

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 26, 2026
Rough Draft

STROMMEN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the fifty-first day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislative Session. Our chaplain for today is Senator Hardin. Please rise.

HARDIN: Lord, we thank you for a peaceful land and a free country. We praise you for your powerful hand, which models meekness. That is power under control. We thank you that the evidence of your Holy Spirit's presence is available to us right now, on a budget day in the Legislature, that love and joy and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control can be ours. The days and nights are long for us right now, Lord, and we're already tired. Frankly, it's just easier to be mean. So I pray for my fellow senators as I pray for myself, that you would fill us, empower us, grant us the grace and humility we need to work together effectively for outcomes that honor you, as well as the wonderful people of our state that we have the privilege of serving. Whether they're looking our way today or not, 2 million of them are depending on us to lead. And as we lead, may we grant undeserved favor to one another as you do to us. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

STROMMEN: I recognize Senator Bosn for the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOSN: Colleagues, please join me for the Pledge. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

STROMMEN: Thank you. I call to order the fifty-first day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, Second Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Are there any corrections for the Journal?

CLERK: I have no corrections this morning, sir.

STROMMEN: Thank you. Are there any messages, reports, or announcements?

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CLERK: Just one, Mr. President. Agency reports electronically filed with the Legislature can be found on the Nebraska Legislature's website. That's all I have at this time.

STROMMEN: Senator Glen Meyer would like to recognize Dr. Dave Hoelting of Pender, who is serving as family Physician of the Day on behalf of the NAFP, Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians. Doctor, please rise. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We will now proceed to the first item on the agenda. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, General File, LB1209, introduced by Senator Clements. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; provide for appropriation to the Legislative Council; and declare an emergency. The bill was read for the first time on January 21 of this year and placed-- and referred to the Appropriations Committee. That committee placed the bill on General File, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to speak.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. You'll see a handout on your desk about LB1209. LB1209 is an Appropriations-- excuse me-- an Appropriations shell bill requested by the Fiscal Office and the Bill Drafters, in order to harmonize the A bills on those bills listed above with the, with-- to harmonize them with the budget bill, LB1071. This bill addresses a timing issue related to these A bills, which have advanced to Select File or Final Reading. They all have provisions which reduce General Fund appropriations in various agencies and programs. The total General Fund impact of these 5 bills is approximately \$16.5 million in savings. And so by doing this, these-- normally, bills would have to wait until their A bill passes before they can pass Final Reading. This is going to allow the A bills-- or the bill-- the primary bills, I call them the parent bills, to go ahead and pass. As those pass, there may be adjustments needing to the A bills, depending on what they do regarding the budget. And so, we're going to make sure that they don't conflict with wording in the budget bill, and this will make it easier for us to harmonize those. Each of the introducers of these 5 bills have been notified that this is the plan. I've had no opposition. Questions have been answered. It will improve our financial status. We will be able to get this, I, I believe, a little bit sooner, to show on the green sheet. And each of these now should be showing on the green sheet, and they will be combined into this one bill to be shown as LB1209 on the green sheet. But it's a, a way to make sure they harmonize with the budget bill and that adjustments to the budget or to these bills that don't

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quite match up will be able to be done harmoniously-- we'll call it that. And so, this shell bill needs to move on and then we'll be working on moving these bills into it. That-- I think that's all I have-- anybody has any questions. Also, we have the Fiscal Office under the south balcony, if you have a question about that. They're the primary ones that-- who brought this to me, and I ask for your support on advancing LB1209. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on LB1209. Senator waives close. The question before the body is the adoption of LB1209. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 37 ayes, 0 nays on advancement of the bill, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The bill is advanced. Next item, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Clements would move to suspend Rule 5, Section 7(f) and (g) to allow for the A bills for LB759, LB847, LB901, LB1101, and LB1235 to be indefinitely postponed, and for the appropriations for these bills to be contained in LB1209.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on your motion.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. This is the next step required for these bills to be put into LB1209. The rules say that every bill has to have its own A bill attached to it and moving with it. This will allow us to suspend that rule so they can be sent over-- moved over to LB1209, and though we won't-- will not have to have them continue to be attached to the bills. But the A bills will just move together as a package, so that we continue, continue to have harmony in those bills and the budget bill. I ask for your green vote on the motion. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on your motion. Senator waives close. The question before the body is the adoption of the motion to suspend the rules, Rule 5, Section 7(f) and (g). All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Please record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 39 ayes, 0 nays on the adoption of the rule suspension.

STROMMEN: The motion to suspend the rules is successful. Next item, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Clements would move to indefinitely postpone LB759A, LB847A, LB901A, LB1101A, and LB1235A, consistent with the previous rule suspension.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on your motion.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for your support on the previous motion. This will detach these A bills from their parent bill, and then we will be putting those LB-- A bills together in the next round, onto LB1209. And there-- again, so that when we put them together in LB1209, we can make sure they coordinate with the budget bill, as they make changes to budget items. And I ask for your green vote on the motion. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on your motion. Senator Clements waives. The motion before the body is to-- or-- to indefinitely postpone. All those in favor vote yay; all those opposed vote nay. Please record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 37 ayes, 0 nays on the adoption of the motion, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The motion is adopted. Next item, Mr Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. Clerk, some ite-- Mr. President, some items for the record. The Judiciary Committee will meet at 9:30 under the north balcony, under the north balcony. Judiciary Committee, under the north balcony at 9:30, for an exec session. New A bill, A bill LB1050A, introduced by Senator Murman. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB1050; and declare an emergency.

STROMMEN: Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB1071, introduced by Speaker Arch at the request of the Governor. When the Legislature left the bill, Mr. President, pending was the bill itself, as well as AM2748. That's all I have.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, for a two-minute refresh.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. I thought there was also AM2920 pending. Is that correct? And if so, I would move to withdraw AM2920. This is the mainline budget bill, and we'll discuss further when we get to it.

STROMMEN: So ordered.

CLERK: In that case, Mr. President, Senator Clements would move to amend with AM2941.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on AM2941.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. This is LB1071, the May 9 Appropriations bill. And AM2941 is the budget items passed in the-- on Select File by the committee, but it removes childcare subsidies and it removes education scholarships. So those 2 items would be removed by AM2941, and the rest of the budget items, as we have discussed in the past, would move forward. And I-- to thank people for the discussion on those items. We have-- people have had an opportunity that wanted an opportunity to move items along in the budget. I-- been, been having comments about bees in the past. But I don't have much for comments for bees today, except want to, want to just recognize my wife. My wife, for a while, was a professional clown, and her clown name was Bee Happy. And so, I believe Peggy is watching. And Peggy, I always-- thank you for always being happy. And I, I love you. And so, and so with that, the mainline budget bill will move on to Final Reading. I'm, I'm hoping, if we have removed objectionable items-- and I ask for your green vote on AM2941 and LB1071. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on AM2941.

CLEMENTS: Well, thank you. Thank you for putting up with my comments about bees. And I have to recognize Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, who did one-up me with the "queen bee" comment. And the-- I would have to recognize Director Patent in the Fiscal Office as definitely earning that title, and the rest of us are worker bees. We know that they do the, the real job here. So I-- thank you, Mr. President. I ask for your green vote on AM2941 and the other amendments in the bill.

STROMMEN: The question before the body is the adoption of AM2941. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Please record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 32 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The amendment is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Clements would move to amend with AM2944.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on AM2944.

CLEMENTS: And just a minute, please. I withdraw that amendment.

STROMMEN: It is withdrawn. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Armendariz, I have FA1060, FA1061, FA1062, FA1065, FA1066, FA1067, and AM2773, all with notes that you would withdraw.

STROMMEN: So ordered.

CLERK: Senator Calth, I have FA730 with a note that you'd withdraw.

STROMMEN: So ordered.

CLERK: In that case, Mr. President, I have nothing further at this time.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements to close on AM2748.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. AM2748, and that becomes just the basic parts of the Select File budget from the Appropriations Committee. I ask for your green vote.

STROMMEN: The question before the body is the adoption of AM2748. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 36 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The amendment is adopted. Turning to the queue, Senator Hansen, you are recognized to speak.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, colleagues, I'd like to give a special thanks to Senator Clements and the Appropriations Committee and his staff. This will probably, I'm assuming, be his last bill that he will be on the floor and his last budget. I want to do this now instead of bringing it up on Final Reading. But I, I appreciate all the work that he has done over the years. I think this is maybe his-- he has 10 years, excuse me. Gosh, he's been here a decade. That's a long time. But I think this might be his fifth budget-- fourth or fifth budget, I think, that he has gone through. And Senator Clements has always been a statesman. He's always been willing to listen. He's always been willing to work with his committee, which is rare, a lot

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of times. So I'd like to give him a special thanks for all the work he's done over the years, and moving things forward, and doing the people's work in a just and conservative manner. So with that, thank you, Senator Clements. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STROMMEN: Senator Guereca, for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB1071 advance to E&R for engrossing.

STROMMEN: You've heard the motion. The question before the body-- all those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Brandt, Clements, Clouse, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Ibach, Jacobson, Kauth, Lippincott, Lonowski, Meyer, Meyer, Moser, Murman, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Voting no: Senators Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Conrad, Guereca, Hunt, Juarez, McKinney. Not voting: Senators DeBoer, Fredrickson, Hughes, Prokop, Quick, and Spivey, Bostar, and Dungan. The vote is 43-- 34 ayes, 7 nays on advancement of the bill, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The bill does advance. Mr. Clerk, next item.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB1072. Senator Clements would move to return the bill to Select File for a specific amendment, that being AM2898.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on AM2898.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. This is my 10th year on Appropriations, my fourth year as chairman, and it has been a grind. And I very much appreciate your recognition. It's very humbling, and I thank you very much for your support. And working with you has been-- I don't, I don't-- maybe it hasn't been fun, but I've been glad to do it. People ask me a lot, are you enjoying it? Well, come to Appropriations for 10 years and see what you say, but no. I do enjoy numbers. I think you guys know that. There's more numbers than you can ever need to worry about, but let's get back to the agenda. But I do very much appreciate your support. LB1072 is the other budget bill. It's the fund transfers bill, but it also has a portion of the childcare items that are now removed from LB1071 in order to not have a con-- conflicting provisions in the 2 budget bills. This amendment would strike Sections 156, 158, and 238, and harmonize the 2 budget

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bills together so that the childcare provisions, which are no longer in LB1071, also will be removed from LB1072, and that is-- it was on Final Reading, so we're having to bring it back for this amendment. I ask for your green vote to return to Select File. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Turning to the queue, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Senator Clements, I take umbrage with your comment that you have not had fun. I think that you've had a lot of fun with your puns. You're very punny. Thank you.

STROMMEN: Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on AM2898-- on the motion to return. Waives close. The question before the body is the adoption of the motion to return to Select File. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 38 ayes, 0 nays on the motion to return, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Motion is adopted.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Clements would offer AM2898.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to open on AM2898.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. As I mentioned, this removes the childcare items that were put in the budget to harmonize with LB1071, but this would mean that childcare subsidy returns to the current statutes that's in effect, and doesn't-- it makes that-- so that there is no adjustment to childcare subsidies in the budget bills. But childcare subsidies are not removed at all. They're reverting to what they have been in statute. Just wanted to make that clear. And so, I ask for your green vote on AM29-8-- AM2898. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Clements, you are recognized to close on AM2898. Senator Clements waives close. The question before the body is the adoption of AM2898. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 33 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: AM2898 has been adopted.

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CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Raybould would return the bill to Select File for a specific amendment, that being AM2948.

STROMMEN: Senator Raybould, you are recognized to open on your motion.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, fellow Nebraskans, watching us on TV. This specific amendment, AM2948, is striking the sweeping of the funds from the Bureau of Education Land Funds. I think we've had discussions on this before. I have shared with you the 2007 Attorney General Opinion by Jon Bruning, stating very clearly that it is unlawful to do this. I have shared with you documents from the Association for Educational Land Trust throughout the United States. I shared his impromptu legal opinion, as well. And I have shared with the concerns raised by the administrative arm of the Educational Land Trust funds that they do intend to sue the state of Nebraska, which is really unfortunate that this body has chosen to completely ignore something that is so clearly enshrined in the Nebraska Constitution, as compared to any other department or agency in our state of Nebraska. I guess the question to my colleagues is, you know, why, why is it OK to pick and choose what parts of the constitution we wish to enforce in the deliverance of our legislative duties? If I'm not mistaken, we all swore an oath to preserve and protect our U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of our state of Nebraska. We have a clear constitutional duty to provide funding for public schools, kindergarten through 12th grade, but the constitution is silent on public-- private school fundings. There is clear, irrefutable constitutional language on the Board of Education Lands and their funds. Our Nebraska forefathers were really thinking of many generations and not just a single budget deficit. We know that the swiping of this funds has been attempted in the past. And the Attorney General provided the opinion telling us or the legislators back in 2007 that it was unlawful. So they didn't. These funds haven't been raided since the inception of the plan back 149 years ago. Our forefathers were clearly thinking and planning for the future of all children and the long term, but I think we are just in the throes of doing fiscal decisions that are not in the benefit of future generations of our fellow Nebraskans. I know we have a number of bills that's-- are on growing the good life. And I've said this before, I think we're really gambling with the good life by moving forward with this, this, what I consider an unlawful sweeping of funds. What it-- what's-- let's follow through. What is the current outcome of the actions that we're taking today? Most likely, the Bureau of Educational Land Trust Funds will file an injunct--injunction to stop the transfer out of their agency to the Educational Future Funds. Most

likely, that will happen. The other scenario that could happen, and I'm not an attorney, but most likely they will take those funds-- if they don't do an injunction completely, they will most likely put it in escrow, so nobody can touch it. The other outcome of this is-- that I think you're aware of, because you all have school districts in your legislative districts. Normally, in the course of business of the Bureau of Educational Land Fuss [SIC], they, they send out funds, as prescribed in their guidelines and bylaws and rules and regulations approved by the Legislature, on distributions to each and every school district in our legislative districts, based on per student ratio as well as a percentage of the real estate land earnings in their county. So this year, they had projected to release \$83 million or so, out to all the school districts in, in your legislative district. If these funds are swept of the \$40 million, that means there will be \$40 million or so less funds going out to the school districts. These school districts can use those funds in a discretionary way. They can use them to resurface, resurface their gym floors, or maybe buy another school bus, or maybe remodel their kitchen. So the schools have discretionary use of these funds, but I think that is probably an unintended consequence that you may not have been thinking about. So not only are we penalizing our schools in our school district, we're doing something that could have repercussions on some of their capital improvements that they have been planning for and actually counting on. I'm asking you to vote in favor of this so that we do not precipitate the likely lawsuit. And I think Senator Dorn spoke clearly-- well, maybe it is a good thing to go ahead and, and have a lawsuit move forward. In my mind, that is such a wasteful spend of taxpayer money in light of the fact that we have a budget deficit. Just think of how much better uses we've all talked about, where we could spend that money. But again, the sad thing is we're stopping those funds from going out to the schools, which we know put them to very good use. You know, one of the consequences, besides the lawsuit, that is likely to happen that we didn't consider-- and I just wanna read this from the legal counsel that I thought was just wonderful. It said, our founders envisioned a new nation in which freedom would be upheld by an educated citizenry, citizenry, a vision summarized by Thomas Jefferson's observation that the people are the only safe depository of government. But to render the next generation able to discharge the responsibilities of self-government, their minds must be improved. Another wise person that said, our public education is the greatest equalizer in our society. This vision of education as a prerequisite for self-government is enshrined directly in Nebraska's Constitution. Article VII, Section 7 unequivocally declares these

