garden gives us and many others in the neighborhood an opportunity to engage in meaningful activities with others and build relationships with others. Additionally, by offering annual events we give the larger community a chance to get together and socialize. We have an annual ice cream social that usually has about 100 people attend. We have an annual watermelon feed. We play an active role in bringing people in the neighborhood together, providing an opportunity for positive social engagement. And greater connections make a stronger neighborhood, making a stronger and safer community. Another nice thing about the garden is the intergenerational mix. We have a wide range of ages with our members. We have middle-age and older retired couples, from empty nesters to retired people. We also have college students, young professionals. Some people have a wealth of gardening experience and there's other people who have never gardened before. Many of our younger members will say that they grew up in outstate parts of Nebraska and their families always gardened, Mom and Dad always gardened, but they maybe haven't had the opportunity. They're excited to be able to have a place in Omaha where they can grow. They're in an apartment but this gives them a place where they can grow their own vegetables. Sometimes they bring their parents to help them get started or take care of their plots, but the garden provides an opportunity for a mixture of ages to interact, learn from each other and build connections. There's also educational benefits. There's a lot of sharing about gardening expertise with gardening tips. Some of our members are into heirloom plants and others are into seed savings. There's a lot of teaching that goes on. One of our members is a master gardener and teaches not only a lot basic things but also things about how to handle garden pests and take care of things like that. It's especially neat to see children with the educational benefits. The children always get excited about the garden, and it's good for them to get to see where

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their food comes from and what it looks like when it's not coming from the grocery store shelf. They're always excited to pull their first radish or carrot out of the ground. And we've had stories about kids who refused to eat any vegetables until they grew them themselves, picked their own tomato, and now suddenly they will eat tomatoes. They also...it also gives children a chance to learn about nature as we see rabbits, many birds, many types of insects and butterflies. The garden has been loaded with Monarch butterflies recently. We see four or five types of butterflies in the morning at the garden. We see worms, we see snakes. We do have sweet potatoes in the fall. We often unearth snakes that are hibernating. The kids always love that, get very excited about that. (Laughter) We've also found a nest of baby mice while digging up sweet potatoes, but it's great and educational for kids to get to see these animals in their native habitat rather than as part of an exhibition behind the glass walls of an aquarium. We also have a formal educational component at our garden. We sponsor educational workshops that are open to the public. We've had annual...well, we have an annual "What to Plant and When" workshop that's always very popular. The basics of gardening is something people are really interested in learning about. But we also host workshops on a variety of topics, such as edible weeds, making herbal salves and lotions, permaculture, all about bees, seed saving, etcetera. We also collaborate with a public library and we've been offering educational workshops for the past two years, including a kids' workshop on composting, and adult composting, and some adult book discussion groups. We also serve as an educational resource for the community. We've had Brownell-Talbott day campers come make a hike up to the garden. They're learning something about growing foods so they come to the garden for a morning. The Nebraska solar group came recently to learn about our solar panels. And we also have newsletter articles teaching about the importance of pollinators and composting and cover cropping and things like that. There's a lot of benefits that I'm not going to go into but I hope you will be hearing more about children's programming. Some of the gardens in Omaha do excellent children's programming and also there's some refugee gardens that provide a lot of great benefits to refugees. But I think, just more broadly, our most important or broad impact is not specifically on our 41 members and their families but on the larger

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community. The Dundee Community Garden gives the neighborhood a place. It's an open, green space where they can experience nature and beauty. Studies show people are happier when they spend time outside and exposure to green space reduces stress and increases a sense of wellness and belonging. We give people a place to go to experience nature and being outdoors and the beauty found in nature. And I've have more than one person has told me that want to live in the Dundee neighborhood because of the Dundee Community Garden. Many of our sponsors, whether Dundee businesses or individuals, they don't have plots at the garden, they don't get those direct food and health benefits, but they love the garden for being a valuable aesthetic asset to the neighborhood, for providing a calm, serene, place of beauty that brings neighbors and friends together. The garden gives neighbors a sense of pride and a sense of neighborhood identity and it's truly become a neighborhood asset and treasure. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Green. Any questions? [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Just quickly, you state you have 4x8 plots? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: Four foot by ten foot. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Oh, I'm so sorry, 4x10. How much do you charge for those? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: We charge \$30. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: And I think the price, as Mary Balluff mentioned, can range from \$15 to \$25 to \$30, \$40. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: And how much of that is paying for insurance because of liability

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issues? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: You know, our insurance is \$300 a year. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: That's for the liability insurance. And our property owner had first required that before we bought the property and now that we own it. So that barely covers it. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. That's good to know. Okay. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Senator Johnson. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Yeah, I think you might have covered part of it when you talked about the insurance. Are you...it's community gardens. Are you an official structure or is it just a name? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: We are...and I know not every garden is the same, but we became a nonprofit association and then we became a 501(c)(3) tax exempt... [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: ...but I don't think most gardens are. That's a lot of steps and a lot of expense to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Sounds very well-structured. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: Partly we did that for buying the property and getting grant funding. Some of the organizations, the foundations, want you to be a 501(c)(3). [LR558]

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SENATOR JOHNSON: Did you have to do anything different in your liability because of donating food? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: No, no, that has not come up. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: That it's inclusive in your policy, so you're... [LR558]

MARY GREEN: Yeah, I think they're more worried about people tripping over a plot or a shovel or something, that kind of thing, I think. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: That type of liability versus food source. Okay, thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Then, of course, having done all of that, you haven't had to worry about...you've taken your expenses and otherwise, but you haven't had to worry about landlords or any of those types of questions necessarily, but have you been in that situation before? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: Well, we did just use the property until we purchased it last year. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I see. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: So our first three and a half, four years we were just using it and it wasn't until we purchased the property that we went ahead and made the investment in putting in the water, which was about \$9,000. And then now we have to deal with the annual water fees, which... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Uh-huh. And then before that, what was your situation? How did

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you acquire the water and...? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: You know, we were lucky that there's a house next to us that let us use...we have rain barrels and we were able to put rain barrels up on their house and store water on our property and then when we'd run out of rain, which this summer is kind of an exception, but often that rain barrel water didn't last real long, they let us use their water with a hose. But they had told us that they were not going to continue doing it that last year, 2013. So we were kind of lucky that we were finally at the space...place where we were ready to buy it and get our own water because that was not a good and long-term solution. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Right. Starting to become a problem with that, yeah. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: It was starting...yeah, it was. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Well, you had it for a little while. Now how big is the plot land that you have? [LR558]

MARY GREEN: You know, it's not that big. It's about 65 feet by about 120 feet. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I see, so... [LR558]

MARY GREEN: So we're smaller, compared to some gardens have more space, but we've got more plots kind of packed in. We're pretty compact. I think we get a lot of produce out of a relatively small space. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. Sure. Okay. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: How much is your sewer fee per year, do you know, or water?
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MARY GREEN: You know, our monthly water fee is about \$60... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: ...and often the actual water usage is about \$2.00. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: So the rest is the kind of infrastructure fees that are set per month.
[LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Sure. Okay. Yeah. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any other questions, anyone? Seeing none, thank you for your
testimony. [LR558]

MARY GREEN: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Welcome. Good afternoon. [LR558]

ERIC WILLIAMS: (Exhibit 3) Hello. My name is Eric Williams, W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, not to be
confused with my twin brother Scott Williams, but Senator Harr I'm sure will have no
problem with that, right? I have some prepared remarks and I gave a copy to them. I am
the vice president of the Dundee Community Garden and so I thought I would go right
after Mary. And I can present kind of some personal experience, my own interaction
with the garden and the benefits it has brought to me. Thank you for inviting me here to
present my experience with the community gardens and the benefits to individuals and
neighborhoods here in the Omaha area. In January of 2009, I attended a meeting
hosted by the Green Omaha Coalition entitled "From Here to Community Garden."

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Panel members from several organizations presented their experience, and engaged the audience to get connected with each other and start producing local food in their own neighborhoods. At the conclusion of the meeting, I put my contact information on a list with several other residents of the Dundee area, including Mary, and we planned to begin working on a garden in our neighborhood. Five months later we broke ground at 4902 Underwood with the first several plots. Now, after more than five years, I have met hundreds of other people in the neighborhood and across Omaha through my involvement in the Dundee Community Garden. Although many of us live only a few blocks apart, we would not have met if it weren't for our shared passion for growing healthy food and developing a strong community. The Douglas County Health Department has coordinated a semiformal "Community Garden Networking Group," which Mary Balluff discussed earlier, in the winter months over the past few years and I have been involved along with several members of other gardens. Each year in January there is a panel discussion with a question and answer session for guests who are interested in starting their own gardens. I have worked with several other individuals, and have been very pleased to be involved with the forming of the Benson Community Garden, Springbrook Community Garden, Farnam Farm, and the Omaha Home for Boys garden which has turned into the Sahler Garden, which I think you got to tour today. In each of these locations, individuals and families have met their neighbors and come together to produce their own food and spend time being active outside. Omaha has a strong group of garden leaders who share their experience with others and exchange best practices to help new gardens be successful. My friend Kurt, from the Benson Community Garden, demonstrated the solar panels which power a radio and lights at their location. During planning for our site improvements last year, I led an effort to design, install, and operate a solar system for our electric lawn mower and Weedwacker at the Dundee Community Garden. This equipment produces no emissions at the site, is quieter than combustion maintenance equipment, and actually costs less than having a connection to the electric grid or the ongoing use of fossil energy. This past weekend, a solar energy tour was hosted at our site to share what we have learned about clean energy with other visitors from the community. In 2013, I

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worked with the residents of a Springbrook neighborhood to select a site, lay out plots, and design the needed resources to start their garden. One key component of that site was the dozen fruit trees which they have planted around a drainage ditch to improve the aesthetics of their community, while producing healthy fruit for neighbors. By discussing with Amie from that garden and watching the success of their trees, in the fall of 2013 we planted six trees along the north side of Dundee Community Garden in our own small orchard. We look forward to sharing fruit with members of our community over the coming years. Establishing and maintaining community gardens takes dedicated individuals, policies that allow and encourage local food production, and both up-front and ongoing funding. Policies at the state, city, utility, and neighborhood level are critical to providing benefits from community gardens in more locations. Allowing the use of both private and public land to grow food, plans and equipment to provide access to water, and legal and financial tools for garden organizations will continue to bring the good life to even more residents in our state. Healthy food provides a significant increase in quality of life, and community gardens are an excellent way to be active outside while growing food with friends and neighbors. Small areas of land won't produce all of the food that a community needs, but reconnecting to our food can help people lead healthy lives and happy lives. The greatest benefit I have gained over the past five years has come not just from growing my own food, but from growing my connection to neighbors and others in the community. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to reading the complete study. I would also like to echo that Mary Balluff made comments about water, legal guidelines, other insurance, other financial benefits that could be brought to the gardens, and that's come out of the Community Garden Networking Group that I mentioned. I think that she is probably a great point of contact for more information about what that group has worked to develop. And I would definitely echo all of the suggestions she made about potential improvements, so more gardens can both start and be successful in our state. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Mr. Williams. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [LR558]

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ERIC WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Good afternoon. [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon. My name is Nathan Morgan, N-a-t-h-a-n M-o-r-g-a-n. I'm the executive director of United Methodist Ministries here in Omaha and our major program is the Big Garden project. We are a network of 103 community gardens across Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa. Most of our gardens are located in food insecure neighborhoods, as the primary focus of our gardens is to alleviate hunger and to build community in usually low-income, underserved neighborhoods. Many of the things that I was going to mention have already been mentioned today, so let me talk a little bit about the aspects of community gardens that can alleviate hunger. Many of the neighborhoods, both rural and urban, across Nebraska are considered food deserts. There's a large food desert here in north Omaha where residents have lack of access to grocery stores, to supermarkets, and lack of access to healthy food choices. One of the things we've learned by building community gardens in urban and rural areas is that food deserts are an issue in rural Nebraska as well. If you live in a town of 500 and your grocery store closes and you don't drive, you are in a food desert, and that can affect the quality of your life. What we do is we partner with churches, with nonprofit organizations, with schools to build community gardens on their property and be able to...the gardeners use much of the produce on their own. They also donate much of it to food pantries in their communities. We do have a couple of gardens that actually do sell some of the produce in order to provide a revenue stream for that community garden. Some of the benefits that may not have been mentioned already that we have observed is that community gardens reduce crime. They provide eyes on the street. There are several community gardens here. I can think of one immediately at St. Mary's Avenue that is in front of a low-income senior citizen tower. If I walk onto that garden, it's affiliated with Kids Can, which is a local nonprofit for low-income kids. If I would walk into that garden, within two minutes there's a senior

