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Education Committee
October 06, 2014

[LB1103]

The Committee on Education met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, October 6, 2014, in Omaha, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB1103. Senators present: Kate Sullivan, Chairperson; Jim Scheer, Vice Chairperson; Bill Avery; Tanya Cook; Al Davis; Rick Kolowski; and Les Seiler. Senators absent: Ken Haar.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you so much for being here. My, what a huge group and maybe we...standing room only. Afraid we don't have any empty seats, so apologize for that. But maybe as some people have the opportunity to testify and then leave there will be a few more open seats. But we are thrilled to have you all here. My name is Senator Kate Sullivan from Cedar Rapids. I represent District 41 in the central part of the state, a 9-county area and I am Chair of the Education Committee. I'd like you also to meet my colleagues that are here today. I'll start with the Vice Chair of the committee, Senator Scheer. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: I'm Jim Scheer from District 19 which is up in the Norfolk area. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Al Davis, District 43 which runs from Crawford east to Springview and south almost to North Platte. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Rick Kolowski, District 31 in southwest Omaha. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: Bill Avery, District 28, south-central Lincoln. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SEILER: Les Seiler, Hastings, Nebraska, District 33. It's all of Adams and all of Hall except for Grand Island. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: We hope Senator Tanya Cook, who is also a member of this committee, will be joining us shortly. Unfortunately, Senator Ken Haar, who is ill today, will not be here. We also have a couple of sitting senators who are not members of the committee but are here. Senator Kate Bolz of Lincoln, I was told she was here. Senator. And Senator Scott Lautenbaugh. Oh, he stepped out. Okay. All right, thank you very much, all of you, for being here. Before we...oh, and I also wanted to introduce my staff. To my immediate left is Tammy Barry, one of the legal counsels for the Education Committee. In the lavender shirt, senator...(laughter). [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Pay cut. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: You'd take a big salary cut, let me tell you. LaMont Rainey, legal counsel. And to my far right is Mandy Mizerski who is the committee clerk and will be recording the testimony today. Before we begin though, I wanted to make a few comments about this whole process that we are involved in. It started out as my priority bill, LB1103, to create a vision for education in Nebraska. And I think, first of all, it's maybe important to tell you what it is not because we didn't enter into this conversation because we think there are problems with education. In fact, quite the opposite. We think we have a great educational system all the way from pre-k to postsecondary education. Can we do better? Well, we always can do better. So that's the quest that we were on. Another thing that this is not is initially not a discussion about money. That's one thing I discovered in my early reign as Chair is that we do have because it commands half of our state budget, a lot of our education conversations revolve around money. So I wanted these conversations and this visioning process to talk about not only what's great about education in Nebraska, what we can do better, but can we arrive at a collective vision of what our educational priorities are? So that's what we have embarked on since the session ended last...oh, seems like a long time ago but last

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June. The Education Committee met, determined what might be an appropriate vision, mission, and goals. We sent out a survey based on that, an on-line survey. Over 5,000 people responded to that. We spent some time meeting with special interest groups, literally had roundtable discussions bringing together some groups that don't normally talk to one another and had some really good conversations. And now here we are with the public hearings and we will have three of them related to the visioning process: here, this today, then next week we'll go out to Norfolk and Broken Bow. And then a little bit later on we'll get a little closer to talking about dollars when we have a public hearing at the end of November about the lottery study, which some of those dollars are devoted to education as well. But here we are today and we are thrilled of the attendance. We look forward to hearing from you and we are ready to listen. This is not a discussion. The Education Committee will not engage in dialogue with you. We may ask you a few questions. We're wired to do that. I'll turn my microphone off most of the time. These two microphones, Senators, if you ever want to ask a question, it's probably easier to grab one of those. They can be slipped out of their handles so the testifiers may be asked a few questions. So logistically, all these housekeeping rules that we need to make sure are covered before we start. If you do plan to testify, we hope if you haven't already done so, to fill out one of the green sheets in its entirety. And if you don't have one, they're in the back of the room. If you do not wish to testify but would like to have the record reflect that you were here in attendance, there is also a sheet in the back to do just that. And when you do come up to testify, ask that you speak clearly and loudly because, as I said, Mandy is trying to get an accurate recording of this hearing. If you have handouts for the committee, please make sure that you have at least 12 copies. And you may hand those to the committee clerk when you come forward. We will be limiting the time that you speak. Right now we've got a full house. But I would like to limit testimony to five minutes. So LaMont will be keeping the time. And we will give you the "hi" sign when we approach that. Now, that's not to say that you have to take the full five minutes, but you will be given that opportunity. And this day and age, we always need to make sure that all cell phones, please, are turned off or put on silent mode so we don't have that disruption. We've had a...Senator Cook, thank you for

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joining us. Welcome. We also have another sitting senator, Senator Sue Crawford, has joined us. Thank you, Senator Crawford. Okay. I want to say first and foremost, too, as we begin, we are thrilled to be here at this wonderful facility of Gallup. And our first testifier, I've asked him to also sort of give the official welcome from Gallup, Mr. Jim Krieger, the CEO. So with that, Mr. Krieger, I'll turn it over to you. [LB1103]

JIM KRIEGER: (Exhibit 1) Thank you, Madam Chairman. I need to correct Senator Sullivan. I'm vice chair and CFO of Gallup. I have a partner, probably wouldn't like to hear if I was CEO. (Laughter) This is wonderful. We didn't have any idea in terms of attendance and so forth. Now we've got it standing room only. And I can't think of a more important topic in terms of Nebraska resources into the future than education. So I want to thank the committee for actually coming up here and meeting in Omaha. I want to thank all of you for participating today. And I look forward to a good conversation, and I wish you great luck in terms of developing a strategic plan. So thanks for being here. Welcome to Gallup. This is the privilege of being my house: I get to go first. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jim Krieger, K-r-i-e-g-e-r. I'm the CFO and vice chair of Gallup and the chairman of Nebraska's Early Childhood Business Roundtable. I've appreciated spending time with you this morning at the north Omaha Educare and highlighting the business community's interest in early childhood education along with my colleagues from the Columbus and Bellevue Chambers and Union Pacific who, like Gallup, has operated an early childhood development center on its corporate campus for many years. So on behalf of both Gallup and the Business Roundtable, let me say that we are pleased to be your host for today's public hearing. We are pleased that you are undertaking the strategic planning process prescribed in LB1103 to develop a statewide vision for education in Nebraska. In doing so, we'd encourage you to continue making early childhood a prominent aspect of this vision. Early Childhood Business Roundtable is a growing group of statewide business leaders who believes early childhood needs to be a top priority for our state. And while there are many reasons that this should be the case, our main interests have included economic development, work force development

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and return on investment. We've been traveling the state for nearly three years and meeting with local chambers of commerce, with local business leaders, and local media in places such as Omaha and Lincoln, North Platte, Kearney, York, North Platte, and Norfolk and Scottsbluff to deliver the same message. With today's economic research indicating that we can achieve up to a 10 percent rate of return on investment when we reach kids most in need of quality early childhood invest...environments, we find it is easy to achieve consensus amongst business leaders in the state. The business community understands the concept of accountability of public dollars and return on investment, so they understand the importance of investing early when presented with the research and the facts. We've had the great fortune of having some national experts visit Nebraska including Nobel laureate economist James Heckman, who was featured speaker at our recent Nebraska Chamber event. I'd like to show you just two slides that we used in our presentation of materials that day that are graphic depiction of return on investment. The two graphs are above and I believe every one has been handed out. First, above: the RAND Corporation, Public Spending and Brain Development, The Disconnect. And the objective of that chart is the dotted line represents the percentage of dollars invested in education at various ages. The solid line above represents the timing of a young person's brain development. The greatest brain development occurs in the first three years. Years four and five, and then so important to be ready for school. Many, as it's been researched, will say that...and their researchers all confirm that starting behind is very difficult, if ever able to caught up. But the point about this graph is that the least dollars are spent at the greatest opportune time in those early five years. The greatest amount of dollars spent in the latter years of youth. The second graph represents the same vision only depicted differently. The rate of return as Dr. Heckman helped us understand is of course greatest in zero to three, next from four to five, and least impactful at age eighteen and above. Clearly the most efficient, accountable, and highest return on investments occurs in the first five years. I would point out Heckman's research indicates highest rate of return can really be achieved in the first three years. So we suggest we need to consider: How do we reach more at-risk children birth to three with quality early childhood experiences in addition to our efforts with four- and

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five-year-olds to get ready and get the desired results? If we do this, we will produce the future work force we need while reducing other demands on our tax dollars such as grade repetition, special education costs, work force training, welfare, and even incarceration. I was pleased to see the research shown at the front door walking into the Educare center over the past seven years tracking the children up through 7th grade and the achievement in reading scores that has been achieved to date. In closing, because LB1103 is about establishing a vision, let me say that we are excited about the efforts of the Legislature, state government, the business community, and a new Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, Educare expansions throughout the state, and various other entities and providers who are all doing great work on this issue. Our vision would be that the state of Nebraska becomes a national model for the delivery of early childhood education to at-risk youth birth to five years old. And we believe that if we put together all of the pieces of this puzzle and coordinate our efforts effectively, this vision can be accomplished. That's an exciting prospect and an exciting vision that the business community wholeheartedly supports. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Krieger. Any questions for Jim? Appreciate your testimony. [LB1103]

JIM KRIEGER: Thanks again. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: One thing I failed to mention and maybe just to streamline who goes next, these first two chairs up here to...the first row of chairs will be reserved for testifiers. So if you can just fill in once the person comes up to testify, you can move over and then another person can join you. Welcome. [LB1103]

DON KLEINE: (Exhibit 2) Good afternoon. My name is Don Kleine, K-l-e-i-n-e. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Senators. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you for a few minutes today. The history of my occupations has been in law enforcement. I've been at...I was a deputy county attorney here in Douglas County right out of law

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school. I became a Chief Deputy Douglas County Attorney for a number of years. I was the head of the Criminal Bureau for the Department of Justice for the state of Nebraska for several years under the Attorney General. And I've been the elected county attorney here in Douglas County for the past eight years. I'm currently the Douglas County Attorney but I'm also a member of an organization called Fight Crime: Invest in Kids which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan anticrime organization of nearly 5,000 sheriffs, police chiefs, prosecutors, and crime survivors nationwide including 81 members here in Nebraska. Our mission is to take a hard-nosed look at research on what it takes to keep kids out of crime and then educate the public and policymakers on that research. As a county attorney, it's my job to do everything possible to protect the public. Putting people behind bars who commit crimes is one way I do that. But I know from my personal experiences in the courtroom that we can't simply arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate our way out of our crime problems. We have to implement strategies that keep people from turning to crime in the first place. Education needs to be the focal point of that strategy so I commend you for taking on this visioning process for education in Nebraska. Nationwide, seven out of ten inmates in state prisons don't have a high school diploma. I look at the history of the defendants I am prosecuting and I can see the pattern of events that led them to the courtroom. Many struggled in school. Some who cannot read or write end up getting frustrated and dropping out. Make no mistake about it, while I prosecute well-educated people also, there is an undeniable link between school failure and future crime. We know from research that investments in high-quality early care and education programs puts kids on a different course and provides them with a foundation for success right out of the starting gate. I understand the committee toured the Educare of Omaha this morning, and while all communities can't have an Educare, it's not the building that's important. It's what's happening in the building that makes the difference. We know more today about consistent investments prior to kindergarten entry helps build fundamental skills necessary for a successful educational experience, and therefore, a different path than choosing crime. We can replicate Educare's results in any community in Nebraska. I'm glad to say that we do have these kinds of things happening in our state. The Legislature has invested in

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high-quality preschool programs through our public schools and high-quality infant and toddler development through Sixpence and by recently incorporating a quality rating system for our state's childcare providers who care for a high number of children prior to kindergarten entry. Even with these investments, we are only reaching a small number of the children who are at the greatest risk for school failure and the possibility of turning in...a life of crime. From school success to productive citizen, I want to reiterate from the perspective of law enforcement, a county attorney, that investments in high-quality early childhood education is an investment that pays back in a multitude of ways. And I just want to thank you for all that you do. Do you have any questions? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Kleine. Couldn't agree with you more on the emphasis of early childhood. I think the Education Committee has spoken on that as well. But you are also on the frontline of dealing with people who have...young people who have made poor choices and whether they have either stayed in school and are dealing with those choices or dropped out. We can't forget about those. Any thoughts in terms of your experience in what perhaps we're lacking to address those concerns as well? [LB1103]

DON KLEINE: Well, I mean, so the earlier we address the issue, the better off we are, the way I see it. And the children that we have that are a little bit older that maybe are in the juvenile court system, I think that we're addressing those issues also as far as what we need to do to better address those young people in the juvenile court system: putting more resources, having more mental healthcare for those young people, those individuals. I think that's been somewhat lacking and I think the resources that I hear from my folks in the juvenile court system are that we've got to have more help and resources to be able to turn those young people's lives around. But obviously, the earlier, the better. That's I think the purpose of my comments today is starting them as early as we can in the education system. And I really believe that if we can maintain that connection with education and young people, it's going to keep them away from the criminal justice system is what I look towards. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions for Mr. Kleine? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

DON KLEINE: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

MARK MUSICK: (Exhibit 3) Welcome. Madam Chair, members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to allow us to talk a little bit. I want to talk about early childhood education and its impact on the military. My name is Mark Musick. I'm a retired major general. Last name is spelled M-u-s-i-c-k. My last positions have been with the assistant adjutant general for air for Nebraska Air Guard, and then final position was with mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of strategic command at Offutt. And I represent a group of 450 admirals and generals who are very, very much concerned about our nation's youth and the opportunities that they have as they grow up. The Department of Defense has a statistic that says 70 percent of young Americans age 17 to 24 are not able to qualify for military service. This is pretty disturbing. And it not only diminishes our military strength, but it also has an impact on our national security and our economic security for the nation. When thinking military service, most people think of the physical demands associated with it. However, there are many, many mental demands also. Today's servicewomen and men operate highly complex weapons systems and find themselves in intense situations that require proficiency in technology, strategic thinking, as well as decisiveness and diplomacy. Like you, they have a very difficult job to do. Poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why so many young Americans are unable to join the military. In Nebraska, 12 percent of Nebraskans do not graduate on time. And those that do, 15 percent do not score highly enough in math, literacy, and problem solving to be able to enter the military. These have long-term implications with our security and our economic security. There is a fix to the problem. Decades of research from long-running studies

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conclusively has shown that when done correctly, early learning education can boost graduation rates, deter kids from crime, and reduce the likelihood of children being held back from school. This past May, I joined other retired generals in Omaha to release a report on quality early education and how it's impacting our national security and our future national security. The report highlights and shows how high-quality early education can have impressive education results and also crime prevention outcomes. It can also reduce childhood obesity, which is a problem that we have. We can be very proud of the Educare center that we've had in Nebraska. I was able to get a tour of that and that's a magnificent facility. Quality preschool is also an excellent investment for taxpayers. An independent study of 49 state- and district-funded preschools have shown that preschool can on an average return a net benefit of more than \$22,000 per child served. So we really have an option here of deciding do we put money towards early education? Or 20 years later, do we put money towards correctional facilities? That is what we're really up against. Please, please, please consider increasing the state's investment in early childhood education from birth to school entry. High-quality early education develops young people in mind, body, and character. And they can also choose to succeed in whatever career path they choose with the military being an option in that career selection. We have a shared vision in the future of Nebraska, along with the military leaders of Nebraska will be with you shoulder to shoulder on proceeding down this path to make sure that Nebraska is a leader in early childhood education. Thank you for the time and thank you for what you do for the state. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I have...and thank you, General. Just a couple questions. The first one has to do with the 75 percent figure that you used. Is that of people who apply for the military? Is that where that data comes from, or is that general observation across all students? [LB1103]

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MARK MUSICK: That's a general observation across America. Basically, there's three reasons why the percentage is so low. One is they can't academically pass a test. The other one is they've done something crazy in their life and have some kind of a criminal record. Or they're not physically fit. They're just too heavy. And those are the three reasons and those cut out a lot of the population. I think we're beginning to see some impact on that as we move forward with this. But there's still a large percentage of our population that don't even have a chance to apply. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And then the other question, you know, Nebraska already ranks quite low in terms of the amount of state support for schools. If we're going to do something like this, we're going to have to add a significant amount of revenue. Will you and your people be on board to help get that done? [LB1103]

MARK MUSICK: We will help you. The retired generals and admirals in Nebraska will help you proceed with this path if it's the vision that you want to go down. We think it's very, very important not only to Nebraska but to the nation. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you, General. [LB1103]

MARK MUSICK: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

SAMUEL MEISELS: (Exhibit 4) Thank you. Madam Chairwoman and members of the Education Committee, my name is Samuel J. Meisels, M-e-i-s-e-l-s. I'm the founding executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. I want to begin by thanking you for your exceptional efforts in developing a statewide vision for education in Nebraska. I'm grateful to you for your work and for the

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opportunity to appear before you today. The Buffett Institute, in existence for just one year, is an innovative research, practice, and policy institute of the University of Nebraska. We harness the multidisciplinary resources of all four campuses of the university to promote the development and learning of children from birth through age eight, which you seem to be hearing a lot about today. Our efforts are focused especially on children who are vulnerable because of poverty, abuse, or developmental delays. Our vision is that Nebraska will be the best place in the nation to be a baby. Today, I want to share three messages with you. First, Nebraska needs all children to achieve their potential. With the help of First Five Nebraska, we estimate that there are approximately 100,000 young children at risk in Nebraska composed of 62,000 children from birth to age five and another 40,000 in grades K-3. This number has not decreased over the past 20 years. In fact, it's grown and is distributed across the state. Today, we know that 64 percent of at-risk children live in 11 counties across Nebraska and these counties alone account for 70 percent for the state's high school dropout population. Nebraska is a small population state. As you know so well, every person, every baby counts. Who these children are and what happens to them during these critically important years matters to all of us. Research teaches us that the most effective time to impact a child's future is from birth through age eight. Children make their greatest gains in learning, behavior, problem solving, language, and emotional growth during this time. Early learning can have major impacts on cognition and social-emotional development as well as on school progress, earnings, reductions in antisocial behavior, lowered welfare participation, and even reduction in trouble with the law. The early years matter. Second, we know what to do. At the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, we've been presented with a remarkable opportunity to identify the best of what's known about early childhood education and development and to help apply it in ways that directly improve children's lives. Two signature programs shape our efforts. Our Achievement Gap Challenge aims to narrow the gap in learning and development between children coming from economically disadvantaged versus advantaged families in Nebraska. We just launched this statewide program in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and intended to inform our approach in other communities throughout the