assets to be perpetual funds for common school purposes, dictating that the principal of this permanent fund cannot be diminished or diverted. This is consistent with the mandates of the Nebraska Enabling Act of April 19, 1864. So many states that came into the union during this period of time, before and after the Civil War, this was a strict requirement for statehood. This was a strict obligation that the states had testified and committed to that they would adhere to through all perpetuity, to create these public lands, whose purpose and benefit is for public school and education. The attorney goes on to say, school trust lands constitute a binding federal-state compact, and any alteration of the terms of that trust implicates both the Contracts Clause, U.S. Constitution Article I, Section 10, Clause 1, and the Supremacy Clause, U. S. Constitutional-- Constitution, Article VI, Sec-- Clause 2 of our Federal Constitution. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the sanctity of these school trusts, recognizing that those designated to act as trustees act strictly bound and personal liable fiduciaries. That tells us we are all bound. We are all fiduciaries, that we should be focused on the future education for all Nebraska children. This is a sacred obligation, but I know it is untowards, but the federal, federal government and federal judges have said that they will readily engage on this matter, as well. So colleagues, I ask you to vote for this amendment to restore those funds back that were unconstitutionally taken. And I ask you to be mindful. We have duties just as sacred that are enshrined in our Nebraska Constitution, that we should always do everything lawfully. So I ask for your green vote and support for AM2948. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Rountree and Senator Kauth would like to recognize Jobs for America's Graduates, JAG Nebraska, 140 high school students from across the state, in both the south and the north balconies. Please rise and be recognized. Returning to the queue, Senator Clements, you are recognized to speak.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. I stand in opposition to AM2948, return to Select File motion. The, the, the issue boils down to whether-- what the definition of income is, and the BELF has taken a very conservative position that capital gains on sale of stocks is not income. And we have attorneys who disagree on, on both sides of that question. The constitution, written many, many years ago, is unclear on what the-- on really, the definition of income. These funds will go to education. They're going to the Education Future Fund, to a separate subfund for public schools, and will be allocated the same way as other BELF distributions are allocated. The BELF account has--

in 2016, it had \$666 million in it-- no, excuse me, \$690 million in it. At the end of fiscal year '25, last June 30th, \$1,122,000,000, so \$500 billion-- \$500 million of increase that's not been distributed. And the-- even with the distribution from this fund shown in the budget, projections are that the balance would still increase from \$1.122 billion to \$1.151 billion, even if you do take out \$35 million, which is an average what they've been re-- re-- removing or distributing. If you just point out, in fiscal year '25, they had total revenues of \$91.8 million, which a lot of that was probably capital gains that they are saying is principal. They distributed \$40.9, about \$41 million of the \$91 million, and the other \$50 million just added to the principal. What we're doing is allocating some of the previous-- what we, we believe is income and capital gain distributions to the Education Future Fund to be used for the schools. It's not reducing amount going to schools. I, I would say it's increasing the amount that's going out to schools. And so, the-- there is an impasse with a couple of different attorney opinions, and the issue is not clear. I'm willing to let the issue work itself out. We did move the transfers from the BELF Fund, from fiscal '26-- we moved it out to fiscal year '27, so it could be several months to be worked out before the money would be actually transferred, and I look forward to a resolution of this. But at this point, I oppose AM2948 and the return to Select File. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Conrad, you are recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. I just wanted to add a note in support of my friend, Senator Raybould's motion and then potential amendment. I think we have had a significant debate on the most sig-- significant aspect of our session, our budget adjustments. We walked into the Legislature with a over \$470 million deficit to address that widened through the course of additional fiscal forecasts. And even with this budget, that contains therein, impermissible sweeps and heartless cuts, to paper over the fiscal recklessness of Governor Pillen and the majority of this Legislature, we've still got a budgetary hole to fill this year and about, what, \$20 or \$30 million in additional taxes-- primarily regressive taxes are baked in to LB901, and are going to need to be pushed through in order to balance the budget. So I just want to be clear about where we are, and where we're headed, and why. And it didn't need to be like this. There were thoughtful proposals in addition to cost efficiencies and cost savings. There were thoughtful proposals in terms of identifying new revenue. There were thoughtful proposals to close tax loopholes that benefit the most wealthy, not even the top 10% or the

top 5% or top 1% of earners. There's measures pending that would close tax loopholes impacting less than 1/10 of 1% of the top earners, and they haven't been given serious consideration. But what has been given serious consideration, and not just consideration but affirmative votes to enact are cuts for Nebraska's veterans and sweeps, cuts for Nebraska's-- Nebraskans experiencing homelessness, cuts for kids who need special education services, pulling back on our promise of just 2 years ago, to meet 80% of special education needs in our schools, and the list goes on and on and on. The legally suspect, impermissible sweep from Veterans, from the Cultural Endowment, from the Environmental Trust, from the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, are all required to prop up this heartless and reckless fiscal situation that members of this body and Governor Pillen have wrought. And in addition to these deep cuts and the \$20 or \$30 million of regressive tax cuts that remain in our future, there's also been a consistent nickel and diming of Nebraskans. Countless fees have been increased, and not in modest amounts, in significant amounts, not one or two here or there, but across the board. We need to connect the dots. We need to be honest with what's happening with our fiscal situation. And colleagues, while it's a sunny day and I'm always going to believe in and bet on Nebraska and bet on Nebraskans and its leaders, because our beloved Nebraska deserves no less, we're staring down the barrel of a billion-dollar structural budget deficit that we're going to have to contend with in just a few short months, after we adjourn sine die this year. And something's got to give. This is a note, this is a reminder, this is a clarion call to those particularly in the business community, and those particularly representing wealthy interests and big corporations. Your corporate welfare programs, your corporate tax cuts, your individual income tax cuts, and asking taxpayers to subsidize your businesses with childcare and food stamps and health care--

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

CONRAD: --and otherwise has got to stop. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Raybould, you are recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I think we need to think, what are the next steps? You know, what happens next? The question is, what if these funds get frozen? Do we have to come back for a special session to figure out how to backfill our budget? I don't know if anybody who-- who wants to do something like that. I know Senator Clements said, you know, there's conflicting attorneys'

opinion, but not really. The Attorney General that-- Office that Senator Clements and I both spoke with, they said very clearly to, to us both that we have no reason to dispute the findings of the Attorney General, Jon Bruning's Opinion, back in 2007. I'm concerned that this is going to precipitate something that we might have to come and-- come back for a special session to correct. So where are we going to get that \$40, \$42 million, \$44 million funds from? Can you think of any other large account that has that capacity to fill that funding shortfall that we have just created, that has-- that doesn't have the sacred constitutional guardrails on that? The language, again, is very clear. And what LB1072 does, it continues to give the Legislature authority to continue to use these funds inappropriately. The language that they said permits the Bureau of Educational Land Trust Funds [SIC] to continue to receive income and earnings from the original invested principal. Now, it doesn't take any business analyst or a business person to, to know what the original, invested principal of anything is, is zero. So that further handcuffs the Bureau of Educational Land Trust Funds of accessing and using those funds appropriately. The previous Attorney General's Opinion said, the current distribution practice of the Investment Council for the Perpetual School Fund is that the net investment interest and income are calculated and distributed. We believe the current distribution practices are consistent with constitutional and statutory requirements. The question you present is whether interest, premiums, dividends, capital gains, or other income may be distributed. Well, you have to look no further than the, the actual language in the constitution. It says: the following are hereby declared to be perpetual funds for common school purposes, including early childhood educational purposes operated or distributed through the common schools of which the annual interest or income only can be appropriated. The Attorney General goes on. Ordinary current receipts of the-- from the trust pu-- excuse me. Ordinary current receipts from the trust property are income. The income includes the return produced by capital that does not impair it but does not include returns that represent an accretion to capital. It also says, reportedly, the receipts from investments have been allocated between income and principals, with capital gains added to the principal of the Permanent School Fund for reinvestment. So any reasonable-minded business person, finance analyst, when they read that language, that tells you interest earned, capital investment gains, all these elements are classified as income, which are required to go back to their principal investments that are used exclusively for our public schools in perpetuity. So for those reasons and more, I ask for your support. I

know that this body feels that they have total discretionary authority, but I disagree. I mean, what kind of legislative body takes \$25,000 away for (from) the Board of Landscape Architects that has only \$100,000 in their budget? To me, that is a desperate act of a Legislature that has no game plan for our next biennium. And our, our next biennium of fiscal deficits, I'm troubled by that. I think we all should be troubled by that. I think our fellow Nebraskans should do the same.

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator John Cavanaugh, you are recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I rise in support of Senator Raybould's motion, AM2948, to return to Select, and her amendment. I did want to say hi to the JAG folks. Welcome to the Legislature. Hope you're learning something. Hope it's valuable. Appreciate the JAG program. But Senator Raybould's made a very good argument on this, on multiple rounds of this debate, and I agree with her. I did-- wasn't going to punch my light, but then I heard Senator Clements talk about how this money's going to be put into educational purposes. And for me, I, I think we should be putting more money into education, but the problem is the, the BELF funds are in a trust specifically meant to go to education, and the Legislature coming and moving it into a, a legislative cash fund for education just means that then, the Leg-- then we are not going to put as much money from General Funds into education. And so ultimately, through this shift of funds, education is ultimately getting less money, because we are depleting the, the money that is specifically in trust for education to free up ourselves and give ourselves a pass on some other money. And so, it's this sort of-- I talked about this on the last time Senator Raybould had this motion up, about the movie, Paper Moon, and the, the "quick change" is what that-- the, the scam was called that the character played, where he hands, you know, the \$5 and the \$10 and, and increases increments to get like \$20 for-- in change for his \$1 purchase. But this-- that's-- this sort of thing feels like where we are just obfuscating and shifting funds into these other accounts, and we shouldn't be taking it out of this fund no matter what. But we certainly shouldn't pat ourselves on the back and say that we are going-- we are investing in education when we're taking money that it's already earmarked for education, and then just giving it to education, and then taking money that we were going to give to

education and put it to something else. So I agree with Senator Raybould that we shouldn't take this money in general, but I also think we need to be clear that this money-- we are, we are just using education money for education and then shifting General Funds away from that. So on net, we are taking, we are taking money away from education in the long-term, and not investing in education with this. So Senator Raybould's amendment would ensure that we are not long-term depleting resources that are available for investment in education. So I encourage your green vote on AM2948. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Raybould, you are recognized to close on AM2948.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Again, I urge and encourage my colleagues to vote yes for AM2941. The concern I have that we have had no reserve in using is sweeping from so many funds. Senator Clements pointed out, on page 42 of our goldenrod book, a whole page dedicated to funds that had to be swept to make and fulfill our obligation for our Education Future Funds. If you recall that we made a commitment of putting in \$250 million on an annual basis. The first time I heard that, I thought, oh boy, we're not going to be able to do that. We're just, we're just-- we can't live up to that commitment and obligation. And sure enough, it really only took 2 short years to come to fruition that we, we don't have that \$250 million to put towards another commitment that we had made that we realized we just don't have the funds. Senator Conrad talked about it, I've talked about it, so many other folks have talked about it in this Chamber: how in the heck did we get to where we're at? Why are we, why are we in this huge budget deficit crisis? And forgive me, I know I sound like a broken record, but if you just look at the numbers, which I look at on a daily basis, and if you look at what the Forecasters show and tell us, when they look at revenues coming in or not coming in, for corporate and income taxes, you can just make that simple correlation. Because of our accelerated income tax rate reduction, we have literally decreased our revenue base, without any careful thought and plan on how to expand our revenue base. Now, any reasonable minded business operation would say, we're going to go out of business, folks, if we don't increase our revenues. As now, a retired grocer, every day we look at sales. We need to have sales. We need to have customers come through our door to really allow us to, to fix our stores, and to buy more inventory and sell more groceries, and it's not that different from our state government. We have inflationary impacts on us and our budgets, as well. We have cost increases everywhere for health insurance. But the point is, we're not planning for it. We had no plans to maybe take

away some of the sales tax exemptions on luxury items. Our consultants told us very clearly, they've never heard of a state who's done what we have done in reducing our income on individual income taxes and corporate taxes without having a backup plan. We had no backup plan. And I think it should come as no surprise to many of us here, if you look at the numbers, you can see clearly that we have created our own, self-inflicted budget deficit. It has become a structural deficit. But that should not authorize us or entitle us to go into so many funds and sweep them. And the disturbing fact is, if you read the language in these budget bills, we have not only swept the funds, but they have-- we have given ourselves full imm-- full authority to continue to sweep those funds on an annual basis or a biennium basis, with little regard to the major contributions that Educational Trust Funds do, Environmental Land Trust Funds, Veterans Trust Funds, Cultural and Historical Art Trust Funds, and how they enhance the lives of our fellow Nebraskans. I don't intend to come back for a special session, and I know many of my colleagues don't want that to happen, either. But I do ask for your support for AM2948. It's our fiduciary responsibility. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The question before the body is the adoption of AM-- oh, motion to return to Select File. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There's been a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch voting no. Senator Armendariz voting no. Senator Ballard voting no. Senator Bosn voting no. Senator Bostar not voting. Senator Brandt voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Clements voting no. Senator Clouse voting no. Senator Conrad voting yes. Senator DeBoer. Senator DeKay voting no. Senator Dorn voting no. Senator Dover voting no. Senator Dungan. Senator Fredrickson not voting. Senator Guereca voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting no. Senator Hansen voting no. Senator Hardin voting no. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting no. Senator Hunt voting yes. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting no. Senator Juarez voting yes. Senator Kauth voting no. Senator Lippincott voting no. Senator Lonowski voting no. Senator McKinney voting yes. Senator Fred Meyer voting no. Senator Glen Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting no. Senator Murman voting no. Senator Prokop not voting. Senator Quick voting yes. Senator Raybould voting yes. Senator Riepe voting no. Senator Rountree voting yes. Senator Sanders voting no. Senator Sorrentino voting no. Senator Spivey not voting. Senator Storer voting no. Senator Storm voting no. Senator Strommen voting no. Senator von

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
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Gillern voting no. Senator Wordekemper voting no. Senator Fredrickson voting yes. Vote is 11 ayes, 33 nays to return to Select File, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: The motion to return fails. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Raybould would move to return to Select File for a specific amendment, that being AM2825.

STROMMEN: Senator Raybould, you're open-- or you are recognized to open on your motion to return to Select File.

RAYBOULD: I, I wish to withdraw.

STROMMEN: So ordered. Senator Guereca, for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB1072 advance to E&R for engrossing.

M. CAVANAUGH: Machine vote.

STROMMEN: A machine vote has been requested. All those in favor, say aye-- vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 34 ayes, 9 nays on advancement of the bill, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: LB1072 is advanced to E&R for engrossing. Next item, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, General File, LB1050, introduced by Senator Murman. Senator Conrad would move to indefinitely postpone the bill pursuant to Rule 6, Section 3(f).

STROMMEN: Senator Murman, you are recognized to open on LB1050.

MURMAN: Thank you, Mr. President. LB1050 is the Education Committee's second priority bill. LB1050 is a data-driven approach to tackling Nebraska's third grade reading levels. This bill is not a new idea, but instead replicates what worked first in Mississippi, with those same successes moving on to Louisiana, Tennessee, Indiana, Alabama, and likely many others. Thirteen years ago, Mississippi was ranked 49th in the nation in fourth grade reading ability, according to the National Assessment of Education Process-- Progress-- excuse me-- more commonly known, known as NAEP. Mississippi knew it could do better, and after some serious reform, it climbed from 49th in the nation--

close to the very worst-- to 9th in the nation, in 2024. This dramatic rise, climbing from the very bottom of reading scores to near the top, is often referred to as the "Mississippi miracle." But the truth is, it wasn't a miracle. This was the result of state lawmakers taking a data-driven and logical approach to make serious changes to how they fought-- how they thought about education. Today, Nebraska finds itself in a similar position, unfortunately, to that of Mississippi. In 2024, Nebraska's fourth graders ranked 40th out of 50. That isn't acceptable. Under LB1050, the Department of Education is tasked with setting testing criteria to determine a threshold for third grade reading level ability. As the students are tested, if they do not meet the threshold level, they will be identified as having a persistent reading deficiency. I want to note that with the committee amendment, this process is modified from the original bill, and I will speak to that soon. Instead, rather than sending along students who aren't prepared... We're going to make sure kids get the support they need with the support of their parents or guardians. Students with persistent reading deficiencies will attend intensive acceleration classes, which will include individualized instruction focused on the specific reading deficiencies of the student. Evidence-based reading intervention practices. Diagnostic assessments to identify specific skill-based strengths and weaknesses of the student and frequent monitoring of student progress. This piece is key to the legislation. When a child is retained due to a persistent reading deficiency, that child isn't being punished. They need help. We know what happens if they don't get that help. Research tells us that students who cannot read proficiently by the third grade are four times more likely not to graduate high school. There are, of course, also good cause exceptions in this legislation for the retention of students. Those include students with disabilities who have been previously retained, students with disabilities who do not participate in the statewide accountability program, students with less than 2 years of English instruction, and students who have already been retained. In conclusion, what is happening now isn't working. Nebraska currently ranks 40th out of 50 states on fourth grade reading scores, and those scores in recent years have been dropping, not increasing. Change is needed, and it's needed quickly. And while I'm looking forward to hearing that feedback and welcome it all, I would encourage my colleagues to take a long look at the NAEP scores and ask, is this current path working? Should we be satisfied with being 40th in the nation? I don't think so. And I don't think this is a problem we can simply throw more money at, either. In the last several years, the increase in state support for education has been significant, but the

data shows that support-- that that support hasn't been enough. And I'll go on to the amendment, if that's OK.