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citizen from the tower that's down there asking me who I am, why I'm there, the produce is for the kids, thank you very much. I need to watch myself while I'm there so I have to identify, okay, it's all right, I'm here...I work in the garden. It's okay. They know that I'm here. That's a wonderful thing to have happen in a community garden because it means that the neighborhood is taking ownership of it. Community gardens also...they reduce family food budgets, which is a huge issue right now. Fresh produce, as mentioned earlier, especially organic produce, is expensive and by being able to grow some of what they eat, families become more resilient. One of the things we also do is we recognize that gardening skills are scarce, especially amongst young people. So we teach over 200 youth and adults each week through our ten-week summer curriculum how to grow, how to harvest, how to cook, and how to preserve some of their own food. Some of the issues around what government can do, access to land continues to be a struggle for many gardeners, especially in our newer refugee communities. Language barriers are sometimes an issue. If there was a vehicle in which public land could be made accessible to gardeners, that would be a huge benefit. We have not done that with my organization. We partner with nonprofits and churches, but I can definitely see the benefit of that. If we could help gardeners reclaim unused property, both urban and rural, and that is beginning to happen here in Omaha through the Prospect Village partnership that the city is working on. There have been lots there where abandoned houses which have been used for criminal activity have been demolished, the lots have been cleared, and there will be community gardens on some of those lots. And it's in partnership with several other organizations that are represented here that that is happening. Funding for start-up costs and for continuing to maintain gardens is a perennial problem in community gardens. Depending on the size and the structure of the garden, start-up costs can be fairly expensive. Water costs, also when there are issues around soil contamination that requires either remediation of soil, which can be an expense and take time, but it also, if you want to not do the remediation, then it requires the construction of raised beds, the bringing in healthy soil, those sorts of things. And that's a cost that community gardens have to face. If there was a way that individuals, community garden groups could find out what's in the soil where they're

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thinking about growing, if the municipality has those records, if the county has those records, many citizens don't know how to navigate city and county government very well. And if they were able...if there were a place they could go to ask those questions where those records could be pulled and you could find out what's in the soil where I want to grow, that could...the answer to that question could alleviate some of those start-up costs if it's a positive answer that there aren't contaminants. One thing that hasn't been mentioned that I think would be very beneficial is, if there was a way to encourage more gardening in our local school systems. Many of our students...we're all aware of the obesity epidemic among young people, but many young people have no idea where their food comes from or how to grow it. I had a young man at Nebraska Children's Home walk up to me with a handful of green onions saying, what is this grass I have here and should I pull it out of the bed and throw it away? Much of what I do on a daily basis is saying, no, no, no, don't pull that, that's a tomato plant. This is a weed, go pull that. So those sorts of skills aren't...young people don't have them. If there was a way that we could combine the STEM education aspects of community gardening with also the nutrition aspects of what...the healthy nutrition aspects that community gardens bring to our young people, that would be very beneficial. One other quick story that I can tell you that can specify how community gardens build neighborhoods, we partner with several refugee groups here in Omaha to build community gardens in their neighborhoods, particularly the Bhutanese refugee community. I was approached by the president of the Bhutanese Neighborhood Association to construct a community garden in an apartment complex where many of his friends and neighbors from Bhutan were living. They had been in refugee camps, many of them for 20 years, and were brought to Omaha, didn't speak the language. As soon as they arrived at the apartment complex, there was a murder in the parking lot. This was several years ago. They were not involved. No one from that community was involved, but they were terrified, obviously. Mr. Bishwah (phonetically) decided that having a garden, and his people were native gardeners in their homeland, having a garden would be a way that they could connect with the community. They worked with us, we developed a community garden on their property, and now crime is not an issue in that apartment complex. It's a

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beautiful place. It's a place for the neighbors to come out. Again, every time I show up, someone will be out there within two minutes asking me very politely who I am and why I'm there, which is exactly how it should be. These community gardens can be resources to address, I believe, not only issues of hunger and poverty, but also issues of crime in our neighborhoods, so they have multiple benefits. And any way that state government or local government could support them, we would be very enthusiastic about partnering with any entity of government that could do that. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Johnson. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you for coming in. Especially the perspective from the faith communities, part of it is donating the land or having the land available. But I guess how hard is it within your...within a parish or a congregation to find dedicated people and continue to find dedicated people to do the extra work that you're putting into it, and appear to be putting into the education side of it, and the community building and that? How...is that sustainable? [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: It is if it's done right. We do a lot of training of, talking with people in a particular congregation or at a nonprofit or a school before we ever put the first shovel in the ground. It is as much about people as it is about plants, perhaps more. So doing training about what it takes to coordinate people as much as it does what it takes to plant is vitally important to making a community garden successful. What we found is, we have what we call a three-year sustainability model. The first year is all wrapped around planning the garden. What are the characteristics of the site? How is the soil? Who are you going to recruit from your congregation in order to maintain the garden? What skills do they have? Then we work on the basics of planting, the basics of growing. But we also work very hard on making sure that those community gardens are connecting with the surrounding neighborhood. I tell people, stand where your garden is going to be. Do a 360. Every house you see you should be knocking on that door inviting those folks to garden with you. If they're not willing to do that, share produce

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with them. At the very least ask them to keep their eyes on the garden. And that's a way...that's those connections within a neighborhood that make the neighborhood a better place to live. We've seen neighborhoods where we've put community gardens where crime has gone down, but also pride in the houses that are around it has improved. We've seen people start keeping their lawns in better shape, doing plantings in their front yard. Maybe putting a new paint job on. It's those sort of...those tangible but yet in some ways intangible things that have come from having that garden in that place. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thanks, Senator Johnson. Sir, one more question for you. [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: Yes. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And you talked about anecdotally seeing the crime go down and stuff like that. Are there any statistics out that have shown this to happen? Could those be made available to the committee? [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: There have...I don't have them with me now, but I can find them. Senator, can I share them with you? I've got your e-mail address. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: That would be perfect. Yeah. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: That would be great. Yeah. Thank you. [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: Okay. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Those would be really good to have. [LR558]

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NATHAN MORGAN: I'll do that. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you very much. [LR558]

NATHAN MORGAN: Yep. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. They're fighting to get up here now. Come on up. Thank you very much. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: (Exhibit 5) Good afternoon. I'm Roxanne Williams, R-o-x-a-n-n-e, Williams, W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, and I'm the executive director of City Sprouts, a community garden located in north Omaha. Community gardens are an integral part of any growing, healthy neighborhood, and City Sprouts, the oldest community garden in Omaha was founded in 1995 in the Orchard Hill Neighborhood in north Omaha at 40th and Seward. During the mid-'90s, this area was experiencing much violence, drugs and gang activity. Concerned neighbors wanted to change a place of death and despair into a place of hope and growth and the seeds for City Sprouts were planted. A half acre of trash-filled, vacant lot overrun by weeds and debris was converted into a beautiful, productive community garden with 45 raised beds, fruit trees, composting bins, perennial flowers, beehives, a hoop house, and rainwater barrels. The mission of City Sprouts is sustaining communities through gardening. And we accomplish this goal by increasing the amount of fresh food available to people in need, providing employment for at-risk youth, offering education on healthy lifestyle choices, and empowering our community. The city of Omaha is working with us now by providing grants and the opportunity to change vacant lots owned by the city into productive community gardens. That is the Prospect Village initiative that Nathan Morgan referred to and we're a part of that initiative. This is a great start and there is so much more that can be done. Funding is always a challenge and consistent financial support from state and municipalities would be extremely helpful. This could be accomplished through providing suitable land, soil testing, free or reduced access to water, equipment and materials like mulch and

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soil. I think you have had a good understanding of the benefits of community gardening, so I would just like to say that City Sprouts is excited to serve as a resource as you research this resolution and we look forward to an exciting, dynamic relationship as we continue to grow more community gardens to benefit all of our citizens. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Ms. Williams. Senator Harr. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you. Thank you for coming in. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: My pleasure. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: What do you see as your biggest burden and what could we do to help alleviate that burden? [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: Our biggest challenge is always fund-raising. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: Part of...we are different in that we are a 501(c)(3), and... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Do you own your property? [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: We do own our property. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: We have a half acre that we received back in 1995 and then recently... [LR558]

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SENATOR HARR: So you don't pay property tax? [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: No. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: And then we just recently bought an acre and a half at 40th and Decatur. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: And do you know what your sewer fee is? [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: It's about \$50 a month. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. At your new location, are you going to have to have a hook-up fee? [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: Yes. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Do you know... [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: And we put water in and it cost \$8,000. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: Because prior to that time we were doing what other people were doing. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Rain barrel. [LR558]

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ROXANNE WILLIAMS: We were hooking a hose to the neighbor house over here and they got their water shut off. And then we borrowed from the neighbor behind us, and the students left the garage door open and a snake got in, and so she said no. (Laughter) And then...so, you know, and then we'd haul it up the hill and there would be no pressure, so there was no way we could consistently grow produce without a reliable water source. And so \$8,000 and more information than I ever wanted to know about installing water, we have two water hydrants there now. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [LR558]

ROXANNE WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Let me just ask a quick question. How many others do plan on testifying on this LR? One, two, oh, three. Okay, three. Okay. Thank you very much. [LR558]

_____: Sir, with the two separate bills, do you intend to hear some testimony from individuals more than once on this? [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yes, if there's people that want to give testimony on each LR, that's fine, yes. [LR558]

_____: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. Good afternoon. [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: (Exhibit 6) Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Goodman,

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E-I-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H G-O-O-D-M-A-N, and my testimony is regarding seed libraries which are including community gardens but are not limited to. In fact, they're inclusive of all citizens. Nebraska has a rich agricultural heritage. Our emblem is the seed sower and yet seed saving and sharing seed, the art of that is lost. Seed libraries ought to be established in every city and town across the state along with educational components. More importantly, legislation that protects seed libraries is imperative in order to ensure the perpetuation of our land-based heritage for many generations to come. So Common Soil Seed Library is here in Omaha. I helped to establish that program and we work on a very small budget of \$2,000 and serve 600,000 patrons in the Omaha area. It has been around for two years and we are now growing to two more locations. In Pennsylvania there has recently been a law that has shut down seed libraries and I would like Nebraska to take a stand on that issue by requesting that you pass bills in order to ensure the protection of seed libraries in our state. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Senator Harr. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yes, sorry. Thank you, Senator Schilz. What kind of enabling legislation would you like to see? Is there a model language out there other states have used? [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: I don't believe that states have established legislation that protecting seed libraries. It's a newer thing... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah. [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: ...that has spread out just because people are wanting to perpetuate open pollinated variety of seeds and share and continue that gardening heritage. So because it's such a new thing, there has not been a lot of legislation that I'm aware of to protect them. [LR558]

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SENATOR HARR: And what was the bill that eliminated it, or what did it do? [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: Pennsylvania--and I know that there's one other state, but I'm not sure of what it is--eliminated seed libraries. And I think that as a rich... [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: I mean, what did they do? They made them illegal or...? [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: Yes, they did. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Wow. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: On what grounds? [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah. [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: Yes, and because we have a rich agricultural heritage, it's economically in our best interest to keep that heritage open and free of access for all people. The seed libraries, you know, seeds when they're grown and shared in abundance, just continue to perpetuate themselves. And it does promote economic sustainability and independence in the community as well as, you know, promotes happiness among members of the community that are using it and able to share their seeds. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great thing. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. Appreciate it. [LR558]

ELIZABETH GOODMAN: You're welcome. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Good afternoon. Welcome. [LR558]