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state and nation. With the help of area superintendents and their staff, we've developed an initiative based on intensive, continuous, evidence-based services for young children who are most at risk in their communities with a focus on home visiting for birth to three-year-olds, intensive preschool for three- and four-year-olds, and aligned preschool and early elementary curricula from preschool through grade 3. This effort is closely linked to our second signature program, early childhood work force development, focused on improving the quality, quantity, and skills of educators and other professionals who teach and care for children. Our goal is to address the shortage of qualified early childhood professionals in the state by increasing professional preparation opportunities. Estimates from First Five Nebraska forecast the need for more than 7,700 new early childhood professionals to meet the needs of the 45,000 young at-risk children who do not participate in a documented quality early childhood program. The tasks ahead are substantial, but they are finite. We know what to do and we know how to do it. Finally third, by joining forces with you, we believe that we can help Nebraska's children, help our state, and strengthen our future. The Buffett Early Childhood Institute is working to galvanize the field, provide a unified vision and approach for early childhood education and development, and bring knowledge and evidence to bear from practice, research, the four NU campuses, and public, private, and community-based organizations in order to transform the life experiences of young children in Nebraska and beyond. We want our efforts to correspond to your vision and your commitments just as we hope our efforts will help inspire you to higher goals on behalf of children in need. We look forward to working with you to leave a legacy in which all children are able to reach their potential--to develop, learn, and succeed in life. You are key to making this a reality and I and my colleagues are here to work with you. Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Meisels. Any questions for him? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

SAMUEL MEISELS: Thank you. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Good afternoon. Thank you, Madam Chairperson and the Senate Committee, for giving us the opportunity to come and present today and to share in the vision that LB1103 started. I would like to talk and start off a little bit about LB438 just real briefly. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Could you introduce yourself? Spell your name, please. [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: (Exhibit 5) Oh, yes. I could. I apologize. My name is Jim Sutfin. I'm the superintendent of the Millard Public Schools. And again, I'm excited to be here and have this opportunity to share with you. Last year when the legislation passed with LB438, it created an initiative in our state that, mixed with a vision committee, has really started to pick up conversation and steam. LB438 basically became an accountability model in our state that allows...it allows all school districts to be part of an accountability model, all 245 (sic--249) school districts. Whether a school district is at the top of the accountability or at the bottom, we're all together in this, in the educational battle now. What I'd like to share with you today though is instead of looking at the early childhood spectrum, I'd like to switch gears and move towards the career and college readiness component. What we would like to propose is a change in how we look at career and college readiness and accountability so that we increase rigor, relevancy, relationships, and accountability. The way this would work is that career readiness programs, oftentimes referred to as career academies, would...school districts work in conjunction with business and chambers of commerce and schools districts to identify career readiness programs that help support the local or state economy by helping students earn a licensure, a credential, or a near license or status while taking courses that also meet high school graduation. The district would be provided state support to help offset the cost to those students earning the credentials and the incentive to change programs

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drives districts to implement career programs that ultimately help students penetrate that achievement ceiling that LB438 established. Too often, students who are not college bound check out of high school because of the relevancy of schooling is not in line with preparing for a career. "Incentifying" districts to add programs that prepare students for specific careers while also recognizing that those programs must have a credentialing component raises the quality of education for students who are choosing a career path. School districts only receive the financial incentive for students who successfully complete the licensure program versus an enrollment process. Career programs we know cost more than basic education programs. Along the same line, we believe that career readiness and college readiness needs to be attacked at the same time. Students who choose to attend college upon graduation from their high school experience also have an opportunity to participate in an educational program that increases the rigor and helps them penetrate this achievement ceiling that was established by LB438. A school district may select to grow dual enrollment or AP or equivalent programs. Public schools would articulate courses with community colleges and universities. These are oftentimes referred to as dual enrollment courses. And students who participate in these courses and earn a transferable grade of C or better would be counted in this tier II funding model. Public schools who choose to offer AP courses or the equivalent would also have a chance to meet the incentive standards. Students who select AP courses and complete the AP exam at the conclusion of the course and students who earn a grade of three or higher on the AP exam, which is a "transcriptable" credit, would be counted in the tier II model. So again, when you go back and you look at rigor and relevance, it's engaging students all the way through the K-12 experience. And the accountability measure that we're introducing this afternoon is one that it is not contained within the local school district. But the accountability measure is determined by some sort of outside agency such as the College Board, the International Baccalaureate Program, the community college, or the credentialing official. We believe that the key to this vision is accountability and that that accountability has to be in the form of that external control. Career programs require licensing or credentialing agencies (inaudible) fall to the community college and college

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prep programs and articulated courses would fall to the community colleges, the universities, and again, the AP would fall to the College Board. We really feel like this is an opportunity to connect with what your committee has been working on while also keeping our students engaged all the way through their educational experience so that they're better prepared to support the local economies and to make choices about their careers. It's the bookend of what we've just been hearing--the early childhood all the way through the college readiness and the career readiness. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Sutfin. Any questions? Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. Dr. Sutfin, just for clarity purposes, can you go over the AP versus the... [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Dual enrollment? [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Dual enrollment, yes. [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Yep. Advanced Placement is a course that's established by the College Board. And the students would complete the course and then they would take the AP exam. When a student earns a grade of three or higher on the AP exam, they earn college credit. A dual enrollment course is an articulated agreement through a community college or a state college or university where the teacher has to meet the university requirements, which is a master's degree plus 18 hours in the subject area, and then there has to be an articulated agreement for the course so that the standards that are being taught in the high school are the same standards that are being taught in the college-level course. The students then earn a "transcriptable" grade meaning that they are dually enrolled. So the grade that they earned in the high school course is also the grade that they earn in the college course. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And so then the incentive for the district, because we're going to

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incent this activity, correct? [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: The incentive is to have these kids do well on these exams, am I correct? [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: That is correct. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: If they don't do well, the district does not benefit. [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Yeah, correct. When you're talking about AP or dual enrollment or career academies, you know, if you look back, we do an awful lot of funding based upon enrollment and not on an accountability or performance model. If you use an example of where you had 20 students taking an AP biology course and 18 of them earned a two and 2 of them earned a grade of one, then none of the students have mastered the material and none of them have earned college credit. The leverage back to a school district is change then. You either have one of two issues that are likely going on in that classroom. You either have an articulation issue meaning the taught and the assessed curriculum are not aligned, or you have an instructional issue where the students aren't learning the material. And by "incentifying" this type of program based upon successful mastery, you mobilize districts to change. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, ma'am. Dr. Sutfin, on the teacher preparation side, that's extremely important as well for the dual enrollment classes or AP or IB. The standards are set for that, are they not? And how high are those standards in most

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cases? [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Yeah. When you're looking at dual enrollment, if you were to articulate to Metro Community College or the university system, it requires a master's degree plus 18 hours in the subject area. So what you know is where a general biology course, there is no requirement beyond a teaching certificate versus to teach AP or dual enrollment, the salary difference is more expensive, the training involved in AP and IB is significant. And quite honestly, it's also the material piece. When you're teaching an articulated course through the university, the textbook that you use is the university textbook. The textbook cycle, even for a high school, may be 7 to 12 years. And when you're looking at the university textbooks, they're three to five. So not only are you changing them out more rapidly, the cost of a college textbook far surpasses the cost of a high school textbook. So the dual enrollment, the AP, and career academy are fundamentally more expensive to offer than a basic Rule 10 education. But and the dilemma is if you don't offer those programs, our students check out by the time they're a senior in high school; and they have the year which they either wait to go to work, or they have the year wait before they go to college. And this gives us an opportunity to challenge them at the time in their life where they should be learning at their peak efficiency, while they're getting either career ready or college ready. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

JIM SUTFIN: Thank you very much. Appreciate it. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

CHRIS RODGERS: (Exhibit 6) Good afternoon. Madam Chair and members of the Education Committee, my name is Chris Rodgers; that's R-o-d-g-e-r-s, and I serve as

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the director of community and government relations for Creighton University. We want to thank you, Senator Sullivan and the committee, for your recognition and leadership in recognizing the importance of higher education. Creighton University supports your efforts with this bill. Creighton University believes there is room for improvement in Nebraska's postsecondary education policy. As you all know, Creighton University has an exemplary present-day reputation for offering purposeful education established on academic excellence, social justice, and personal growth. There are few institutions in our region that have the breadth and depth of academic programs and the ability to bridge these programs like Creighton. We are the only university in the country offering education in eight health professions on the same walkable campus with programs in arts and science, law, and business. We believe the opportunities to bridge our academic offerings for the benefit of our students and our society are limitless. Creighton is committed to preparing our students with the necessary skills and knowledge to be productive members of the Nebraska work force and communities. Our university's reputation for the pursuit of excellence comes from the contributions of our faculty who are passionate scholars, inspired teachers, and tireless researchers. We continue to invest in our academic programs as knowledge rapidly expands and is shaped by international developments in the humanities, the sciences, law, healthcare, and business. At Creighton, building on our Jesuit values, we educate competent, compassionate, and committed students who can become agents of change. Creighton continues to collaborate with our students, families, businesses, and organizations to keep our students in Nebraska and place them with Nebraska companies. Joining the Big East Athletic Conference last year has afforded Creighton an opportunity to build an awareness of an outstanding Nebraska university in markets where we historically have not had significant name recognition. We have taken advantage of that opportunity by increasing marketing efforts and alumni outreach in those areas. We have an opportunity to communicate to a wider audience of prospective students the academic excellence and uniqueness of Creighton. Clearly, participation in the Big East benefits Creighton and the entire state of Nebraska. We look forward to keeping pace with the likes of Georgetown, Marquette, DePaul, and others. In doing so, it will be necessary to

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work closely with the state of Nebraska, and Creighton stands willing to partner and be an asset to this committee. While we agree with the vision, mission, and goals established in LB1103, we believe that action can be taken in the next Legislature to explore other avenues to provide the very best education in Nebraska from early childhood to college. We believe now is the time to significantly invest...to significantly increase the amount of financial aid for students who attend Nebraska's private, nonprofit colleges and universities. We believe this is good public policy and should be considered by the full Legislature. Students should be able to attend the college or university where he or she has the best chance for educational and career success which is consistent with their vision. Choosing a college should be based on a student's personal and professional goals and whether a college or university can accommodate the student's educational plan. Nebraska's independent colleges and universities awarded more than 41 percent of the bachelor's and advanced degrees in 2010 and 2011 including 55 percent of the degrees in business, one third of the degrees in education, and more than half in the health sciences. In spite of this contribution, the state support of students in private and nonprofit sectors was less last year than in fiscal year 2001-02. And the percentage of dollars allocated to need-based students, grants in all sectors compared to higher education operations in Nebraska ranks lowest of any Big East or Big Ten Conference state. While Creighton strives to make its education affordable to deserving students by providing significant amounts of institutional financial aid, it needs more support from the state of Nebraska to make its educational programs available to more needy resident students. Our breadth and depth of educational possibilities are a bargain when compared to many national institutions. However, as we continue to be competitive with our peers in the Big East, we hope to partner with the state in a grant program that will assist Nebraska students, students who will find educational success at a private, nonprofit college or university in Nebraska. I will be happy to answer any questions you have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Rodgers. Any questions? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

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GALEN BOLDT: (Exhibit 7) Thank you. Greetings. Galen Boldt, superintendent of Wahoo Public Schools, G-a-l-e-n B-o-l-d-t. Senator Sullivan and all the members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide input, taking the time to set these up. I'm here actually representing STANCE, Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education. The two documents that I am giving to you, one of them you've simply seen before, which is simply our support for the goals that you have established. It outlines also the pillars that we felt were important also, obviously early childhood, which has been talked about, career and college readiness. Jim provided some real details on career and college readiness. The other two pillars that we had were curriculum instruction and assessment and then formative assessment. I'll come back to formative assessment in just a minute. But the notion of what we wanted to talk to your committee about today simply had to do with the incredible window of opportunity that we have right now as we create this vision. This is my 39th year in the business and I'm pretty sure I've taken five different workshops on how to write objectives. And I'm not sure that I got any of them right along the line. I understood them but to make sure that they're communicable to everybody that we need to communicate with, it's a tough task. And I really give you guys lots of credit for what you have done there. The notion though about what the words say and how this affects what happens in Nebraska over a significant number of years, again, in this window of opportunity what we would encourage you to do is to when we're done, when we're after that final draft and we have a document that has objectives like we have laid out right now, we really need to be sure, be clear that those objectives are measurable. We really feel like right now we are in the process of creating the vision. The second document that I gave you talks a little bit about good curriculum planning in which you start with the end in mind. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe are two of the really big authors for Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development. And they've touted that kind of a process, Understanding by Design, which starts with the end in mind. Well, when you start with the outcomes, it's important to start thinking about what does that look like? So the measures of those outcomes as we're beginning the process, thoughtful

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discussion needs to be put into that kind of a plan. And Jim outlined some pretty good detail about the career and college readiness. I'm certainly not prepared to give you the details of any one of those objectives. But I would say, for example, on goal number two, that is the high expectations for educators, for students, for parents, for postsecondary. The notion if we're going to have an objective that has to do with high expectation for all of those groups, how do we measure that? I think there's a good way to measure that when it comes to schools. I'm not sure how you measure the high expectation for parents. I'm not sure how you measure those high expectations in a way that can provide thoughtful growth as we move down the line. Another thing I guess, I would simply say we've got a really neat group of people in the State Board of Education working on same concept. Their document that they've come up with, A QuESTT, identifies several tenets that are important for us to think about and work in conjunction together with. One of the tenets that the A QuESTT document has identified is formative assessment. The notion that the science of learning is upon us and we know more about the science of learning than we've ever known. We really need to make sure. And I guess formative assessment would be one of those tenets that we really hope gets a lot of attention. From the standpoint of STANCE, we felt like we wanted to offer any kinds of potential leadership for providing information, whatever the committee would like. We would just like you to know that we're there to help you provide...to take a look at any one of those aspects. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Galen. [LB1103]

GALEN BOLDT: Yeah. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions for Mr. Boldt? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

GALEN BOLDT: You're welcome. Thank you. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

FRANK HARWOOD: (Exhibit 8) Thank you, Senator. Good afternoon. Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee, thank you for taking your time to provide us with the opportunity to give input. My name is Frank Harwood, H-a-r-w-o-o-d. And while I'm the superintendent for Bellevue Public Schools, today I'm here representing the Greater Nebraska Schools Association. The 27 member districts of GNSA are responsible for the education of approximately 200,000 Nebraska students or two thirds of all of the prekindergarten through 12th grade public school students in the state. As a group, the purpose of GNSA is to collectively advocate for all Nebraska public school students with the mission of to ensure educational excellence through adequate funding for all Nebraska public school students. For this reason, we applaud the Education Committee's efforts to define the vision, goals, and objectives needed to move public education forward in Nebraska. The committee's first goal to provide quality educational opportunities that engage and prepare Nebraskans for success and learning is directly aligned with GNSA's purpose and we wholeheartedly support it. The focus on access to quality early childhood programs along with college and career preparation opportunities are mirrored in the efforts of all GNSA member schools. Additionally, recognizing that students have different needs and that may require different educational opportunities is something that we work on every day. Although we are focused on grades pre-K through 12, we know that our students will need to continue their education after graduation so appreciate the objective aimed at making sure the postsecondary opportunities will be available and affordable. We are also very supportive of the committee's second goal of increasing educational outcomes for students. The objectives proposed closely match many of the building and district school improvement plans across the state. Many of these objectives can be a good measure of the quality of programs being offered by schools. Goals three and four recognize that schools are teaching more than academics, that issues that face the larger community are also issues in schools. Schools do have to be concerned about the physical and psychological safety of our students and staff. Schools must be good

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partners with the rest of the community with the understanding that school is an extension of the community and we must be responsive to its ever-changing needs. While we are optimistic about the committee's visioning process and we look forward to working with the committee as they implement policy to move education in Nebraska forward, we understand that moving from vision to action is not always easy. We urge the committee to look for ways to improve educational outcomes for all Nebraska students while keeping in mind the tremendous diversity of students in districts. GNSA is committed to advocating for excellent educational opportunities by providing equitable funding for public schools. Just as each of the students that we serve has different needs, each of the districts in the state has different needs as well. As we look at a vision for the future, it is important to remember that the current funding formula is based on equalization for districts that lack the local resources to provide for the needs of their students. This philosophy should continue to be a tenet of the Legislature's commitment to strengthening our state by ensuring a quality educational experience for our children. Again, thank you for the opportunity and I would be happy to try to address any questions you have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Harwood. If you were to identify, I don't want to call it even a shortcoming, but one thing that is probably critically missing in our educational system, and I know you're going to speak through pre-K through 12 because that's what you're involved in. And don't say money. (Laughter) [LB1103]

FRANK HARWOOD: So I have to pick one. I mean, I would say schools in Nebraska are very good. When you look nationally, we have very good schools. I think one of the issues that we're facing is the equity of opportunity. And I didn't say equality of opportunity but the equity of opportunity for students across the state. That comes from the sheer diversity of both our students and our districts. GNSA represents mostly, I mean, schools that range in size from a little under 1,000 to 51,000, which is...that's quite a bit of diversity. But the districts actually have quite a bit larger diversity. And trying to...when you start looking at these visions, is how do each of those things look

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for each of those students, is going to be a difficult piece. And I think that comes up as a funding piece, but it also just comes up with an opportunity piece. So I think that's probably in Nebraska where we have the biggest issue, is just the equity of opportunities. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any questions, additional? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

CARLY COSTANZO: Thank you. Committee members, thank you for your time today. My name is Carly Costanzo, C-o-s-t-a-n-z-o. I am here representing Educare as a former parent. I was one of the tens of thousands of parents who knew education was very important. However, knowing early education and the importance that that had, I wasn't aware of how much. I had my foster son come and stay with me and that's how I learned of Educare. He was a student there. Through volunteering at Educare and seeing the advancement between him and my son who was--they were eight hours difference in age--it was eye-opening. My foster son was so much more advanced compared to my child who...I'm a stay-at-home mom. So I'm there dealing with my child every day. Being against the idea of sending my child to school at such a young age, being as why I was a stay-at-home mom, I ended up enrolling both of my children into Educare. I was able to, fortunately, as they had IEPs. So then my children also had the added guidance within the speech realm that they were receiving separately, but Educare allowed that as well. Educare did so much for my children academically, kindergarten readiness. But it also educated me as a parent. It gave me the steppingstone to become an advocate for my child, children. It gave me the awareness of just the overall importance of speaking to your children every single night after school. What did we work on? If there wasn't something that they had to work on that night, let's find something. While my children were at Educare, I became a college student myself. Educare held me accountable to continue my education which in turn gave me the tools to hold my children accountable to do what they needed to do. So then I was able to, at the end of the school day, all right boys, let's sit down. Mommy