STROMMEN: Senator Murman, you have 5 minutes left.

MURMAN: OK. I'll move on to AM2605. No? OK. I'll, I'll wait with that. Thank you.

STROMMEN: Senator Jacobson would like to recognize St. Patrick's High School, from North Platte, located in the north balcony. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Conrad, you are recognized to open on MO442.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I had filed these motions some time ago, when it became clear that there was a significant amount of concern with some of the specifics in the proposal brought, brought forward by my friend, Senator Murman, on behalf of Governor Pillen. Let me be clear and level set here. I think every single member of this body and every serious person in Nebraska cares about our kids, and they want to ensure that our kids have the best opportunity to be successful. And at the heart of this legislation, which I don't want us to lose sight of, as we work through the details, and we will, and they're important, is a good goal. The goal is to wrap additional support around our teachers and kids to help improve reading proficiency and skills, not just to hit a certain metric, but to give kids the tools they need to be successful in life, and to have success as they progress through the educational system, and to have success as they become students in our great community colleges, our great state colleges, our beloved university, as they take up the trades, as they become productive members of our economy and our society, as they become active and engaged citizens in our democracy. Educating our children is one of the most important and highest callings of a democracy. Nebraskans love their public schools for good reason. We have awesome private schools out there that meet a lot of families' needs. And let's not forget our homeschool families-- 10,000 or 15,000 homeschool kids each year that need our attention and support as well. Because every single kid deserves an opportunity to succeed. Now, what Senator Murman has brought forward here is a starting place for dialog and discussion about how to achieve those laudable goals. After extensive committee hearings on this topic and feedback from a lot of key stakeholders, the Education Committee worked hard to make this bill better, ensuring that the rigid retention aspects that were originally in place were modified to strengthen parental rights and put parents in the driver's seat about

educational decision making, which is their fundamental right. We worked to make adjustments and modifications in the committee amendment to extend the operative date of these proposals and to specifically provide more flexibility and time for kids who are English language learners, and ensured clarity and exemption for kids with special needs. One of the other parts of this legislation that I, I hope is not controversial is taking the next steps in our collaborative work to improve dyslexia screening and support for kids. The incredible efforts led by my friends, Senator Pansing Brooks and Senator Linehan to tour the schools, to figure out how we can do more and do better by kids with dyslexia was extraordinary and path-breaking, and has made a positive difference, but we need to keep our eye on this issue, and we need take the next steps forward on those issues. And the dyslexia components herein are important, and I want to make sure that people don't forget about those as we talk about curriculum and timeline and metrics and retention, which are also important. But I do want to give a special shout-out to that. The last piece is this. I know myself, Senator Murman, and other members of the Education Committee and proponents of this bill are excited to hear your feedback, are excited to work together with colleagues and our partners at the local level to strengthen this proposal, to make sure it works for a very diverse set of school districts that are out there, and to make sure, in our effort to achieve laudable goals, we recognize, in many instances, one size can't fit all. I know this. I attended a country school for kindergarten through sixth grade. It looks really, really different than the large, urban, diverse schools my kids go to in north Lincoln, and I'm sensitive to that, and I know you are, too. The last piece I'll let be injected into the record-- and it was something that I talk about on the Education Committee a lot. Let me give you a tale of 2 kids-- and they're my kids. Our daughter started off elementary school, reading at a high level, without a lot of support. She just-- it just-- it sparked for her. That was just the kind of kid that she was. Our little guy, who's in fourth grade now, struggled with reading and still does, and has intervention and support, and has resources, and couldn't work harder than he does every day in school. And we're so proud of him. And he gets awesome grades, and he's a good friend, and a good leader, and curious and fun. But he keeps falling behind, because one metric in particular doesn't work for him. He can read. His vocabulary is good. He can understand. He can't read fast enough to hit the metric. So we need-- the, the, the reason I tell this story is we need to be careful, because putting a perhaps well-intentioned but putative policy in place that dings a kid that's doing everything right and

getting all the supports they need because of one metric, I don't think that want to over-correct in that regard. And I know you have similar experiences with your kids and grandkids. I know your hearing from the teachers in your district. I know, you're hearing from the administrators in your District. I know that we've made strides together in changing and updating our reading curriculum to make sure it works and is meeting best practices. We've made important strides to get reading coaches out there. We've important stride to ensure that we have more resources for kids with special learning needs. All of this is interconnected, and it's something that impacts each of our districts and our hearts. So I know this is going to be a good debate. I know there's a lot of moving parts and questions here. But I would-- I'll, I'll leave the motion on the board just right now, because I see there's so many people in the queue and I know there's some additional amendments forthcoming, but I don't intend to take it to a vote. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Dungan would like to recognize 24 ninth grade students from Northeast High School, Lincoln, Nebraska, located in the north balcony. Please rise and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator McKinney, you are recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: All right. Thank you, sen-- thank you, Mr. President. And I'm OK with the motion to IPP right now, just because I think it allows for a discussion on this bill, and so we're not moving super fast. People-- many people have asked me, how do I feel about this bill, whether I like it, I hate it-- and I hate finding myself like, in between on a lot these things, because I do see the need to address the reading proficiency for, for students in third grade and beyond. I work with kids outside of this, like not just kids in high school, but I help kids at, you know, the club team in, in north Omaha, so we deal with kids who do have, you know, issues with learning. And, you know, you talk to them, you talk to their families, and you see where the need is. So my, my issue is less with, you know, a requirement that, you know, we make sure our kids are prepared before we move them on, because one of my issues with our school system is it moves too many kids ahead without making sure they're prepared, and we graduate way too many people who probably should not. And then you go talk to Metro Community College, and they're taking high school curriculum classes for 2 years, because we're just-- honestly, it's like a factory of just pushing kids out. And then, we're wondering why our society has so many issues. And I did-- and I had the Research Office do some research for me, for student outcome for black male students and OPS, and it is horrible, to say the least. You know, suspension rates in

'24-25, 27.7% of black male students received at least one suspension, compared to the 13.3% district-wide average and a 10.5% for white males. Black males had the highest repeat suspension rate, at 18.3%, of any demographic group. Graduation: the on-time graduation rate for black male students was 48.6% in '24-25, compared to 56.9% district-wide and 61.7% for white males. 2024 represented an improvement from a recent low of 41.6% in '21-22, around the pandemic and those type of things. And what I'm getting at-- oh, it's another one. Academic failure: 23.9% of black male students were failing at least one course in '24-25, compared to 17.8% district-wide and 12.9% for white males. This rate has nearly doubled since 2015-2016. Alternatively, Rule 18 Interim: 25 point-- 2.5% of black male students were placed in a Rule 18 Interim Program in '24-25, the highest rate of any daf-- any, any demographic group, and nearly 3 times the district average of 0.9%. So I introduced bills this year. One was LB1112, to do standardized grading system for the state, which I think would address making sure we're holding a standard in the state, but it's stuck in committee and school districts don't like that. Senator Spivey told me that there's a pilot going on with reading coaches with our ESUs, which I think is needed. I also offered LB855, which is a-- which was an early intervention bill that is still stuck in the committee. Then, we also need school accountability. None of this gonna-- is going to work if the districts and the schools actually don't want to do it. So I think this bill, if passed, needs more accountability measures, and we also to make sure we're finding ways to support families and communities. I don't know where I'll be at the end of the day, but I just wanted to highlight these points, because this is an issue that needs to be addressed. And again, I don't think our school systems care about black boys, and the data shows it. And we need to figure this out, because it's horrible, and you can't say you love public schools if this is the reality. Thank you.

STROMMEN: Senator Riepe, you are recognized to speak.

RIEPE: Thank you, Mr. President. Students learn to read by the third grade, and then they read to learn. That's a general rule. That said, the challenge is how does one accomplish the grade-level proficiency by the third grade. My conversation with educators is that a state law is too rigid and fails in a number of ways. I will go through several of those. Number one, it has a negative impact of retention, and that is while a student may falter in reading, they may excel in mathematics or some other course. If you hold them back, they're going to have to take those math courses or those other courses again and they will be punished, if you will. So it's an illogical approach.

Second, it's a resource misallocation. It moves the current resources and support away from grades K-2 to focus on grade 3. Third, it ends up being an unfunded mandate, the lack of specificity, specificity in the law, and it also requires spending and staffing to support before and after summer school, and that is not-- funding is not provided in 1050-- LB1050. Also, the right focuses in early intervention is, is the important piece and not simply retention. Research does not support retention as a method of intervention. Number six, that it relies on misleading outcomes from other states. I know that the state of Mississippi is touted as being a miracle. But this miracle, as it has gone along and they've gone back, has fallen short of being a miracle, that the students that it had gained inter-- in, in-- inter-- unintentionally ended up of losing that gain by about the seventh grade. It creates an unfunded mandate, as I said. It also-- Nebraska already has a strong literacy program and system that we have a number of universal screening, individual reading improvement plans, progress monitoring and intervention adjustments, and science of reading professional development. And we've had some more of the scientific approach to this in the last 2 years, so I think it's premature to, to uproot that particular gains or ex-- exploration or interest, in, in terms of replacing it with another program. We also need to increase testing. I know students don't necessarily like the continuous testing, but-- so I, I think that this program, while well-intended, falls short of what we really want to do, and we create maybe more of a problem than we do a solution So I will be standing in opposition and voting against LB1050. And thank you. Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Jacobs-- oh.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm going to, I'm going to speak opposed to LB1050. I would have to say that I want to, first of all, compliment the Governor and Senator Murman for trying to do something about the problems that they're perceived to be out there. I think the Governor's stance, from the beginning, is that he cares about kids, he wants the best for kids, and I think we all know that reading at an early age is critically important. With that said, I've heard from many of the schools in my district, and, and being fairly familiar with how a lot of them operate, they're either not running into the problem or they've got other plans or they've got other programs in place to really deal with those who are falling behind. They also are concerned about the unfunded mandate that would go with potentially having to hire another employee. As you know, I'm a big unfunded mandate guy. If there's an unfunded mandate that we're pushing down, I am probably going to be opposed. I do think, however, that this

problem is something that is probably more prolific in larger schools and there needs to be some help for those kids to get there. I'm not sure holding them back is the answer. I think a lot of kids that have been held back, they pay that price for a long time to come. And-- but we do need to do more. And whether that's working with the ESU's to bring reading coaches-- I will tell you that when I was, when I was a young kid, my-- I had 7 brothers and sisters. My mom didn't spend much time with me in reading, and so I was behind in reading right out of the gate. And I was in remedial reading. Many of you are saying, gee, we're not surprised by that. But I was read-- remedial reading, and I had to catch up, and it was tough. I'm glad I didn't get held back. I did eventually catch up and I'd like to think went beyond the norm. But I can tell you there's a lot of complications to this. I think the bill is well-intentioned, but I'm not sure it's the right bill for right now. I'd really like to see more study done. I'd like to really see the Department of the Ed come out with a plan for how that should work, and I also think that our local school boards need to continue to be focused on this issue. But for those reasons, I'm going to have to be opposed to the bill. But again, I, I realize that there's a problem there, in some cases, that needs to be dealt with. I'd really like to figure out the best plan moving forward. I just don't think this bill is it. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Juarez, you are recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. And good morning to everyone online. Senator Jacobson, I do appreciate very much the perspective that you just shared, because I do think that we need to allow more time on this bill, or on this reading goal. I am for MO442 and against LB1050. And I will share my reasons why. Let's be clear. We're all-- we all share the same goal. Every child in Nebraska deserves to read proficient-- proficiently. Literacy is foundational. It is not optional. It is essential. But this bill takes us in the wrong direction. And districts and families already have this option to retain their students, through legislation passed in 2024. Many of us introducing educational policy do not have degrees or experience actually teaching, and we need to remember to leave it to the experts. I have heard over and over on the floor of those who advocate listening to experts when it comes to ag issues or business issues. When it is education, everyone seems to be the expert. I don't believe this comes at the request of teachers or school districts. It is coming from the gover-- Governor, copying and pasting parts of programs that may have worked for a while in another state. This is completely disregarding local control. If you want this in your town,

talk to your superintendents. And I wanted to state that the superintendents in my district both do not support this bill, for many reasons. Have those conversations, you use-- use your political will, will to meet and listen to teachers and what they believe is working. The school districts need to utilize the expertise of their very educate-- educated staff to address the issues around literacy. They are the experts. They are informed on the most up-to-date, research-based strategies to teach literacy. We should allow the programs recently implemented to take its course. We know trends in teaching change. Our state has made significant effort to get more new and experienced teachers, skilled in the science of reading. This undertaking takes time, and there are some teachers still needing professional development and curriculum changes to align with the science of reading. I believe first, districts should have the direction to practice retention or not. Though it could be a tool in the overall toolbox for improving literacy, we know the research offers mixed results. And for Mississippi, it did not see improvements in those students as they continued on into middle school, as you will see on the handouts and the introducer mentioning the great scores for the fourth grade. What about consistent gains? Retention is not the most effective tool, and our efforts should be focused on others. At its core, LB1050 still relies on mandatory third grade retention as its primary solution to literacy rates. And I want to say this plainly: retention is punitive, not educational. Decades of research tell us this. The National Association of School Psychologists has stated clearly that grade retention is not an effective strategy for addressing academic deficits. In fact, it is associated with increased anxiety, lower self-esteem, behavioral challenges, and a higher likelihood of students eventually dropping out. One of the most cited research papers on grade retention is a 2001 meta-analysis from Shane Jimerson, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Jimerson looked at 20 studies published between 1990 and 1999, and conc-- and concluded that they failed to demonstrate that grade retention provides greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than does promotion to the next grade. In many studies, students who were retained had worse academic achievement--

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

JUAREZ: --and social, emotional outcomes than students who were not. Thank you.