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CLARK WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. Thank you. Hello. I'm Clark Williams of Jurassic Gardens and City Chicks. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Mr. Williams, could you please spell your name? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: J-u-r...well, Clark Williams, C-l-a-r-k W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Just like it sounds. Thank you. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Okay. And I'm from Jurassic Gardens and City Chicks here in Omaha, Nebraska, in north Omaha. And what we do, we raise chickens, aquaponics, ferment composts, honeybees, and just other farm and garden significant...I'm getting a little nervous. (Laugh) [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: You're doing just fine. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Our goal at Jurassic Gardens and City Chicks are to empower people in the holistic way to grow their own foods and to create a healthier, more socially-just local food system in our backyards, homes, empty lots applying permaculture principles to cultivate land ownership and community leaders in our inner city. Realizing how important it is in our community to own land and to learn to be self-sustaining for our own goods, not to mention all of mankind to survive, our plan is to implement a long-term work ethic program for ex-offenders and homeless families to learn how to adapt to today's society while learning to utilize foreclosure homes to apply permaculture to grow their own foods. In this industrialized world, there's more destructive than it's ever been as the big bank crisis continues to collapse from its own greed with foreclosure homes and our food industry gets worse with the sugars and diseases, all of the signs are pointing to us to take care of the lands that we are locked out of in our communities. We're very small right now and we're doing it on a...all along with a very limited budget. Although we get support from a few nonprofit organizations,

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we are looking to get all the help that we can get to bring this dream to reality. Omaha is in an agricultural state and has a very strong agricultural background as a city, but it seems to be light-years behind in the urban farming and permaculture movement. And it's time for a change. So I would like to invite anybody that I possibly can to get all the help that we can to support this idea, so. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Williams. Any questions? Senator Harr. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you, Senator Schilz. Other than money, is there anything we can do to help encourage these gardens? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Buy some chickens. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Buy some chickens, there you go, yeah. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Buy some farm fresh eggs. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah, buy some fresh eggs. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: There you go. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Well, you know, just make land a little bit more accessible being as it's hard to get land around here. We do build our sustainable food systems all from scratch. We build chicken coops and aquaponics and different gardens, grow beds and everything on our own. And so, you know, just pretty much financing the land access that we can do these different things with. [LR558]

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SENATOR HARR: Okay. Are you working with a land bank, something new? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm trying to learn a lot more about it and work with the organizations that's doing it, yeah. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. If you need help, give us a call too. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Okay, I sure will. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any other questions? Mr. Williams, you said...how long have you been working at this, at your endeavor here? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: For almost about...well, a little over two years now, at least two years. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And how many...you say you grow eggs, is that what you're mostly doing? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Yeah, we raise chickens. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And the aquaponics, what, fish? Is that what you're doing? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Yeah. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And what kind of fish are you growing for...? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Right now, we're doing catfish to see we get our perfection down. But we'd like to grow...it is designed to grow edible foods so tilapia, catfish, and perch. [LR558]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: But we are getting vegetables and different crops out of our aquaponics system. But, you know, the fish right now in Nebraska you really can't sell edible fish without having different permits and everything. But, you know, we're getting our technique down and our ways of different growth and everything down. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Right. So now will you...will you do this in partnership with community gardens in showing them how to do this, or are these gardens that you're doing yourself and then moving out? How does that...? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Well, yeah, it is designed to basically partnership and build community gardens in the community by taking over foreclosure homes and, you know, putting edible landscapes on them so it's beautifying the community at the same time, you know, encouraging people to get these homes and do something in these homes in the community. So, yes, it is designed to be a community garden, more or less a lighthouse to the community, yes. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: With a little more emphasis on more than just fresh vegetables and things. You're bringing in some animals and things like that. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Right. Yeah, we wanted to like build urban farms in urban communities. Roosters aren't allowed in the city but chickens are allowed in the city and we always encourage different things that you can raise. Chickens, ducks, or even, you know, different turkeys and stuff like that in the community, yeah, we will promote. Whatever is legal and whatever we can grow that's livestock in the community I would encourage, so. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. Great. How many sites do you have right now? [LR558]

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CLARK WILLIAMS: Right now, well, I help take care of maybe three different sites right now, but I just got one of my own and it was some land that was donated to me from somebody and they helped me, you know, get the land and just go ahead and start. And I build my own chicken coops and sustainable food system, so. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: So you're kind of...you're just getting into it and feeling your way and learning as you go. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Yeah, and it's a beautiful thing to do. It's a sense of empowerment to really be able to grow your own food and really do it in your own community instead of being codependent on the grocery stores and stuff like that. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Absolutely. Well, I think it's a great idea and I think there's lots of opportunities out there, so hopefully you'll get your information to Senator Harr. Senator Johnson. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Do you have any feeling or have a limitation on the number of chickens for egg production or site? Is that going to be a hurdle at some point or do you just want to have more smaller locations? [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: Well, yeah, you try not to have too many chickens at one location, so if you can split it. I mean, you know, I see more condemned homes than I see people growing food. So if you got ten condemned homes and you're growing food on it, then that's, you know, ten chickens in each yard. You can spread it out instead of just trying to have one at one home. So it is designed to really bring employment and bring jobs in the community. If somebody's job was to go around collecting eggs, and it would be nice. Well, we're working on a building to try to bring a farmer's market to north Omaha. It was an old condemned building that sat around closed for a while. We put power to it and our goal is to try to raise a farmer's market to where we can go around and on these homes if we can collect the gardens and the food off of these homes and sell

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them at our farmer's market in the community, so. [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Very good. Neat project. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any other questions? Mr. Williams, thank you very much for your testimony today. Very much appreciate it. [LR558]

CLARK WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you, guys, very much. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Anybody else to testify on this one? Thank you. Anybody else? So much for three, four. Okay. Last two, right? [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Loaves and fishes. Loaves and fishes. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Thank you. Have a seat ma'am. Welcome. Good afternoon and welcome. [LR558]

KAY STEVENS: And we promise not to multiply. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Good afternoon and welcome. [LR558]

KAY STEVENS: Good afternoon. My name is Kay Stevens, K-a-y S-t-e-v-e-n-s, and I'm with No More Empty Pots here in Omaha. I've got comments on both and I don't know how you want to do that. It's really short, but... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: We'll just take this one so far. [LR558]

KAY STEVENS: This is five... [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah, LR558. [LR558]

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KAY STEVENS: (Exhibit 7) LR558, okay. As you've heard, there's a tremendous amount of innovation and energy and commitment that is going into community gardens in Omaha. I've been with No More Empty Pots for almost five years now and we worked very early in the process to define the distinctions between community gardens and urban agriculture or urban farms, and what you've heard is an array of community garden activity in this city. And the same is going on in Lincoln and in rural communities across the state. There's a genuine patchwork quilt of community garden models being implemented and we think that's wonderful, but the research that we think is necessary and...oh, and I think Mary mentioned the land use draft, land use standards that we developed with the Food Policy Council to present to the planning department to be used as they develop their community gardens, the Prospect Village Garden that was mentioned and some of the others. Because one thing that we could see was a growing interest in doing this and the cities being pushed to let their abandoned and neglected lots be used for these purposes, but there were no rules and they were jumpy and so they are...whenever you work for a city--I worked for three years for Omaha--so when you get jumpy you don't do anything. You just wait for it to go away. So the standards were developed and were received, actually surprisingly well, by the planning department and they're still floating around and a draft of that is available if you want one. You can contact anybody that's connected with the Food Policy Council to get it and see how that fits into the big picture from your point of view. But I think that the social, health, community, and food access benefits that have been described from all of these presenters goes...almost goes without saying because in the last ten years in the country community gardening has mushroomed and exploded exponentially across all the states. We believe that a study that's based on the broad parameters, which basically the list of parameters in the resolution are justifying community gardens, what all the wonderful benefits are, which we agreed with and wholeheartedly support, but we think for a study to have real beneficial applications in the state is we need to focus the research in three areas. First of all, there's extensive research that outlines best practices for community gardens all over the United States. I could name 15 states right

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now that have developed standards and are growing profoundly collaborative profitable community gardens, self-sustaining community garden activities from the East Coast to the West. And so we would like, though, I think, and it would be beneficial to everyone here that's working with community gardens, that there be an assembly or an inventory of community garden activities within the state of Nebraska and classifying them as to ownership, meaning public versus private, or collaborative public and private, size, type, and all of those things. We've heard rumors that in the far western reaches of Nebraska there's experimentation with greenhouses to grow citrus products. And one of the dreams for expanding the growing season to 12 months a year so that we can, in fact, begin to sustain our local food demand is to be able to produce things that don't grow here traditionally and what do we have to do the research, the more sophisticated research down the road. So that inventory of community gardening practices of the country would be...could be done with a Google exercise. And I'm incompetent when it comes to Google, but I found programs. So it would be a matter of, say, a graduate student just looking and listing all of the links that will lead you to everything from Chicago to Kansas City to Milwaukee to Detroit. There's just tremendous innovation going on all over the country. The second thing that would make this useful, it would identify any infrastructure deficits because there are a lot of them. And the water issue is different everywhere you go and that has been an epidemic problem here that's starting to finally be resolved, but it's a very expensive solution. So what are the deficits across the state for sharing technology and making these programs work better? And the standardization of access to vacant land, there is a state...you mentioned the land bank bill which does actually benefit all of the communities in the state. If they want to start a land bank in their area, they can. But there needs to be more coherence in terms of how that is done; how does a public entity manage the quality and quantity of vacant and abandoned land and convert it into something productive. And so...and then finally, I think legislative action might actually benefit from linking these two resolutions and combining the research because I think they're very much interconnected activities. There are issues in the other piece that I will talk about later, but we want to stimulate the growth of urban farms because that's jobs and economic development and it's

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building community down into the roots of the community, what Clark is trying to do, and there are other Clarks out there trying to do the same thing. It's about creating jobs. And when No More Empty Pots first began to organize, that was our priority and it was what set us apart because we wanted and we were very...you know, kind of mean and aggressive about it, actually. But what we were after was to get people to focus on understanding the economics of the existing food production system and then come up with systemic changes to make this more productive, more profitable for growers, more accessible for the market, which in the state of Nebraska, which is a rural agricultural state, but the market in Nebraska is in the cities. I notice Jim Knopik's truck is out there. His market is the city. He's getting it to the people, numbers...large numbers of people. So we want to do things in collaboration with other entities to help get that done. So, that would be the extent of my comments. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you very much. Any questions? [LR558]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you for the challenges. (Laughter) [LR558]

KAY STEVENS: Nothing small. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, ma'am, very much. [LR558]

KAY STEVENS: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And for our last testifier, come on up, please. Two...second to last testifier. Okay. Guys, remember, we are on a time line here and so we have to keep going, so very quickly, please. Thank you, sir. Welcome. [LR558]

BRENT LUBBERT: Thank you. And thank you taking the time. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Oh, sure. [LR558]

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BRENT LUBBERT: (Exhibit 8) I'm Brent Lubbert, and that's B-r-e-n-t L-u-b-b-e-r-t, and I will be brief. I only have one point I kind of want to get across. I'm representing one fifth of Big Muddy Urban Farms. We're the urban farm. We grow on five different vacant lots of land. And the point I want to get across is how it benefits us as an urban farm. There are more community gardens and there's two points to that. So as an urban farm, we are similar to a community garden. We are growing food just as a community garden is, but we differentiate that we are bringing goods to a market and our markets in particular are a 30-member CSA, Community Supported Agriculture, or we have investors, Gifford Park Neighborhood Market, and then the occasional restaurant sale. But we would be nowhere without the support of community gardens and there's two community gardens I want to exemplify right now. So one is that we partnered with NorthStar back three years ago when we started our organization, so this is our third season. But we broke ground over here at the Sahler Community Garden and farmed on the square plot that's there right now. But last year was our last year growing there and now refugees grow there and more than just that. But it's been amazing seeing the difference in styles on how that has grown and that goes back to the community garden where there's many people growing right next to each other, so they get to learn from different styles. And that is an amazing learning experience I think that should always happen. So with that partnership and also there being a community garden there, we were able to farm there because there was land there and there was already growing happening. And then we also partner with the Gifford Park Community Garden, which is an amazing community garden, but that only is in fruition because of all the time and effort that a couple of folks from the community have put into that, actually a lot of folks. It's the whole community. But on that community garden, we have a demonstration plot as well as a chicken coop. And with the demonstration plot there's a youth garden program and so we participate in the youth program by doing examples on what we're growing. This year, it was potatoes and then we made potato dough, pizza dough, and made pizza for the end of the year. But then we also get to teach about chickens and the biology and physiology of chickens, which is great. So that goes back to the question of, how are you going to