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has her homework. You guys work on your homework. We do it together as a family. My children are now in first and second grade. I was able to get tons of support by Educare to pick a good school that my children could go to within the metro area. And my 2nd-grader--2nd grade--reading on a near 4th grade level; my 1st-grader, reading on a near 3rd grade level; their science scores are phenomenal; their math skills, out of this world; their social and emotional skills are amazing and it's all because they had that early intervention at Educare. And they gave me the opportunity to learn and grow with my kids to be the advocate. So if I see a problem, I could speak up and say hold on, hold on. This isn't right. This isn't normal. So early education, in my opinion, is the foundation to every success a child would ever gain K-12 and post. That's...yeah. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much for your testimony. [LB1103]

CARLY COSTANZO: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions? Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I've got questions, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I really appreciate your testimony. I think it's very valuable. Many people on this committee have heard me say over and over again, parents have to be a part of this process. You've been there and you learned that through the process of Educare. But how do we reach parents who aren't being served in that manner? [LB1103]

CARLY COSTANZO: I mean it's...I was unaware. And I only found out through my foster child. And that's something I was fortunate enough to sit with Educare on their

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committee and that was a big concern. How do we reach these parents? How do we give them the knowledge? And that's something that I still question in the field I'm in. I still...how do we? And it's word of mouth. Like I tell all the clients I work with about Educare. I tell them, if you can't go into Educare, find something else. There's so many Head Start organizations, preschools. The importance is astronomical. You can't put any words into how important. But you hit the roadblock with, how do you reach these parents? And that's something I think it's going to be forever an ongoing thing that everybody has to work together and collaborate together. But right now, I don't know one set thing that you could do. But that is...parents need to be aware, without a doubt. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I appreciate your comments. And if you dwell on this issue and you come up with some solutions, I think it would benefit everyone. Thank you. [LB1103]

CARLY COSTANZO: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

CARLY COSTANZO: Thank you. [LB1103]

MARY ANGUS: Leave those for you or do you want me to bring them up? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Please, please. [LB1103]

MARY ANGUS: I don't think I have 12. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

MARY ANGUS: Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senators, committee members, for all of your...Senator Cook I'm looking at because she's my senator. So give me some

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strength here, okay? The credentials that I bring are simply that I am a resident...
[LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Could you please spell and state your name first? [LB1103]

MARY ANGUS: (Exhibit 9) Oh, yes, yes, yes. My name is Mary Angus, A-n-g-u-s. And my credentials are that I live in north Omaha and grew up in Florence. And as a result of some of that, I received a communication from a teacher from north Omaha. It struck me so difficult. It was so difficult for me to even read it that I felt you needed to hear it. The teacher wishes to remain anonymous and the school also. This was on September 27, a week ago Saturday. Dear Mary: All of the teachers in our building were sent an interesting memo from our counseling department. The following is a synopsis of that message. Colleagues: It is important that students who receive our counseling services are able to do so. While in the past students have often just dropped in, the number needing such help has increased so much to the point that we will have to institute a more formal process. Throughout our area, we are having many more students who are dealing with grief. Please keep us informed when we have students dealing with death or murder, especially if it is an immediate family member. I am aware that this impacts all of our kids...many of our kids. The same policy holds...applies for incarceration. I don't want to ignore it because it makes it seem normal. I'd really like to help instill a new normal for our kids. Thank you for helping our kids. We are all investing so much. That's the end of the memo. The teacher continues. I don't think the policymakers have any clue what the teachers in our north Omaha really face on a daily basis. Do you think the teachers in District 66, Millard, Elkhorn, Ralston, etcetera, get these kinds of everyday notes? The teachers in our building are being put under a microscope because we have not met proficiency according to the No Child Left Behind Act for a number of years. In many cases, we struggle to simply meet the basic needs, let alone affect their ability to pass computerized state tests. Thank you for letting me vent. I wanted you to get a taste of my life as a teacher under the stress of negativity from upper management while we are still trying to help our children, our clientele. In a

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follow-up conversation, this teacher went on to make the following point. While differentiation is preached as an essential element in effective teaching in the classroom, I would draw attention to the members of the Education Committee to the fact that nothing in the draft of the common vision for education in Nebraska makes any mention of that value when it comes to the operation of an educational system itself. By that I mean there is no recognition in the goals and objectives of the need to differentiate among school districts and even among schools within a district regarding the challenges to be overcome in achieving goal three: create a positive, safe, and successful learning environments. That was my communication. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much, Mary, for your testimony. Any questions? Senator Cook. [LB1103]

SENATOR COOK: I want to thank you for offering that advocacy and bringing it forward on behalf of the person or persons that put it forward to you. We do talk as committee members about other social determinants that impact the success of our students. And as we go forward, we will be looking at ways to support classroom teachers in their efforts to support students. But I appreciate that being brought forward today. Thank you. [LB1103]

MARY ANGUS: Thank you, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mary. Welcome. [LB1103]

DEVON THORPE: Hello. Hi, thanks for having me today and hearing me out. My name is Devon, D-e-v-o-n, Thorpe, T-h-o-r-p-e. I'm here on behalf of Educare of Omaha. I'm a current parent. My son...I'm a current parent. My son attends Educare Omaha at Kellom. Like you said, you all had the opportunity to tour our fine building this morning. For one, I call Educare "our building" because it's like a second family to my son and I. They stood next to us and helped to hold us up through some extremely rough times in

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our lives, through me not being able to walk last year and through my son's mother passing away last year. They were right there with us in every conceivable manner. And they also helped to connect us with community resources such as Ted E. Bear Hollow. Educare is...I don't call it a day care; I call it a school. But they're much more than that because they actually care about what's going on in the children's home lives. They care about what's going on with the families. And they do many, many things to help get families and the community engaged in the children's lives and learning experiences. I know, as opposed to my son attending a regular or normal day care, he's in a learning environment at Educare where he's excelling and progressing at a rapid rate. Every day it's something new. He's singing a new song where they're learning how to build something or learning how to cook or wash their hands or brush their teeth. And to them, it's all fun and games. It's an interactive song. But they're learning. They're learning a skill, something to further their growth. And something that's also different about Educare is they have a curriculum that they abide by and adhere to in the classrooms. And when the children get there, they have a structured routine. And I think that's very important because a lot of children don't have that structure and routine in their home lives, but when they come to Educare, they do. Also, like how Educare, the teachers communicate with the parents every single day on how the children are doing, how their day was or how their week was and overall. And they also have these things called parent meetings where pretty much they're miniature parent-teacher conferences where parents get in the classrooms and they get to see, you know, what's going on, what's being learned, what skills are being worked with. And it just helps keep you informed on what's going on in your child's life. And Educare also does screening processes where they check up on the children's progress. They do them two or three times a year, I believe--once in the beginning and then once in the end. I can't remember if they do one in the middle. But I personally love these screening tests because they keep me informed on how my son is doing in school. And though he's only...he's four now, it's very important to me because I know that how he does now translates into how he'll do in the future. They also have many materials there and resources. Like they have a speech pathologist to help with the children who might have

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some minor issues with their speaking capabilities. And they also have learning materials that parents can take home so that the learning doesn't stop, you know, at whatever time you pick your child up or Friday afternoon or evening. You can take these things home. And there are interactive games or books or CDs with the learning songs on there, which I really love because I don't think that the learning should stop once you leave Friday afternoon or Monday or Wednesday or what have you. And I heard you speak earlier about what could be done to have parents more involved in their children's lives as far as learning goes. And Educare, they're working really hard on that. They do a great job. They have a variety, just a variety of things that they do as far as the young people's group...or the young parents' group, where they get...I believe it's parents under 19 or 20. But they get them in there, they get the whole group together, talk about the issues, offer them help and resources. They do that. They also have a grandparents' tea where they invite grandparents in to, you know, go around the school, come to the classroom, maybe they want to read to the children, things like that. And they also have a fatherhood group where it's not just for the parents, the fathers of Educare children. They invite uncles, grandfathers, friends who...because it's not just parents who are influential figures in the children's lives. And they get these people in here because it is vitally important for fathers to be in children's lives. And a lot of kids don't have their fathers in their lives. I'd also like to say that I wholeheartedly believe that early childhood education is one of the most important things that we as parents, officeholders, just anybody in the community, it's the most important things we could do because it gives our children a head start on furthering their success later on in life. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Thorpe, for your testimony. Good luck with your son. Any questions for him? Thank you very much. [LB1103]

DEVON THORPE: Thank you very much. You all have a great day. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

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KATRINA BURTON: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Katrina Burton, B-u-r-t-o-n. I am here representing myself, my children, my grandchildren, and all of my descendants who cannot be here to represent themselves today. I am very happy and grateful for the opportunity that I have to present my feelings. As a mother, I feel very inadequate almost being in the presence of so many people who are so well educated and well versed. My words will be simple in comparison. But they will be heartfelt. While studying my feelings with regards to the suggested vision, mission, goals, and objectives, I came across a quote that made me think. Abraham Lincoln was of the opinion that, quote, the world has never had a good definition of liberty. We all declare for liberty, he said. But in using the same word we do not mean the same thing. With some, the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself and the product of his labor, while with others liberty may mean for some men to do as they please with other men and the product of other men's labor. Again, he said, the shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act. It made me think, which is better? If liberty is the wolf, i.e. some men do as they please with other men, then eventually the wolves eat the sheep. When there are no sheep left, then the wolves must turn on each other, for they believe in doing as they please with others and know no other way. This then results in the destruction of all. It seems as though the best definition of liberty must then lie with the sheep. Each man may do as he pleases with himself and the product of his labor. Under this definition, the sheep will likely flourish. Now the question that remains is, what is the character of the shepherd? In order for the sheep to survive the wolf, they must follow a shepherd who will guide and defend their liberty. If not, the wolves will be allowed to destroy the flock, which will result in the destruction of all. Each of us is a shepherd of sorts. As a parent bound by the dictates of my own conscience, I'm called upon to protect and defend the liberty of my children. As an elected government official bound by the supreme law of the land, you are called upon to protect and defend the liberty of your constituents. So the question I hope you ask yourselves is this, do the laws which I am called upon to create, our goals and objectives, reflect a definition of liberty which holds true to the constitution

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and which will lead to growth? Or do they reflect a definition of liberty which will ultimately lead to its own destruction? Ambiguous terms such as high quality, performance standards, developmentally appropriate, high expectation, etcetera, beg to be defined. They beg to be defined because the goals upon which these terms hang cannot be considered complete unless they are measurable. Dates have been suggested for the completion of these goals further indicating that these terms must be defined so as to have a beginning and an end. There are at least 24 such ambiguous terms included in within this vision, mission, goals, and objectives, not the least of which is the term success. Given that "every Nebraskan" would have a personal definition for each of these terms, given that these personal definitions would be constantly changing as individuals acquire new information, I have to assume then that you do not intend to allow every Nebraskan to define these terms for themselves otherwise measurements wouldn't be possible. I must therefore assume that some men will be defining these terms for and on behalf of every Nebraskan. As a shepherd of your constituents, are you sure you wish to pursue this course of action? Are you sure you want to initiate a line of thinking that would deny preschool operators the ability to define high quality for their place of business thereby denying parents the flexibility to choose preschools that more closely match their definitions of high quality, that places the definition of performance standards in the hands of those far removed from those required to perform? That definition...that defines developmentally appropriate on the basis of a law of averages rather than the unique needs of an individual child, that would deny children with the guidance of those whom they associate with on a regular basis the right to define high expectations for themselves. Are you sure you wish to pursue a line of thinking that would ultimately deny every Nebraskan the ability to define success in education for themselves? As a shepherd of my children, I urge you to carefully consider the definitions of liberty which you're choosing to employ and the consequences of allowing some men to do as they please with the product of other men's labor, that being their knowledge. I urge you rather to be a shepherd which would defend against the wolves so that when you, at the end of your term, once again amongst the sheep, can be confident that you will not also find yourself face to face with

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wolf. I appreciate your time. Thank you so much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Thank you again. [LB1103]

KATRINA BURTON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

ASHLEY CARROLL: (Exhibit 10) Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Ashley Carroll; it's C-a-r-r-o-l-l, and I am here as the state coordinator with Action for Healthy Kids. I'd like to provide some...I will be talking about addressing barriers to education and presenting some evidence-based solutions. But first, I want to start off with some background. One in three children in the U.S. are overweight or obese, which predisposes them for a variety of adverse health outcomes such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, asthma, and stroke. In the U.S., approximately \$14 billion is spent on direct medical costs incurred in the treatment of childhood obesity annually. One in four military recruits are unable to serve in the military because they're overweight, which is the number one reason for disqualification. One in five children in Nebraska are deemed food insecure, meaning the availability of their next meal is uncertain. While 44 percent of Nebraska students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, only 38.9 percent of those students participate in a school breakfast program. Now, addressing these barriers: Nebraska students come to school from a variety of backgrounds, circumstances, and levels of readiness. If our goal is to help families overcome barriers to education and make every Nebraskan educated for success, then we must stack the deck in favor of all children by ensuring healthy, well-nourished students are entering our classrooms. The most dedicated teachers and innovative curriculum will not make a hungry, malnourished, and/or sick child into a high-performing student. The achievement gap cannot be closed without addressing multiple factors simultaneously including child health and wellness, hunger, and physical inactivity. Each of these factors has a

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negative impact on academic performance and increases the likelihood that a child will miss school days as a result of poor health. We all know that eating breakfast is important. That's why schools often provide breakfast on standardized testing days. So doesn't it make sense to treat every day like a test day? Providing breakfast at school is one of the most well-researched and cost-effective measures to directly impact school wellness. Students who eat breakfast at school have been shown on average to attend 1.5 more days of school per year and score 17.5 percent higher on standardized math tests. The challenge is that traditional breakfast programs offered in the cafeteria are not always the best model to reach students. Alternative breakfast delivery models like grab-and-go breakfast and breakfast in the classroom address multiple barriers to access and student participation including reducing the stigma that school breakfast is only for poor kids, bus schedules that do not allow time for students to get breakfast before school, students simply not being hungry first thing in the morning, and parents who are too rushed in the morning to provide a nutritionally balanced breakfast. Additionally, teachers report improvements in student alertness and attendance, decreases in school nurse visits, as well as a reduction in discipline problems when students consume breakfast at school. Smart snacks and healthy policies: Since students spend the majority of their waking hours in school, it's an ideal environment to promote healthy eating through education, access, and modeling. Students consume up to two-thirds of their daily calories in school, which makes offering nutritious foods a no-brainer in the cafeteria, classroom, vending machines, and anywhere food is served. Teachers and staff can contribute to a healthy school environment by offering healthy, nonfood rewards as incentives instead of pop, candy, and other junk food. When teachers and other adults model healthy habits, students notice and emulate those behaviors. Healthy snacks can even present a learning opportunity by exposing students to new foods, discussing where they come from, and their specific contribution to a well-balanced diet. Multiple learning styles are incorporated into the classroom, yet the use of movement and physical activity are underutilized in engaging students. While students are at school for most of their day, they're unfortunately not meeting their daily recommended goal for physical activity. The Institute of Medicine recommends each

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child gets at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. With instructional time and test scores given priority in the school day time struggle, PE and recess are often the first areas to be cut or reduced. However, this practice may be counterproductive and counterintuitive as neuroscience studies show that the positive impact that just 20 minutes of physical activity has on brain function. Brain-imaging studies show that the brains of aerobically fit children may exhibit superior executive function. Physical activity doesn't have to occur all at one time. Physical activity engagements or brain breaks can be incorporated into math, science, and reading where students are moving while they're learning. Imagine if every Nebraska student was guaranteed a nutritious breakfast and lunch and was physically active throughout each day. More so than expensive technology, these measures might be the most cost effective and impactful way to ensure Nebraska students are adequately prepared to enter the knowledge economy of the future. An investment in our children is an investment in Nebraska's future. We ask that you include in the goals for Nebraska education that all schools provide breakfast with public and private incentives for alternative breakfast models, that all schools provide healthful snack options in vending machines and in the cafeteria that comply with Smart Snacks regulations, and encourage the use of healthy fund-raising and nonfood rewards. And finally, that schools place a priority on physical activity and provide multiple opportunities for students to achieve the daily recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day. This includes daily recess, high-quality PE offered as frequently as staffing allows, physical activity engagements or brain breaks infused into the classroom, and shared used agreements that allow for the school building to be used but the community after hours for intramural sports. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Carroll. Any questions for her? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

BLANE McCANN: (Exhibit 11) Good afternoon. Madam Chair Sullivan and members of the Education Committee, my name is Blane McCann, M-c-C-a-n-n. I am the

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superintendent of Westside Community Schools here in Omaha. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I provided a handout that will go into greater detail regarding my remarks. I'm here today to talk with you about the next generation of learner in my school district and throughout the state. Imagine a school district where teachers are integrating literacy skills across all grade levels and content areas ensuring that students are able to gain greater understanding on a variety of topics, a place where learners increase the amount of time they are allowed to make personal choices in their own learning through increasing engagement in relevant lessons. Imagine a district where we can foster community and global partnerships, giving students real world learning and life experiences. Imagine pre-K through 12 settings where we can integrate new and existing technology with meaningful face-to-face educational experiences creating 24-7, anywhere-anytime learning opportunities for all students. The vision that I've described to you is one that we have started to implement within the Westside Community Schools. We are working to graduate students who are creative, critical thinkers who can engage in authentic problem solving. We are giving them technology as a necessary tool to enhance their learning. We are setting metrics around problem solving and critical thinking which is no easy task. It's an exciting time to be in public education. Our goal is to do what's best for young people. But in order to be truly effective, the state must continue to invest in education. And it's about making the right investments in our future as we prepare students for a 21st century economy and jobs that have not yet been invented. If we want our young people to compete on a global level, we must adequately fund public education in Nebraska. As you work on a statewide vision, I encourage you to consider investing in the things that really matter for student success. It is in this area of funding that I understand your task is not easy. As someone relatively new to Nebraska, I spent part of my summer vacation traveling through western Nebraska. I was amazed at the beauty and the expansiveness of this state and the great challenge of providing appropriate funding for all school districts, each with their own unique educational needs. Throughout the state of Nebraska, we are dealing with changing demographics, especially in the area of poverty. We must work to ensure that all students earn a quality

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education to move our great state forward economically or risk losing a generation of students who are not prepared to take their place in society. A culture of innovation is alive and well in the Westside Community Schools. Our teachers are encouraged and expected to aim high and take risk in order to engage all students and graduate independent learners with the capacity to learn throughout their career. As you develop the statewide vision, I encourage you to (inaudible) excellence from our school district and others while providing both encouragement and resources to assist all school districts to achieve their goals. In closing, we must prepare our children for a global society. They will need to be bilingual to communicate with colleagues in other countries, demonstrate a capacity to learn new things by being curious and adaptable, show an ability to execute and lead to accomplish goals and solve complex problems. Consequently, we must redesign schools that consistently focus on these types on skills and behaviors to prepare all students and build their hope for a bright future. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today and to share some ideas regarding our statewide vision for education. And of course, I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Blane. Any questions for him? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