STROMMEN: Senator Storm would like to recognize 31 fourth graders from the St. Wenceslaus in Wahoo, located in the north balcony. Please rise

and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Returning to the queue, Senator Brandt, you are recognized to speak. Senator Fredrickson, you are recognized to speak.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. And good morning, Nebraskans. I-- so I-- you know, I'm listening to this debate, and I've been-- I've actually been thinking about this bill quite a bit this session. I was first notified about this bill-- I don't sit on the committee of jurisdiction. I don't sit on the Education Committee. But I was notified by this bill-- about this bill, rather, by a number of the school districts in my district, and the concerns that they have. And I'll, I'll start by saying this. I, I mean, I certainly appreciate the-- kind of like the stated goal behind, behind the bill. I think many people have gotten up and already said that they-- well, you know, we can all agree on the idea that we want, you know, improved literacy, and to ensure that our students are, are achieving reading goals and, and, and ma-- making progress with-- in that, in that aspect of, of their learning. But I, I do have a number of-- piece of-- concern that, that have come up for me. And so, you know, one thing that-- I've got a son in first grade. And so, he's, he's, he's learning to read, and he started learning to read in kindergarten. And they've got these little decodable books, and they're really kind of fun and cute, and, and everyone kind of goes off that. But I, I just had parent-teacher conferences, I think it was like 2-- maybe 2 or 3 weeks ago. And one thing that became really clear was, you know, there-- there's just such a diversity of learning styles that kids have. And that might seem like common sense, but, you know, when educators are given the autonomy and the freedom to really use evidence-based approaches to meet the unique needs of each student, that is something that I think ultimately leads to better literacy and improved literacy. And we just need to kind of acknowledge the, the, the, the shared reality we all have, which is that school districts are very diverse, and there are very diverse learning needs that, that, that occur, or that are, that are in school districts. Other things that kind of come up for me is that-- the way I read this bill is that there just seems to be a over-reliance on retention as a policy lever. So it's kind of saying retaining a student is the, the way we solve challenges with literacy, and I'm just not sure that's accurate. And I think if we believe that that's successful, we don't need to look any further than prior federal legislation in this country, for example, No Child Left Behind, which was, you know, a bipartisan piece of legislation that passed in Congress. It was signed into law, I think it was around early 2000s,

and very well-intended. I think that it had shared goals. But we learned that there were a lot of policy implications of that, and, and, and that was, you know, kind of looked back upon as, as not a success, because there was, again, this over-reliance on punitive measures versus targeting the root causes of what is actually driving challenges with literacy in our schools. And, and this, you know, the LB1050, it's giving very-- sort of-- the way I read it, it almost feels a little bit like No Child Left Behind, just with like a little bit of lipstick on it. It just kind of feels like it's just been updated for 2026, but it's not necessarily going to translate to the outcomes that we, that we want to see with our, with our students. I've also spoken with a number of colleagues in here who are in different parts of the state, and you know, they shared concerns about the potential unfunded mandate aspect of this bill, and I think that that's a very astute and wise thing to point out. You know, if we are indefinitely retaining students in the third grade based on a specific metric-- and again, let me say this, too. Standardized testing doesn't always measure actual intelligence. Right? I mean, I think all of us have people in our lives who have incredible gifts, incredible talents, incredible intellectual abilities, but they might not score a certain way on a specific test. That has nothing to say or do with their skill level at that moment. People just test differently, so that's another component here, too. So going back to my concern about the unfunded mandates, what I was trying to get out there is that, you know, if we are indefinitely retaining people in third grade who aren't meeting a specific metric on a specific test, you know, are we going to expand third grade classrooms? Like, so let's say we need to add an additional third grade because so many students were held back, right? Who's going to pay for that? Is that an infrastructure issue? Do we need to hire additional third grade teachers for that? I mean, these are the kind of questions that we need to ask. And I don't see any guaranteed funding in this bill. So would this just have to be absorbed by the property taxpayers in that school district in that case, or is the state going to pony up on the bill on that? So again, I don't think that's the intent at all of the original legislation. But as we've seen in other pieces of legislation, we do need to think about these second and third-term impacts. And I see that I'm out of time here, so I'll get back on the mic and continue my thoughts. Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Spivey, you are recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues, and folks that are joining us online. And of course, good morning,

Grandma. Thank you for coming to work with me today. I wanted to kind of start out and first kind of reground at, at a higher level, because I think as the debate will continue to go and what some folks have already uplifted is that we are taking a piece of a comprehensive, really large opportunity or social issue, however you want to frame it, and are trying to use policy to solve for it. So I think we also, again, have to take a comprehensive approach to what's in front of us and how we got here, and situate ourselves in how does this policy add, subtract, and, and the right path forward. And so, I first want to thank, though, the teachers that are on the front lines, because this is not necessarily a reflection of the work that teachers do. I feel like I have a greater appreciation for the work of our educators during the pandemic, when I had to be at home with, I think my then kindergartner. He would have been kindergarten and then first grade. Trying to balance work, teach him on a tablet, and teach him just in general, it is a lot. And so, it, it takes a special person to dedicate their career to educating our future workforce and leaders, and our most precious possessions, our babies. And so, this is not a reflection on teachers and their work. It is an opportunity to think about our education system, how it's best serving our students, and what are the opportunities there. And so, again, just want to make sure I uplifted that and made it clear. Thinking about this, and I was-- as I was reading through the amendment and the work that was done on this-- and appreciate the Education Committee bringing an amendment that they hope addresses some of the concerns versus the original intent of the bill introduced by the Governor. One of the thoughts and, and-- from the debate that I was kind of sitting in, was around this idea that we are making sure, in what is in front of us, with the AM-- or LB1050-- we haven't got to the AM in the same way-- is that we're really ensuring that parents can make the best decisions for their kids. And I do think that is the 50,000-foot view that we have to start in as we have this conversation, because if we are talking about parents having the ability, and opportunity, power, and influence to make the best decisions about their children's education, we also have to recognize those other social drivers that impact that. And so, if our parents are worried about the work requirements that have been passed because they are on SNAP and they're not able to fully engage, or if parents are underemployed working 2 and 3 jobs, what does that mean for their engagement in their kids' education? If there is not safe and affordable housing, what does that mean? Right? Like, there are a number of other public health indicators or social drivers that impact how families engage with the education system, as well as that kid and how they navigate or matriculate through their

educational journey that we also have to be aware of and name in this conversation. It cannot just be siloed to the interventions that we are talking about. Otherwise, we will not see true movement. We're not going to go upstream and address the core root issue. It'll just be a band-aid, as Senator Fredrickson named with No Child Left Behind, and, and other policies, that don't actually help us actualize the, the intent. I do think If we're going to talk about Mississippi, we really got to talk about Mississippi. I attended Jackson State University that is housed in Jackson, Mississippi, a beautiful experience. But I got to see firsthand the intersectional systemic inequities that produce outcomes like kids not being on grade reading level. And so, again, if we're use geographies and case studies, we have to truly unpack all of those intersections and tentacles to be able to produce the best policy. I do see my light is on, so I've already punched back in. And we'll talk a little bit about some of the key components of the amendment that I don't think are just, in general, workable, and that how we really need to situate ourselves in some data that we already know, from NDE, that maybe will give us other paths or opportunities for amendments that may be coming or that we can work on while we have some time on this bill, to really ensure that students are able to be successful in their educational journey, and we're not disproportionately impacting specific groups of students.

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Raybould, you are recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I do support the motion to indefinitely postpone. I'm not sure that this bill does have clear outcomes that are achievable in their mind. There's a couple of things that I've noticed about this bill that are troubling. So currently, it has a fiscal note from the Fiscal Analyst from January 26 of 2026, of \$850,000. But the language that is really troubling is also in the fiscal note. It says the cost to school districts associated with retaining students in third grade as provided in the, in the bill could be significant, but cannot be determined at this time. And so, the Lincoln Public Schools sent me a quick summary of some of their initial concerns and expenses. They estimated that even-- just for the Lincoln Public School System that the cost would-- to implement the pro-- provisions of LB1050 as amended by AM2605, to be \$5 million per year. And they have a breakout of that-- of those costs. Evaluations and specialized training, \$500,000 per year. Approved reading

assessment, \$75,000 per year. Summer reading program and assessment, \$310,000 per year. Notification to parents on performance on dyslexia screening, \$70,000 per year. Additional sa-- staffing, \$3.5 million per year. Supplemental reading intervention programs, \$60,000 per year. Resources to work on reading skills at home, plus parent training, \$70,000 per year. Before and after school supplemental reading intervention, \$450,000 per year. Teacher training for acceleration class, \$40,000 per year. And they're educators. I'm not. But they also just summarized it rather quickly: repeating a grade does not automatically improve learning. Their big fear is that we're shifting funds away from investing in early screening, the-- having a strong K through third grade literacy instruction. They feel that is the critical period in time of really screening and working with those children to have better outcomes and more in-- intensive programming at that age group. So if you're really trying to just focus on the third graders, that really detracts from the resources that they would like to see, that have, obviously, best practices, and have stronger outcomes. It also says that the, the, the state of Nebraska already has a framework in place to diagnose and support our students through NE-MTSS. So they already have the screening in place. This would be just another layer of additional screening that is truly not necessary. It also says that the Nebraska Department of Education is in the early stages of their federally-supported, comprehensive, literacy development program, and that's something that they're working on. So I, I am truly concerned that the fiscal note and what we're hearing from our educators that they don't believe this is the, the solution that we should be spending our taxpayer dollars on. And I'm hoping Senator Murman would yield to a question, if he's here.

STROMMEN: Senator Murman, would you yield to a question?

MURMAN: Yes, certainly.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Senator Murman. You and I spoke yesterday about the fiscal note. And I know it's from January, and I know you have some modifications and changes. Did you want to talk about the fiscal note, and will the fiscal note change, or what are your thoughts?

MURMAN: Yes. The original fiscal note has changed. It's down under-- I don't have the exact-- I should have looked up that exact figure, but I know it's under \$100,000 now. It was \$800,000 on the original bill. But with the new fiscal note, it's under \$100,000, and that is from the Department of Education for the screener.

RAYBOULD: And so you heard me read off the estimates from Lincoln Public Schools, and that's just one of the public schools. Have you heard feedback from any of the other public school districts on how the-- the cost to them, and how they would implement these changes?

MURMAN: Well, the public schools should be doing all this already. I mean, their goal is to get kids proficient in reading by third grade, ultimately. And even before that, most should be proficient, so they should be doing all of this. It shouldn't be any more of a burden than what they're doing now. It's, it's maybe a little more of focus on reading, and that is very important.

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

MURMAN: Thank you.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Fred Meyer, you are recognized to speak.

F. MEYER: Thank you, Mr. President. When this bill first was dropped, my first phone call was to Education Commissioner Brian Maher, which I've known for almost 25 years, going back to the days when I was on the State Board of Education. And he said, oh, Fred, I'm not against that bill. I think we need to take some drastic steps to improve our reading in Nebraska. And I said, well, it's been going down for a couple years. And he said, actually, Fred, it has been going down since 2015. That's an indictment for what we're doing here in Nebraska. Also, going back a number of years, I have a habit of asking el-- lower elementary teachers, were you prepared to teach reading when you came out of college? And 100% of them say no, they were not ready to teach teaching [SIC]. So I'm going to throw some of our teacher prep programs, or all of them, under the bus this morning, because this is the same thing we've heard for 25 years. In 2006 or 2007, the State Board of Education called all 17 teacher prep programs before the State Board of Education over about a 6-month period of time. And everyone came before us and said that they were doing everything exactly perfect, and they were turning out teachers who could teach every topic just the way they were meant to. Well, we know that those were hollow words, and that has not happened. So this situation of teachers not being prepared to teach reading has gone on for a long time. A few years ago, Senator Linehan, who was the most av-- avid advocate of reading that I have ever met, wanted \$25 million to-- in state appropriations to teach teachers how to teach reading.

Now that seems a little redundant to me, but sometimes you just can't help the I-- the irona-- irony of how things happen. For the rest of my testimony here, I'm going to read from a letter that she sent, sent to all of the state senators, about what happened a few years ago, in this very body. This is in 2017. When the third grade reading bill was first introduced in 2017, it included language to not promote to the fourth grade any student unless they were already receiving special education services or were English language learners if they could not read at the third grade level. Through negotiations, that language was removed from the bill. The Legislature was assured by the education lobby then, as the education collaboration insists still today, we share the goal of improving literacy. And assuring students read at grade level by the end of third grade. Unfortunately, 8 years later, reading scores have not improved. In fact, they've gone down. Her last paragraph: 8 years have last-- have lapsed since the Legislature and the Governor recognized and tried to address third grade reading scores. Students who are first graders in '18-- in 2018, are now in middle school. LB1050 is necessary because there still are no consequences for not effectively teaching youngsters to read. Too many will be socially promoted,--and that is a phrase that absolutely should irritate everybody in this body-- and face growing frustrations from fourth grade to their senior year of high school-- in fact, if they stay in school. If you are unable to so read, school is a miserable journey. The overreaching goal is not to harm children by holding them back, it is to effectively teach them to read and to create consequences if they are not. And that's what this bill does. Again, if not now, when? If not having these children have some inconvenience and get extra help at this point in their life-- we all know that the consequences in high school and after that are much more expensive and much more dire. So I support this bill. Is it perfect? No. Will it pass? I don't know. I'm going to vote in favor of it. But after studying this issue and being somewhat knowledgeable about it for a long time, how many times can we just keep--

STROMMEN: Time, Senator.

F. MEYER: --promoting things and passing them on? Thank you, Mr. President.

STROMMEN: Senator Hunt, you are recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. We've got state senators in here who can't read really well. I, I hear some of you stand up and you read your pages that you've been handed to read, and it's a struggle for

some of you. And that's not a judgment. It's an observation. So I'd like all the kids watching, or who may hear this in the future who struggle with reading, to know that you can, you can grow up to be whatever you want. You can be a Nebraska State Senator. We have had presidents who struggled with dyslexia, of course. There are numerous CEOs and different civic leaders who struggle with reading. And so, I take issue with Senator Meyer-- Senator Meyer's statement that the kids aren't getting consequences, that there's quote, no consequences. And he said, they quote, need to have some inconvenience for the struggle with reading. And maybe his intention in saying that was to say the teachers are the ones who need to be punished if the kids can't read. But I don't like this bill. I don't like a punitive approach to education. I think that kids want to read, kids want to learn, and teachers enter this vocation because they're passionate about this work. I mean, it goes without saying they don't do it for the money, right? It-- it's a very, very special kind of person who wants to be a teacher, especially an elementary education teacher, when you are, you know, a parent figure for so many of these kids often. Sometimes, these teachers are the ones making sure these kids get fed at all that day. You know, for not much more money than LB1050 costs, we could make sure that all the kids in Nebraska are getting fed at school. What about that kind of investment, instead of this punitive investment? As Senator Meyer said, it's because the kids need to have some inconvenience. I don't think that a punitive approach is going to make it easier for these kids to learn. Another thing I've always thought about, a lot of the bills that we, that we get in the Education Committee is-- and I say this often-- is that they kind of just amount to teacher chores, as I call them. I think that state senators who have very negative views about public education or government schools, as some of you call them, or who think that teachers aren't, you know, willing or able to educate our kids, or that kids are bad, or that public school kids are getting a worse education, what have you, whatever it is, or that they need more standardized testing to make sure that they're up to the level that you expect them to be. We senators come in here, with our life experiences and these kind of incorrect assumptions about education because we don't know what we're talking about when it comes to education, generally. We aren't the experts. But we come into the Education Committee with all kinds of ideas for a new bill. Here's a new bill, here's a new law, here's a new piece of bureaucracy or a form to fill out, or a report to file, that teachers can do instead of planning their lessons, instead of continuing their education, instead of being there for these young kids that rely so much on their

teachers, again, especially at this elementary school age. I have friends who are teachers, who talk about-- you know, they-- sometimes they bring extra food for the kids in their classes because they know they're not eating. They have kids who they know are facing abuse at home, or neglect. They have kids who are English language learners who are not only struggling academically, but struggling with increasing racism in this country, as they fear their parents are going to be deported, something many of you support, calling their parents criminals and things like that. It's not easy to be a teacher, and it's really not easy to be a student. And those of you who struggle with reading, which many, many-- more than a handful of you still do today, I think that you should look at these kids with compassion and you should look at these teachers with appreciation, and not want to jump to kind of a punitive-punishing measure that adds more bureaucracy for teachers, more forms to fill out, more reports to file, because these layers of bureaucracy are actually the things that take away from the education time and the learning time that could achieve the goals of a bill like LB1050. I look forward to the failure of this measure. I've been fully against it all along. I think that we need to trust teachers, and we need to trust schools and the administrators of those schools, who are the experts, to decide how they're going to structure their policy in educating their kids. Thank you, Madam Chair.