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manage these community gardens? And when the community garden is set in place and then there's an urban farm that can hook up with the community garden, there's that support network that happens. And in our case, I mean, the community garden was there first, you know, because that is the basis of things. And then we were able to lean on that support. So, as we want more urban farms, hopefully, which bring economic impacts of jobs and education, as well as getting press about agriculture incorporated, because the newspaper is so close that they can come talk to an urban agriculturist instead of the economics of going to the countryside. Not that the urban agriculturist knows everything, but...yeah, so the community gardens definitely have been a pillar of support for us, so just wanted to get that across. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Very good. Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LR558]

BRENT LUBBERT: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And now, here we go, hopefully. And welcome. Thank you. [LR558]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Scott Williams, S-c-o-t-t W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, 1139 South 93rd Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska. First and foremost, thank you to the Agriculture Committee for joining us here in Omaha for this opportunity to provide public insight on the issues of community gardening, urban agriculture, and local foods. Thanks to the senators and staff for joining us today, the NorthStar Foundation for hosting this discussion, and to the guests here in the room for being involved and contributing the expertise and the efforts for input here today. A special thank you to Senators Harr and Kolowski for introducing resolutions that deal with this important topic. Personally, and I do not speak for the NorthStar Foundation, even though I am employed here, personally I stand in strong support of this resolution today. I do work as an academic advisor at the NorthStar after-school program. The NorthStar

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facility includes an adjacent property, which is host to a flourishing community garden which you will have the opportunity to tour earlier this afternoon. This fall marks the conclusion to the fourth gardening season and by all accounts it has been by far the most successful and productive so far. The community garden provides benefits to NorthStar students directly and to the broader community. In addition to academics, athletics, and art immersion, part of NorthStar's programming involves external partners providing curriculum. Two partners in particular have made use of the gardening site as an integral part of their activities. Truck Farm, who provides gardening and healthy food education, has located a portion of their lessons and their gardening at the garden during the past five weeks. Students have learned about identifying different plants, weeding and maintaining the plots and garden, and common pests and problems that arise surrounding food and flowering plants. In addition, another partner, Cooking Matters, has provided NorthStar students with the opportunity to learn about cooking, the value of nutritious prepared foods, and even to have the opportunity to cook produce that they have planted, grown or harvested themselves right here at NorthStar. All of these have been facilitated by the availability of a community gardening site on the adjacent property. In addition to gardening and healthy local foods, the community garden site provides numerous and broad-reaching benefits. Community gardening starts with community. The neighborhood around the site has been actively engaged in tending the garden. Most of the residents are resettled refugees who have come from more agrarian lifestyles. While providing food, the gardening activity itself provides a feeling of home and a sense of community. I offer appreciation to Laura Weiss of the South Sudan Community Association who was integral in organizing the community to make the garden successful and the site that we saw earlier today. Many of the members of the community who live right there are involved in the refugee resettlement program and they're the ones who actually make the garden site successful. Apart from my position at NorthStar, I've personally been involved in community gardening, local foods, and urban agriculture for a number of years. If my face and voice look familiar, it was my twin brother, just a few moments ago, who talked about his activities founding the Dundee garden and a number of other sites. Additionally, my mother, Roxanne, is

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the director at City Sprouts, so this runs deep in our family. (Laughter) [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Indoctrination, right? [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah. [LR558]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: In addition, through a partnership with No More Empty Pots, who is also represented here today, I wrote a proposal to the city of Omaha Planning Department in response to a request for proposal for eight community garden sites in the Prospect Village Community Garden project. This has been a collaboration between the city of Omaha Planning Department, No More Empty Pots, City Sprouts represented here today, Big Garden represented here today, and the South Sudan Community Association. That project, in particular, has been an outstanding example of the city as an organization looking to make best use of land that's available. So in the neighborhood between 30th and 36th Street from Hamilton to Lake, there has been an extensive effort to put sites that had otherwise been properties that had been condemned and taken down and just abandoned lots, essentially, that are owned by the city, put them back into productive gardening use. And so this fall we're starting to break ground on those first sites and put them into active community gardening and urban agriculture use. And through the spring and summer of next year, we should see a flourishing activity as members of the community have the opportunity to work on those gardens. In addition, this has actually been an opportunity for the city to ask for people in Omaha to be involved in community gardening, local foods, and they found a resounding response of support and fervor to try and be involved. And that's how the partnership that we have organized came to be. It's been an excellent opportunity to learn about the things that are required for community gardening and we've identified some of the hurdles. Many of the folks who have spoken today have identified some of them to you--land access. Fortunately, the city of Omaha has started to look at that and try to do what they can to make some land available to community gardens. Properties owned by the city can be put into interim use for community gardening. Now interim use

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is a difficult topic because if you don't own the land, it's difficult to make an \$8,000 investment in water infrastructure. It's difficult to plant orchards of flowering trees that won't probably provide fruit for three to five years. But there are some benefits that can be realized right away. And from the city's perspective, in a number of cases, some of those sites may be strong enough...may show strong enough support from the community that they will actually be able to become permanent community garden sites. And so, through that partnership with those various organizations in the city, we're looking to explore what it takes to actually make those gardens a success. We've come up with some interesting ways to try and address the water problem by using large storage tanks on the property, and then coming up with the way to get access to municipal water that doesn't involve neighborhood...or neighbors with hoses, and doesn't involve the expense of trying to put in a whole new metering system for the lots in particular. So we're trying to address some of those problems for how we could put otherwise disused lots into use. And so water is certainly one of those. Access to land is certainly one of those. And we're looking to explore the rest of those and it's an ongoing process. But myself and the other partners in that project would be happy to be a resource for you as you continue to study community gardening, local foods. The things that we learn, the best practices that we'll try and develop for those sites will certainly be something we'd love to pass on to the committee and, you know, offer any information in any way. My own personal experience, my Ph.D. is in engineering and so I look at gardening from a very technical perspective, and I'm interested in the infrastructure of how do I support gardens. But there are other folks in the room who are certified master gardeners and have years of experience with different types of plants and different types of vegetables, and how to make those work the best they can. So, I would be happy to be, you know, a point person that you could contact for infrastructure questions about gardening. And I hope that that is a useful resource as you look at these studies to try and find out the ways the Legislature might be able to support community gardening and the local foods. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time, or stay in touch in the future to try and provide input. Thank you.

[LR558]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Thank you very much. And sorry I almost cut you off there. But any questions for the good Doctor? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LR558]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. One last call. Is there anybody else who would like to testify? Would you like to real quick? [LR558]

LARRY DUFF: I'll give you two minutes. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Last one and then you're going to close, right? You're not going to close? Okay. [LR558]

LARRY DUFF: I'm here on behalf of...I've listened to this. I'm for the proposal. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Can you say and spell your name, please? [LR558]

LARRY DUFF: Yes. I'm Dr. Larry, L-a-r-r-y, Duff, D-u-f-f, and I didn't come prepared to testify so I'm going to give you some random notes of things that are available that haven't been touched on here. I'm a biologist, science teacher, practicing attorney, and a horticulture student at Metro Community College. In terms of that, agronomy is the large farms. Horticulture is the community gardens to ten acres. We own ten acres in Wisconsin that brought me into this thing with the middle daughter. Metro Community College has all of the academic courses in place now. They need to be brought within this community. This study would do that. They have currently 124 majors over there, they're two years in place. Their director is Todd Morrissey, who put Lauritzen Gardens together, places students on a national basis, currently has the educational courses in place for the community gardens and a two-year associate's program; works with BlueBird Nurseries at Clarkson, a \$20 million operation; works with Garden Fresh at

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O'Neill and that operation up there. The economic development, and I'll close with this, the economic development, all you have to do is look at Will Allen in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who we work with. They just got a \$5 million grant from IBM private money and a \$1 million from Walmart. As I said, I didn't come prepared to testify. They have small animals in place over there. They have the coursework for all of these folks, both on the academic side and on the professional side. With that, I'll close. I'll be happy to testify or submit anything else on a prepared statement. Senator, I didn't come prepared to testify. I'm the interface between the Adams project, the horticulture as a horticulture student, and the community gardens and our farm in Wisconsin. We'll close with this: Wisconsin is a model. It went from 100 of these to 900 in three years. It's an emerging field. The horticulture basis deals with culinary basis, deals with your national thing. There will be a national exposure...a state exposure next February. This is an emerging field. I only deal with high-level aquaponics nationwide. The best program I found was at Metro. Thank you very much for allowing me to testify. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thanks, sir. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Appreciate it. Could you please fill out a sheet before you go? [LR558]

LARRY DUFF: I'll be happy to submit a written report. Thank you so much for your time. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Hey, no, thank you very much. Appreciate it. Okay. [LR558]

LARRY DUFF: I'm for the proposal, Senator. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you. Thank you. [LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I think Senator Harr decided not to close on this. [LR558]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah, I'll waive closing just so we can keep moving to the next one.

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[LR558]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. Great. Thank you. And with that, we will move on. I think that Anna is here to testify on behalf of Senator Kolowski. [LR558]

ANNA WISHART: Do you need to break at all and stand up? [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I think let's just keep going. So welcome, and this is on LR545. [LR545]

ANNA WISHART: Yes. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And I think you're set to go anytime. [LR545]

ANNA WISHART: Thank you. Well, good afternoon, Chairman Schilz and members of the Agriculture Committee. My name is Anna Wishart, A-n-n-a W-i-s-h-a-r-t, and I am speaking today on behalf of Senator Rick Kolowski who represents Legislative District 31 and the great state of Nebraska. The senator sends his regrets. He's unable to attend. He's at an educational leaders meeting in D.C. and unable to be here, so I will take his place. Senator Kolowski introduced LR545 to ignite a statewide discussion on local food and how we can improve the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of it in Nebraska. So what is local food? There's actually no single definition as it varies within the local food movement. One of our tasks within this interim study is to create a definition that fits for Nebraska. So to give you a picture to work with today, in 2008...in '08, Congress defined local food as the locality or region in which the final product is marketed so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product. Or you could also define it...they also defined it as the state in which the product is produced. And to give you a better picture, the face of local food in Nebraska and nationwide is farmer's markets; community supported agriculture, CSAs; school and community gardens cooperatives; urban and

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rural farms that sell locally; farm-to-plate initiatives in restaurants, and the list goes on. So today you will hear from experts in the field of local food. They will talk to you about the economic, educational, health, and environmental benefits of a local food system. They will also discuss the challenges in front of us for increasing local food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. Thank you for lending your ears today. I'd be happy to answer any questions. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Ms. Wishart. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [LR545]

ANNA WISHART: Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Welcome. Good afternoon. [LR545]

JON BAILEY: (Exhibit 9) Good afternoon. Good afternoon, members of the committee, my name is Jon Bailey. That's J-o-n, B-a-i-l-e-y, and I'm the director of the Rural Public Policy Program at the Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, Nebraska. In the interest of time, I'll summarize what...the handout that's being provided to you. But as Anna pointed out, one of the things she asked me to talk about was some of the big-picture items of local and regional food systems and the economics and some of the barriers that people who are interested in local and regional food systems are facing. I think one of the important things to say first is how much money Nebraskans spend on food and how little comes back to the state. It's estimated that Nebraskans spend over \$4 billion annually, and this data is a few years old so maybe it's closer to \$5 billion annually on food, and 90 percent of that leaves the state. So I think that begs a major policy issue that I think would be something to consider as we go forward on this issue is, how do we bring more money back to the state of our total state food budget? I think there exists and we, the Center for Rural Affairs, believe there exists a real opportunity and a growing opportunity to create comprehensive local and regional food systems in the state of all of the things that Anna mentioned earlier to start increasing that 10 percent