BLANE McCANN: Thank you. Yep. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

KELSEY DENNIS: Hello. My name is Kelsey Dennis, K-e-l-s-e-y D-e-n-n-i-s, and I'm here on behalf of Educare as well. This is my sixth year being a parent at Educare; I'm nervous though. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That's all right, you're doing fine. [LB1103]

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KELSEY DENNIS: At fourteen years old I found out I was pregnant. And of course being that young, you already don't know where to turn to. So Educare came to our school, which was Central High School, and they did a presentation basically about their program. And of course I got signed up being that it was free from the hours of 8:30 to 2:30. That was the best thing that I could obviously do at that point. And becoming involved in the program when my son was 3 months old, it taught me a lot. They had the teen parent program within Educare which I attended as well, which had a lot of advice and support from the people there. As far as like budgeting and all that type of stuff, they're there for you for support on that. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That's all right, you're doing fine. [LB1103]

KELSEY DENNIS: Okay. And as far as my son learning from the program, again like I said, I was 14 so I'm going to school during the day and then of course when I turned 15, I was able to get a job. So I was at work the whole entire night so I solely depended on Educare to provide everything that I needed for my child to learn and grow and be ready and prepared for kindergarten. So of course he graduated from the program at five years old. And I also had another baby who's in the program now. So each year I'm still involved in the teen parent program and it's still helping me to this day because you still are learning new things as you grow older. So each year I'm learning new things and I want to talk about the program itself, okay. One of the things that I like about the program is also the schedule that they have. They are on a strict schedule of what they do every single day. They expect every child to be there from 8:30 to 2:30, which are the core hours that they learn from. And so your child is expected to be there in the morning for breakfast. Breakfast ends at 9:30 so your child has the option to eat from 8:30 to 9:30. They also do music, they learn from play in the hallways, outside. Also the fact that they have the 3 to 8 ratio in the classroom is a big thing to me because my child was getting like hands-on, one-on-one attention it seemed like as far as what I seen. It was more of a one-on-one type of a thing where now he's in kindergarten and he has all these students and only one teacher now paying attention to him. So it helped

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out a lot being that there was more than one teacher in the classroom. And they also do Spanish in the class as well, so not only are they benefiting from the English but they're benefiting from certain Spanish things...words that they use. Then they also have family-style dining. And just in the reality of like a real world, even in my household when I was growing up we didn't always sit at the table for dinner at nighttime. We didn't always do that type of stuff. So beings that they actually sit down at a table for breakfast and lunch, they're served with regular plates, not plastic, paper plates that they're throwing away, they're actually learning how to serve their food and just how to...manners. Just respecting each other at the table, so. I just feel like it's a really, really good program and that the way that we could probably spread the word is by opening more programs because I've spread the word by mouth. And being that there is a waiting list, it's hard to get into the program. So if there could be more sites opened up, there could be more people involved and more people spreading the word for early childhood care. That's all I have to say, so. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Well, you did a great job. Thank you, Ms. Dennis. [LB1103]

KELSEY DENNIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Obviously, your children have been helped a great deal by Educare. Can you tell me a little bit more about how you, yourself, have been helped by Educare and how they've helped you improve? [LB1103]

KELSEY DENNIS: Yes. Well, being involved in the program, I actually was offered a full-time job there when I graduated high school. So that helped out a lot because I needed the money. And as far as just a parent involved with my children, the programs that they do have--even if it's like an outing to the zoo or something like that--that gave us the opportunity to be involved to give our children that outing to the zoo that we might not have been able to do before or Children's Museum or any of that. It just...it shows the involvement that you need to have with your child. So that's what I've gotten from

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the program. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Great. Any other questions? [LB1103]

KELSEY DENNIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good luck being a parent. Welcome. [LB1103]

LAMAR DODD: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Lamar, L-a-m-a-r, D-o-d-d, Dodd. I'm going to start off by saying thank you as well for having us up here. I'm a parent at Educare as well as an employee. And as a parent there, I see so much. My child started there at...he's been there a year. He turned three in September and this is his second year at Educare. From day one to now he is such a totally different person. He went from being, not so much a bully because he was a only child, you know, to being around the different kids in the classroom and different things like that. He's blossomed so much from the program and different aspects of it. Recently...well, I had started off being involved as far as the policy committee for my child. I feel like I am his first teacher and that's very important to me. With that, we...his mother joined...his mother as well works for Educare. She is the nurse over at the other site, Indian Hill. I'm at Kellom. I work there as the cook so I see what he eats on a day-to-day basis, you know. It's all...it's just really important to see the involvement in different things that parents have with their kid. Like the young man said earlier, we have a fathers' group and I am in control of that fathers' group. I try to round us up every month and get fathers involved with their child as well. I see both parents come in. That's...to see both parents come in and be involved in their kid's life is very important. And it's not a lot of people to see it. You see single mothers, single fathers, but to see them come in as a group and work is a very beautiful thing. And I just think that as a parent, first, Educare has really made us appreciate the fact that there's actually teachers and people that are willing to be there for our children, so. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Lamar. Any questions? [LB1103]

LAMAR DODD: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions? [LB1103]

LAMAR DODD: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you so much for your testimony. [LB1103]

LAMAR DODD: No problem. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good luck. Welcome. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: (Exhibit 12) Thank you. I'm Eileen Vautravers, E-i-l-e-e-n, Vautravers, V-a-u-t-r-a-v-e-r-s. Senator Sullivan and Education Committee members, thank you very much for this opportunity. I am speaking on behalf of the Nebraska Dyslexia Association, and I will be addressing several of the goals and objectives in the course of my presentation. The Nebraska Dyslexia Association congratulates the Education Committee and heartily agrees with your vision of "every Nebraskan educated for success." What constitutes success varies from one individual to the next. But since 95 percent of all children can learn to read, reading is most often the key to success for most children. According to most authorities, one in five children has the primary form of dyslexia, which is the most common cause of reading problems and the most common cause of a specific learning disability. Dyslexia can cause problems not only with reading, but with writing, spelling, and comprehension. And it results from difficulties in the sound component of language. Reading really is rocket science. As a result of the development of functional MRIs in the 2000s, we now know that for reading to take place multiple areas in the brain must communicate with each other. In the approximately 60,000 Nebraska children K-12 who have primary dyslexia, they do not

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have the wiring to the left back brain reading centers which perform word analysis and rapid recall. Most often this form of dyslexia is inherited, with a 40 percent to 50 percent chance of a child having dyslexia or difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, when a parent has had these difficulties. In addition to the approximately 60,000 students with primary dyslexia in Nebraska, we have up to 85,000 students with secondary dyslexia and it's explained in the handout how this number is calculated. Functional MRIs have shown these children have the wiring to the left back brain centers for reading but it has not been activated due to their deprived environments with poverty and exposure to toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences. As you finalize Goal 1, Objective 2, which states, "Children from backgrounds that put them at greater risk will have access to additional early childhood opportunities," please consider stating that children from backgrounds with parental struggles in school or those with primary dyslexia and those with backgrounds of potential environmental deprivation or those with secondary dyslexia, be recognized early as at risk for reading failure and have access to appropriate supplemental instruction. Since these children constitute the largest group with backgrounds placing them at greater risk, we feel this would be appropriate. Besides these two groups of children, those children with delays in emergent literacy skills and delays in language development are also at risk of having reading difficulties. So screening for these delays in all those children enrolled in the preschool mentioned in Goal 1, Objective 1, in addition to screening all children in elementary school for signs of dyslexia, would help identify additional children at risk. As your committee has so accurately recognized in Goal 1, Objective 2, the importance of early identification of children at risk for learning difficulties cannot be overstated. In one study, early identification of these children followed by implementation of a structured multisensory language program in first grade resulted in a reduction in reading disability by 66 percent up to 90 percent. The window of opportunity, as someone mentioned earlier, to develop the brain wiring for reading by screening and intervening with appropriate research-based instruction has been shown to be prior to third grade. If implemented in third grade or later, 75 percent of students continue with reading difficulties through high school. Therefore, the Nebraska Dyslexia Association would like you to consider adding

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an additional objective to Goal 1 and that is: All children will have early identification and initiation of science-based instruction for learning difficulties. Although dyslexia is a neurological condition that children do not outgrow without intervention, it has educational consequences and requires educational treatment. By addressing the need for appropriate instruction of both primary and secondary dyslexic children, your committee will have a most significant impact on reaching your goal to Objectives 1 and 2. Multiple studies have confirmed the findings of Dr. Sally Shaywitz at The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity that the brain wiring for reading can be developed in the primary dyslexic and can be activated in the secondary dyslexic by employing explicit systematic multisensory language instruction. In order to teach all of the children of all of the people in the ways that they learn best, this multisensory language instruction, which employs seeing, hearing, touching, saying, and movement, must be taught to and practiced by teachers in training in our institutions of higher education. In addition, research has repeatedly demonstrated that these preservice teachers must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the science of reading and linguistics. What teachers know about linguistics affects not only student improvement in reading scores, but what students learn. As evidenced right here in Omaha, Central Park Elementary School, which teaches all students to read using a multisensory language program called Spalding, their third to sixth grade student reading proficiency scores of 70 percent to 80 percent are comparable to our state's reading proficiency scores. However, Central Park has double the percentage of students in poverty compared to the state. In spite of Central Park having the same percentage of students in poverty as neighborhood schools nearby, its student reading proficiency is more than 50 percent higher than in those schools. There is no deficit of knowledge about what works to help struggling readers become proficient readers. The science of reading has demonstrated repeatedly that explicit, systematic, direct, multisensory language instruction is essential. Therefore, NDA requests that you consider adding an objective to Goal 2 as an expectation for teachers in educational institutions. This additional objective would state: Higher education institutions teach all teachers of reading the science of reading and multisensory language instruction. The Nebraska Dyslexia Association would like to

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work together with you, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education to help accomplish your goals and objectives. Together, we can help all of the children of all of the people become educated for success. And you have the summary at the end of my report. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Eileen. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I appreciate your testimony. Any questions? Senator Davis. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for coming today. A couple questions: You talk about identifying these children for learning difficulties and I'm assuming you're talking pre-K? [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Yes, as early as four and five years of age there are many signs of risk for dyslexia in that preschool child. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: So, I mean, are you...is that correct to say kindergarten then is when you would try to do this assessment? [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: No. There are screening assessments even in prekindergarten. Children that have difficulty rapidly naming objects; children that have difficulty rhyming words--cat, hat, mat; children that have difficulty learning their alphabet and the sounds and such; all of those that are taught as preschool skills, children that are slow in those areas are at risk for the reading difficulties later. [LB1103]

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SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. And then I had a question about Central Park Elementary. How long has it been using this program? [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: I cannot say. It has been for many years, I know that. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And so the data that you presented us is long term? [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: It's cumulative, yes. It covered the third through sixth grade; third graders getting it. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: So that being the case then, why hasn't the Omaha Public Schools adopted this policy across the board? [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: I'm not in a position to have access to that information. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Okay, thank you. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Senator Cook. [LB1103]

SENATOR COOK: You made reference to the requiring multisensory language instruction among higher ed teacher education programs, I'm assuming. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR COOK: Do you know whether or not the university system or private universities require that as far as teacher curriculum as of right now? [LB1103]

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EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: As of now, we are unaware that any of the institutions of higher education in Nebraska are requiring that as part of their course curriculum for educating teachers of reading. Teachers of reading are teachers that are in special ed for children with reading difficulties. We have heard repeatedly from teacher training programs that we have offered, the teachers come up and say, why wasn't I taught this in my college course? And this has been happening for a long time, decades that these teachers are reporting this. [LB1103]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Doctor. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Eileen. [LB1103]

EILEEN VAUTRAVERS: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

JIM GROTRIAN: Good afternoon, committee. You've been here for almost two hours and you've heard a lot of really great information. My name is Jim Grotrian, spelled J-i-m G-r-o-t-r-i-a-n, and I have the pleasure of serving as the executive vice president for Metropolitan Community College that serves the greater Omaha area. MCC has consistently strived to fulfill our mission of providing adult ed, career, technical education, applied research, and transfer opportunities. We're also pleased to be doing this and celebrating our 40th year as a postsecondary institution serving our four counties. As a result of a recent and significant master planning process, we have focused that mission even more with a vision towards innovation and economic responsiveness. As you've heard from many of our partners today, particularly from K-12, it's important to be innovative and be responsive to those economic conditions. We have identified three major themes that we believe that will fit well into your strategic

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planning process. And the first one, in particular, is technology. Technology has become a driving factor in the future of career education and our everyday lives. A recent example was Metropolitan Community College was recently named a recipient of a federal PEC grant, which is meant to bolster information technology and career training and pathways to high demand in IT and IT-enabled occupations. The funding, if you're not familiar, is part of the final \$450 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (Competitive) Grant Program, which many community colleges around the state have been recipients of. We've nicknamed a project PROTO, standing for Providing Realistic (Ongoing) On-ramps to Technology Occupations. And the project will establish an IT career pathway that incorporates career training in both commercial and industrial IT industries. We think that's a good example of the major theme in which we've embarked on, particularly as it relates to our overall strategic planning process. We plan on serving about 500 students with that new grant. And most importantly, it's like anything we've done over the years. We don't believe we can do anything significant without partners; partners in K-12 and also partners in industry which is mentioned in your plan as well. I wanted to mention some of those partners we have: Nebraska Department of Labor; Heartland Workforce Solutions; Alvine Engineering; Kiewit Corporation; Omaha Public Power, White Lotus; Trane; TACKarchitects; and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. And over those three years we plan on collaborating with those partners to prepare hopefully up to 500 dislocated workers in career pathways in IT. The second theme that we have committed to is creating a flexible job-driven training that leads to certifications is quickly replacing the traditional associate's degree even in our world. And MCC is a first responder to business and industry job-training needs and prides itself in continuing to be a partner in developing workforce talent. The third is developmental education. Developmental education has become more prevalent with recent high school graduates and our adult population than ever before. MCC must continue to reinvent our delivery process to ensure student success in postsecondary education. As this committee and the Legislature considers developing and honing your long-range vision and goals for Nebraska's education system, we would encourage you to consider these concepts

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further into your planning process. The first one would be the future job growth in our economy will be driven by middle-skills positions that require some postsecondary education but not necessarily even lead to an associate's or bachelor's degree. Mentioned in your goals also about similar measurements of success in higher ed. And for example, it is important to note that in community colleges similar to our four-year partners in delivery of education differ greatly on the access of curriculum and in many cases the affordability of that education. A college entrance exam such as like the ACT or SAT which may be required for four-year admissions is not required for admission to MCC or many open institutions like ours. And we tend to gravitate toward assessing students' basic skills through other means to decide and to see if they're prepared for a postsecondary education. The second is the term of completion. Completion again is a strong benchmark, in a traditional sense, we've all been living with for several years, but it's not always as easy to define at the community college level. At MCC we closely monitor students in participation and anticipated goals and outcomes. And many community college students, as you're already aware, are not degree seekers and hence not necessarily completers in the traditional sense. And their goals might include a wide range of completing one to five classes for workplace readiness, transfer courses, or those seeking to complete at a four-year institution, and a smaller number are even degree seekers or necessarily completers. A second would be is really emphasize the continuum of career and technical education that begins in K-12 but they will not end up receiving a high school diploma. A K-12 system serves as initial foundations for career education, as we all well know, but not necessarily lead to fulfilling a middle-skill job vacancy which does require some postsecondary education. As I said earlier, we're extremely proud to partner with other educational partners and also business and industry. And we take a lot of pride in the strength of our partnerships with our K-12 partners here in our four-county service area, which you've heard from many of them today. Third, and I believe probably the most important for our future as we think about policy, is the Legislature must develop a statewide strategic workforce development plan that is driven by the vision and goals of this process. And currently there is no coherent strategy that directly relates to job-driven training or applied

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research as it relates to the future workforce needs and particularly specific to our mission, i.e. for example, last week many of us attended a meeting of the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership and a national site selection executive briefed many of us on the importance of an economic development strategy. And one of the most important issues that he recommended that the state policymakers consider having is that we must invest heavily in a workforce development and training program to land important economic development projects; and we agreed. So last is MCC is continuing evaluating our existing training programs and delivery methods to ensure we are consistently economic responsive to changing economy and our commitment to those we serve to be a leader in developing our workforce talent. So thank you for the opportunity to testify today and giving us the chance to participate in this conversation and help build a better Nebraska through education. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Grotrian. You mentioned that the ACT and SAT are not probably as appropriate for community colleges in assessing preparedness. What methods do you use to assess preparedness for a student? [LB1103]

JIM GROTRIAN: That's a great question, and thank you. We do use the ACT. We also use another ACT product called COMPASS, which measures core competencies across general ed curriculum. And we're also studying other multiple measures, such as the emphasis of high school transcript and so forth. Our students aren't required to take the COMPASS assessment. We do strongly encourage it if they want to enroll full time. But if you're a part-time adult student that comes with some other postsecondary education we don't require it. So we use a combination of multiple measurements. It's difficult to determine but Metro, along with all the other five community colleges in Nebraska, use COMPASS. And we find that to be probably a better indicator of where people are at that moment with their educational skills. And we do have some conversion tables that go into the subscores of the ACT test itself. So if they bring that with them, if they're a high school student, we do use that as well as an equivalent to the COMPASS. So it's a combination of many tools. We don't have it completely figured

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out and it's something we're studying through actually an initiative through the Higher Learning Commission at this moment in determining what other breadth of measurements can we use to help better predict success of the adult learner. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

JIM GROTRIAN: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

EAN GARRETT: Good afternoon. How you guys doing? All right. So first of all, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. My name is Ean Garrett, you spell that E-a-n, Garrett, G-a-r-r-e-t-t. I am a native of north Omaha. I am a Howard University graduate from Washington, D.C., as well as a UNL Law College graduate. And I've also completed coursework at CBL International Law and Business School in Dubai. I am representing my organization, Infinite 8 Institute, of which I am the head consultant and founder. We are a consulting firm that focuses on innovation in education as well as the social sector. Our staff of six consultants focus on high-growth areas such as digital currency, noncognitive development, as well as environmental sustainability. Last year we worked with partners in over 11 cities around America. Recently we were awarded the Director's Coin by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, as well as our strategies were recently recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. So today we're going to touch upon early childhood education in Nebraska as well as secondary education in Nebraska. In 2013, according to Child Care Aware of America, Nebraska ranked last out of the 50 U.S. states in early childcare quality. As a result, we were motivated to create our early childhood curriculum, which is the first curriculum ever created that is comprehensive, by an African-American. It is called the Infinite 8 Non-cognitive Development Program and our program focuses on environmental sustainability. The students practice