IBACH: Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Madam President. And good morning, colleagues. I do rise in support of the motion to indefinitely postpone LB1050. You know, I actually appreciate that Senator Murman, in his opening, acknowledged that the Mississippi miracle wasn't a miracle. It was a combination of ver-- a lot of policy decisions, and it really did-- I think it ended up being like a 20-year period of intentional changes to how Mississippi approached their literacy issues. And one of the first things that they did was going to their teaching colleges and double down and really reinforced so that-- then reinforced the teaching, the teaching of, of reading, so that when the teachers came out, they were able to effectively teach reading. So I appreciate, you know, Senator Meyers [SIC] uplifting that. A lot of times new teachers need that extra support. But kind of going back to the Mississippi miracle, it, it, it was more than just holding kids back. And, you know, there, there are certain groups within Mississippi and national groups that, when they looked at the entire situation, they, they really uplifted that, that retention piece. But like Senator Hunt referred to, there's, there's so much more to explain-- there's so

many reasons why a child might not be proficient at reading. You know, their, their situation at home so often is that key driver. Making sure that the child isn't going to school hungry, having a stable home life, ensuring that before the child reaches 5, the parents are reading to them so that, that development begins early, that by age 3 and 4 they're able to grab a book and hold it right side up, as evidence that parents have been intentional in reading to their children. But when what we do is cut funding to our university system, when we do is not uplift policies that look at the entire life cycle of this child's educational journey, and we just say, no, let's just double down on the retention part of that, or the, the-- yeah, the retention of part of that, well, that falls short, colleagues. It wasn't a miracle. It was a long, drawn out, concerted effort that was deliberate and addressing so many societal and socio-economic factors that had the end result of children having difficulty learning, having difficulty reading. So we have to look at it all, colleagues, not just the punitive aspects of it. And it's easy-- well, let's just hold them back. But there is so much more to that. And until this body is ready to address all the various issues, from age 3 till they get to third grade, colleagues, let's not focus so much on just the retention part. I'll get back on the mic. I had a great conversation with a, a reading specialist a couple weeks ago. And she delivered a letter to me that I'll, I'll, I'll read portions of, as sort of her breakdown, but the title says it all: Retention is punitive, not educational. So colleagues, if, if we're serious about having a conversation about all the things that need to go into creating our own-- I'm not going to call it the "Nebraska miracle." That would be too corny. But if we want to recreate that here, it's going to be a lot more than just holding kids back in the third grade. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Fredrickson would like to recognize 80 fourth graders in the north balcony, from Loveland and Westgate Elementary at Westside. Please rise and be recognized by your Legislature. Turning back to the queue, Senator Murman, you're recognized to speak.

MURMAN: Thank you, Madam President. It's really too bad I didn't get to the amendment before we moved on in the queue. A lot of the things that have been talked about so far have been totally addressed in the amendment, and there's been a lot of misinformation spread by NSEA and others. But the, the amendment changes a lot of what the bill started with, and I totally support the changes in the amendment. I've always said that parents should have the ultimate authority of-- or the ultimate decision-making of what education is for their, their children. And the amendment does provide for a parental override, so

if, if their child is not proficient in third grade, the parents will come in, and-- parent or parents, whoever is responsible for the child, will come in, have a chance to come in and talk to the school, talk to the administration, the teacher, especially, and determine what is best for that child: being retained or moving on, despite being profic-- not being proficient in reading. Number one, they would get another chance with summer school to get proficient and move on that way. But if the parents do insist that they think what's best for their child is to move on and hopefully get proficient mo-- moving forward, with the work of the teachers and the parents all together, they, they can override the school and advance their, their own child. Another thing that was changed is eng-- English second language. The original bill had just one year. If you had one year of English sec-- second language, you could-- you wouldn't be affected by this bill. But it was moved to 2 years, so that was better addressed. And then, we heard from the schools about how difficult it might be to make sure every student is proficient, even though that, that is the goal of the schools, the teachers and parents, everyone together, hopefully. But it was moved back 2 years, so that all of the supports that we do have in place now, and the planning and everything that would need to take place would have actually 2 years, to make sure that that was all in place, before this would go into effect. I do appreciate Senator Meyer getting up and addressing this issue because he, with his experience on the State Board of Education and knowledge of what's happened in the last 20 years, he is very-- has, has a lot of knowledge and could contribute in a good way, and, and I appreciate what he said, that this is just a piece that needs to get done. A lot of the supports have already been put in place. Early in my tenure, Senator Linehan and Senator Pansing Brooks-- it was bipartisan-- advanced the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act, and that put most of these supports in place that were part of the Mississippi miracle. And right now, we do have 14 out of the 18 supports in place that happened in Mississippi back in 2013 that helped their students to advance from, like I said, being near the bottom of the nation. And traditionally, they had been at, at the bottom in the nation in reading-- being able to read, and move them up to very near the top in just a short amount of time. I encourage you to look at the handouts I passed out. Nebraska students are trending down; have been since 2016. So this is not something that's just happened since COVID. This-- we can't just keep doing what we've been doing. We've got to focus more on third grade reading-- or actually, before third grade, and this bill does do that. It has all the supports in place, communication with the parents, all that kind of thing in place that I-- I do realize most schools are doing that,

so it just puts the focus more on early reading than what it already is, and with this in place, we would have 17 out of the 18 supports in place that happened in Mississippi.

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

MURMAN: Thank you.

IBACH: Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Really?

IBACH: Excuse me. Senator Glen Meyer, you're recognized to speak.

G. MEYER: Thank you, Madam President. I know Rick and I look a good deal alike, but he's way better looking than I am. It's easy-- I, I know it's easy to confuse us, so. I think it's tremendously important to have this discussion today on LB1050. I voted it out of committee. I, I don't believe in necessarily voting bills out of committee just to have a discussion on the floor, but this is one I think deserves that consideration. Governor Pillen had an op-ed today in the World Herald. I think the numbers are-- should trouble all of us. 8th grade proficiency reading, 27% in the state of Nebraska. Our proficiency in math at the 8th graders, 32%. This is after many years of improving our schools, spending more money on our schools. And evidently, we're not getting much return on investment for that money and the time we're spending in schools. Governor Pillen and I are, I would say, contemporaries, age-wise. We probably went to school in very similar circumstances. When I went to school, started out in a one-room schoolhouse. It was-- then we consolidated districts, a two-room schoolhouse, 40, 50 kids, 2 teachers, overlapping, you-- second grade heard third grade, third grade heard fourth grade. It was a very positive learning environment. It's something we don't have today. I read a lot. I was an avid reader. I'd hurry up and get my work done. I'd go over, I would grab a-- an encyclopedia-- and for those of you that are much younger than I, that was actually a book, back in the day. It was not a Wikipedia. And I would, I would just pick a random letter. They, they had letters on them, so you could, you know, you'd pick a particular. A letter, and I would read it cover to cover, not every word, but things that interest me. And I, I think that, that helped my vocabulary. I certainly had a great deal of interest. I had, I had material for Trivial Pursuit 30 years ago, that I-- I was, I was pretty tough. Today, contemporarily, I know nothing. And I, I hope you don't hold that against me. And no, in those days, I did not wear a

pocket protector. I, I was not one of those kids. My kids, when they went to school, it was a different time. They're, they're in their early forties. One of the things that, that we had available was something called Schoolhouse Rock. Maybe some of you are familiar with that. I'm going to ruin your day. I'm going to, I'm going to just mention something that goes through my head periodically, when I talk education, and it's "conjunction junction, what's my function." You know, they had all kinds of little ditties and, and little things to help you learn. I see Senator Rountree's giving me a thumbs up on that. Obviously, they had it where he grew up, also. There's a number of reasons for poor reading, and one of the things we heard in committee is dyslexia. It's so hard to diagnose that. And one the numbers, if, if I recall correctly, is about 20% of the kids that come into kindergarten, first grade, are suffering from some form of dyslexia. It's extremely hard to diagnosis, hard to make that determination. And, and so, that's one of the problems we deal with. Along with that, in many cases, and certainly with, with some of our immigrant community that comes in, they may have-- maybe have never had an eye exam. They've never had eyeglasses. I, I talked to my local optometrist, and, and he said, when they give that child that first, that first pair of glasses, it's like the world opens up for them. I see my light's on. I'd, I'd had a great deal more to, to say about this. But certainly, the conversation has been good. I'm going to leave it at that. I, I could, I could spend another 5 minutes. But once again, excellent conversation, something we need to have, and it's, it's for the benefit of our-- it's for the benefit of our kids. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Question.

IBACH: The question has been called. Do I see five hands? I do. The question is, shall debate cease? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 18 ayes, 2 nays to cease debate.

IBACH: Debate does cease-- debate does not cease. Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Madam President. So back on the mic, you know. And I talked about this da-- actually, I'm going to send it around to the rest of the body-- that I got from LRO. But to simply put it, the

data shows a consistent pattern where black male students are pushed out of classrooms at disproportionately high rates, falling behind academically as a result, and graduate at significantly lower rates. These outcomes have remained largely unchanged over the past decade, which strongly suggests the issue is not individual behavior-- although y'all want to suspend them-- but systematic practices within the education system itself. And that is why I don't love or hate this bill. I think the system is the problem. We need to modernize our education system. We keep putting band-aids on a problem that needs to be fixed. We're telling kids to be educated in a cookie-cutter approach that was created 30 years before they was even thought of. Kids learn at different paces now. We know attention spans are down. We know they can't sit in classrooms for too long. But we keep telling them to go into a system that is literally not designed for them to learn properly. That is a problem, the system. The system is failing our kids and we keep suggesting band-aids to solve it. And it's like, this isn't about kids failing. It's about a system failing them early, repeatedly, and predict-- predictively. When over half of black boys in middle school are being suspended in our schools, that is not discipline. That is displacement. And when that leads to lower graduation rates and high failure rates, we shouldn't be asking what's wrong with the students. We should be asking, what's wrong with the system? The system is the problem, and nobody wants to solve it. Nobody. Nobody wants to require teachers to have human relations classes. Nobody wants to maybe shorten the school, school schedule during the week. We, we call other countries third-world countries, or we perceive ourselves as being in a better space than a lot of other countries, but when you look at the data globally, the American education system is failing our kids. That is the problem. We need to fix it. And, you know, the fact that we have to have a discussion about a huge percentage of kids being behind in, in reading proficiency should tell you that the system is the problem-- and it's deeper than the education system. It's what are we doing to provide supports for families, making sure their households are in a space where kids are able to learn and live and be happy, and I deal with so much traumatic situations. That is the problem. Then the other thing that I hope, if this does go forward, there is some school system accountability. We can't pass this without making sure there are some teeth to hold these districts accountable, because they will slime their way out of accountability if, if given the opportunity. They did it with the suspension bill, which got repealed. There was provisions in the law that said districts could and probably should seek alternatives, but they didn't. They just kept sending kids back to

classrooms, causing teachers to feel like they couldn't do their job, which led to a repeal when the districts didn't step up and provide alternatives to suspensions. So I'm telling you, if you pass this, Senator Murman, or if anybody votes for this, if you don't put teeth in this to tell the districts actually what to do, it's never going to work. The kids are not going to-- the, the outcomes are not going to change. They're going to find a way to get around it. Either they're going to say there's a shortage in teaching, money, whatever. It's not going to work unless you actually put things in here that holds them accountable, if you want a better result. Thank you.

IBACH: Senator Storm, you're recognized to speak.

STORM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. You know, I don't, I don't think LB1050 is ready for prime time. It's a-- we all want third graders to read better. I do. I know all the superintendents, teachers, reading specialists want to, in the state, as well. But we can't rush this and just throw something out there, and say, let's go for it, and see how it turns out. Every school district is different. I mean, OPS is different than Mead High School. And in my district, I have Schuyler High School. Schuyler High School is 90% minority. They speak 30 different dialects in the school system, and to try to implement something like this with what they're having to work with would be very, very, very difficult. It's an unfunded mandate. This would have some cost to it. But I'm not willing to just throw everything out and say we're not going to try to do something like this. I just think we need to take time to really wrap our heads around what we're going to-- what we're trying to-- how we're going to accomplish this. There has to be a really viable plan how to do this. And from-- my understanding is we have funding that's just came into the school districts as of last year, grant money to try to help with-- more reading-- increase the literacy rates. Let that work a little bit, but I would also be open to setting up some type of commission. And I would get the reading specialists involved, I would get the in-- Department of Education involved, superintendents, and the Legislature involved, and try to come up with a really working plan to see how we're going, going to do this, and take a little bit of time. It's hard to come up with a concept in June, and then talk about it and say, this sounds great-- and it does sound great-- and just look at one other state that tried to do this, and say, this will fit perfect in Nebraska. And then, jump off a cliff, because that could have some major ramifications. So, for me, I don't think it's ready for prime time, but I'm open to more discussion. I want to hear more people talk about this. I also think

if you're going to have kindergartners, teach them more about reading when they're younger. Don't sit here and try to do just as much time on science, and just as much time on PE, and just as much time on this, focus on reading with kindergartens. And I'm not sure we can do that in this state with Rule 10. I'm learning all about this. I have some good superintendents. So that's kind of where I'm at on this, for now. Thank you.

IBACH: Senator Hallstrom, you're recognized to speak.

HALLSTROM: Thank you, Madam President, members. I am in opposition to the indefinite postponement. I've been getting a lot of contacts from school superintendents, principals, teachers, former teachers, I have teachers in my family that have reached out and tapped me on the top of the head. I think you look at this, and a number of speakers, Senator Jacobson, Senator Storm, most recently have talked about an unfunded mandate. When I was campaigning, I heard that loud and clear. We talk about financial literacy, we talk about different curriculum requirements, IT, dyslexia and reading, the very issues and subject matter that we're looking at here, that have been mandated in one form or another upon the school districts in the past. And my suggestion to them was identify some existing unfunded mandates that no longer serve their intended purpose, identify them, let us know about it, and maybe we can-- if we give you one, we can take 2 or 3 or 4, try to get some of those things off your plate that maybe you're no longer functioning well. I look at the bill, and one of the things that concerns me is the fact that it's come out so late in the process. I understand that there were amendments. It takes time to, to know what the bill was, to think the bill was deadlocked in committee, and then all of a sudden it comes up, and "Presto. Chango." It's on the floor today, without a lot of time to really research, analyze, or determine which of the experts should we believe. I've, I've heard dueling experts, in terms of the impact of retaining kids, or holding back kids. Some say good, some say bad. We need some time to sort some of those things out. The bill, as I read it, doesn't kick in until 2028-29. While that may serve as a ramp to help with the first and second graders, to prepare them for when the third grade standards and the retention period, subject to the parental control, kick in; might be the reason for it. Also, could be the reasons for not rushing to judgment. We can come back next year and make a change to this. But at the same time, one of the reasons that I'm a little bit conflicted on this, is I was contacted by a school district in my legislative district. Frightening factoid to me: they estimated the number of students that would be held back. And quite frankly, I, I firmly believe that that school

district is one of the better ones around. And yet, there was a significant number of students that would be retained. So whether we need to put more emphasis on early childhood programs, I don't know. I just don't know whether this is, in fact, the proper solution, or perhaps, more significantly, the proper time. With that, I would yield the balance of my time to Senator Conrad, if she chooses.

IBACH: Senator Conrad, you're yielded 2 minutes.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you to my good friend, Senator Hallstrom. I so appreciate his presence here and have an opportunity to work together on important issues. Friends, the queue is full. We've had great debate thus far. There's a lot of meat and important components in the committee amendment, so there's no reason to stay on the motion. With that, Madam President, I'd like to withdraw. Thank you.

IBACH: So ordered. Senator Murman, you're recognized to open on the committee amendment.