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amount of food dollar that comes back to Nebraska. This opportunity comes from a current and growing positive attitude--you heard it on the previous resolution--concerning local foods and growing national emphasis placed on food security, health, and the environment. One of the things that we often hear is, what are the economics? Are there economic effects, economic impacts of local and regional foods? And in my comments, I summarize both a USDA study on that and then a recent study from Iowa about their experience of regional food systems. And one of the opportunities I think that regional and local food systems create is the opportunity to economically benefit not only the individual growers and producers involved but also economics of the state's agricultural sector which is strong, of course, in this state, and the local and regional food systems can do nothing but help that, and also of rural communities. And in some ways, as the data in my comments show, particularly the Iowa study, regional food systems in Iowa have created jobs where they're done. And so anything that creates jobs in rural areas is a plus. Senator Wallman can attest to that. Anything that creates jobs is something we should look at. And anything that helps repopulate rural communities I think is something we should really look at, at how we can strengthen that. Local and regional food systems have some real opportunities for young and beginning farmers who have problems often with access to land and access to the capital involved in agriculture. And in this usually smaller scale agriculture, they're able to start...start their agriculture (recorder malfunction)...nationally, \$1.2 billion in 2007 and it's growing. It almost doubled from the previous data in 1997. It's probably grown since 2007. The Iowa report was from 2013. It's a study of the Regional Food Systems Working Group in Iowa, which is a statewide network of Iowa farmers, food-based businesses, educational institutions, government agencies. They did a survey of 103 farmers in 2012 and found that those 103 farmers reported \$10 billion (sic), a little over \$10 billion (sic) in local food sales in 2012; 74 buyers totaled nearly \$9 million in purchases in 2012; and then, as I mentioned, some job creation numbers also from these efforts. So this is a real entrepreneurial activity, which I think all farmers and ranchers are entrepreneurs, and Nebraska has a strong entrepreneurial bent, entrepreneurial culture. You heard from urban folks who are doing that today. So rural,

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the rural economy is based primarily on entrepreneurship, whether it be agricultural or nonagricultural. So this is another way to enhance the entrepreneurship of rural communities to increase the economic benefits of agriculture in rural communities. One thing that we...we have just completed a study with UNL on how to create regional and local food systems in Nebraska and I've attached to my written comments, I've attached two reports that came out of that project with UNL. And one of the things that we have found--and this is nothing new, USDA has found the same thing, every other state that has studied this issue has found the same thing--that an important aspect of regional and local food systems is the connection between consumers and the producers, connection between the produced food and consumers. So one of the things in this project that we did with UNL was to ask consumers. We surveyed consumers, producers, and institutions, food-buying institutions, did a survey and also some focus groups with them. One of the things we asked was, first of all, particularly of consumers, are they interested in local food? Are they interested in buying local foods? Have...do they buy local foods? And we found overwhelmingly that consumers want to purchase--I mean almost unanimously of everybody we surveyed and talked to in focus groups--almost unanimously, consumers want to purchase food locally if they can, if it's available. And most of it comes down...I mean there's all the health benefits, the environmental benefits that you heard earlier. But mostly it comes down to connection between the food and the producer of the food and the consumer. People want to do something to help their local economy, to help their local farmer, help their local rancher, do something to help. And this is one way they can help. So as I said, almost...it's close to 100 percent of consumers want to purchase local food if it's available. The "if it's available" part is a real issue. And even the producers told us that. So on the last page of my written comments I talk about some of the...we also asked producers what challenges they saw in participating in local or regional food systems. Most of them, a strong majority of producers want to participate in the local and regional food system too. But I've outlined some of the challenges there, and there's some real, I think, policy challenges that this committee could take up on that, some really big issues, like distribution and transportation and processing. The lack of processing

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facilities for locally produced food is a big issue. There's also just some general entrepreneurial business education that's a problem, and this came through in some of the surveys we did with consumers. Consumers who are used to certain conveniences now in their food purchases, you know, they're used to stores being open at certain times or used to the food that they want being there all the time. So we as consumers have gotten used to that, and that's not always available when they do these local food purchases or farmer's markets or CSAs or whatever part of a local food system there is. Some of that cannot be avoided, but some of it can, some basic business education. And the producers who are involved in this, of course, are experts at farming or ranching. They may not be experts in running a retail business, and so some more entrepreneurial and business education I think would really help a lot of these producers. Anyway, I think there's...I think the bottom line, the big-picture line here is there's a real opportunity, economically and socially, to create these regional and local food systems that will help rural communities, it will help producers, that will help consumers. And so we look forward to working with you, and I appreciate the senator for bringing this study to your attention. And we look forward to acting as a resource and helping you with developing the policy that will move this forward. Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Thank you, Mr. Bailey. Any questions? Senator Wallman. [LR545]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Thank you, Senator Schilz. Yeah, does the state have the willpower...I mean not willpower but manpower to check these products, you know, for safety, like USDA? For...I've got a meat producer and he butchers his hogs, butchers his beef, sells it at a meat store. He does quite well,... [LR545]

JON BAILEY: Uh-huh. [LR545]

SENATOR WALLMAN: ...and it's in Beatrice. So he has a little trouble getting somebody to inspect. [LR545]

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JON BAILEY: This has been a long-term issue, Senator, and it probably precedes most of you being in the Legislature. There's been studies about that as well, and the necessity of that and the cost of it. [LR545]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Yeah. [LR545]

JON BAILEY: And, yeah, it...that's one of the types of issues. And so the whole distribution and the processing issue I think is a big one, yeah. [LR545]

SENATOR WALLMAN: The safety thing, yeah. Thanks. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Wallman. [LR545]

JON BAILEY: And I don't know if there is the person power out there to do it right now. I would probably guess no because there seems to be a lot of holes in the system. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Appreciate it. [LR545]

JON BAILEY: Thank you very much. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Just a question while he's coming up: How many folks plan to testify on this LR while we're sitting here? One, two, three, four, five, six. Okay, great. Thanks. Welcome, sir. Good afternoon. [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. David J. Hibler, H-i-b-l-e-r, Sr. People call me "Dr. D.," as in dummy or dirt or dumb as dirt, although dirt isn't necessarily, those of you agriculturally inclined, isn't necessarily all that dumb but is really

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pretty...well, it's been around for a long time, shall we say. (Laughter) I had thought...I want to apologize, also, for being ill prepared for today's meeting. I've had a grandson in the hospital with leukemia for a month. I've had...it's kept me quite distracted. And I've also had a doctor's appointment this morning, and I had hoped to be able to put some last things together before that, but it didn't happen. I am here to testify on behalf of BPR-CPR, Inc., which is a small nonprofit. We first filed...well, we came into being in 1999, 16 years ago, as the Benson Plant Rescue. We incorporated nonprofit in 2007 as Benson Plant Rescue, and we reincorporated last year as BPR-CPR. It's Benson Plant Rescue/Community Produce Rescue. And actually, we're walking both sides of these two bills that you've got here, both as regards community gardens, on the one hand, because as Benson Plant Rescue we've been very much involved with Mary Balluff. And anything that Mary told you was gold. Okay? I mean, you've heard the wonderful testimony from other people as well, from Mary Green and from Nathan and from Kay. These are all people that, you know, we've all worked together. And I think that Omaha has manifested itself as being a hotbed of urban agriculture and community-oriented agriculture activity. And I think we just need to keep on moving in that direction. From the Benson Plant Rescue point of view, we have had a community garden going for five years which two years ago we turned into a refugee garden and the Karen community has been taking care of it. We've also from this past year had a teaching garden in association with the Benson High School kids, but, unfortunately, a groundhog has pretty much seen to making a dent into that particular venture. But in dealing with the high school kids, we've tried to explain to them that's part of gardening, as well, that you sometimes get unanticipated attacks on your production, shall we say. But from the community produce point of view--okay, and this gets to the question of food production, local food production, and local food distribution--I would like to raise with this committee, and this may even go beyond the confines of this bill, the whole question of dealing with food waste, okay, dealing with or dealing with what is called food waste, because the statistics that are coming out nationally about the scope of this problem are somewhat staggering. To quote from an article in the paper only a couple of weeks...a couple days ago: In 1912 (sic--2012), the most recent year for which estimates are

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available, Americans threw out roughly 35 million tons of food. That's almost 20 percent more food than the United States tossed out in 2000, 50 percent more than 1990, and three times what Americans discarded in 1960. And the summary of some of these studies is that the question of hunger in the country or the question of hunger in the world at all as a whole is not necessarily just a question of food production but a question of food distribution. Curbing hunger isn't a matter of producing more food so much as better preserving and distributing the food being produced. And from that point of view, we have the matter of both preconsumer and postconsumer food waste, that is to say, the amount of food that is generated on the farm or generated out in the country that is lost before it actually gets through the distribution system and gets out to the consumer, as well as the food that is lost after the fact. So now, wearing the other hat apart from the Benson Plant Rescue, wearing the Community Produce Rescue point of view, we have for, again, the past 16 years rescued out the back doors of grocery stores the produce culls that every day are going out to the landfill. And again, there are studies out there that show that current landfill usage, up to 50 percent of what's going into landfills is in some ways food related or organic related. So another major issue that should be addressed that is a parallel to the food distribution side is the reclamation of this organic waste for useful purposes: one the one hand, reclaiming that which is edible to distribute out. You heard some of the earlier testifiers talk about taking food from their local gardens and distributing it out in the community. From the community produce point of view, we have about a dozen different nonprofits that we've distributed to over the years; three of them are drug/alcohol rehabs; two of them are sheltered housing for mental clients; we've got a battered women's shelter through the Catholic Social Services; Siena/Francis House; the Open Door City Mission and whatever. And the common ingredient in any number of nonprofits is that, when people think about providing food to the hungry, a lot of times they are talking about shelf-stable food because that's mostly what people need to deal with. It's in a box; it's in a can; you can put it out there and you can keep it for a long time. But the question of getting that...these disadvantaged populations access to fresh produce, to fresh food is something that really needs to be done. And from my point of view, it is not just

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shocking but actually almost criminal that, as near as I can estimate from the sense I've had of it, having...well, I've worked actually in food rescue for 40 years now, but I've been in Omaha for 16 years. My ballpark estimate is there's probably five tons or more of edible produce going to the Omaha...the Douglas County landfill every day, okay, maybe up to five tons of edible produce to...we are, through CPR, and we're just rescuing right now two days a week out of Whole Foods, we're rescuing somewhere between 1,000, 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of food a week, okay, that we then distribute out to these different nonprofits. And the reality is that, of that organic waste coming out of the backside of the grocery stores, probably 85 to 95 percent of what is coming out the back door is usable, okay, and could be adapted in some fashion. And apart from being adapted as edible, that which is not adapted as edible for direct food use distributed to whether nonprofits or low-income clients, it can and should be composted rather than dumped into the landfill because we can, on the one hand, quit burying something that is a useful resource, and we can develop different fashions and manners in which we can use this resource for productive ends. Some suggestions then that we might, you know, just to...and I don't know how much of this fits within this particular bill or may, just insofar as you as Agriculture Committee think of additional bills into the future that may be out there, okay? You might think about tax credits for beginning farmers. This gets to what the last speaker was just talking about. The urban...agriculture right now is such, at least large corporate agriculture is, such a...there is such a cost involved in it that just getting started on the big scale, if you want to be a corn farmer--and I've lived out in the country before I moved back here, I was out in the country for 25 years when I was teaching down at the U in Lincoln--the amount of investment needed just to begin at the commercial level of farming anymore is simply staggering, okay, and it's next to impossible unless you've been born into it or inherited into it to get started, whereas locally grown food and locally developed agriculture is something that has a much less up-front--that is, if you're doing ten acres or 20 acres--and what you need to deal with that is much more economical. So possibly the state can do some things to do tax incentives or training incentives to help young farmers get their foot in the door. The question of food conservation zones within the immediate confines of the large urban