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mindfulness meditation as well, as well as noncognitive development. We benchmark based off the top three educational paradigms in the world, Finland, Singapore, and China. Our curriculum has been approved and our training has been approved by the Department of Education here in Nebraska and we hope to collaborate further. In regards to secondary education, in March 2013 there was an article where the World-Herald reviewed the test results that show a vast achievement gap for black students despite decades of efforts and some recent gains. In reading proficiency, for example, black students in OPS still trail their white counterparts by an average of 31 percent in grades three through six and by a 44 percent gap by grade seven. By the 12th grade, black OPS students or graduates' achievement gaps become poor with only 12 percent of graduates meeting ACT standards for college readiness in reading. In English proficiency, only 1.4 percent of black OPS graduates met the ACT proficiency standards. And less than a week ago, The Center for Education Reform released their Parent Power Index, which ranks Nebraska public education 49th out of 50 states. The ranking is due to low teacher quality, the fact that teacher evaluations are not done annually and are also not tied to student growth. Additionally, neither tenure decision nor licensures in advancement and renewal are based on teacher effectiveness. Ineffective classroom performance is also not grounds for dismissal in Nebraska and performance is not considered during layoffs. But these issues are not only negative to Nebraska but they're issues that are being dealt with all around the country as well. In 2012 according to the Program for International Student Assessment, the PISA, a global assessment that measures 15-year-old students around the world in reading, science, and math, the U.S. ranked 24th in science, 21st in reading, and 31st in math. The United States ranked below average compared to the rest of the world in every category. So what we are recommending is... additionally we look at John Amos Comenius, the father of modern education who is a Czech Republic or a Czech national. And he created our modern system of education in the early 1600s or the K-12 system that we utilize today. And because of that, it shows that our educational system is somewhat archaic and it needs to be updated in order to be on par with that of the rest of the world. So as a result, we recommend that charter schools be considered and

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that they be utilized as incubators, small, nimble incubators for innovation. Additionally, we recommend the revamping of the OPS curriculum to be on par with not only that of other states but international best practices as well. And then I will end with a quote that comes from the book authored by Milton Friedman that is called, That Used To Be Us. And he said as he discussed with an official at the Singapore Ministry of Education...he had a conversation with an official there and he asked, "Well, what are you guys doing so that you guys are so great compared to the rest of the world?" And the official responded back saying, "We are not good enough. We must never think that we are good enough. Either you adapt or you die." Right now as I stand before you, we are in a very unsure place as far as the world is concerned. And right now is a better time than ever to innovate, to think about different ideas that can contribute to the greater overall well-being of our students so that they might be able to compete internationally in the new global knowledge-based economy of today. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Garrett. [LB1103]

EAN GARRETT: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Did I understand you correctly that your organization has a curriculum that has been approved by the Department of Education? [LB1103]

EAN GARRETT: Yes, that's correct. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And where is it currently being used? [LB1103]

EAN GARRETT: It's being utilized in Element Learning Center, Students of the Future, and Kids Are First. So we have a total of about 200 children who are utilizing the curriculum as well. Also we are recently affiliated with the Learning Community so as a result we're utilizing their voucher program to work with childcare providers. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony.
[LB1103]

EAN GARRETT: All right, thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, members of the Education Committee. My name is Adam Weinberg, that's W-e-i-n-b-e-r-g, I'm the communications and outreach director for the Platte Institute for Economic Research based here in Omaha. We've published numerous reports on education policy issues here in Nebraska and those are available on our Web site, platteinstitute.org. While K-12 education is considered a civil right in the Constitution of Nebraska, serious equity issues in our education system persist. And I'd like to discuss that with you today. We think that the Education Committee's goals and visioning statements are excellent. And we think that they set the right tone for what we need in terms of identifying the areas for improvement. But we also think it's important as we create this collective vision for our state that we talk about education policies that can enable these goals to be realized. And so I'd like to stress in the research and the literature just how important it is to consider education program structure instead of, as Senator Sullivan indicated, there's often a lot of discussion about funding and money. And really structurally I think we need to come back and say what are the best practices that can realize greater achievement to fight our achievement gap? And so we believe that the Education Committee in its goals has seized on a very important structural point when you stated the goal of creating systems of support for parents to assist their children with educational expectations. And we have two thoughts about ways that we can help make this more possible for more Nebraska families. One way is by having a statewide school choice program. And then the other would be an accountability system that gives parents more information about the schools in their community. And many other states have instituted systems that create a star rating system for schools so that

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they can look at do I go to a three-star school, do my kids go to a four-star school or a five-star school, and creates the kind of information that we all have access to if we want to go out to dinner Friday night or we want to know where the best place to shop is and create that kind of conversation for families and parents. Parental involvement is an underutilized tool in building educational equity. And actually in Nebraska, we are 1 of only 7 states, so 43 states have implemented school choice programs which would allow a parent to send their child to the school of their choice. And there are a variety of policies that make up school choice. It's not just one thing though the conversation sometimes gravitates to one policy or another. And so I want to encourage that we make it so that every family has the same kind of choices that families that have the income to decide where to locate, that families that have the opportunity to investigate what the best schools are, that those choices are available to everybody. I want to level the playing field and empower all parents to have the choices and tools to seek answers to get the best education for their children. And if they go to a three-star school, to figure out how can we make this a four-star school, how can we work together with partnerships in the community to increase educational achievement and opportunity for all? In a recent report we discussed at the Platte Institute how, for instance, as a great start in school choice here in Nebraska, we could implement a privately funded tax-credit scholarship program that could be targeted to help the most vulnerable, at-risk students access a better learning environment and still at the same time while properly structured, save state and local education dollars for our traditional public schools. We could even structure that program to provide funding for early childhood education programs for low-income families. Now other states are also implementing policies like education savings accounts. And what that allows families to do is if there are dollars left over from a scholarship after they've been applied to a school of choice, the remaining funding can be used for tutoring or college tuition and other opportunities for educational enrichment. So by giving families more choices, by giving them access to more information that is comprehensive about the schools in their area and creating an environment where we can create more schools of quality in the communities where families really live, we can help achieve our common vision for education and enhance

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the value that's provided to students in every dollar that we put into the education system. So we look forward at the Platte Institute to continuing to partner with the education community, parents, and policymakers to expand educational opportunity for all. We understand as a recent speaker to our legislative conference, Derrell Bradford, a great education advocate from New York said: Sometimes new proposals to change the educational landscape can feel disruptive at first and it can feel frightening to some. But as we've seen in so many other areas of expertise, when an environment of diversity and innovation is encouraged we all win with better outcomes. Families win because they get to be more involved in their child's education. The student wins because those dollars can then be dedicated to their individual learning needs and goals. And the public schools and taxpayers win as well because we now have ample evidence from the 43 other states that have implemented programs like this that when properly designed and structured, many of these programs can shore up the traditional public schools and they can provide more education resources for everyone. So we're excited to continue the conversation on school choice in Nebraska and I thank you very much for your time. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Weinberg. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: How do you think your philosophy of providing choice translates to equity out in sparsely populated areas of rural Nebraska? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: In rural Nebraska it's complicated because there are a lot of areas where there's not too many schools of choice. But there are blended programs that you can have where there's enrichment for digital learning or you can have home schooling programs which for many families are an option. And so there are a wide diversity of education choice programs that I think both meet the urban equity need and also meet the rural needs of families that they need a different choice or their child is struggling in

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a particular setting or they have special needs, whether it's special education or whether it's a disability or a family in particular need. So I think if we look at the fact that school choice is not just one policy, it's really policies that run the gamut and as well some that we haven't even conceived of yet there's a great possibility to meet the needs of diverse communities. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Certainly. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Yes, Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Just... [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Oh, sorry. Sure. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Avery. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: (Senator Avery does not have the use of a microphone.) Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm trying to keep an open mind on charter schools and it's hard to do for me because I keep reading about studies that show that charter schools aren't really meeting the promise that they make. But my concern is even deeper than that. And that is that I'm interested in how these schools will be administered. Who will administer the schools you're talking about in your own scheme? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Well, I'd be pleased to get you more information from a subject-matter expert. I'm the media guy at the Platte Institute so I'm filling in for some other folks. But there's some great research available on our site from Dr. Vicki Alger

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who talks about a variety of school choice options. Now are you referring to the tax-credit scholarship I referred to or charters themselves? [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: Charters. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Charters, I'd have to get you more information in writing from our research team, but I'd be pleased to. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: So you're kicking that can down the road? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Not at all. I think you make a good point that charters aren't just...it's not a cure-all. And the reality is, there can be good charters and there can be bad charters. And the accountability is important. But the more we create choices, we create a best-practices environment where different schools can see in their community this is working for these kids. Let's try to implement more of these in a variety of schools and really create that race to the top that we really all want. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: For me it's really important who is in control of these schools because if you're going to be using state money... [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Right. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: ...it seems to me then you need to have a heavy role of the State Department of Education to administer these. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Well, and that's the key of a charter school is that if the school isn't performing, its charter can be revoked. [LB1103]

SENATOR AVERY: No, I'm talking about before that, before you get that bad. I mean from the beginning where you have a very heavy role...the state would have a heavy

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role in administering it because we don't want schools taking off as they're getting charters and public funds that are discouraging the enrollment of minority kids, for example, or low-income (inaudible). That would be intolerable. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Absolutely. Well, it should be open to everyone. And that is the point is to build educational equity is to make that available to more people so I couldn't agree more. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Davis, did you have a question? [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I do have a few questions. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. I want to explore a little bit more this idea of options, I guess is what I would call that. Can you frame that out a little bit better? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Sure. The principle is that parents are the best people to make the decisions about the quality and opportunities and the achievement that they see in their children's lives. And so when you empower parents to say the choice is yours. What do you think is best for your child? What are the interests and abilities and goals and aspirations that your child has? And how can we use the money that's already in the pipeline for you that's supposed to pay for you to go to public school or go to school in general and use that to meet that individual need in the best way possible? Choice creates a marketplace of innovation where there are different opportunities and there is an encouragement for more people to look at what are some different ways that we can be applying best practices that maybe we're not using right now? Are there different laboratories that we can create that encourage educational entrepreneurs to come in and try different things? And so the best...obviously, it would be in a wonderful, perfect world that everyone would have this choice. But I think especially because there are so many families that they have a great experience with Nebraska public schools and existing public schools, we really should at least start by looking at some of the very most dire areas where there are families that are at risk that are being underserved right

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now and say, are there ways that we can target these policies and start as kind of a pilot to see how do these ideas translate in helping meet the needs of the most vulnerable? [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: When you're talking about being able to option into another school, you're not talking one public school to another, you're talking a public school to a charter school or private school. Is that right? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Well, and I should clarify that most people would call charter schools public schools as well. The scholarship tax credit that we're referring to in most states has been used to help students who are in schools that are considered failing or situations in which they're failing in a school for whatever reason. It could be the health of the student, it could be special needs. And so typically those are used for schools of choice that are private schools. There are, in a smaller amount, states that have authorized scholarship tax credits to be used to go to another public school. And so it really is, I mean it's up to the legislative process to determine how you would implement those kinds of pilots. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: But aren't there already programs in place where scholarships can be donated to a foundation in a particular, let's say, a Catholic school? [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Yes. I think the exact number is about 13 states and that's in our report on our Web site which came in two parts in the last couple of months. But there are, for instance, the neighboring state of Kansas just implemented that program and a variety of others that have used scholarship tax credits predominantly for targeting to at-risk communities. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And then one last question. At one time the Platte Institute had promoted one school district per county. Is that still your policy? [LB1103]

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ADAM WEINBERG: You know, I'll have to get that in writing for you. I'm pretty new to the team. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: All right. I'd appreciate that. Thank you. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Sure. Uh-huh. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you, Mr. Weinberg. [LB1103]

ADAM WEINBERG: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

ROBERT MEYERS: (Exhibit 13) Thank you. My name is Robert Meyers, M-e-y-e-r-s, and I'm a retired teacher and school administrator in Nebraska. My experiences include high school teaching in Nebraska, as an exchange teacher and administrator in Australia; I've taught on-line university courses in educational leadership; and through the organization Phi Delta Kappa International, I've had the opportunity to visit with educators and visit schools in various states including internationally in Canada and in China. And first of all, I want to congratulate the committee for preparing a vision for education in Nebraska. I applaud the areas that I've read on the draft and find the goals laid out by the committee as necessary and exemplary. While I find no fault with the general goals or with the specific objectives, I do have several comments for the committee to consider. And you have a copy of my comments for your perusal at your leisure. I would do one addition to that; I think there is one omission perhaps in the vision. And at this time when there's so much focus on the globalization of education and need for global learning, that I would hope that you would consider including something about language training beginning at the very early stages of education so that we are not a monolingual nation but rather, as most other nations, have multiple languages for our students. The approach that I've used for the testimony today is to

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look at the particular goals that you already have and some of the objectives and to offer some comments on those. First of all, Goal 1 and numbers 1 and 2 deal with the preschool and early childhood and there's been much testimony about that. The usual connotation for preschool is a category of three- and four-year-olds who are getting ready for school, while the concept of early childhood encompasses infants and toddlers through age five. And I strongly believe that all children should have access to early childhood experiences, not just those from backgrounds that put them at greater risk. Goal 1, number 4, deals with equitable and affordable postsecondary opportunities. As a result of declining state support for postsecondary institutions, the tuition has naturally increased. So I hope that the Legislature will support a committee recommendation to increase support to postsecondary institutions in order to maintain or to lower tuition rates for all students. Goal 2, number 1, is to increase the percentage of students meeting performance standards in reading, writing, and math. Recent research completed in the United Kingdom has talked about a key component for student success as being the educational level of fathers. This is a change from what we have traditionally thought of and have learned about the educational level of mothers being a key. So this is an interesting piece of research and I put the Web site on that sheet so that you can look at that if you wish. In the U.S., rates of overall child poverty fell slightly between 2012 and 2013 from 22.6 percent to 22.2 percent. But despite a slight decline, child poverty rates remain higher than they were in 2007 at the onset of the Great Recession when 18 percent of American children lived in poverty. A brief released just last week by the Carsey School of Public Policy explores the child poverty data in the ACS. And it focused on child poverty because the research suggests that experiencing poverty before age 18 is particularly harmful and has implications for brain development as well as educational, occupational, health, and family consequences. How do we deal with the issue of poverty? That's a big question. And until that issue is dealt with, the goal may really remain only a goal. Since you have all of those, I'm going to skip over a couple of those. I do want to talk specifically about the shared use of facilities in staff Goal 4, number 3. I think that's an important aspect. And this is very important because when we talk especially about career and technical education, having the facilities to

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deal with a lot of those programs is really interesting. And I talked about in my notes that you have about the career center in Anchorage, Alaska. It's called the King Career Center and it's one district's approach to this problem where students are brought into the center. There are over 20 distinctive career paths students can study while in high school to prepare them. And they have a myriad of opportunities that range from travel and tourism, early childhood education, automotive technology, welding, and others. And so I think there are a lot of approaches and I applaud again the committee's focus. And I appreciate the fact that the Legislature is presenting a focus for education. I think that's incredibly important and so I thank you for your work and for the opportunity to testify today. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Meyers. Regarding your last comment on the shared use of facilities and what's going on in Alaska, is that Web site that you have noted in that paragraph about the schools in Anchorage? [LB1103]

ROBERT MEYERS: Yes. If you go to that particular Web site that I have, that takes you right to the King Career Center in Anchorage... [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. [LB1103]

ROBERT MEYERS: ...and you can see a list of the programs and how they operate. It's...multiple schools are in the district and they make sure that the students have transportation and they exchange the teachers so that it really is very effective. It's more difficult to operate among schools I understand where there's greater distances. But I think it's an outstanding program to take a look at. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

ROBERT MEYERS: You're welcome. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions for Mr. Meyers? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

ROBERT MEYERS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

DEAN FOLKERS: (Exhibit 14) Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Dean Folkers, F-o-l-k-e-r-s. I am the senior administrator of the data research and evaluation team at the Nebraska Department of Education. And today I am not taking the place of Dr. Matt Blomstedt, our commissioner, but rather fulfilling one of his requirements or commitments to talk about one of the three pieces over the next few hearings that we are passionate about. One of those, this piece is focused on the capacity of data systems. He will be joining you with staff at the Norfolk version to talk about A QuESTT, the new accountability work, and then the Broken Bow session will be focused on career education, early childhood education, and the community engagement work. And so today to spice things up a little bit, data is always typically one of those subjects that people's eyes gloss over and so what I wanted to do is to share with you some exciting activities and information about data in Nebraska; specifically, the education data systems. As a part of LR264, it was a study that we conducted that focused on ultimately the education data systems in Nebraska. And what we were trying to do is to determine of those education data systems in Nebraska, what were the costs, what were the times and hours spent, what types of data issues were there associated with the quality of that work. And so we set forth on a task to conduct the study, surveyed superintendents, conducted focus groups, completed the study that ultimately represented about 80 percent of the student population in the state. And here's what we found: We spend on an annual basis about 655,000 hours of staff time submitting data to the Department of Education. We spend about \$100 million a year in staff time in systems as a part of the Nebraska investment work. And so what we ultimately found as well is that there are some inequities of access and opportunities for districts large and

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small. The smaller you are, the least amount of systems that you have access to, as well as the more expensive those particular systems are. And so as a part of that and the comprehensive nature of the study, what we also came up with is essentially five strategies to help us move forward and how can we build capacity and ultimately support the emerging vision of the Education Committee, the State Board of Education goals, and the work that are happening around the state. So the first area is that of leveraged capacity. So ultimately creating a common language, connecting and leveraging the effectiveness of a coordination of our state, creating a Nebraska education data standard, and leveraging the single sign-on work from the technology connection work that's happening already with the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council and ESUs in our state. Second in a way to reduce and an effort to reduce significantly the burden on our districts in reporting data is to automate, find ways that we can automate the data collections in a way that helps support and engage the students and the teachers. Third--and we felt was a very important one--is create actionable insight. The commissioners often talked about we spend this 655,000 hours of collecting data, we massage it, put it on a report card, send the aggregate data off to the feds, and get a report back from the federal level about how we're doing in Nebraska. And so this really focused point of actionable insight gives us a chance to take advantage of the data, provide value back to the districts to provide insight to policy, best practice, to communities, to parents. And so the fourth area is sustain, support, and coordinating that support of help desk and creating a connection. And the fifth and final area is really about leveraging the buying power of the state and creating a coordination of efforts to use 300,000 students as our negotiation level, 245 districts, and create what we're calling an app...to be an app store if you will, a software and service opportunity where districts choose access to different apps that create an infrastructure and opportunity and ultimately a sustainability associated with that work. Now at the end of the day, a critical nature of all of this work is our commitment, an absolute commitment to privacy, security, and transparency related to about student data in our state. So with that, I look forward to the opportunities to continue our partnership in creating the systems for Nebraska with the Educational Service Unit