MURMAN: Thank you, Madam President. I think it is really important we get to this committee amendment, because I think at least a big part of the discussion has been a, a, a misunderstanding from the original bill and of the-- misunderstanding of the changes that actually happened with the committee amendment. The most important change from AM2605, the committee amendment, is that parents will have the ultimate decision on whether or not their child advanced from third grade. And I think that's a very important part of the amendment, because, you know, I realize the importance of teachers and schools and everything in the educat-- all those people in the education of their, their kids. But the most important factor, especially early on, is how much are the parents involved with teaching their kids to read, preschool, or at least teaching them their alphabet, their numbers, their sounds, and all that kind of thing-- preschool-- and being involved as much as possible from, from even kindergarten on-- first and second grade. So the bill does encourage parental involvement. Parents will be well-informed from the teacher, from the school, beginning in kindergarten, so I think that's very important. And another thing that the committee amendment addresses is the dyslexia part of it. It does make the screening process for dyslexia better. And from the people that testified in the hearing, that was very important, so we did strengthen that. And then also, the English second language. It's more of a challenge when kids come into the school, don't speak English, so we did say that if the students had

less than 2 years of English second-language learning, that they would not be affected by this bill. Also, it moved back the-- when the bill would go into effect, from where it originally was to the '28-29 school year, so it gives the schools 2 more years to get ready, get all the systems in place before this bill goes to-- goes into effect. And I'm just going to go on a little bit, while I have the time, about some of the testimony that has happened so far. I do appreciate Senator McKinney. I think he understands what is happening, especially in OPS, but to some degree, in all the schools in the state. Students, when they don't know how to read past third grade, it's very important that they-- we do whatever we can to make sure they're proficient from that point on. Because up to third grade, in general, kids are learning to read. Past third grade, they're reading to learn. So I do realize that different subjects, it could be a difference. But in every subject, reading is a very important part of that subject, and if a student can't read past that third grade point-- and by the way, the parents are informed from kindergarten on, if their, their child-- or how proficient their child is in reading. So, you know, I've, I've heard that, oh, it's waiting until third grade. Well, it's not waiting until third grade, because the, the teachers and-- can recommend to the parents at kindergarten on that-- if they don't think their child is proficient enough that their child be held back. And, and of course, it's up to the parents, too, at that time, but they will-- the parents will be well aware that their child is not proficient, so they can hold them back earlier. And by the way, I think it is important to hold the child back as early as possible to get them proficient. And if there is an economic-- or excuse me, a mental health impact on the child, it will lessen it-- lessen that impact from kindergarten, first and second grade, even before third grade. So it's important that the parents be involved and can hold their child back sooner. And I've heard several comments about, well, this is punitive, it's punishment. And that really makes me mad when I hear that, because there's no punishment at all in this, in this bill, and it's not punitive at all. The, the whole purpose of early childhood reading education and-- including this bill, and the states that have put this bill in place, put this legislation in place, is to do whatever they can to focus more on early childhood reading. And the focus is to help the child to get as proficient as possible, you know, like I said, starting in kindergarten, but especially at the third grade point. So it's not punishment at all. And by the way, the mental health of the child, it will be an issue past third grade. You know, if there are any mental health issues before third grade, those are going to even be magnified past third grade if the, if the student cannot read to, to a good

enough level past third grade. They're going to have problems every day because they, they don't know how to read as well as they should. So like, like I think I mentioned it earlier, we have-- Nebraska has 14 out of the 18 points in the bill-- or in place right now, in Education. If we can get this bill passed, we'll have 17 out of the 18 supports that are needed to do whatever we can to improve our reading scores in Nebraska. We should not be satisfied to be, well, we're number 40 in the nation right now. So doing-- just continuing what we're doing, I don't look for any likelihood of improvement. Like Senator Meyer said, we've been trying to address this issue, at least since the early 2000s, and especially since the nonpartisan bill by Senator Linehan and, and Senator Pansing Brooks. And that took effect, I think, in 2018 or 2019. And our, our scores have just continued to slip. So we need to focus more. Schools are saying that, oh, we're going to have to hold a lot of kids back with the screening. And of course, the screening is up to-- what, what is-- the screenings put in place is up to the Department of Education. I don't foresee a huge number of kids being held back. Of course, we do have the parental override in place, too, and that's based more after the Colorado legislation, Colorado bill. And that changes quite a bit from the Mississippi bill, but it loosens up the-- any rigid restrictions, so parents do have the override authority. And I, I, I think that the way this bill is amended, we're, we're going to see a turnaround in the slippage that we do have in our national assessments on how well or, or to be honest with you, how, how poorly our-- a lot of our students are performing. We just can't be satisfied with that, and I think this is a big piece of getting that turned around. I don't think we want to wait any longer. We've got most of the supports in place, and we just need a little more focus from our local partners to do everything we can. Focus more on early childhood reading, and improve our, our scores, and most importantly, make it possible for our students to do better going forward, past third grade, and be more successful in life. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Madam President, Senator Conrad would move to bracket the bill until April 17 of 2026.

IBACH: Senator Conrad, you're welcome to open on your bracket motion.

CONRAD: Thank you, Madam President. I'd like to withdraw.

IBACH: So moved. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Madam President, Senator Conrad would move to recommit LB1050 to the Education Committee.

IBACH: Senator Conrad, you're recognized to open.

CONRAD: Thank you, Madam President. I'd like to withdraw.

IBACH: So ordered. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Murman, I have FA1108, with a note that you wish to withdraw.

IBACH: So ordered. Turning to the queue, Senator Juarez, you're recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you very much. And I appreciate getting the opportunity to continue on this topic. And I wanted to express that I am against AM2605 and LB1050. I do think, as I've stated before, that this goal very much is needed. And it's not that I don't agree with the Governor's perspective to try to improve the reading proficiency for our students. There's no doubt that it is needed. But I do think that we need to slow down and take a broader look at how we want to address the issue. And you know, some of the school districts definitely are working on this. I know for the OPS District, this reading proficiency is, you know, a moon-- the moon-- their moonshot. And that was a goal that was introduced when I was even on the OPS School Board, so they're definitely giving attention to it. And I will say that the one thing about the Governor wanting us to take a look at this topic, it really has spurred me to think what are the steps personally that I can take to try to work on this goal. And I've decided that I am going to speak on this topic all the time with many people that I interact with. When I went to lunch with folks from the Heartland Workers Center. I told the families there that they need to get their students stronger in reading. I wanted them to share-- the interpreter shared the message for me that this is a, a concern that I have, because it is so important to the success of our students every-- everywhere in this state. And I'm also going to be having an interim study this summer with educators, and this topic is definitely going to come up. I'm not going to ignore it. So I did want to go on with my other thoughts that I had here, and I wanted to discuss about dyslexia. I recognize the amendment attempts to soften the policy. It adds a student portfolio option. It expands dyslexia screening, which is needed. It provides a limited exemption for English learners. These are still not enough. Language learning takes at least 3 years.

Reaching advanced fluency typically takes 2-5 years. While an easy language, example Spanish, requires 600-750 hours, hard ones like Chinese take 2,200-plus hours. A third grader identified with a persistent reading deficiency will be retained unless a parent successfully navigates a meeting process or qualifies for a narrow exception. This is not a supportive system. This is a compliance system. And, you know, I, I am very concerned about this aspect of the parents being involved, because I just don't feel confident that parents are comfortable in working with the school systems on the topic. I think that there might be plenty of families who actually might be intimidated by the process if they were brought into the school to discuss the topic. Now, all of this comes with a significant cost. This bill creates a long list of new mandates: universal dyslexia screening for K-2 students, K to second, new intervention requirements, expanded reporting, parent notification systems, summer programs, and portfolio assessments.

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

JUAREZ: Thank you very much.

IBACH: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to speak.

BRANDT: Thank you, Madam President. I'm going to read a letter from one of my schools, Thayer Central Community School, sent to me by their superintendent, Eric Miller. Dear Senator Brandt, I'm writing to express my concerns regarding LB1050 as amended by AM2605. While I strongly support the goal of ensuring all students read proficiently by the end of the third grade, this bill creates significant challenges for school districts, particularly small, rural school districts, like ours. First, the requirements outlined in LB1050 will result in real and immediate costs to the-- at the local level. Despite the absence of a fiscal note, the additional screening, assessment, intervention, and reporting requirements are equivalent to adding at least one staff member in many districts, along with ongoing costs for training, materials, and implementation. For Thayer Central Community Schools, we estimate these costs to be approximately \$160,000 annually, with no additional state funding provided to support these mandates. Second, the bill increases assessment requirements, taking valuable time away from classroom instruction and placing additional pressure on young learners. Third, LB1050 is highly prescriptive and limits local decision-making. School boards and educators are best positioned to make these decisions based on the needs of their students and communities. This approach runs counter to

Nebraska's long-standing commitment to local control. Additionally, the bill applies only to public schools. Private schools are not held to the same requirements, creating an inequitable system of accountability. Finally, schools are still in the early stages of implementing the science of reading requirements. This work is already producing meaningful instructional shifts, and it would be prudent to allow time for those efforts to take hold before adding new mandates. I respectfully ask that you carefully consider these concerns as LB1050 moves forward. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the local impact further. Thank you for your time and service. Sincerely, Eric Miller, Superintendent, Thayer Central Community Schools. In addition, I've got a letter here, from Jeremy Klein, who's the superintendent at Heartland Community Schools, very concerned about his cost. And I'm not going to read the letter. I believe-- as soon as I find the number-- they are saying they are going to go up \$125,000, also an unfunded mandate. So these unfunded mandates that we pass here in this body on these local school districts are not covered by the state. They are going to be covered by local property taxpayers. It isn't just Thayer Central or the 13 schools in my District 32. We had a superintendents meeting this morning with 12 superintendents on it. Every school system is saying the same thing. This will increase our costs. And I guess where they're kind of disappointed, they all like this science of reading program. They feel they're making headway. They feel their schools are delivering a good product out there. They are working with the kids that need the help. A lot of these have a reading program. I know my school district-- where I live is Tri-County Public Schools. And my kids, the last one graduated in 2013, so he entered kindergarten about 2000. And the entire time, a lot of his class were going to a reading teacher full time. Most of our schools do that. We want to see our kids succeed. We, we do not want to see kids put in a position where, by the time they get to third grade, they are not getting the help. They are getting that help before they enroll in kindergarten. They're getting that help K-12. And I guess-- I'll, I'll wait and see. But with the fact that a, a parent can simply pull their child out if, if the assessment says that they need to be held back, my superintendents feel, and I do, too, is to-- let's, let's keep working with the kid. This is just kind of a harsh thing to have a kid get pulled back. And the numbers that I saw show that 58% of the dropouts in a school system, a lot of times, the kid went through this, and they feel that's a contributing factor. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Mr. Clerk, items for the record.

CLERK: Thank you, Madam President. Reference report from the Referencing Committee, concerning gubernatorial appointments. New-- amendments to be printed from Senator Storer, to LB400; Senator DeBoer, to LB935. New A bill, LB815A, introduced by Senator Brandt. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; to appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions for LB815. LB838A, introduced by Senator Jacobson. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; to appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB838; and to declare an emergency. LB962A, from Senator McKinney. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of leg-- leg-- LB962. LB1126A, from Senator Moser. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; to appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB1126. New A bill, LB803A, introduced by Senator-- introduced by Senator von Gillern. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB803; and declare an emergency. That's all I have at this time, Madam President.

IBACH: Returning to the queue, Senator Sanders, you're recognized to speak.

SANDERS: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I rise in support of LB1050, and I want to briefly talk about what it does. However, I must also explain to the body what this bill does not do. As we all know, education is one of our biggest responsibilities, and the most fundamental asset of education is the ability to read. A child's ability to read impacts their entire academic and professional careers. LB1050 will help ensure that this foundation is strong in a few different ways. First, struggling students must be identified early. A study conducted by Professor Hernandez of the City University of New York found that third grade students who lack reading proficiency are 4 times more likely to drop out of high school. Instead of accepting this outcome, LB1050 catches these students up. Second, research suggests grade retention is not as harmful, harmful as advertised. A recent study found that repeating the third grade actually leads to 18% improvement by fourth grade. A brief by Fondam [SIC] Institute cited data showing in-- increased test scores and participation in advanced secondary courses. These students also showed a greater sense of school connect-- connectiveness. Third, our Legislature history shows a strong need for action. In 2018, Governor Ricketts signed the original Nebraska Reading Improvement Act into law. 8 years later, our reading scores have declined, not improved. We can all agree that our kids should be able to read, but we need to

take action consistent with our desire. This bill allows students to close the gap. But there is one thing this bill does not do: LB1050 does not provide additional funding to support schools in reaching this goal. Last year, I introduced LR18CA to end unfunded mandates. This is one example of such a mandate. The programming required to meet this expectation will not be free. Teachers must put in extra hours and more curriculum must be purchased. This requirement will challenge districts financially, but it would impact my district, District 45, particularly. Bellevue Public School sees roughly 33% student turnover every year as a result of the heavy military presence in Bellevue. We have seen many of these students come from states which have lower academic standards. This means that Bellevue Public School would likely pay much more than the average district to invest in these new students. This money has to come from somewhere. This bill does not address that challenge. Fortunately, fortunately, LB1050 leaves us some time to address this problem, because the grade retention would not be implemented until after '28-29 school year. The Legislature can address this unfunded mandate in the upcoming session. I implore the Legislature that we address this issue. By passing this bill, we are making a promise. We are committing to address the funding gap in this policy. For my district, this commitment, commitment is not in theory. I support bold action to make sure our kids can read, but my yes vote will be with a clear expectation for our future work. With an eye towards the next session, I support LB1050 and would urge you all to vote green. Thank you, Miss-- Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Madam President, and I think maybe we're in afternoon now. Afternoon, colleagues, and folks that are still joining in the debate. I have appreciated the dialogue-- and let me punch back in. And I had to step out for a bit, so hopefully this is not repetitive, but I really appreciated the intentional dialogue that we've had on LB1050. And then now, the AM, which I know has some of the changes that were discussed with AM2605. I wanted to kind of start some of my comments-- and again, I know we've had lots of dialogue that has taken us down different threads and places. Also, just around-- some technicalities around what we are measuring and the importance of data and evaluation. And so what I have felt like the conversation has been around is, can students read at this specific grade level, and that is measured through a certain set of assessments and tests that are standardized. And I think the other piece to this really important conversation that has been missed, is that does being

proficient in reading mean that you can actually comprehend? I think a lot of the time when we're talking about proficiency in reading, it's because we are thinking 2 steps down the road, around then, how can students comprehend and read dense paragraphs, and pull out key ideas and themes? Are they able to critically reflect on what they are reading, and how does that relate then, to understanding a science equation, or a question that has a lot more text in it than just numbers and trying to figure out some sort of measure. And so, again, as we are talking about what reading proficiency means, there are parts and pieces to this that really looks at the comprehension and success of that student, and how they are taking the skill set of reading to be able to be applicable to a higher level of understanding and application that allows them to be successful. I think that has been an important piece that I have even seen with my kids. My oldest, who is-- he'll be 12 actually, next week. I can't believe it. He's in the sixth grade, and he loves to read. I make him read. And it's, to me, not just reading, because he does the practice of reading, and spending time-- and he is advanced, so he's above grade-level, and always scores really high on his test scores, which I think is great. And also, how does he apply that? Scoring really high on a test score or knowing that he can read these specific words doesn't mean he comprehended what he read, and can he apply it and critically reflect and think on that? And so I think those are other parts and pieces that I've been thinking about this, and how we are situating this policy, and what it means for long-term success, again, as students matriculate through their educational journey. And the other piece that I have heard really clearly that I do agree with, is that early intervention is key. So when we talk about third grade as a point in time-- you know, they talk about the third grade measure being used to build new prisons or not. Maybe that's why we're building a new prison here when other states aren't. But there's a lot of other indicators at that third grade level that trigger other types of systemic activities or interventions. And I have an LR actually, that I introduced in partnership with Senator McKinney and Senator Rountree, that looks at the effectiveness of learning communities for this reason. I think-- and don't know enough about our learning communities, I know how and why they were passed in statute and I think again as we think about our educational interests, partners and ecosystem and stakeholders when we talk about early intervention, we also have to examine other people that are holding parts of that work and what does it look like, and are there opportunities there, what things are they doing that are going well? And so, I think that LR will also give us more data and insight to that, so we can better

understand the full scope of what we are discussing, and the impacts. I see my light is on. This 5 minutes always goes so fast. I had like 3 other things that I want to talk about. So I am punched back in so that I can touch base. I have a couple of things actually in the bill that I have questions on, the practicality and implementation that I had highlighted, that next time I am on the mic, I will discuss. So thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I've also had correspondence from Grand Island Public Schools, and they're opposed to this piece of legislation. So I'm actually opposed to LB1050. And I guess we'll see what the amendments all do. One of the things I want to talk about is that, you know, not every child is-- learns at the same speed. So, when our son was-- when he started kindergarten-- we started him at 5 years old, and we debated whether to do it or not. We talked to the pediatrician, and she said, go ahead and, go ahead and start him in school. We started him in kindergarten that next fall. The first few days were terrible for him, because he would hang onto my wife's leg every time they'd go to school and he didn't want to go, and he'd cry. And the teacher just said, let me keep working with him. So he did go to kindergarten that first year. At the end of the year, they said that, you know, his learning, he had a learning disability and that he was struggling in school, in reading, and pretty much everything. So we actually talked about-- because we were going to move to a different school. We were at West Lawn Elementary in Grand Island, and we were going to move to the Newell School District, or Newell School, in Grand, in Grand Island also, which were probably-- they were several blocks apart from each other. And so, we thought maybe just having him do kindergarten over again would be something that would be beneficial for him. Because he would just be 6 years old then, when he would go to kindergarten there. And really, that's the same age as some of the kids that were there. The teachers said, no, we think it would be detrimental for you to hold him back. It would cause him to have some, some-- I don't want to, I don't want to call it PTSD, but he would have some issues, maybe with-- especially, maybe other kids picking on him, because he was held back. I'm not sure we felt that that would have happened moving to a whole different school, but, but anyway, we went, we went ahead and let him go on to first grade at Newell. He struggled with reading his, his whole-- really all-- throughout all of school. I think it probably got better when he got into high school. We had a, we had a tutor, at one point, for both math and reading. We also had-- we sent

him to Sylvan. But, you know, we had the resources to do that. A lot of families don't have the resources to hire a, hire a tutor, or to get extra help, or to send someone to, to Sylvan to get, you know, a, a different type of resource for them. So, you know, we had that opportunity to try to help him. And then along with that, my wife would read to him at night. I can remember one time, she, she had been reading him a book. He was probably a first or second grader. She didn't think he was interested, so she stopped reading. And then one day, he comes to her and says, Mom, why don't you read to me anymore? So, you know, I think that was really important for him to, to have that. I'm not sure that every family is equipped or has the tools within their family to be able to understand, or to help their children read, or maybe they're working one or two jobs. You know, you look at Grand Island School District, we're a-- the community itself is diverse. We have a packing plant, so there's a-- it's a real diverse community. We have some, you know-- even the parents maybe don't speak English. So there's another adverse condition for those children. You know, they're, they're-- and a lot of them are very smart, and so they learn how to, how to-- they learn English fairly quickly. And it's probably the parents that struggle. But if, if the parents don't understand what's happening with their child and to help make that decision whether to hold them back one year in school, that can be, be, you know, pretty devastating for that, for that child, I think. So I think giving those schools the opportunity to actually work with those kids-- and it starts way before third grade. I think it starts at kindergarten, or preschool, even. Starting with-- at preschool, and, and having kids, you know-- and being encouraged by parents. So sometimes maybe we need to do more parent education, too, to help them be able to help their children to be successful in the school. I know our son, right now, you know, he had a, he had a whole other bunch of issues growing up and, and-- you know, along his life, but he's pretty successful right now. I mean, he's working at a seed corn company and he does very well. He's worked at a couple of different jobs that he's done very well in. And he can read. So somewhere along the line, he learned how to read, and do math, and do some of these other things, aside from school. And I think it's just some of those life experiences that you pick up along the way.