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areas, which again, as previous speaker, Kay (Stevens), talked about this the last time, that the markets for these farm goods are in the cities where the concentration of population is, rather than out in the country itself, okay? It is, again, somewhat criminal when you look at some of the best farmland not just in America but some of the best farmland in the world which lies just west of Omaha between the Elkhorn River and then on over towards the Platte River and going on out towards Wahoo and whatever, the ways in which so much of this productive farmland has been just turned into urban sprawl and some enclaves for the nouveau riche to plant great big, massive lawns for show or display or whatever hobby. As a culture, we need to be thinking seriously about using that land and using that land productively. And then finally, we really do need a much more extensive study of the whole distribution system and how we can get rid of the waste in the distribution system or recapture some of that, recapturing it for twofold purposes--one the one hand, feeding the hungry, people who otherwise cannot afford it and, secondly, keeping things out of the landfill--finding ways that we can capture that waste, recycle it, compost it, and put it to productive ends and get less of this reliance upon the commercial model which, from a fertilizer point of view, involves nitrates which then gets us into all these other problems with nitrates and the water and runoffs into the rivers and into the streams and pollutions of drinking water and everything else. And the more that we can get ourselves towards an agricultural model that is based upon organic basis, it seems to me, is much more profitable. But I apologize for running on here. I've got a big mouth, and that's why I wish I had a chance to write it down. Is it under...are you...do your rules allow you to make a written, within so many days, addition as well? [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Absolutely. If you want to send more information, that's more than possible, yeah. [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: Yeah, I'd be happy to do that if you don't mind. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah, that would be fine. That would be great. [LR545]

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DAVID HIBLER: Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any questions? Senator Johnson. [LR545]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you. Question: Your food rescue, is that raw food or is it processed food that you... [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: This is...what we are rescuing is produce. [LR545]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Produce. [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: Yes, yes, fresh produce. [LR545]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Fresh produce, okay,... [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: Right. [LR545]

SENATOR JOHNSON: ...because I, thinking back many years ago, we weren't even able to use some of that and feed it to livestock. And I don't know where that's at right now. I've been out of that for a little bit. But we couldn't even take produce that was turned away at a restaurant and feed it to livestock. Evidently, you're getting around that. [LR545]

DAVID HIBLER: Well, they're...with the good Samaritan laws, with the change and whatever that is, you are protected under the law now in terms of recycling, especially with fresh produce. Okay, now when get into processed foods, there is a...that's a slightly different... [LR545]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Yeah. [LR545]

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DAVID HIBLER: ...element as well. The statistics out there are that, on the total amount of food waste being generated, 40-50 percent, ballpark, is from consumers and another...the other 40 or 50-60 percent may actually be out of restaurants or production facilities. So you get into, you know, and when you...now there are people working on that. I don't know if the people from Saving Grace are going to be here to testify today or not. But Saving Grace has started out working on rescuing that type of processed food with refrigerated trucks and taking it around and distributing it to nonprofits. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay, thank you. Senator Wallman. [LR545]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Thank you, Senator. Yeah, Prairieland Dairy is composting like Norris Public Schools' food they throw away and part of Lincoln, I think, too. But they're doing that. And Colorado, if you take food from the prison system and all this stuff, you've got to boil it for your hog. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Wallman. Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Next testifier, please. Good afternoon and welcome. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: (Exhibit 10) Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Gregory Fripp. It's G-r-e-g-o-r-y F-r-i-p-p. I'm the founder and executive director of Whispering Roots. Whispering Roots is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) that's focused on providing healthy food and education into underserved communities, both urban rural, using aquaponics. So for those who aren't familiar with aquaponics, we use fish water to grow healthy vegetables. That's what we do. So earlier, I think, there was a gentleman that referred to the Metro Community College System. That's a system that I built there. We basically have started this process in Nebraska. What I'm doing today is I'm here to talk about how local food can affect not only our communities but...and also our schools. To give you a little bit of background on Whispering Roots, we use it in schools. We use aquaponics in schools to teach STEM--science, technology, engineering, and math. So

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we use food as method of engaging students, and we're having great results with that. As an aside, one of our schools that we started with approximately three years ago, King Science Middle School in north Omaha, had no program three years ago. And they went from no program to now being the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow national finalist. They've won about \$55,000 in gear in competing nationally using aquaponics, teaching STEM principles, so all your chemistries, your physics, water flow, things like that, and food. So a lot of places where we work in underserved communities, urban and rural, Jon testified earlier--I also sit on the board of advisors for the Center for Rural Affairs--the issues are the same regardless of being urban or rural: access to healthy food. That's what we try and deal with. So, you know, no matter where you go in Nebraska, people suffer from a lack of access to healthy, nutritious food. There's a couple maps that I put in on page 2. And I'll summarize everything; I won't read word for word. But these maps show where we have low access to healthy food in Nebraska. You notice a lot of it's rural. For some folks, it's hard to believe in that in north Omaha, in the center of Omaha, that we have folks who don't have access to healthy foods, who don't have grocery stores, who don't have access to fresh produce. And I was laughing a little bit. This is my third meeting today talking about local food and food access. And we were over at UNO and they were talking about their food pantry that they have in the school for the students. So I went and looked at it, I even took a picture, because there is a shelf that has fresh produce...for fresh produce. There's no fresh produce. So there's a lot of canned, a lot of processed food. That's the level that we're dealing with. When we talk about the importance of local food from an economic standpoint, and map, too, it talks about there's about \$8,000 (sic) annually that leaves, that we lose in our communities because there's no access to healthy food, about \$8 million. But the demand is about \$20 million. So is there a market for growing and producing local foods at the point of consumption? There definitely is. We just have to figure out how to do it better. You know, a secondary analysis of the Omaha area talked about residents and the census tract from Dodge Street south to about I-80/680 north to the Missouri River, which is commonly known as north Omaha. In north Omaha, with our kids and some of our schools, about 93 percent of those kids are on free and reduced lunch, about 93

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percent. And if you look at Hispanic populations, you look at Native American populations, because we do a lot of work with UNMC now as well, Native American reservations, the issues are the same. These kids need access to healthy food. And so that's when it comes into dealing with Farm to School. You know, I see the problem. We had a bunch of visitors. We had about people from ten states that came into Nebraska, and they came and they toured some of our schools where our kids were growing in the classroom, and they were wondering how we're relating the rural component with the urban component. And the way that we look at it is, as has been mentioned several times, the urban environment is where the buyers are. And so my goal is to figure out how we get all these farmers and all these folks who want to be urban farmers to be able to collaborate, consolidate, and get ahold of some of these large contracts. And here's a thought. You know, we were talking to Creighton University about getting access to their food department, getting local food in there, and their response was, you'll have to talk to Sodexo. Right? So we have people in Nebraska who would like to provide food into one of our universities, but you have to go through a third party. And they say one of the issues is that we don't have consistency. And we're talking about processing. When you get at a certain scale, they need to have scale. If they need it delivered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 9:00, they need it delivered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 9:00. But the problem is some of our smaller producers can't do that. So if we can consolidate that and perhaps from some type of legislation if we can say that there must be a percentage of the food that is purchased locally, that will help these farmers and pending and budding urban farmers get access to those contracts. I was out in North Carolina this summer at the Sustainable Ag Conference. I was presenting there. I was the only non-Ph.D., you know, nonuniversity person that was invited to present at this, you know, conference because they wanted to know how we were doing it in Omaha, all right, on a very shoestring budget. But then they also brought in their people who talked about how they are required to purchase a certain part of their food from the local community. So things like that would be helpful. You know, there's an example that I like to give when we're talking about community gardens, we're talking about access to land. You know, we talked about the city turning

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over that land. I cochaired the committee that wrote that document that allowed people to get access to the tracts of land with the city of Omaha. It was a great success. We're using it now. But then we found out we didn't have access to water. And someone was talking about the amount of money that it costs to get access to water on the land. So you have these folks who want to farm but they can't get access to water because it's going to be too expensive. But there were fire hydrants that were right next to the land that we could use to water the crops, right? But we found out we couldn't use those fire hydrants to water the crops. However, if we wanted to have a fire hydrant party and spray water on the kids in the street, we could water the kids. So you can't water the crops but you can water the kids in the street. That doesn't make any sense. So those are the types of issues when you're trying to do urban ag, when we're trying to do local food, that people run into, and issues with how we process. But regardless of race, you know, children, race, and poverty, you know, they face the same challenges. We can use food to enhance STEM. We can use food to train people because I think, you know, when we're dealing with these young kids, when we're talking about bringing food into the classroom, be it Farm to School or using food as a tool for teaching STEM, we are training the next generation of agriculturists. That's what we're doing. We're training the students who are going to be feeding us tomorrow. One of the problems that we run into is we need action, right, because we do...we have a lot of meetings. Like I said, this is my third one today talking about this issue. But we need action. My organization, you know, I funded the organization myself. We took no third-party funds, no grant money to get Whispering Roots going, and we've gone from that to being an organization that presents internationally with very low funds--which my wife, by the way, didn't like when I first started doing that. (Laughter) Told her it's going to be okay. But, you know, we talk about, you know, there's funding out there that's available. The problem is some of the grant programs are so confusing and they're so difficult that your average farmer or budding new farmer doesn't know how to navigate the waters. You need an actual grant-writing team or an administrative team to actually get through it. So we need to simplify that process and make it easier for them to get access to the funds. Something else that we talk about is when we have a lot of reports. Has anybody every tried to eat

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a report? I mean, you think about it, we have all these reports. Has anybody tried to eat one? If we don't get these systems going, if we don't train more people, if we don't make it easier for people to farm, it's going to be very difficult for us to have healthy food in the future. So all these issues, aggregation, we deal with that as well, converting food that we don't eat. When we harvest, everything that we don't harvest goes to our compost worms. It gets converted to vermicompost. You say, who wants to play with worm poop, to a 3rd grader, you've got hands going up left and right. But that's a resource. That has value. We can sell that out into the market. So there are ways for us to do it, but we need to be able to consolidate the activities. We need some type of process where the people who are trying to do, on the ground every single day, those beginning farmers who don't have access to land who need some type of financial help, they need some type of equipment, if we can make that process a lot easier, and we're working with some different organizations to try and do that, then I think we'll be a lot more successful. But the data shows the demand is there. There's money for us. People want good, healthy food. They need access. We don't have any problem with our kids in these underserved communities eating the food. Our problem is we can't grow enough. That's the problem, and then redistributing some of the food that's going into the waste. If anybody knows what seconds and thirds are, that's food that people don't want in the regular grocery stores. That's what ends up in our underserved communities. I mean, we do aquaponics. We grow fish and we want to bring fish. We want to be a leader. This is an agricultural state. No reason why I should have to go to Chicago and New York to find out how to compete in this space, so we're trying to change that. But that's the challenge. And we talk about Will Allen, mentioned that, from Wisconsin. I don't want to go to Wisconsin. I want people in Wisconsin to come to Nebraska to learn about agriculture, next generation, controlled environment ag, which is what we do, because we all know in a few months there aren't going to be any community gardens growing when snow hits the ground. But our systems will still be producing. We want to look at it from a holistic perspective. And with that, I'll end my testimony in the interest of time. Any questions? [LR545]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Any questions? Senator Harr. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Do you work with Todd Morrissey then, at Metro? Is that...? [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: That's my system. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: That's what? [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: That's my system at Metro. Todd Morrissey and those folks, Mike (phonetic), and all those guys. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Oh, okay. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: We started with Metro... [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Okay, now it's put together. Okay. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: ...because we know in the future...I'm trying to make...we're trying to develop economic systems for Nebraska. So we needed...we need to develop the knowledge for people to run the systems that we want to build. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah. Okay. You guys are doing great work there, yeah. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: Thank you very much. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Any other questions? Seeing...have you looked at the beginning farmer statutes that are in place and tried to apply any of those to what you're doing and with...and what...and if you have, what have you come out with and what has been your experience? [LR545]

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GREGORY FRIPP: We actually have a meeting tomorrow in Lincoln to talk about this issue with beginning farmers. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Uh-huh. Who are...let me ask, I'm sorry, who are you meeting with? [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: And that's with...we're meeting with NIFA. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: So we've got Tim Kenny and his folks tomorrow... [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: ...because we're trying to put together a process that will make it easier, especially when we talk about urban ag. We're going to need everybody to feed all the folks. But we are looking at beginning farmer. One thing that we looked at when we were talking about hoop houses, you know, for an urban farmer, getting a hoop house would be fantastic. And there was that project, there was that program that was in place. But when we read the details, if you were actually an urban farmer, then you weren't eligible for that program; and if you didn't generate enough money, then you couldn't utilize the program. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Really. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: So then we had some conversations about that and some of the rules got changed. But those are the type of issues that, unless you read the details, you don't really know. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Is that that \$10,000 or something like that? [LR545]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Well, there's a number of different programs. [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Okay. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: Um-hum, yeah. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: There's...I would be very interested in how that comes out...
[LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: Yeah. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: ...because I think that could be a vehicle that should be able to be
used for these types of situations. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: I think it'd be great. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: We need to get some new farmers coming in. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: So I'd be very interested in that. When you find out how that goes,
let me know, please. [LR545]