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Coordinating Council, ESUs and districts, the Education Committee, State Board of Education. I'm open for any questions. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Folkers. If those five areas are sort of a time line, where are you in this process? [LB1103]

DEAN FOLKERS: So it's a great question. We actually put together as part of that planning essentially a six-year cycle or a six-year plan. And we are in year zero of that plan. And that year zero is actually being subsidized funded through a federal SLDS grant that's helping us do a prototype of a Dashboard that we're calling ADVISER. It's creating some excitement and opportunity for us to build the framework and infrastructure of some of this work. And so then year one, two, and three essentially would help us realize those other pieces. And that would begin July 1 of 2015. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Any...Senator Scheer. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Dean, from the front page of this you talk about smaller districts, having less capacity and less staff in order to utilize the data. Are most districts, especially those smaller ones, have they the resource or the people to really adequately utilize the dashboard that's out there in order to benefit by all the information that's already there now? [LB1103]

DEAN FOLKERS: It's a great question. And something as a part of the pilot project that we've been working on with the ADVISER Dashboard now, we have Omaha Public Schools is one of the pilot districts, and we have Ponca, as well as Valentine, McCook, and a variety of districts of different sizes. And as a part of the study, we ultimately found that of the 28, 29 different potential systems that districts can have access to, you might suspect ultimately the larger districts have access to more systems. We also found is then the smaller size districts, their access is an issue but primarily it was either because of cost or, as you described, the capacity to maintain support, those kinds of

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things. And so as we sort of build together this plan of strategy that notion of that leveraged support--the app store piece--helps reduce that burden on the districts and create an equity of access at a cost taken...providing a low cost as well as then allowing for them to choose the sources and options for their work. So you're exactly right on that. That's exactly what we discovered. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

DEAN FOLKERS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

DAVID LUDWIG: (Exhibit 15) Welcome, thank you. Well, good afternoon. I'm David Ludwig, L-u-d-w-i-g, the executive director for the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council since July 1. Prior to this time I served four years as a chief administrator for ESU-2 in Fremont, and prior to that as a school administrator in northeast Nebraska for 23 years. I want to thank you for allowing my colleagues and I to visit with you today regarding our support for LB1103 as well as a most important statewide initiative called BlendEd learning. During this hearing today as well as during the hearings scheduled for October 15 and 16, colleagues will be sharing with you specific components of a BlendEd learning environment. I'd like to begin by thanking you for your time and effort for the past successes provided through LB1208. With the passage of this bill, incentives were provided for school districts to connect students to courses they otherwise would have not had the opportunity before them. In addition, LB1208 provided for the motivation for institutions to join and support our statewide network known as Network Nebraska, now poised for terrific growth for high bandwidth solutions. Completely funded by each participant, Network Nebraska provides connectivity to 232 public school districts, which is 94 percent; 17 educational service units, 100 percent; ten public colleges, 100 percent; two tribal colleges, 100 percent; seven nonpublic colleges, 50 percent; three nonpublic schools; and one public library.

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So the structure provided by Network Nebraska created equal access and flexibility for all students through distance learning opportunities and will continue through the BlendEd learning model, which is one of three statewide initiatives adopted through a collaborative effort through the Nebraska Department of Education and the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council. Effective use of data, as Dean indicated, and the teacher/principal evaluation are two additional statewide-adopted initiatives. LB1103 establishes an environment in which every Nebraskan is educated for success. As you consider the four established goals, each is reflective of a BlendEd learning environment whereby BlendEd learning establishes quality educational opportunities that engage students in learning through student control of their learning environment. High expectations are established as each student is provided opportunity for learning over time, place, pace, and path. A positive, safe, and successful learning environment is provided as students are more actively engaged in an environment immersed with digital resources and technology. And collaborative educational relationships are created within the school community as support for 24/7 learning opportunities as provided. Most of us in this room participated in a traditional learning classroom environment which students sit in rows with the teacher in front of the classroom delivering content to students. As we blend this model with the BlendEd learning environment, students will be provided an opportunity to participate in an environment filled with digital resources and technology that will allow students control over learning over time, place, pace, and path. Some individual components of a BlendEd learning environment to include a learning management system, LMS, a learning object repository, LOR, a single, safe sign-on, to name a few, are now in place but because of limited resources, some districts are moving forward successfully with BlendEd education components while others are slower to embrace the model. So because of the needed digital resources technology, personnel professional staff development, success in the implementation will be more dependent upon needed funding and assistance to make a BlendEd learning comprehensive and systemic across the state. And I'm most fortunate to have colleagues here in this room with me during each of these three hearings and from colleagues from across the state that will provide a more

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detailed description of BlendEd learning environment and the impact on educating every Nebraskan for success as defined in LB1103, so thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Ludwig. Any questions for him? Thank you. [LB1103]

DAVID LUDWIG: Okay, thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

KRAIG LOFQUIST: Esteemed senators, thank you for your time today. Like my colleagues, I'm grateful for the opportunity to visit with you regarding the visioning process in LB1103. My name is Dr. Kraig James Lofquist and I am currently the chief administrator at Educational Service Unit 9, where we serve 14 school districts in south-central Nebraska and there's about 10,000 students that are in that area. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Could you spell your last name, please? [LB1103]

KRAIG LOFQUIST: I will, thank you for reminding me, L-o-f-q-u-i-s-t. The mission that's been disseminated at this point is states provide Nebraska the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to be productive individuals. I'm here today to respectfully promote the use of technology to help meet the stated mission and vision. The necessary skills to function in the 21st century includes the ability to effectively use technology. Technology can and should help all of us build knowledgeable, productive citizens. There's a unique confluence of events at this time. First, this governing body is going through a well-thought-out process and the current funding stream for distance education will sunset in June of 2016. In the past eight years, a great deal has changed. For example, Apple Computer introduced the original iPhone in 2007 and the first generation of the iPad on April 30 of 2010. Numerous Nebraska schools use these tools

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every day, and the number of schools that have implemented a one-to-one computer-to-student initiative has grown. Mobile communication devices have multiplied in large numbers along with their capability, speed, accuracy, and productivity. So what can we expect as educators over the next five years? According to the 2014 Horizon Report, which is comprised of 55 researchers across the globe, they tell us that there are trends in education that include both short and long term. One to two years, social media and the integration of on-line hybrid and collaborate learning will play a greater role in the educational environments. Three to five years out, data-driven learning and assessment will continue to grow and students will change from consumers of educational content to students as creators of educational content. In five years and beyond, agile approaches to change will be prominent and there will be a continuing evolution of on-line learning. And the Horizon Report also states there will be inevitable challenges to overcome such as having the appropriate technology infrastructure and training for educators. From the infrastructure standpoint, Nebraska is in a great position. Nebraska has built a robust, high bandwidth network called Network Nebraska that has supported distance learning over the past seven years. Now the infrastructure has capacity to be more than just a distance learning network. The new system will include a single sign-on that my colleague, Dave Ludwig, just alluded to. And that is something that I think we all take for granted. But it's one log-in and password for every teacher, parent, and students with one-stop shopping. The learning object repository that he talked about, which includes videos, video downloads, video clips, maps, archived data, an electronic library, it's really limited to your imagination, but also on-line module courses that provide students with some control over the time, place, path, and/or pace of their learning. Traditionally when we started distance learning years ago, it was you had to have a static room, there was a television and it was send and receive. Creation of comprehensive professional development opportunities for technology-assisted instructional designs so that teachers learn how to adapt to the teaching of the BlendEd model. And the new system will also include personalized learning for students and teachers, provide equal access to courses for all students, allow connection to SLDS that Dean was alluding to just a moment ago, the statewide

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longitudinal data system for improving data-driven decision making. It will promote cost savings, provide expanded opportunities, professional development, and the final analysis will meet the mission of providing Nebraskans the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to be productive individuals. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Lofquist. Any questions? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

LINDA DICKESON: (Exhibit 16) Hello and thank you. My name is Linda Dickeson, spelled D-i-c-k-e-s-o-n, and I'm the distance learning manager at Lincoln Public Schools and also cochair of the blended learning program from across the state called BlendEd. Now as distance learning manager for Lincoln Public Schools, I know that the BlendEd education is going to significantly enhance what we've been doing with distance learning courses. As our colleagues have described, we typically had been relying on synchronous face-to-face dial-ups. And although that is working very well, we know that the BlendEd learning environment can enhance that to make it even better because if bell schedules are a little different the kids can still be working at their own pace before the dial-up happens and we can address a little bit more of that a little later. But we have other colleagues here in support of the BlendEd learning initiative. If you're here, would you please stand and/or raise your hand? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: We don't really allow that during the testifying. Okay. [LB1103]

LINDA DICKESON: I'm sorry. Okay. But I did pass out in your handout a letter of support for people that could not be here today signed by over 40 colleagues that couldn't make it today for the BlendEd learning initiative. We will have other colleagues in Norfolk and Broken Bow that will talk a little bit more about BlendEd learning. But one part that I'd like to focus on a little bit is that safe and secure single sign-on. And it's really that component that is going to make the rest of it work. Until we have one safe and secure log-in and password for every student and teacher in the state, they need

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that in order to access that learning object repository or the classes in the learning management systems. Just as you, as a senator, have a single log-in and password for the resources you need to do your job, we would ask the same thing for teachers and students in Nebraska so that they have a safe and secure environment to access their learning tools to meet their learning objectives. Now the reason that this is not widespread yet is that there's a lot of complex systems across the state. Different districts may have different kinds of account management systems set up or some of the very smallest districts may not have any computerized system yet to set up their accounts and passwords. So the resources, the personnel to help them with those things is limited and so it's a little slower happening in some areas. But that management of accounts would give better and more simpler access to applications when they just have one, single sign-on. Imagine that a student might be taking a course from Lincoln Public Schools, they might take another course from Omaha Public Schools, they might take another course somewhere in their own region. And if they just had one log-in and password to get them to any course and have access to the course, the resources, wouldn't life be easier? Now with my distance learning hat on, I guess for my school district I do also want to thank the senators and praise the wisdom of LB1208 because it did position us very well to move forward with some of these on-line learning tools for kids. But Lincoln was not early in the process. When that passed in 2006, we didn't jump in the fray till the school year of 2010 and '11. But since then, we've connected kids from all over the state to our classes. The common ones are our technology courses like beginning digital art or digital graphic design, advanced computer programming, and we've even done a pilot of kids doing CAD courses over distance learning. So some of the districts that we have served--I just have a partial list--Arcadia, Bloomfield, Gibbon, Yutan, Alma, Meridian, Osceola, Brady, Pleasanton, Wood River, Anselmo-Merna, and I could name a dozen or so more. But we serve about eight to ten schools each semester that are outside of Lincoln Public Schools and it is growing. But what doesn't show up on those incentive reports or that isn't reported anywhere is that we're also serving our homebound students through videoconferencing. Kids that are too ill to come to school, kids that have behavior

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problems that can't be in a classroom with other kids, we connect them through videoconferencing as well. Also all kinds of meetings that will reduce our travel. So I want to thank you very much for the position you've put us in to be able to deliver the services. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Dickeson. Any questions for her, please? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

LINDA DICKESON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

MIKE BAUMGARTNER: (Exhibit 17) Thank you. Madam Chairwoman, members of the committee, my name is Mike Baumgartner, B-a-u-m-g-a-r-t-n-e-r, and I'm here today on behalf of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education where I'm the executive director. For the next couple minutes I want to address several of the statement's objectives and offer the Coordinating Commission's support for them and some suggestions for elaboration of the statements and for plan implementation. The support for postsecondary education from the Legislature, Governor, and citizens of Nebraska over many years is evident in the full array of Nebraska colleges and universities and the coordinated efforts to identify and efficiently and effectively meet the education, workforce, research, development, and community needs of the state. We see evidence of this in many places, foremost I think in the fact that 42 percent of the adult population in Nebraska has at least an associate's degree which is the 12th highest rate in the country. And in fact, a third of adult working-age Nebraskans have achieved a baccalaureate degree, which is the 13th highest rate in the country. We also see it in the fact that most Nebraska public colleges and universities receive slightly more state dollars for full-time equivalent students than their peer institutions and the fact that both tuition and fees and the percentage of education in general funds contributed by students are slightly lower at Nebraska institutions than at their peer

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institutions nationwide. I could go on, as we do in our progress report to the Legislature and Governor from the Coordinating Commission, but while Nebraska's educational attainment is in the top quartile of states, projections from the Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce are that 66 percent of Nebraska jobs will require some type of postsecondary education by 2018 and up to 71 percent by 2020. And while Nebraska has relatively high educational attainment, the rates have increased little over the past eight years and not enough to achieve a 60 percent degree attainment level without dramatic improvement. At the current degrees awarded rates, we'll be at 49 percent or 50 percent in 2025, about 96,000 credentials short of what's needed to reach even 60 percent, set aside 66 percent or 71 percent. Fortunately, we know there are many intervention points where we can make progress, meeting both the needs of individuals and the needs of the state and its employers. And I want to focus on three that you've touched on in the plan that you've developed up to this point. First looking at access and affordability, and retention and completion, and finally education for adults. According to the Nebraska Department of Education, the percentage of pre-K to grade 12 students eligible for free and reduced lunch has increased from 30 percent in 1998-1999 to 44 percent in 2011-2012. More of Nebraska's children are less well off financially than in the past. We applaud your attention to early learning and I've enjoyed listening to the many speakers talk about the importance and the benefits they've received from that today and other speakers talking about the high school and getting through high school, getting prepared for college and careers. But it's also necessary to address the fact that low-income high school graduates continue on to postsecondary education at much lower rates than non-low-income students. In fact, in Nebraska in 2012, 51.7 percent of low-income male high school graduates entered postsecondary education as opposed to 72 percent of non-low-income males and 62 percent of low-income females compared to 82 percent of non-low-income females. And we know that that's compounded because low-income students are already less likely to graduate from high school and then hence the continuation rate makes it even lower. This is a nationwide problem as you know, not just a Nebraska problem. In 2012 the estimated bachelor's degree attainment of

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students nationwide in the upper-income quartile, which begins at \$108,650, was 73 percent. The estimated attainment of students in the bottom-income quartile, which topped out at \$34,000, was 8.3 percent, so almost nine times more students from the top income quartile nationally than the bottom income quartile. Some of this is due... [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: One minute. [LB1103]

MIKE BAUMGARTNER: One minute? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Uh-huh. [LB1103]

MIKE BAUMGARTNER: Okay, fine. And I thought I'd cut. All right. I'm going to stick to affordability then because of the importance of that and because we are coming up at a time where we look at the Nebraska Opportunity Grant in the context of the work that you're doing with the lottery fund at the same time, the affordability piece and the point that so many low-income students have difficulty getting through. The second objective--I'm going to jump to that real quickly then--is retention and graduation. Again, Nebraska does fairly well in retention and graduation rates and the percentage that complete a certificate or degree, but there is still progress that can be made there. In order to attain a 60 percent attainment rate--not to mention the 66 percent to 71 percent--we need to look at additional strategies for improving remedial outcomes, implementing research-based reforms, finding ways to encourage students to increase the intensity of their courses to go more full time. And we look forward to working with you in fleshing that out. Finally, one last thing, adult students: Twenty-five percent of the working-age population in Nebraska has attended some college, but without a credential. And that is a large number of students, over 240,000 adults. Those 240,000 adults need the opportunity to come back to school. We need to identify them, give them incentives to come back and to complete. And beyond that, the students who have never even started need incentives to come back and complete as well. In order to meet

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the workforce and educational goals of the state, we'd like to see adult students addressed strongly in this final statement as well. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Baumgartner. Any questions for him? [LB1103]

_____ : Just that if that was going to be five minutes, he'd better get his watch fixed. (Laughter) [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Well, at least you gave us your testimony in writing so we've got that. [LB1103]

MIKE BAUMGARTNER: Yes, I did. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much. Welcome. [LB1103]

SUSAN FRITZ: (Exhibit 18) Thank you, it's good to be here. My name is Susan Fritz, F-r-i-t-z. I have the pleasure of serving as the executive vice president and provost of the University of Nebraska system. I am here today to offer supporting testimony for LB1103 on behalf of the university. I will frame my comments regarding the Education Committee's proposed strategic plan based upon the university's commitment to access and affordability associated with the White House promise. These commitments are important to Nebraska students, our K-12 partners, and align with the values expressed in the strategic plan proposed under LB1103. In January 2014, the University of Nebraska was one of 100 colleges and 40 organizations across the country that pledged to increase access to and affordability of higher education through significant commitments to the White House call to action on college opportunity. These commitments are excellent examples of the many ways your university strives to make higher education degrees attainable for Nebraska students. The University of Nebraska is committed to scaling its pilot Nebraska Virtual Scholars program which currently offers a limited number of core scholarships to Nebraska high school students to take

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on-line classes for free through the University of Nebraska High School. The university intends to scale the program to focus on dual credit, advanced placement, and STEM courses as well as foundational offerings to middle school students. This year, 212 Nebraska high school students from 35 schools have applied for Virtual Scholars scholarships. The goals of the Virtual Scholars program are to remedy academic preparation gaps that often exist in low-income and rural communities, accelerate completion, and lower the cost of a four-year college degree. To increase college access and preparation, the university will communicate to all Nebraska middle school students and their parents, teachers, and counselors through new and nontraditional communications that are more relevant and more effectively targeted to lower income, rural, and first generation college students. This will include greater reliance on social and digital platforms, outreach to other organizations that work with youth, pairing current university students with middle school students in their hometowns to serve as role models, bringing groups of underrepresented and low-income students to university campuses, and developing materials that can be used in settings such as classrooms and after school programs in addition to being sent home with students. The University of Nebraska's four campuses are significantly increasing participation in their summer school programs, which are intended to expose high school students--particularly low-income and first-generation college-going students--to postsecondary education opportunities. The university has also expanded the reach of summer bridge programs, which are intended to help students make a successful transition to college. The programs allow prospective first-time freshman students to experience campus life prior to entering the fall term. The university provides free education to all Pell Grant eligible students and its campuses have among the lowest tuition of their peers with debt levels and default rates well below peer and national averages. In partnership with the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, the university began the Buffett Thompson Scholars program which now provides more than 2,800 low-income, first-generation students with tuition, fee, and book scholarships, early advising, and a cohort-based learning community. More than 7,000 students attend the university tuition free through the Collegebound Nebraska program. Collegebound Nebraska pays tuition for qualifying