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

QUICK: Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Clements would like to recognize 7 fourth grade students from St. John the Baptist in Plattsmouth. They're located in

the north balcony. Please rise and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Returning to the queue, Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome, students, to your Nebraska Legislature. I hope you have a great time in the building today and get to appreciate what a beautiful historic space you get to be in today during the school day, which is kind of exciting. Throughout history, a lot of cultures have treated the beginning of spring as the New Year, not January 1, but, you know, the time around the Spring Equinox. In Iran and the Iranian diaspora, in Persian culture, they just celebrated Nowruz last Friday, which was on the first day of spring, which is sort of the celebration of a new year. You know, I'm one of those people that sort of recreationally, I guess, enjoys astrology. Like, it's, it's an interesting thing, I guess. I'm not a believer in anything, but it's an interesting thing, I suppose. And I know there's a couple people in here who are big adherents to the Church of Astrology, Senator Dover being one of them. And if you want to ask him about your sign, he can tell you a lot about that. But right now, we are in Aries season, which is also the beginning of the astrological New Year. So that's sort of charging forward energy. It can be chaotic. It's comfort with risk. It's lack of fear. It's, it's moving forth with conviction, no matter what, and it's sort the leader of the zodiac. And so, we're now in Aries season. If you're feeling the chaotic energy, maybe it's the first day of spring, maybe it's because the weather's getting nicer, or if you believe in astrology, maybe it's because we're entering Aries season. It's-- and it's coming with that chaotic energy. But all that to say, I want to wish an early happy birthday to one of the Nebraska Legislature's most iconic Aries. And we do have a high proportion of Aries in this Legislature compared to the general population, because that is the leader of the zodiac. But one of my favorites, Senator John Fredrickson, his birthday is Saturday, and I wanted to wish him an early happy birthday, since we won't be here together on that day. And I also say this-- yeah. Yes, yes. I also this early because you still have time to get him a gift. And I think that a belated gift is okay and that can come next week and that he won't hold that against you. Back on the topic of AM2605 and LB1050. I was reached out to by a teacher who's a friend of mine, and she's been a teacher for over a decade. She's worked as a mental health counselor, as a math teacher, worked with all different grade levels, and one point that she raised to me that I actually hadn't thought about was, I'll read what she said in her message to me. Something else that hasn't been sitting right with me about this is

that our state is not remotely ready for 17-year-olds and 14-year olds to be in the same grade. Our state hasn't been able to pass comprehensive sex ed, it's a horrible idea, et cetera. That was an interesting, interesting point. You know, if we're retaining these kids who are struggling to read, you know, as they go on through school, we'll have very disparate ages in these classes, and I thought that was kind of a valid point and interesting to have people that are kind of-- students that are so developmentally different put together. And of course, this does happen already in Nebraska, but if we do advance LB1050, that will happen more. So I thought that was a very valid concern. The main reason that I'm against bills like this-- and there are a lot of bills like this-- is because I don't like increasing bureaucracy, paperwork, reporting requirements, on teachers and schools that are already understaffed, that are already asking for more planning time, asking for more time to further their own education so they can improve their capacity to teach reading. I think that supporting teachers on the front end of the education by saying we're going to give you the time to plan your lessons, we're going to give you the time to continue your own education so that you can transfer that to these young minds in Nebraska. This is going to pay much further dividends than the punitive approach of punishing kids who are struggling to read. I think it's regressive. I think that the idea of holding kids back who are struggling to read is not going to result in any kind of Nebraska miracle, whatsoever. And for not much more than the cost of this bill, we can afford to feed all the kids at school, which we know has proven results in increasing kids' learning capacity and test scores, which--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

HUNT: --what more can we measure than a test score? Thank you, Madam Chair.

IBACH: Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Madam President. I have to echo the comments of my colleague, Senator Hunt. If a child is hungry, they cannot learn. If a child, for whatever reason, because of their home situation at home, isn't getting to the class, they can not learn. I'm all for a comprehensive approach, but it truly has to be comprehensive. It has to address every issue along the way. And like I said last time I was on the mic, the Mississippi miracle wasn't a miracle. It was a methodical, well-planned, strategic initiative that addressed a lot of issues that along the way, affect a child's ability to read, and

when-- and affect their ability to read when they get to that third grade level. So if, if we're not intentional, if we're not willing to do the work, if we're not willing to make the investment to make sure kids are fed, to make sure that all these issues that affect learning capacity aren't addressed, if we're not willing to make that investment into our teaching colleges to make sure they're the best in the country, that our educators are prepared with a, a method that has been examined and thoroughly vetted to, to work best in Nebraska's unique environment, then, then we're just being cruel by holding these kids back. I had a great conversation with an educator who came in, I think, last week. We, we talked about the quote unquote, Mississippi miracle. And I just want to read a little bit from her letter. I'm Rosita Crowell. I'm a Title I reading specialist and classroom teacher at DC West Community Schools, with years of direct experience supporting struggling readers in our elementary classrooms. I am deeply committed to evidence-based early literacy practices that help every child succeed. I have serious concerns about LB1050, the bill amending the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act, to impose a third-grade promotion gate behind-- based on reading proficiency thresholds. While I support the goal of ensuring all children read at above or below or-- at or above grade level by the end of the third grade, mandating retention for students with persistent reading deficiencies risks unintended negative consequences. Retention often leads to increased disengagement, lower self-esteem, and long-term academic and social challenges, particularly without guaranteed high-quality, individualized acceleration programs. Many of my Title I students face complex barriers, such as dyslexia, socioeconomic factors, or learning differences, that require targeted, multi-tiered intervention, rather than a high-stakes retention policy. The bill emphasize-- emphasis on retention as a mechanism, even with the expectation and intensive classes may disproportionately affect vulnerable populations without sufficient, evidence-based-- without sufficient evidence that it improves outcomes more effectively than enhanced early supports, professional development for teachers, and family involvement. If we're not willing to address those issues that these children are faced, to provide the tools to our families, to provide our tools to our children as they're coming up, coming-- before they get to the third grade, I don't think the answer should just be to put that gate, to put the barrier at the third grade. So. She goes on to say: I urge careful consideration of amendments to LB1050 that prioritize prevention through expanded early screening, intervention resources, dyslexia-specific training, and alternatives for retention, such as intensive summer school programs or multi-year support plans.

Nebraska's children deserve policies grounded in the full body of reading science and proven to close achievement gaps without causing harm. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I'm available to discuss my expertise or provide additional insight for the classroom. Sincerely, Rosita Crowell. Thank you, Rosita. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Murman, you're recognized to speak.

MURMAN: Well, thank you, Madam President. I do appreciate the discussion we're having today. I think everybody stayed on subject. I think that's very important. I'm always very disappointed when we get off the subject and, and just start arguing or talking about something different, and at least we've stuck to the subject. I, I do think that the way this bill is amended, it, it should have the support of everyone, to be honest with you. I, I can see, at least understand a little bit the opposition from the schools. And, and for this reason, they're going to be held accountable. If, you know, all of their kids in third grade are proficient, it's no burden at all. If most of them are, there's not much of a burden. And I can't understand how it was-- smaller school would be more affected than-- could, could be more affected than a larger school. When you have the advantage of size, you can have more sections in a class, and can make things a little bit easier. As long as we-- you know, the schools that a lot of people have been quoting, they say, well, my school's doing a good job. But, but that doesn't explain why our NAEP scores in Nebraska just continue to slide. And it's not just a, a slight decrease, either. It's been really, pretty profound. I passed out that graph. And in-- yeah, I believe it was 2015, we peaked out, and we were about-- I believe, 34%, I believe, proficient at, at that time. We've slipped all the way down to 28% proficient now, in fourth grade, so you know, a pretty steep slide. And, and we've had all of these supports, or a lot of these support that are needed that other states have done, in place since at least 2018. And as Senator Meyer talked about earlier, actually, there's been a big focus on it since the early 2000s. So we, we can't just keep doing what we're doing. We've got to try something different. I know change is hard. It's difficult to change. But change is needed to turn this slide around. So another, another really sad thing is-- I've always said Nebraska's schools are some of the best in the nation, and traditionally we have been. We've always been above the national average. This graph, I passed it out-- passed out, goes back to 2000-- well, Nebraska starts in 2000, but nationwide starts in 2002. And we've always been-- excuse me, the other way around. National starts in 2000, Nebraska starts in 2002. But we've been above

the national average up until 2022, and we slipped below even the national average in fourth grade assessment scores, at that time. I think, to be honest with you, Senator McKinney understands the problem very well. It's important, and he said, and many others on the floor have said, to have the parents involved early with their kids, read to their kids when they're 2 years old or younger, and continue to read to them before they go to school and-- or preschool, whatever the case may be. But we hold-- we need to hold the schools more accountable. Past that time and up to third grade, the schools will send their NAEP scores into the Department of Education, and schools will be rated on how well their kids have done on those scores, how many they've qualified to be hold back-- held back--

IBACH: Time, Senator.

MURMAN: --and how many they've actually held back. Thank you.

IBACH: Senator Rountree, you're recognized to speak.

ROUNTREE: Good morning, and thank you, Madam President. And good morning, colleagues, and all those that are still joining with us online this morning. Senator Murman, thank you so much for that segue into what I wanted to say today, regarding Senator McKinney's comments, starting to read as early as 2 years old. Well, we started to read to our children in the womb, so they would have a good entrance into this world, and we continued to read them at that time, and they continued to grow. Just wanted to stress the importance of reading. All that we've heard this morning, I appreciate everybody's comments-- and especially looking at early intervention. It does take parental involvement. When our children were born, my wife and I decided that she would stay home, come out of the professional career and stay home and raise our children with our values. And since she was home, she opened up a family daycare. We were in an overseas area, and it gave opportunity for other families to bring their children in, and reading was a tremendous part of that involvement-- bedtime reading, daytime reading, and then also, beginning to develop reading with comprehension: understanding what is being read and what does it mean. And so, we had a little mini school, right there in the family daycare. So by the time the kids got ready to go to school, they were already prepared and reading at level. During my time of substitute teaching, I've always enjoyed teaching the kindergartners and the first and second graders, because we have a great time reading. I remember when I was matriculating through school, back in the day, the reading teacher was probably one of the lowest, looked-upon members in

the profession. They didn't have all the great glory like the math teachers and the science teachers, but here we are. We see that reading is fundamental, and we got a lot of that on our Saturday morning, "Conjunction Junction, what's your function?" Those types of things that we don't have now, but those are things that brought us along. And if you were one that loved to read, even from a young age, you were called a bookworm, and it was looked down upon, but you needed to know how to read, how to navigate. My son, Isaac, born with Fragile X syndrome-- and I know that this bill and this amendment will deal a lot with our special needs arena-- but also having childhood apraxia syndrome, and not being able to form his words and get everything out, but he loved reading as well. And even now, coming up on 38 years old, every night in his prayers, he still thanks God for teaching him how to read. He loves the word searches, and even though he may not come on the mic and read like we'll read, but he has his own way of reading, and he loves words, and he loves being able to be educated and to understand. So I remember when we used to get report cards. The reading grade, when you got an A in reading, they say, well, everybody can read, but they wanted to see how you were doing in your math, and in your sciences, and social studies, and those, what we called the tough areas. So here we are, back again, at reading. Back on November the 13th of last year, I had an opportunity to attend one of the schools down in Senator Holdcroft's district, Platteview Central Junior High. And I asked if we could have an opportunity to go in and check the reading program. I love reading when I go to schools. So we have some great educators down there, but I was able to attend the seventh grade reading with one of the teachers. She did a tremendous job with them in reading, reading and comprehension, and then I also went to reading intervention. They had students that came in. So, of course, they've passed third grade, but so that tells us that intervention is still going on, even from the youngest level to the oldest level, to ensure that [INAUDIBLE] are able to read. I had a chance to go to language arts, and then to go into advisory. We had lunch with the students, and then also, a choice in the afternoon of language arts or reading, so I went back to reading again, because reading is fundamental and reading is what gets us through life. And so, with that, I reached out to my daughter this morning. She's in Colorado. I have a little 3 1/2-year-old, 4-year-old granddaughter-- 4 in July. But she is way advanced-- really, at a first-grade reading level, first-grade comprehension level, but she's in the preschool, so we've gotten them now to elevate her, to get her into the classes where she can be challenged even more. So yes, it takes parental involvement. Kids can't do it by themselves. It begins at home if you

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate March 26, 2026
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have that opportunity. But even if it's not at home, we have so many organizations that are on board and they are invested in our children's reading education and reading future. So with that, Madam President, thank you so much for this opportunity, and I yield whatever time I have remaining back to the chair.

IBACH: Senator Glen Meyer, you're recognized to speak.

G. MEYER: Question.

IBACH: The question has been called. Do I see five hands? I do. The question is, shall debate cease? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There's been a request to place the house under call. The question is, shall the house go under call? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 20 ayes, 0 nays to place the house under call.

IBACH: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All un-- unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house under call. Senator Fred Meyer, Senator Moser, Senator Dorn, Senator Hughes, Senator John Cavanaugh, Senator Brandt, please return to the Chamber. Senator Hughes, Senator Dorn, Senator Brandt, please return to the Chamber. The house is under call. All unexcused members are now present. There was a vote open to cease debate. Senator Glen Meyer, will you accept call-ins?

CLERK: Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Dover voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hughes voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Dorn voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Jacobson voting yes. Senator Brandt voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Fred Meyer voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes.

IBACH: Mr. Clerk, please call-- please record.

CLERK: 26 ayes, 2 nays to cease debate, Madam President.

IBACH: Debate does cease. Senator Murman, you're recognized to close on AM2605.

MURMAN: Well, thank you, Madam President. AM2605 is a huge improvement on the bill. It's something that both myself and the committee have supported from day one. We did feel that-- I think at least most of the committee, including myself, feel that parents should have the ultimate say in their child's education, so it does give parents the ultimate decision on whether their-- whether or not their child advances past third grade. The-- also includes the English second language part of it; takes that more into consideration. They have to-- if they have less than 2 years of English second-language, they will not be affected by this bill. Strengthens accountability to everyone involved, and moves it back 2 years so that schools will have ample time to put whatever structure and supports in place that might be affected by this bill, although all of the supports-- 14 out of the 18 supports that were done in, in several other states that have dramatically improved their scores, have already been done. This is a, a final, very important part of the piece. So with that, I, I would encourage your green vote on AM2605.