GREGORY FRIPP: Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay, thank you very much for your testimony. Next testifier,
please. Good afternoon. [LR545]

JIM KNOPIK: (Exhibit 11) Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Jim Knopik, J-i-m

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K-n-o-p-i-k. I'm really grateful that you can listen to some of the problems that we're having out there in rural America today. My...I started North Star Neighbors with about seven families about 15 years ago. We started the Nebraska Food Co-op--I'm a founding member and a board member of that--in about 2006. I have lost a lot of optimism not because small organic farms can't produce enough high-quality food to feed the world, even if the world increases two or three times the size it is today. Our...the problem is, is outside of agriculture. Taxes, property taxes, the things that I worry about most is how do we get new farmers on the land. Right now, the only farmers that we can usually put on the land is a son or daughter from a rich farmer. And today, I see a lot of the land, because of our older generation retiring and passing away, falling in the hands of a lot of absentee landowners. We've had a lot of land purchases by large investors who, because of the low interest rates, are looking for a higher return on their dollar. And so, you know, most...I'd say 90 percent of the land is owned by people who don't even farm the land anymore. And I think the big question we have to ask is, how are we going to get new farmers started? I have several grandkids that I know that would like to farm. But they're looking elsewhere because they understand there's not enough money on the farm to generate enough income the way they want to live. So they're looking at other things. An idea that I have that might help would maybe be exempting new farmers from property tax. If you look at the rural communities, even if a new farmer wanted to start farming, there's no buildings out there anymore. There's no homes, no buildings for them to start. So they have to start from scratch, and they have to invest a lot of dollars just for a home to live in outside of everything else they need to produce crops or whatever. I guess that would be the biggest investment that they'd have to make is in their home and a few buildings. I think other than that I think new farmers could get started with very little money. I've been proving that myself on...when we raise chickens, hogs, cattle now. We raise...me and my son raise about 200 cow/calf pair, and we finish those out. And we're moving to more of a grass-finished operation where it doesn't take a feed mill and corn and those types of things to make it work and actually the input costs are a lot less. Several years ago, we were in conflict with a large hog operation that wanted to move into our community, and I guess that's

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where I learned about all the problems that large CAFO operations and larger farmers create in problems and runoff on the land. We were...me and my dad and my brothers actually farmed together at that time and...after we'd won keeping Bell out of our community. But we did it with community involvement. Lots of neighbors got together to make that happen. And anyway, what I...you know, I always said, if you're going to condemn somebody else for what they do, you'd better look at yourself. And so we went from one of the largest farms in western Nance County to now the smallest organic farm in Nance County. So the...I just wanted to say also, the flood that went down the Missouri River about three or four years ago, personally, I think that that could have been prevented with good stewardship of the land. The farmers today farm and try to take every resource that the ground grows out there. We have a lot of bare ground out there. They not only take the corn. Now they go out and they basically rake all the stalks and forage off of that and leave bare ground because they believe that they can haul in fertilizer and everything else they need to replenish the ground with those things. I just...I would just like to have a player...a fairer playing field for all of our new farmers. The large farmers deal directly with the packers. When I was...when my wife and I first started farming, 70 head of hogs twice a year put the food on our table and the propane in the tank and paid for all of our living expenses. And we took those hogs ten miles away to an auction barn where we could do that. We had access to probably five or six within a dozen or 15 miles of our farm. Now we have to take them over 50 miles and the only competition that's in that auction barn is the auctioneer and one packer. So where are our markets? And so that is the reason I feel that we need new farmers on the farm with...creating their new markets with the folks like that are in this room and in this town that now become competing for the food that we raise. And we can establish our own markets. And another thing, what we do on our farm is we raise it according to what our customers want, not the way we want to raise it but the way they want it and need it for their families. I know...I just met Senator Kolowski a couple weeks ago, and I know that he has learned most of this from his two boys. They're starting to have kids now and they're concerned about what their kids are eating, and they should be, because most problems come in a newborn before they're born, while they're in the womb, all the

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problems with GMOs, pesticides. That is accumulated in the womb, and so the problems are there. And I see lots of health problems in our communities that I feel come from things that are in the air, in the water, in the soil. And I just want to make a point that we really need to look at those things. I guess that's about it. But you know, the one thing that we need to understand is we need to get some new blood out there on the farm. My dad just passed away a couple years ago. And now in our family, there's six absentee owners and two farmers, you know, so that's changed drastically. And I can't really say where that land is going to end up. So while I'm still out there, I still believe that I can help my sisters and brothers put that into some good hands if we have the ability and the chance to do that. But with unfair taxes, the unfair property taxes that our large investors have, and the ones I have in mind are large implement dealers and bankers and those types of investors where they're rewarded for going out and bulldozing the buildings off the land, "dozing" the hills down and putting pivots on, and their taxes, their property taxes are reduced. But my two sons that built new homes out there are penalized for the homes that they built and trying to stay out there. So there's a big disadvantage and something that's really unfair in that. You can read the rest of my testimony. I know that with the...you know, I've been trying to help a lot of new producers get started in marketing, and marketing is the most important thing that we do. We should learn how to market before we learn how to raise anything. And so I push that pretty hard for people to know what their input is in food before they try and raise it. I think I'll quit on that. You can...you have a chance to read my testimony and allow some time for (inaudible)... [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, sir. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [LR545]

JIM KNOPIK: Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Good afternoon and welcome. [LR545]

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COURTNEY PINARD: (Exhibit 12) Hello. Thank you. My name is Dr. Courtney Pinard, C-o-u-r-t-n-e-y P-i-n-a-r-d. And I'm here today in support of the resolution and I'd like to describe some of the current knowledge and science in the area of local food systems and health. I'm a research scientist at the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition and also have an appointment in the College of Public Health. The importance of supporting local food systems in our community impacts us on multiple levels, and we've heard a lot about that today so I won't belabor that point. I relocated to Omaha four years ago from Virginia. And during this time, I've seen how the local food system has grown. And we heard all the evidence of that with the community-supported agriculture, increase in farmer's market, and interest in urban agriculture. And while it may seem that the movement is capable of further expanding on its own, this couldn't be further from the truth. We have the start of something good here with burgeoning interest and increased demand for local foods, and we need this bill to help facilitate and grow this and allow for Nebraska to be an example for the rest of the country. In addition, the truth of the matter is, access to healthy food and locally produced food is not so easy for our most vulnerable populations, and supporting local and sustainably produced foods would help increase access for all to healthy, affordable, and nutritious food. In many...we've heard about food deserts today, and they're both happening in our urban and rural areas. And these are areas that have little-to-no access to healthy food. And creating these local and sustainable food systems would allow these communities to be more self-sufficient and help address the multitude of nutrition and obesity-related diseases that currently cost \$150 billion annually at a federal level. So, as some of my colleagues described, there are many benefits to local and sustainable food systems and from a public health perspective, it's supporting healthy diets through promotion of consumption of nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables and whole grains. While the evidence is not clear-cut that local and sustainable is healthier, it does lower the risk for various diseases because it does support healthier choices. So people tend to make healthier choices when they know where their food is coming from. And having that connection with the person that grows your food helps not only support a vibrant community and economy but also fosters a relationship that can lead to traceability of food for food

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safety as well as just knowing that that food tastes better. So people may tend to pick that tomato over the candy bar when it actually tastes like a tomato and it was ripened locally as opposed to picked green and shipped over thousands of miles and then gassed to stimulate ripeness. So it really comes down to making those healthier food choices and also learning how to eat seasonally. And that can be more budget conscious for our low-income populations in understanding that that resource changes seasonally. And I mentioned a lot of public health approaches do focus on fruits and vegetables. But I'd like to also put out there that local food systems, as we've heard today, also include dairy, meats, and grains, which can also be beneficial, especially here in the Midwest. So I...sustainable growing practices have obvious benefits for the environment, but what's less obvious is the health benefits. And at the federal level, USDA has taken a lead in trying to promote this through their "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" campaign. And in addition, I found out this week, I was awarded a USDA grant to explore local food systems in rural Nebraska specifically using meat as a leverage point to get more people shopping locally in their small stores. And actually, Jim supported that grant going in, so wanted to let you know. These examples and others would help demonstrate how this bill could support facilitating more funds like this to help continue to grow our local food system. So I'd like to end the testimony by mentioning the importance of Farm to School, which was already mentioned today, and how this benefits our children. This, the coming weeks are a good time to promote this. It's Farm to School Month in October. And the benefits are really wide reaching, especially given the current dire statistics when it comes to childhood obesity. Farm to School can be a vehicle to help drive a healthier food system. Although we've started work doing...with this in our state, there's still a lot more work to be done. And I do feel like, as some of the others have mentioned, we're kind of lagging behind on a lot of these fronts, and policies to support this would be beneficial. So we can begin reversing childhood obesity by starting to make improvements in our local food system which would have a domino effect through the schools, through the communities, and ultimately into the homes. So recognition and utilization of our local food system could be sustained throughout children's lifetimes, starting now, and create a healthier next

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generation. That's all I have. Thank you. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LR545]

COURTNEY PINARD: Thanks. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. [LR545]

ALISON CLARK: Here is this, relating to the community gardens... [LR545]

SENATOR HARR: Oh, good. [LR545]

ALISON CLARK: ...some documents from the community garden network as well as the Food Policy Council and the planning department. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Thank you. [LR545]

ALISON CLARK: Thank you again for having me and accepting all of these wonderful testimonies from this great and thriving food system we have here. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Please, say and spell your name, please. Thank you. [LR545]

ALISON CLARK: (Exhibit 13) My name is Alison Clark, A-l-i-s-o-n, Clark is C-l-a-r-k. And I am here representing Big Muddy Urban Farm, one fifth of the farm collective, as well as City Sprouts Community Garden and the Gifford Park Neighborhood Market. And I just wanted to speak briefly on the topic of food access in our local food community and just remind you to acknowledge and consider all parts of our food community when you're looking at ways to increase access. Specifically, I want to add an anecdote that I have from my experience working with the Gifford Park

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Neighborhood Market, which is an extremely small neighborhood-based farmer's market and artisan market, which encourages entrepreneurship within our neighborhood. We have vendors' age range from age eight onwards to 80. It's pretty incredible--people baking cupcakes at their local church and bringing them, as well as people from the Southern Sudan Community Association making different products, etcetera. We had the opportunity through the Department of Agriculture in the state of Nebraska to get a card reader to begin accepting EBT benefits at our market this year, and we were able to get that up and running in the month of July. And through a mayor's grant through the city of Omaha we are also able to offer what's called "double-up bucks" for our EBT. So essentially, anyone who has an EBT card who swipes to use those EBT benefits at our market has the opportunity to have their EBT benefits doubled through grant funding that we received from the mayor's grant. Not only is this a way for us to encourage people in our community who maybe have less access to local food to be able to support people in our neighborhood, it's keeping local...our local food within our local neighborhood, encouraging local food access to people that might not otherwise have access to it. And I just encourage you to consider creative ways to encourage some of those state funding that's going into our nutrition programs, like EBT; Women, Infant, and Children, the WIC Program; and then the Senior Nutrition Farmers' Market Program, and encourage ways for the people using those benefits to have greater access to local food. Not only does it keep that state money in our local food system, but it also supports our farmers and supports the people that have access needs relating to local food. So since we have started that program at our market, in the months of July, August, and September we've seen \$1,000 that has been used through the EBT card reader, and about 50 percent of that was then matched for double-up bucks. So it's pretty incredible for such a small market to have that type of response, and I just think it's really important that you consider all of the different levels of income as we're increasing this local food in our food system. So thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to listen. Are there... [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for

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your testimony. [LR545]