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students and leaves them and their families to cover fees and other costs like housing and books. Collegebound Nebraska has grown by 1,000 students since 2010. Full scholarships are provided to students selected in the ninth grade who successfully complete the university's high school academy preparation programs. Finally, in November Nebraska will participate for the first time in the EducationQuest led American College Application Campaign, a national effort to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students pursuing college degrees. We think the initiatives and the accountability process our Board of Regents has in place helped put into context the university's strong, ongoing commitment to access and affordability, particularly in view of the ongoing national conversation about college costs and the value of a degree. We are committed to these and other partnerships within the P-16 Initiative. In all, these commitments also are congruent with the Education Committee's strategic plan. Therefore, as the state's largest public higher education entity, the University of Nebraska stands ready to assist in achieving the plan proposed today by the Education Committee. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Fritz. Can you tell me, is there any interaction between the University High School and the efforts that we have just heard with the BlendEd initiative? [LB1103]

SUSAN FRITZ: I do not have that specific information. I know there are conversations certainly between the school districts and the University High School. And so I would assume so, but I can't say that conclusively. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

SUSAN FRITZ: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

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ROB DICKSON: (Exhibit 19) Thank you. My name is Rob Dickson, last spelling is D-i-c-k-s-o-n. I'm the executive director of information management services for Omaha Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity and vision you are defining for education in Nebraska. Blended learning environments acknowledge that this is a high-tech age and that people learn in many ways. The new BlendEd classroom combines the best elements of face-to-face and direct instruction from the teacher while responding to the needs of the modern learner and providing on-line learning objects, such as video tutorials, podcasts, and social media collaboration tools for learning or--I was told this from Superintendent Evans--bricks and clicks. In order to understand BlendEd learning, it's critical to understand what it is not: doing on-line worksheets; reading digital prompts; or staring at a computer screen all day. Integrating technology can be an amazing and motivating tool for students. However, if schools just deliver the same traditional curriculum, they're not working toward the vision of BlendEd learning which gives students more control of their education. As Chris Lehmann, principal of Science Leadership Academy of Philadelphia, said: Technology must be like oxygen; it should be ubiquitous, it should be necessary, and it should be invisible. And I think technology is exponential. On-line learning is sweeping across America. In the year 2000, roughly 45,000 K-12 students took an on-line classroom activity and a course. In 2014, that number is now in the millions. What originally was a distance-learning phenomenon is no longer. Most of the growth is occurring in BlendEd learning environments in which students learn on-line in an adult-supervised environment at least part of the time. Most states, which I am a transplant from Kansas, allow for a virtual offering for K-12 education either through a statewide program or through allowing each individual district to facilitate their own. Currently, the University of Nebraska High School is the only accredited opportunity for on-line digital learning. As we move to increase educational opportunities for the youth in Nebraska, we must look at varied methods to deliver high-quality, engaging instruction that prepares students for college and the workplace. As you all know, today's student has many different exterior influences. The BlendEd learning environment can give opportunities that a traditional model just doesn't provide.

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Some of our students face challenges that affect their learning path. These include professional opportunities, a variety of health-related issues, and so on. Digital learning is a great equalizer. It holds the promise of extending access to rigorous, high-quality instruction to every student across America, regardless of language, age, ZIP code, income levels, or special needs. Omaha Public Schools offers various BlendEd opportunities and is constantly looking to expand 21st century skills through blended opportunities that align to our district's new strategic plan. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Dickson. Any questions for him? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

ROB DICKSON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: Welcome. Good afternoon or evening--I had to check the time. I appreciate you all for staying here and doing this. It shows your care and concern for the education of all students in the state of Nebraska. My name is Clarice Jackson, last name is spelled J-a-c-k-s-o-n. And first and foremost, I am a parent. Secondly, I am the president and founder of Voice Advocacy Center. And I'm here today to speak on two important issues to me and to many people that I represent. One of those issues has already been addressed here today, and that is the need for dyslexia legislation. My daughter, who I became a legal guardian of when she was 8--she's now 24--was a product of the Omaha Public Schools system, but made it to the fourth grade unable to read simple two- and three-letter words. After special education intervention for over a year, no progress was still made. Now there was nothing cognitively wrong with her to enable her from learning to read, but still she made no progress. Through my own advocacy efforts outside of the school system, I found that she had dyslexia, which is the most common reading problem. It affects one in five. So if you have a classroom of 30 children, 6 of those kids have some form of dyslexia. And I like to think of dyslexia on

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a spectrum from mild to severe. And only the most severe make it into special education. And even when they make it into special education, it is still not addressed at this time in the public school system. There's no screening or remediation method that is used specifically for that. It is more prevalent in African-American and Hispanic communities. And we don't know why that is, but according to Yale Dyslexia and Creativity Center, the ways of "why" are all over the place. But the issue still remains that it is a huge, huge problem that Nebraska needs to address. And legislation is the only route at this point to do that. I have, along with other people from across the state, spoke to many educational people that can change this. And of course they've listened, but nothing has changed. And so these children remain very frustrated, which leads to avoidance behaviors and perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline, because, as we all know, 75 percent of all inmates are functionally illiterate. So we can sit here and pretend like this is not part of that reason, but it definitely is. This is not an attack on the Omaha Public Schools system. I'm only giving you the experience that I had as a parent with a child in that system. This is...this addresses Millard, Lincoln. Every school district has a child that has dyslexia, lots of them. So we need to recognize this common difference and address it. My second thing that I want to discuss briefly is I commend everybody who came up and talked about early childhood education. It is extremely important, and I don't disagree with it. But where I'm a little perplexed as to how we forget about the rest of the children that are already in the school system who are in schools, quite frankly, who are failing them. So is the message that we are trying to send, okay, we know that we have messed up some things for the kids that are already in there, and so what we're going to do is we're going to work on the kids that are getting ready to come into the school system and we're going to forget about those that are already in there that are struggling and that are failing. If that is not the message we are trying to send, then we need to rebrand how we message this thing because, to me, that's what it says to me. There are lots of kids that are sitting in schools that cannot read, who are failing. And nothing is being done to address that. I am a proponent of educational reform in the efforts of school choice. I think it's imperative at this point that we become more open-minded about the different options that are out there. A one-size-fits-all model is

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not going to fit everybody. And so there are children, including my daughter, who was in the public school system, who could not get any help. So what was I to do? Wait? Time waits for nobody. So we have to look at what are some alternatives to assist kids now. And we can still work on, well, the schools are getting better, and that's great. But kids can't wait and parents are frustrated and we need change to happen. My last thing that I would like to say is, is we need to learn more about the truth and the facts about charter schools. There's 20-plus years of evidence. And everybody that's come up here has talked about the evidence of early childhood. There's evidence that proves that charter schools are effective. We know how to create the best model. We can do that. Kids need that, so I ask that you be open-minded about that. And when legislation comes down the pike, please, be open. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Jackson. [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: You're welcome. Any questions? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions? Senator Scheer. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Yes. You said you'd talked to several people in dyslexia. [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Have you brought that to the State Board of Education? Because they actually have control over Rule 10, we don't, so... [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: Yes, I have. I have not gotten much response from them. I've actually received a greater response from the Omaha Public Schools district from several of their board members who have at least come and attended some conferences and some educational trainings about dyslexia. So four of the school board members really understand what it is and get that it's an issue. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Okay. Thank you. [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: You're welcome. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

CLARICE JACKSON: Thank you so much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Um-hum. Welcome. [LB1103]

WENDY BOYER: Good afternoon. Thank you. I'll try and keep my comments brief and maybe just share a few things that haven't been shared today. My name is Wendy Boyer. I'm a senior vice president with the Greater Omaha Chamber. Boyer: B-o-y-e-r. One of the things that was said earlier was that by 2018 66 percent of the jobs in Nebraska will require some kind of postsecondary education, either a two- or four-year degree. However, for every 100 students in Nebraska, 88 of those will graduate high school; 62 will go on to college; and 31 will complete a two- or four-year degree. So we're graduating with a postsecondary degree a third of our students and, yet, two thirds of the jobs will require postsecondary education in just four years. So as we're looking and thinking about the economy and growing the economy in the state of Nebraska, that's concerning. Talent is critical to our ability to be able to be successful and enjoy the quality of life that we have currently and that we will continue to have in the future. Educational attainment also impacts earnings. We know that individuals with only a high school degree in the state of Nebraska, their median wage is \$25,000 a year. So a high school diploma will not even allow someone to make a livable, sustainable wage and be able to support their families. So I applaud that we're looking at a cradle-to-career system. I would encourage that we think about how we use data not just to hold schools accountable or to inform instruction, but also as a way of researching best practices. What's working? How do we replicate that? How does that

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inform our policy? And so as we're collecting all this data, it's critical that we not just report on it but that we are analyzing and using it to research and study it, the science of education and how we get better, throughout the entire system. As far as the goals and objectives, there would just be a couple of things that I would add. One of them is success in the workplace goes much further than the basics of reading, writing, and math. What we hear from employers so importantly and so critical are: the need for employees to be able to communicate well; to work in teams; to think critically and creatively; to be able to analyze and problem solve; their ability to adapt rapidly to changing environments; and that they're lifelong learners. And I think we need to think about how we're incorporating those important skills into education and our vision for what education looks like. So that's making relevant learning opportunities, being innovative, strategic partnerships, dual enrollment, career academies, all of those above. And so however we can create a more flexible system that allows us to leverage those very valuable and limited resources, the strategic partnerships needs to be encouraged. I would also share that 80 percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the United States are dependent upon the mastery of science and mathematics. STEM jobs have grown three times faster than non-STEM jobs in the United States, and we see that trend continuing. So...and we encourage that science also be listed as a critical component within those goals and objectives. And then technology has been spoken of a little bit. I would like to just reemphasize that. When we...about a year ago, we did a survey of 154 companies in the greater Omaha region to understand what their technology needs would be in the next two years. Those 154 companies projected 1,500 jobs that would be necessary. We believe--or know--that that's probably three times that at least in the next two years. At the Peter Kiewit Foundation...or the Peter Kiewit Institute, we graduate about 110 a year. So when we know that we have 3,000 to 5,000 IT jobs necessary in multiple industries, those are critical skills, and so that also...we need technology standards. It needs to be as basic as reading, writing, and math. We need digital literacy, and that's I think the best thing that we need to do to equip our students to be able to be employable and successful in their careers. And with that, I would answer any questions that you might have. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Boyer. Any questions for Wendy? Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. You make a lot of really good points, Ms. Boyer. I think my question comes down to a funding question. You know I had that earlier. [LB1103]

WENDY BOYER: Right. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I really think it's going to take a public-private partnership. Are members of your organization willing to step up and participate in that? [LB1103]

WENDY BOYER: I think so. I think you're seeing business step up in a way that we haven't before. They're in a critical place right now. They can't get the workers that they need. And so in the system, however we can leverage and create these flexible strategic partnerships, whether that be with business, whether that's with community colleges or four years, I think we need to put all of that on the table and look at that. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

WENDY BOYER: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

WENDY BOYER: You're welcome. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

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ANDY ISAACSON: (Exhibit 20) Good afternoon. My name is Andy Isaacson. That's I-s-a-a-c-s-o-n. Thank you, Senator Sullivan and members of the Education Committee, for the opportunity today to discuss our state's educational priorities and to provide NSEA's input on the visioning process. I am representing the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association, and I am also the president of the Papillion-La Vista Education Association and a secondary teacher. Please note that my testimony today only reflects the positions of the NSEA and not of my local school district. NSEA's vision for education in Nebraska is straightforward: provide a great public education for every student. In order to achieve this goal, we are focused on improving the quality of teaching, increasing student achievement, and making schools better, safer places to learn. An important part of this work is ensuring that every student, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender, or other factors, is taught by a motivated, well-trained, and highly qualified teacher. This past spring, NSEA conducted six focus groups where we talked to 72 millennial-age teachers. Overwhelmingly, the top concern shared by these educators were burgeoning class sizes, the amount of standardized testing required, and a lack of access to mental health services for students. I will take my allotted time at this hearing to speak about class size. As a special education teacher, I know firsthand that class size affects everything a teacher and their students do. In most school districts in Nebraska, we've seen an increase in the student-teacher ratio, and that increase is negatively affecting student learning. The problem is exacerbated when the student affected is an English language learner. Our students are not getting the individualized attention they need to succeed. Today's typical classrooms are more diverse than in years past. Some students have mental or emotional disabilities or behavioral problems. Some students speak little or no English. Some students live in poverty. Students have a range of backgrounds and achievement levels. Students who need individual attention--which, frankly, is all of them--are unlikely to receive that attention in a large classroom. Smaller classes help to develop the noncognitive skills that are important to success in work, college and, later in life, skills such as persistence, motivation, and self-esteem. As society asks more and more of public schools, Nebraska's Legislature needs to provide smaller class sizes so teachers

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can provide the individual attention all students need to learn and achieve at high levels. A reduction in class size will lead to improved student achievement and fewer behavioral issues in the classroom. We hope the visioning process will be instrumental in improving education in our state and that, as a result of the committee's work, new initiatives will be implemented to encourage gains for student achievement within the classroom. I appreciate your time and your work with this endeavor, and I'd be happy to answer any questions of yours. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Isaacson. Any questions for Andy? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

GARY TARGOFF: (Exhibit 21) Good afternoon, Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee. My name is Gary Targoff. That's T-a-r-g-o-f-f. I'm the assistant general manager of education at Nebraska Educational Telecommunications or NET. It is a pleasure for me to come before you once again, and I want to compliment you on the process you are undertaking to establish a vision for education in our state. We all know that few things are as important as providing a quality education to all Nebraska students. Indeed, our state's economic and social prosperity depends upon a highly literate population. Statistically, a 1 percent rise in literacy scores results in an eventual 2.5 percent rise in labor productivity and a 1.5 percent rise in GDP per person. The challenge, of course, is how best to ensure a high-quality education within the budget and geographic realities in which we must operate. To that point, NET believes that educational media plays a role in providing quality educational opportunities that provide Nebraskans for success in learning. Our vision of education in this great state of ours is one in which educational resources are ubiquitous, where access is equal no matter what the size of your school district or its location in the state, where children are engaged in learning activities well before they enter first grade, where parents, grandparents, and day-care professionals are able to support early learning through a network of services and resources. NET, through its relationship with the Public Broadcasting System and partners such as the Nebraska Department of Education and

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the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, has been actively engaged in designing systems to fulfill that vision. Our Ready to Learn initiative is currently working in the communities of Auburn, Fremont, Schuyler, Dakota City, Crete, Hebron, and Hastings, to provide at-risk children ages two to eight with access to research-based educational media built on familiar PBS kids' programs and characters, such as Martha Speaks. Ready to Learn resources are associated with an increase in reading ability of 29 percent amongst children in grades K-2 and gains of up to 31 percent in vocabulary amongst low-income children. Working with our partners, the Ready to Learn initiative is helping train Head Start educators, day-care professionals, and parents on the appropriate use of educational media, as well as the need for personal interaction with children--all aimed at helping our youngest and most vulnerable learners prepare for school. While technology is not the sole solution to providing quality educational opportunities, we believe it is the great equalizer when it comes to access to resources, and NET's virtual learning library which now contains over 87,000 digital assets that are accessed by teachers and their students no matter their location across the state. Designed by content providers such as ourselves, WGBH, who are the producers of NOVA, the Smithsonian Institute, to name a few, digital educational media is a cost-effective way to supplement teaching methods in the classroom. And you've heard about that from my colleagues talking about BlendEd learning systems. In addition to the new productivity tools, including lesson plan builders and quiz makers that enable deeper engagement with content and allows the 44,000...excuse me, 4,400 registered Nebraska educators to create personalized interactive activities for students. In the words of Kim McCain, who is a library media specialist at Dewitt Tri County Schools, the best thing about the NET virtual learning library is its outstanding resources. So in closing, educational media, whether for pre-K learning or grades K-12, provides educators, both formal and informal, with the tools to turn learning into fun and productive activities. As Nebraska reimagines its education system to provide our learners with the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to be productive individuals, the appropriate use of educational media should be factored into your equation. As one of the state's most trusted providers of educational content, NET

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believes we can help you fulfill that vision by playing a role of equalizer through access to resources. Thank you, and I'll answer any questions you may have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Gary. Any comments/questions for Gary? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

TED STILWILL: (Exhibit 22) Thank you. Pleased to be here. Ted Stilwill, S-t-i-l-w-i-l-l, CEO for the Learning Community. I want to thank you for, obviously, for your patience and persistence this afternoon but also for your commitment in establishing educational principles to guide Nebraska's educational system and making that a prerequisite to discussion about regulations or funding. I think that will make a huge difference in terms of leadership for the educational system. It may not surprise you that I'm going to talk a little bit about early childhood education. You've heard me talk about that before, particularly in connection with poverty. But it...and I'll shorten the comments a little bit, hopefully, from what you have in the testimony before you. I just want to make about four points, and all of them really point to why this committee and the educational community in Nebraska needs to think about early childhood education and educational policy differently and in different ways than we have done in the past. First of all, it will require your committee and our state to think about education as a stewardship responsibility. Just as some of you might have enjoyed those responsibilities with the department of...or Agriculture Committee or Natural Resources Committee, it requires you to think about the stewardship or the human resource in Nebraska over a long term, a generation or more. Even though you're elected for a specific term and you're term limited and you have...you meet once a year and there are biennial budgets and so on, you really have to look out a generation to see what kind of a difference can be made. That's what's going to be necessary. So that requires all of us to think a little differently about these kinds of issues. But it also requires us to think about poverty differently than we have in the past. In the education community, we think about poverty as free and reduced-price lunches. We know that that's grown dramatically. In the next few years, probably over half the kids in Nebraska will be eligible for free and reduced-price lunch if

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the current trends continue. But within that population of free and reduced-price lunch kids are kids from families who live at 100 percent of poverty, and those are growing very rapidly as well, as are the families living at 50 percent of poverty. And the needs in those families and the needs of those young children are much more severe and cry out for much more attention. And when we talk about early childhood education from a more universal aspect and in terms of increasing kindergarten to all-day kindergarten for everyone, we're providing access to four-year-old preschools for everyone. Those are all good things, and you've heard about that earlier this afternoon. But what I'm suggesting, and I think Dr. Meisels would agree, is to open a targeted early childhood strategy specifically for children from families who live in very high poverty, because their needs are dramatically different. And if you think about how much poverty has increased in Douglas County in the last dozen years, early...poverty among kids under 18 has doubled. In Sarpy County, it's tripled just in the last 12 years. That means that those are the families at 100 percent poverty or worse. But in those families, you have a condition where adverse conditions are piling up on those young kids. They're more likely to see emotional or physical neglect, contact sexual abuse, drug or alcohol users in the home. They're going to see their mother treated violently. They're going to see their family member incarcerated and so on. There's a whole list of those things. When those things pile up, you may know a family where one child has some of that going on or one of those things. But when you have a number of them going on, the trajectory--life trajectory--of those kids changes on a near-permanent basis, and it requires targeted early childhood that starts at birth with home-visiting programs, as Dr. Meisels mentioned, starts with intensive three- and four-year-old programs that you heard from Educare, and starts with more intensive programs at K-3. We can't have business as usual or we'll get the same results we've seen in the rearview mirror. And kids from poverty will start school behind and fall further behind every year. Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Stilwill. Any questions for Ted? Thank you very much. [LB1103]