ALISON CLARK: Okay, thanks. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Welcome. [LR545]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Welcome back. [LR545]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: My name is Scott Williams, S-c-o-t-t W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s. I spoke to you earlier about community gardens and the benefits they provide, particularly in an urban setting. And I just wanted to speak briefly in support of the resolution presented here which has more of a focus on the rural and the across-the-state benefits of local food and local food production. In general, I just wanted you to know that there are people both in the city and across the rest of the state who are strongly supportive of the Agriculture Committee and the Legislature at large looking at studies that investigate the benefits of local foods. You've already heard from a number of experts, and I just wanted you to know that I stand in support of this. And if you...if there's any way that...and if my knowledge or any of my expertise in this area could be beneficial, I'd be happy to provide that to you at this time. And thank you very much for taking a look at this issue and hopefully providing the benefits to Nebraskans across our state. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Any questions now? If not, then if we do have some in the future, we will be more than happy to get ahold of you. [LR545]

SCOTT WILLIAMS: Absolutely. I'll be sure to provide my contact information. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Very good. Thank you. [LR545]

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SCOTT WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Next testifier, please. Going once. Come on up. Welcome back.
[LR545]

KAY STEVENS: Thank you. I will be brief, I swear to God. This particular resolution is really where my heart is, and I wanted to just touch on some of the things that I think...
[LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Can you spell your name? [LR545]

KAY STEVENS: I'm sorry. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: You're fine. [LR545]

KAY STEVENS: My name is Kay Stevens, K-a-y S-t-e-v-e-n-s, and I'm with No More Empty Pots. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. [LR545]

KAY STEVENS: And as I said earlier, No More Empty Pots has been around for a while, four or five...I've been involved for five years and a year before they incorporated. So I've been with them. And I'm not getting any younger either. So I'm in a hurry. I want to see things happen in Nebraska that I just know that we're capable of. And all of these issues in the resolution pretty much cover the territory. What I wanted to impart to you is, I've learned because of...you know, I figure I've got 20 years left of productivity and I don't have time to reinvent any wheels and I don't think any of us do. There are wheels out there that we can tap into and identify the applications in our own state. And the one that is my first love and I've been carrying this around and writing and I left it up there...in the back. But it's called The Healthy Food Financing Handbook: From

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Advocacy to Implementation. And it was produced by the Food Trust in Pennsylvania. And there was something mentioned earlier about Pennsylvania banning seed libraries, but I have to find out whether that's...what that's all about. But they did this handbook on the methods that were used in the state of Pennsylvania over a ten-year period in order to develop the policy changes and the funding base and the networks to produce the kind of change that we're talking about doing. They called it the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. It was begun in 2004. The handbook goes into specific detail about the process that they follow. It's a four-part process: step one, prepare and inform; two, engage and empower stakeholders; three, strategize and develop recommendations; and four, change the policies that are applicable. What the idea behind this is, to do the kind of research that can create a clear and compelling visual representation of the complexity of the problems. I don't...I think there is a tendency, because this is also a very impassioned field, to make things sound simpler than they really are, and the food system in this country is extremely...it's like changing the healthcare system, maybe even harder if that's possible. So they talk about doing secondary source research, like 120 studies that were done across the country that showed a direct correlation between lack of access to full-service grocery stores and incidence of food-related disease/death. And that got my attention immediately, so I went through this thing with a pen twice to find out what they use to make the...and that sounds kind of...I'm always accused of being...what is the word, instead of exaggerating? Anyway...but they talk about developing an evidence-based campaign consisting of multiple entities of various diverse backgrounds and interests and getting them to the table. And this is people in leadership positions. Over the ten-year period that it took them to do this and develop the model, they ended up measuring their results, and there are a lot...there's a lot more data in the report about what they discovered as far as the economic impact on communities, both urban or rural, when grocery store retail establishments are placed there, not only in terms of jobs and sales tax, return on sales. Other businesses and better housing tends to show up. And they've measured all this. I don't...didn't want to give you the details because that would take forever. But since 2004, they have launched 88 projects. They've created more than

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400,000 either retained jobs in facilities that either had closed or were going to, and they have measured the impact of the 5,000 jobs that that created and the investment in the underserved communities. So they have quantified the results of making the systemic changes. We believe this is an example of public policy working to create economic development with deep roots. Economic development that comes into low-income neighborhoods from the top down does not meet that definition. And we've got 50 years of...I grew up in north Omaha...50-60 years of experience watching money come tumbling out of the slot machine into north Omaha and then things go away. And then they sit vacant or whatever. Really feel strongly about root-based, grass-roots construction of systems to solve these problems. So we believe that what we need is focused, deliberative research that leads to implementation of policy changes that are systemic and designed to create tangible, measurable community benefits. What we need are champions that value collaborative problem solving and want to use their positions to make life in Nebraska better. I feel absolutely very strongly. Every single person in this room at one time, pretty much everybody in this room, has been at meetings, and these discussions have been going and going. I was really happy that "Dr. D" brought up the food waste issue--because my first and foremost love is garbage, it's always been garbage--and the relationship between wasted organics and food production capacity, especially in and around communities where the soil quality is highly questionable, because it's been used and abused so long, that availability of organic resources in order to build soils. Want to quote the Milwaukee program, the Growing Power program. The first thing that Will Allen always says is, grow the soils, grow the crops, grow the community. The soil is never valued as having an innate value. We don't have a metric for measuring its value as production, as fertility, and we've got to start looking at it differently. I also, in closing, want to call your attention to an article in today's paper about the climate change event going on at the United Nations. And the opening salvo at that event was, we don't want to talk about whether climate change is real or imaginary; what we want to talk about, what is the biggest contributing factor. And their estimate is the biggest contributing factor is food waste. United States wastes three to five times as much food waste as any other industrialized

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nation in this world, and that's just nuts. So first of all, learning how to not do that, and we reward it by paying for disposal systems that cost a fortune. Nobody bothers to ask what the millions of pounds going in that landfill that "Dr. D" mentioned, what is that really costing us as taxpayers. And no...the other thing nobody mentions, and sustainability is a big deal now, so everybody is suddenly a sustainability expert, but nobody talks about the methane coming out of the tops of landfills. We've only got two landfills that I know of--there may be a third now--that's trapping the methane, which they did so they could justify taking in the yard waste, which is an economic decision. But there are a lot of other landfills--old, closed landfills--and they are all contributing to the climate problems that we're facing. And we paid for those problems. We invested in those businesses. So I think the paradigm that's outlined in the...it's really good reading and it's not...oh, the word was hyperbole. I knew I'd think of it. (Laughter) It is not written in a dry way. It's kind of exciting to see because they're saying, you know, this can be done, we did it, it took ten years but we did it. I don't think it should have to take us ten years because they did it by trial and error. We already know what works, so we need to adopt some of these models and stop worrying about is anybody else doing this. We always do this in Nebraska. I come from recycling and solid waste and we used to say everything starts on the coast and by the time it gets here, it's usually either ineffective or you can't get money to do it or we do it wrong, because we could make more money doing it wrong, when it comes to building landfills and dirty MRFs and all the other stupid public investments that we've made as a state in garbage. So changing our way of looking at progress as an asset, and all of these things are assets. These are jobs, real money, better life in the poorer income, lower income communities. We have an obligation to take better care of where we are. So that is the extent of my comments. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [LR545]

KAY STEVENS: Thank you. [LR545]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Are there any other testifiers for this? One more. Thank you. Welcome. [LR545]

CAIT CAUGHUI: Yes. Thank you. I have a very, very brief testimony. My name is Cait, C-a-i-t, Caughui, C-a-u-g-h-u-i. And I'm here. You've already heard from Nathan earlier today. I'm also with United Methodist Ministries. The Big Garden is a program, and I wanted to just briefly tell you a little bit about what we did this summer with children and youth here in Omaha. We have a sustainable agriculture curriculum, and this summer we taught at...we taught about 200 children and youth each week with our curriculum. And we're not only looking at organic gardening practices, but we are also looking at the importance of local food and where the food that we're eating comes from. We have lessons on talking about local farms and local farmers. We actually even brought in local farmers so that the kids could see farmers from around this area, both in Nebraska and Iowa, and start to connect with...there are folks around me who are producing food. And we had a real positive response from them, an excitement. And even though these are gardening classes and we're teaching them at after-school programs or we're teaching them at group homes or whatever, I feel like we are engaging children and youth in getting excited about potentially becoming farmers themselves in the future, whether that's urban or rural. And I just want to say that United Methodist Ministries partners with just about every organization that's sitting in this room to work on promoting local foods and also supporting our local producers. And as we are expanding our programming, we're hoping to do more of that in the future. I'm also here representing myself. I am a young, beginning woman farmer. I used to reside in Nebraska but I have recently relocated with my family to farm in southwest Iowa. And I wanted to speak really briefly about the support that we have received in southwest Iowa as young beginning farmers and challenge Nebraska and this state to rise to...we've heard from a lot of other states, oh, this state is doing that or this program is doing that, and that's all great. But I do feel like we've received so much more support in Iowa as far as what we're doing. We have a very small farm that we are transitioning to

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become certified organic. In fact, when we went into Iowa and started farming, we had institutions and groups contacting us saying, did you know there's funding out there to help you certify your operation; do you need help with GAP training, good agricultural practices; how can we assist you. We were contacted by Practical Farmers of Iowa, who asked us if we'd be interested in being in a beginning farmers program. They have a savings incentive program where we save money from our business for two years and they match it. It's an amazing program. They also provide mentoring and, during those two years, you write a business plan. Fortunately, we already had a business plan because we had previous mentors and farming experience. And so we went into it. You know, I just want to second everything Jim Knopik said about you've got to know how to run the business and marketing before you even plant your crops. You have to know how you're going to move that product or where it's going. Another big support system that we have are local RC&Ds in Iowa. The RC&D in Pottawattamie County, which is in Oakland, which is in our county, also contacted us and said, just like Greg Fripp was mentioning, hey, there's a lot of grant funding out for you, both state and federal, and these grants are weedy and they're hard to get through and we know you're busy farmers but we're here to help you. I know there's been a lot of funding cuts for resource conservation and development groups in Nebraska, and I hope that we can change that. I hope that conservation can become a bigger part of Nebraska and supporting our young and beginning farmers because we are interested in those conservation practices and we are interested in things like the Farm to School Program which has been going on in Iowa for a while. We have found out that it would be very easy for us to get our local products into the schools in Council Bluffs, for example. And I just want to really reiterate that, not for us as producers, these...Farm to School Program, it is so important. This is going to allow us to scale up our operations. This is going to allow us that income that we need to stay on the farm, because it is very hard. It's hard to find land. It's hard to get access to land. And it's hard to even find, like Jim was mentioning, finding land that there's a house because, unfortunately, a lot of these farmsteads are being torn up. These small farmsteads that are perfect for local food production are being torn up and turned into, oh, well, we can plant a hundred more acres of corn right

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here, or soybeans. So those are just a few things that I've experienced in Iowa, and I think that Nebraska can be there and really support our producers. I also wanted to bring up another point that's really important that I know farmers in...small, diverse farmers experience in Nebraska, and that's agricultural drift. Currently, that is a big thing for local producers. There aren't a lot of measures out there. There are places where you can register your farm and say, please, protect my land from agricultural drift, I'm growing these crops, or whatever. But there isn't a lot of legislation out there. There's...I mean in many states I don't really know much of any. But it's a huge issue. This season...we sell to CSA, direct to consumer. We also sell to grocery stores. We also sell to people in our rural community who come to our farm to buy. And when spraying was going on, we were very concerned about agricultural drift. And we know that there's not a lot that we can do if that would happen. We would not stand up in court against any farmer. So I just want to emphasize that as an issue that I feel like local producers are experiencing. And then finally, I'm done. I just want to say there are young people out there in Nebraska who want to continue farming and who are going to be the folks who will be producing our food, and getting it into the schools through the Farm to School Program is going to be very key in that. Thank you so much. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Great. Thank you. Any questions? [LR545]

CAIT CAUGHUI: I need to fill out a sheet. [LR545]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Seeing none, thank you. Any other testifiers? Seeing none, I think that will close our hearing today. Thank you all for coming. We appreciate it. And have a good weekend and maybe we'll (recorder malfunction)... [LR545]