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TED STILWILL: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

THOMAS LOCHER: Thank you. Good afternoon. Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee, my name is Tom Locher, L-o-c-h-e-r. I'm a director of the Nebraska State Bar Foundation, which is considered the center for law-related education in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska State Bar Foundation has partnered for many years with ESUs to provide distance learning to Nebraska students statewide. And in addition to offering educational programs on Constitution Day and Law Day, we have involved our foundation in a number of other law-related educational opportunities. To give you an example, the foundation partnered with the Homestead National Monument in Beatrice to offer a Constitution Day program this year. And a lesson based on the questions posed to immigrants wishing to become naturalized was delivered in person to 165 students, but it was also available by a live streaming to students outside the area. And following that lesson, students observed a naturalization ceremony where 59 persons were sworn in as new American citizens. Another important distance-learning opportunity offered by the Bar Foundation this year was through its Hruska Institute interview with United States Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., who was in Lincoln only a couple of weeks ago. At the law school, the Chief Justice participated in a discussion with questions asked by Judge William J. Reilly, chief judge of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. And many of those questions were submitted by some of the 597 Nebraska students, high school students taking part in the institute through live video streaming, as well as a number of attorneys across the state who were not able to attend this very important opportunity for Nebraska citizens. After the institute live aired that interview on September 19, there were almost 25 additional schools interested in watching a recording of the conversation with the Chief Justice. This included an additional 840 students statewide for a total of 41 schools and over 1,400 students having video access to this educational program. We believe that

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distance learning is critical given Nebraska's great geographic reach, and the Bar Foundation urges your careful consideration of that in the envision process. And we thank you for the opportunity to participate in educating our students in our system of justice and matters related to the law. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Locher. Any questions? Thank you for your testimony. Welcome. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: Hi. My name is Kirsten Case, C-a-s-e. I'm the executive director of the Literacy Center, a nonprofit here in Omaha that serves adults 18 into their 80s who are looking for adult basic education services. I waited towards the end because I wanted to see if anybody else was going to talk about a population that's often invisible and underserved. But unfortunately, we saw some people get close to it, but it was mostly through statistics, such as seven out of ten individuals that are inmates are functionally illiterate. We work with individuals that are working to change their lives and to become self-sufficient through adult education services. And I come to you today to ask you to consider that in this plan that you're working on, which I think is wonderful, that we also consider including individuals that, again, are underserved in our communities. This is not just an Omaha issue but a statewide issue, these...when we're looking at lifting up our young people and looking at opportunities for future work force opportunities, that we look at lifting up all of Nebraskans. I'm going to share a couple of statistics with you because this is how this group is talked about right now. Earlier, we heard about the seven out of ten inmates are functionally illiterate. Forty-three percent of individuals with the lowest literacy rates live in poverty. Twenty-nine percent of adults 16 years and older read below the eighth-grade level. In Omaha alone, there are 70,000 adults who are considered functionally illiterate. This means that their reading and writing skills are so low that they can't function in everyday life. This also means that they may have a hard time holding or finding a job, understanding the information that their doctor provides to them, and helping their children with homework. We talked a lot today about early childhood education and how...what a great impact it has on children. These

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adults were once children in our schools. And there are many reasons why they went through the system and they were not able to receive the education that they needed, that they need to be self-sufficient, that they need to help their children, that they need to be productive citizens in our community. But the fact of the matter is, is that they did. I would love for your plan to be hugely successful. I want you to work me out of a job. That would be lovely. But until we get to that point, we have children that are in our system now that are going to need my services in the future. So again I ask that you consider that this plan be more comprehensive, that it also includes adults that are in need of adult basic educational services. And I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Case. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions? Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Just a couple. You bring some good points. I'm going to...a couple questions. Where do you get the 70,000? [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: It's from data that we get from national resources and local. I can send you where it comes from specifically. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I just was curious about that. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: It's about 16 percent of the population is considered functionally illiterate in the Omaha area. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And do you use a volunteer network at all to help these people? [LB1103]

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KIRSTEN CASE: We do. We have about 90 volunteers currently that are serving our students. The Literacy Center is a nonprofit organization. In the last three years alone, we've grown 470 percent in our services. We served over 500 students in the last year alone, when...and three years ago, we had 15 classes a week. We have over 70 classes a week today at five community locations, and that's just touching the tip of the iceberg of the need in the community. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And where is the source of your funding? [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: We rely on grants and individual donations. We do have some Department of Education through the adult education funding; we do get some funding through that as well. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, ma'am. Ms. Case, do you also work in the jails, in...with incarcerated individuals at the current time? [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: We do. We have had programming on site at Douglas County Corrections. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: We also work with individuals that are at a level that they can leave and come over and take classes. We work with Probation, General Assistance, a

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number of different organizations. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Ms. Case. [LB1103]

KIRSTEN CASE: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Hello again. [LB1103]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: (Exhibit 23) Good afternoon. My name is Jen Goettemoeller, G-o-e-t-t-e-m-o-e-l-l-e-r, and I'm here on behalf of First Five Nebraska. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your strategic planning process and also for all of the work that you've put into this. This really is a great opportunity to step back, take a look at the world we live and work in, and show the nation that Nebraska is blazing a new trail in education as we prepare our students for this high-tech, mobile, and very global economy. You have all seen the statewide map showing approximately 62,287 children ages zero to five who are at risk of failing in school. These are the kids who are most likely to arrive at kindergarten one to two years developmentally behind, struggle to catch up, and cost us significant dollars down the road. We can get ahead of that growing number of children at risk and also the increased demands that they will bring to the K-12 system by intervening early when the science shows the neurological foundation is being built. For the first time, we've been able to calculate how many of those 62,000 children at risk we are currently serving. These numbers are included in my testimony. Fifty percent of at-risk preschoolers we're reaching right now. For at-risk children age zero to three, those who are at highest risk of failing in school, only 7 percent experience the kinds of interaction that close the achievement gap, and that's really where our problem lies because that's the time when the foundation for all future

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learning is being built. That's what we have to prioritize if we're going to get ahead of the problem and change the game. If we're seeking lasting solutions, we cannot overlook the first three years. In my written comments you'll see a recommendation to edit the second objective under goal one. That objective should be the highest priority under that first goal, and we can help you accomplish this objective in the next five years by expanding the highly effective public-private partnership known as Sixpence. Right now, 10 percent of Nebraska schools are closing the achievement gap for kids before they get to that preschool age. That's when science shows that it's easiest, most effective, and also the least expensive. More schools want to do that work, but right now there's only funding for 25 school districts. Sixpence holds great promise not just because of the child outcomes it is receiving and what it's able to do for parents but because its funding streams, which do include private investments, can reach every school district--every district, not just those that are equalized. The Legislature has the opportunity to work side by side with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute to allow schools access to Sixpence resources that close that achievement gap early. By focusing on the earliest years and the most at-risk children, we will be able to achieve the largest returns on investments and change the odds for children most at risk. Appreciate your time and the opportunity today. Thank you so much for your work. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jen. Any questions for her? [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: I've got just one. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: It's just...it's a personal question, Jen. Your data on the maps, could I review that with you privately sometime to see where the data came from? [LB1103]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: You bet. Yes, be happy to. [LB1103]

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SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. [LB1103]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

JESSIE RASMUSSEN: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I'm Jessie Rasmussen. The last name is spelled R-a-s-m-u-s-s-e-n, and I am the president of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. About ten years ago, my boss Susie Buffett took the advice of then superintendent of Omaha Public Schools who told her, if you really want to have a positive impact on the educational success of children at risk, then you need to invest in the first five years and make sure that these children arrive at kindergarten on par with their peers from resourced families instead of one to two years behind. So she set out to do that, found the Educare program in Chicago created by the Ounce of Prevention, inspired by the philanthropist Irving Harris. She was attracted to this program because it was targeted to serve the children who were living with the greatest number of risk factors, but it was also a program that started early and was grounded in the science, and it was a program that provided a full-day, year-round program, the right kind of dosage and intensity that these children need, but also the kind of support that parents who are trying to advance out of poverty needed to be able to do that. So the replication in Omaha was picked up by other philanthropists around the country, and we now have a national network of 21 Educare schools. Four of them are in Nebraska, two in Omaha, one in Lincoln, and most recently we opened the first Educare in a Native-American community in Winnebago, Nebraska. There are more schools in the pipeline, but I

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would tell you that we are just as concerned about being able to lift what we have learned about effective practices and birth-to-five services and extending them beyond the walls of the schools into the broader, early childhood community. There are sort of three general themes or lessons that we have learned. One is the importance of starting early. The national evaluation of our Educare schools shows the same result across the network, and that is that children who have had two-plus years of Educare--they start before age three--are actually entering kindergarten on par with their peers from resourced families. And in Omaha, when we have followed these children into third and fifth grades, that is holding true, that the children who have had two-plus years of Educare look significantly better on the statewide reading and math assessments than the children who just had one to two years of the Educare experience. So starting early really does matter. Second thing we've learned is we have to deliver quality. Just any old early childhood program does not get these great results. It has to be a quality program. And while there are many variables that contribute to quality, probably the most important one is the skills and competencies of the teachers who are interacting with the children and their families. And so we must pay attention to the work force of...in this arena. And thirdly, you've heard this before but I want to repeat it, and that is the value of targeting the at-risk children. All those wonderful return on investment of public dollars, like as much as \$4 to \$16 for every \$1 invested of public dollars, that's with kids who are living in circumstances of risk. In essence, the greatest at-risk kids are your highest return children. And there are multiple examples of how we are doing this expanding beyond the walls of the Educare school. I just want to give you a couple of them. One is here in Omaha. We, along with several other private philanthropists, are investing in a program called Early Childhood Services, which is lifting the practice of master teachers or coaches and providing that coaching to child-care programs in the community that are serving predominantly children from low-income families. Another example is the Sixpence program. We and others are partners in the state Sixpence program that is statewide. We're also supportive of home visitation programs in several locations across the state of Nebraska. And most recently, we've been having a growing number of conversations with very small communities, helping them to understand how

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to do a quality birth-to-five program, how to put together a budget braiding multiple funding streams, and how to deal with some of the challenges around space but not just any old space but space that really supports early learning. So thank you again for this thoughtful process, your patience, and endurance this afternoon. But most importantly, I want to thank you once again for understanding that early childhood is really the front end and the foundation for an effective education system. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jessie, for your testimony. [LB1103]

JESSIE RASMUSSEN: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any comments or questions for Ms. Rasmussen? Thank you. [LB1103]

JESSIE RASMUSSEN: You bet. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1103]

CINDY COPICH: (Exhibit 24) Thank you. Thank you, Senator Sullivan and other members of the Education Committee, for allowing this opportunity. My name is Cindy Copich, C-o-p-i-c-h. I'm the parent of three school-age children and a member of the Bellevue community, where I am an elected school board member. I am here today to represent only my personal views. In review of the vision for education in Nebraska, I wonder if the objectives are too narrow for the state level. In fact, many communities across the state are already collaborating, cooperating, and working to provide these opportunities, services, and instructional needs for students. Rather, I see the Education Committee focusing more on the broader, overarching goals that reduce barriers and boost student learning opportunities by providing continued support for area school districts as they implement these goals. My suggestion would be to look at the goals through a systems view, consider why these goals have not been reached and what the

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state can do to better support healthy and successful students and families in a more inclusive approach. One way that you have worked to increase support for local school districts and students is by working with the Nebraska School Board Association, local board members, and district superintendents to allow schools to recoup more of their federal dollars from the state for Medicaid reimbursements that help pay for student services and supports. This type of systems change and improvement needs to continue. When I read over the four pages of goals and objectives, I see a common underlying theme, and that is of poverty and inequitable opportunity. As you know, Nebraska's children are born to parents that have different access, resources, opportunities, and incomes. The growing need of early childhood programs speaks to growing poverty and inequality. As state representatives, I hope you will continue to work at the state level to streamline the supports, services, and resources that benefit all families inside and outside of schools. Schools will continue to struggle to meet individual needs of children if society and the state do not address the reality of poverty and inequality and race. All of these matter. As a former kindergarten teacher, I certainly ran across a few parents that refused to believe...that seemed to think and make their lives a bit more difficult for their children than they should. But I refuse to believe that parents today care less or have lower expectations for their children than those of past generations. I do believe that parents today are experiencing different and more significant challenges than many parents faced generations ago. As a parent, I have been privileged to have access to quality healthcare for my children and myself. I am able to provide my children with adequate opportunities to learn that stimulate their brain development even before they started school. My children live in a safe place with access to quality food. And this is not true for all Nebraska's children. Schools will not be able to adequately and effectively address the proposed goals without broader community realizing the extent to which poverty influences the lives of all of us here today and by taking action to make opportunities and resources more equitable. And I'd like to view that more as the opportunity gap rather than the achievement gap, which we hear a lot of. The task that you have before you is immensely important. Without targeted community engagement and discourse, we prevent economically advantaged

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people from critically reflecting on their privileges while muting the voice and experience of the economically disadvantaged. I work daily to recognize the difference between what I have earned and what I benefit from but have not earned. I urge all of you to do the same. Again, I thank you for this opportunity. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much for your testimony. Any questions? Thank you again. Welcome. [LB1103]

JIM ENRIGHT: Thank you. Madam Chairman and members of the Education Committee, my name is Jim Enright, E-n-r-i-g-h-t, 3303 "R" Street, Omaha. As you can probably tell, I don't represent any special interest groups, just myself. So I'm free to speak, say what I think is right. And I was going to talk about a whole bunch of stuff, but it's late and I'll stick to charter schools. That's the most important thing I had to say. Charter schools, we're one of only, as you know, eight states that don't have charter schools or some law authorizing charter schools. So that should give us some reason to pause there, I think. We're only one of eight states. And I do want to second what the gentleman from Platte Institute said about school choice. I agree with all of that. And also, the lady that was here, I forget her name, African-American lady, she spoke very well without notes about what she said about school choice too. I saw the movie Waiting for Superman, cried through it all. It was sad, very sad that these people are...these families are denied a choice in our state, because they may be in a dysfunctional school and they're desperate to get out of there and they have no choice. They have no charter school to go to--or no vouchers, for that matter. So, you know, I think about those movies and it just makes me cry. So...and another thing about charter schools is they save money. They...if you look in the charter school association Web site, they spend 42 percent of what their surrounding schools spend, on the average, of taxpayer money. They're pretty good at raising private money, too, but they're just cheaper. So if you want to save some money...I'm not asking for state aid for anything. I'm a taxpayer. I'm hurting paying that property tax, like a lot of people, and so save some money with charter schools. As far as who should charter, I think the charters should be done by the

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State Board of Education and are supervised by the State Department of Education, because there is some state money. I think the majority of the money should come from the school districts where they're located. It's true that charter schools are more successful in inner cities than when they're in the suburbs simply because there's much more room for improvement in inner cities in education than in suburbs. They're already doing pretty well. So there's no...I think there are some ways that rural areas could benefit possibly from charter schools, and I think they were mentioned earlier. You could have an on-line learning charter school that would go out to all the little towns and rural areas where they could get courses. You could have that as the charter school and they could get these on-line courses. So that would benefit mainly the small school districts that can't afford to have a lot of subjects. They would have this...like Skype. They could use Skype for conferences and so forth, and closed-circuit television, too, and have that as the charter school. That's one idea. And on Indian reservations also, there's a possibility there. I think there is a couple charter schools on Indian reservations. So I think charter schools just simply give more choice to the people, and that's what makes good education; that's what...what if we had...consider if we had one government supermarket, one government supermarket we all had to go to. We'd probably all starve to death, except for the black market. So it's choice that makes the free enterprise system work, competition. And there's studies that show that charter schools, where they come, actually improve the mainstream schools because of the competition. They say, oh, they're out...we'd better get on our horses here because the charter schools are making us look worse. One minute. Okay. Okay, I got too wound up. But I would say, you know, consider these charter schools right now. And I'm for pushing tax credits; I'm for vouchers in some cases. But I just wanted to make the point that...I know you've been bombarded with a lot of stuff today, and I want to make the point. Please consider charter schools. Give people a choice. Thank you very much for your time. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any questions for...okay. Welcome. [LB1103]

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CHARLES FRIESEN: Hello. I'm Chuck Friesen. I retired from the Lincoln Public Schools after serving as a math teacher and an instructional technology coordinator. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Could you spell your last name, please. [LB1103]

CHARLES FRIESEN: F-r-i-e-s-e-n. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [LB1103]

CHARLES FRIESEN: Sorry. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [LB1103]

CHARLES FRIESEN: Even I am getting a little tired of hearing technology testimony, so I'll make it quick. One of my goals is for Nebraska to have world-class on-line learning opportunities for students. And we've already heard testimony that people appreciate Internet Nebraska, the highway that all schools use. But it also takes hardware, software, training, learning management systems, and the like to deliver that. But oftentimes, we'd fail to walk the last mile with schools and with teachers. And by the last mile, I mean the leadership and coordination that the state can provide for the content, the curriculum, what have you. Right now, we have 50 math teachers developing the same course independently, and we can do better than that with statewide leadership and coordination for on-line content. The ETV testimony of 87,000 resources available should be organized and available for teachers in an organized sort of fashion, not each teacher needs to reinvent the course, if you will. So I would encourage you to think in terms of walking the last mile with teachers on not only distance education, but whatever project it might be, whether it's early childhood or career academies and the like. We've heard lots of positive testimony. And I also want to follow up on a couple of comments that I heard. I'm vehemently opposed to charter schools. Many Nebraskans are nervous that the movement is nothing more than a front for the wealthy to send their

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kids to the schools of their choice and to receive a tax break. But more importantly, I might add that there are really mixed results across the country on the benefits of charter schools, and I would encourage all of us to inform our views of charter schools by listening to independent, bias-free researchers with their views of charter schools. Saying it's so doesn't make it so. We have to study these things and listen to independent voices to determine the efficacy of movements like a charter school in Nebraska. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Friesen. Any questions? Thank you again. Seeing no one else wishing to testify, this will close the hearing on LB1103. And thank you, everyone, for your involvement in testimony today. Thank you. (See also Exhibits 25 and 26.) [LB1103]