IBACH: Senator-- Senators, the question before the body is the adoption of AM2605. All those in favor vote aye; those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 32 ayes, 5 nays on adoption of the committee amendment.

IBACH: The amendment is adopted. I raise the call. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Madam President, Senator Murman, I have FA689 with a note that you would withdraw.

IBACH: So ordered.

CLERK: In that case, Madam President, Senator Conrad would move to amend with FA1007.

IBACH: Senator Conrad, you're recognized to open on your-- on FA1007.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. Pres-- Madam President. And good afternoon, colleagues. I had filed some placeholder amendments on this legislation, some time ago. I-- in advance, in advance of knowing what would be contained in a potential committee amendment, and so that was protective in nature. I know that we were able to address many significant concerns at the committee level and in the committee amendment, but I think everybody understands and acknowledges, based on feedback they're getting from their district, based upon really excellent discussion and floor speeches that we've had here this

morning, that this bill has a lot of work left to be done before it would become law and through subsequent rounds of debate. So I know some members have let me know off the mic that they are working on substantive amendments that they hope might even be down yet today for filing and for debate and discussion. And so, I think it would probably be good to-- and I see the queue's really, really full still. So it would probably be good that we can structure a debate on this for our remaining time together this afternoon. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Turning to the queue, Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Madam President. Well, since we're talking about education, I heard a number of inaccurate statements about the role of the queen bee this morning. And I have been a beekeeper for 6 years, so I thought I would educate the body on, on the structure of the typical honeybee colony. The queen bee makes no decisions about what goes on in the colony. The queen bee has one role, and that's to lay eggs, and she does that very well. A queen bee-- healthy queen bee will lay between 1,000 and 1,500 eggs per day. And with the life expectancy of a bee being in about 30 days, your average colony out there in a hive will be about 30,000 bees, so one queen, about 400 drones, and the rest are all female worker bees. So let's talk about the drones for just a minute. There are only about 400 drones in there. They're all male. They don't have a stinger. They serve one purpose, and that's to mate with new queens. And so, they're kind of lazy, they get up about 10:00 in the morning, they go out, they find their fellow drones from the other hives. They hang out in a, a drone recreation area and they wait for new queens to, to fly by, which doesn't happen very often. But when it does, they chase after that queen. Queen is bigger, she can fly faster. She actually has to slow down to be able to let some of those drones-- the stronger drones catch her, and she will mate with between 12 and 15 drones, most of them from other hives, so she has a good mix of DNA from around the neighborhood. And then, she returns to her hive to start laying eggs. So-- and the drones-- OK. They eat 4 times as much as a worker bee do-- does, and they're worthless after September, because there are no new queens being produced. So one day, they come back to the hive, and the worker bees-- the female worker bees say, nope, you're not coming in. And then, they starve. So it's, it's not really a good life for a drone bee for-- in, in the hive. But the worker bees are really the amazing, individual bees in a hive. First, they consume 3 things: pollen, pollen, nectar, and, and water. Those are the 3 things that

they consume. And they produce 5 things: they produce honey; they produce wax; they produce something called propolis, which is kind of like glue, honey glue-- I mean, bee glue; royal jelly, which is what they use to produce new queens; and, and of course, venom. OK. The worker bee can sting, and, and they can only sting once. The, the stinger has a barb in it, which remains embedded in the person who's stung, and its-- and it has a venom sac that's pretty powerful. So what are the de-- the decisions that are made by the, the worker bees? First of all, they decide when they want a new queen. When the queen is not producing the 1,000-1,500 eggs a day and it's time for a new queen, they will kill the, the old queen, and they will start feeding about 6-10 eggs with what's called royal jelly, and that will produce a queen bee. And the first one, the strongest one who hatches first, kills the others that are still in a larva form, and then she goes out on her mating flights to get ready to start laying eggs. So that's, that's the first thing the worker bees do, is they decide when they want a new queen bee. The second thing they do is they decide how many drones there are going to be, and the way they do that is by the size of the cell. So they will-- the smaller cells are for worker bees, larger cells are for drones. So they will, you know, only do about 400 large cells. The queen as she goes through, she says this is a small cell. She will lay an egg and she will fertilize it, and that will produce a female. And then, she'll lay an egg and not fertilize it, and that is a drone. It's very interesting how that works. They also decide when it's time to swarm, in other words, reproduce when they need-- the, the hive is too small, and so they-- half the bees will leave with the old queen and go find a new location, and that's all decided by the worker bees. And then, again, they decide when the drones are no longer welcome, where they've--their-- they've, they've, they've expanded or they've exhausted their usefulness, so they, they are not allowed back in the hive. So, you know, the bees are just-- it's an amazing organism. They communicate through dancing and through pheromones and--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you very much, Madam President.

IBACH: Colleagues, Senator Storm would like to recognize 2 guests today, Luke Storm, his son, and Colleen Storm, his wife, from David City. They're under the south, south balcony. Please rise and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Sanders has 44 fourth graders from Cornerstone Christian School in Bellevue. They are in the north balcony. Students, please rise and be recognized by your

Nebraska Legislature. Turning back to the queue, Senator Hardin, you're recognized to speak.

HARDIN: Well, if the question is how do you follow a captain of a nuclear-powered destroyer from the Navy who's also a beekeeper, the answer is badly. But I will share some ideas. I do stand in favor of LB1050, and I'd like to share some of why. Among some other things, I'm, I'm kind of an entrepreneur, which my wife keeps assuring me is the French word that means I can't find a job. And so, one of those things is that we own and run a commercial childcare center. Happens to be in another state, in a major city, in a suburb of that city. I'm very thankful because kind of the only thing I think I'm really good at in life is being a cheerleader. And so I'm very fortunate, because in that childcare center, we have some of the absolutely most amazing employees anywhere. And so, I cheer them on, and they do amazing things. They, in fact, turned that childcare center into the highest-rated childcare center in that part of Colorado, and that's not an easy thing to do. They deserve all of that credit. The reason I point that out is to say one of the foundational pieces of that center is early childhood literacy. Our director is a very wise lady, and in fact, she went out to the local public schools and talked with the kindergarteners-- the kindergarten teachers within 10 miles, and asked this question: when a child walks through the doors to become a kindergartener in your class, what is that ideal child ready to do, from an educational standpoint? She put that together and came up with this is what the public school kindergarten teachers are looking for academically in their ideal student, and they set out to build it. Foundationally, it comes down to early childhood literacy. Well, is that a whole bunch of little kids sitting in rows, and sort of, you know, smack the back of their hand with a ruler? Far from it. Children learn at play. That's where you grow their capacity to learn. That's where you grow IQ, if you want to use that controversial phrase, intelligent quotient. It doesn't mean they all turn out the same. It just means they get postured to do the best they possibly can. And so, how does early childhood literacy work? Well, what they have taught me is that it starts at the crib. If you've ever read to a child, a little one in your arms, I dare you to read the book even the second or the third time. And if you're ever tired at night as a parent-- with the plastic pages of the book, and on the page 1 is Mr. Froggy, and page 2 is the bee, page 3 is Mr Elephant, and page 4 is the raccoon, if you're tired as a parent and you try to skip a page, good luck with that. Because if they've gone through the story a few times, that will not be permitted. And so, they're going to make you turn

back, because there's sequencing involved. That little arm and hand will reach out, grab that page, and flip it back. Don't mess it up. Get it right. And so, that's the beginning of early childhood literacy. You see, we're programmed, and God sort of built us for story. We love stories. None of us kind of are decided that we like stories. It's just in us. We like them. And so, that's a part of it. And I think the only challenge with LB1050 is that it's about 2 years too late. Because by the first grade, most of that formation for comprehension and intelligence, that trajectory is set, but I think LB1050 gets us in the right lane. Thank you, Mr. President.

IBACH: Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I stand in opposition to LB1050 based on the volume of concerns people are expressing to me, but fundamentally because of the fiscal note. And hopefully, I can ask Senator Murman to, to see if he could expound on how that fiscal note came down. But most importantly, this is another unfunded mandate. I'm hearing from-- I had a handout from Beatrice Public Schools that I shared with you their concerns. I have the handout from Lincoln Public Schools, where they have documented the increase in cost to them to implement LB1050, even with the amendment attached to it, so that is probably the biggest concern, from my perspective. It's the fiscal cost to the state of Nebraska and the unfunded mandate we're pushing on Lincoln Public Schools and all the other public schools, as I'm hearing from them. There are programs in place, and they're saying that it is requiring us not to redirect resources to the third graders, where all the educators are telling me that the emphasis has to be on early childhood education, those early grades of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. That is where, where they're seeing the greatest closing of any type of reading gaps or learning gaps in those children. It's important to focus the resources then because then they-- those children can get the resources they need to overcome any little impediment they have that is slowing down that child's potential and that child's progress. So I promised several people that I would read some of their comments. And certainly, you have the Beatrice Public Schools. They said I may pass them out and read it. They say, at a time when school districts are already facing difficult financial decisions, it is deeply concerning that we are reducing funding for special education, serving students with the greatest and most immediate needs, while simultaneously being asked to increase spending on students who may be able to catch up without such intervention or may not require retention at all. This shift in priorities raises serious questions about whether we are

truly allocating resources where they are most needed. Additionally, it is troubling to hear proponents suggest that the bill can be passed now and fixed in 2 years. Public education policy is too important to approach with a "build the plane while we're flying it" mentality. Our students, educators, and communities deserve thoughtful, well-researched, and complete legislation from the outset, not a work in progress driven or-- by urgency for a political win, rather than a sound policy. And furthermore, they say, there is a concern that LB1050 is modeled after legislation originating outside of Nebraska, reportedly from a policy bill factory in Florida that promotes similar measures across multiple states. Nebraska has long prided itself on doing things the Nebraska way: thoughtfully, collaboratively, and with a focus on what is best for our communities. We should not be importing policies that may not reflect our values, our student needs, or the realities of our schools. And here's another letter of concern. And this, this letter goes right to my heart and right to where my head always is. It talks about: the fiscal note for LB1050 does not mention the cost to schools, which can be considerable, and there is minimal provision for compensation. Any loss of special ed support will only hurt. And while the mandated testing and interventions may be key to improving reading proficiency, some degree of this is already being done by schools. But many more students may be included in very costly individual and small group environments. Using the simple math-- this is great. Using simple math, it would be about 40 students in Beatrice, times 12,500, which equates to \$500,000 to educate for an additional year. This is an annual cost to that school district. This is prior to accounting for the additional costs associated with testing, interventions, et cetera. In short, this is a very conservative estimate. But across the state, if you want to extrapolate, 7,200 kids would be about 30% of 24,000 enrolled. That would not be proficient on current standards, multiplied by 12,000 per student costs. That's \$86.4 million across the state every year. I think we need to seriously put a pause on this piece of legislation. Perhaps it would be a great interim study. I don't know if my colleagues probably already suggested that, to--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Juarez, you're next in the queue. Senator Spivey, you're next in the queue.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Madam President. So I want to kind of pick up on some of my thoughts and ideas that I mentioned before while running out of time on the mic, about specific parts of the amendment, which were adopted-- that I think it's actually kind of timely now, since they have been adopted and we need to dig in a little bit more. So one of my key concerns when thinking about this bill and what I've heard from my district-- again, I'm an Omaha senator, so Omaha Public Schools is within my purview-- is just around some of the local control and implementation of some of these projects. Colleagues have spoken on the mic previously, about some of the strategies that are already being implemented. So our moonshot goal, or our kind of big key initiative for Omaha Public Schools is around reading, within the budget, that actually moved on today. There was some appropriations to the ESUs around the reading coach pilot, where they needed more dollars to continue to figure out the implementation of that program. They needed the rest of the data for those-- 2 more years, so that then they can think about the widespread strategy and how do they continue to implement it. So there are things happening to address this really important issue. Again, OPS has this as a, a major priority. And when I think about some of the parts of the amendment, it doesn't seem as feasible when you think about what is needed for what school district, and how do they really apply that strategy. So when I'm looking at the AM, specifically, for example, it talks about-- this is currently page 15, so if you're following along and have the amendment that I printed out this morning, it looks at Section-- let's see-- Section 13. This is page 15, it's (h). It's around the access to before and after-school supplemental reading intervention with a teacher or tutor who has a specialized training in the reading intervention. So I think that is a great idea. I think we definitely need to have additional supports for those students to continue to think about the capacity needs to help them, again, understand, in my opinion, not just how to read, because kids can memorize folks do the things, but really comprehend and apply what they are reading. My concern with that and how we are dictating that in legislation for a district or even a school, because that is very micro to a school-level intervention, is do they already have the specialist that is trained for that reading intervention? Who is going to monitor the before or after-school access? What does that mean on transportation? So, for example, with my son, who is in sixth grade, he takes the bus in the afternoon. He gets out at 3.05 and is home by 4:00, which I feel like an hour on the bus is kind of long, but I get it. There's lots of drops. If he took the school bus in the morning, he has to be at the bus stop at 6:20, which is super early. That means

he has to get up at 5:20, an hour before. Because you know these kids move slow, he's going to forget things, and so that is a very early and long day for a, a kid to be able to then think clearly throughout their school day and really be able to engage. And so, if the only option for this supplemental reading intervention happens before school, what if that student does not have transportation by that parent to be able to get there? Does that mean that the busses are now going to have to provide that transportation and what does that mean for school routes? What does that look like for the breakfast schedule? What if that student, even in elementary, is responsible for helping their other siblings get off to school because that parent has a job and they are not able to be there, and that is the responsible person that is helping to navigate their siblings. So there are a number of concerns around when we mandate in policy like this, very specific, minute activities, that it doesn't really allow for the schools who know their students best to think about the structure and if it's actually feasible, and do we have the resources to do this. So if we have the resources and planning, that's great. And unfortunately, I don't think we do, and this is going to-- this example caused more harm because it cannot be implemented. So I see my light is on. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: That's your time, Senator. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I think this is my first time speaking on LB1050. So first, I'd like to thank Chair Murman and the Education Committee for taking on literacy in Nebraska. It is an extraordinarily important issue, and I-- I'm happy that we are having this conversation today. I really do appreciate it. I understand that there are maybe some concerns about LB1050 with the committee amendment that has been adopted, as it is right now. And I have not been super engaged in this topic, because much like TEEOSA, anything education-related outside of my own children's education, I, I haven't taken the time to really dig in and learn, because, you know, we all only have so much capacity, and dealing with Medicaid and developmental disabilities takes up a lot of my capacity. But I do care deeply about literacy. I, I share some of the concerns that have been stated today over the grade retention and, and what that could mean. And hearing the-- about talking about the reading scores in 2022, and how previously we were doing really well, I do have to think about that moment in time and what that means. For my own experience, in 2020, our schools shut down. My oldest was in kindergarten, so the second semester of their kindergarten year was--

it just ended abruptly, in March of 2020. And then, my oldest and my middle kid are just one grade apart. So the next year, my middle kid started kindergarten from home and my oldest started first grade from home, and that was the 2020-2021 school year. They eventually were back in person in the spring of '21. So by the '22 school year, they had not really-- they were in second and first grade at that point. They hadn't really had in-school instruction at all. So fourth graders also had not had a lot of in-school instruction at that point, and my kids had to have reading intervention, because as I like to say, it was clear I am not a good teacher. And my kids are avid readers. They love to read. But they did, for a year and a half, have reading intervention at school to help them get up to speed. So while I appreciate that our reading scores went down in 2022, I, I, I want to make sure that we're not over-correcting, and keeping in mind that in 2022, we were still recovering from at-home learning, with parents trying to work full-time, do their own Zoom meetings, and make sure their kids were getting educated, while everybody was sheltering in place and trying just to survive. Maybe it was just me. That was my scenario. So I-- you know, I look forward to continuing this conversation about literacy in Nebraska. I think there's been some other really important points made, as far as special education funding. We should be making sure that we are funding special education at a very high level, and that is going to result in better outcomes for our readers. And the grade retention, man-- the man-- I think it's the mandatory part that's maybe a sticking point and something that can be worked on. But we shouldn't be forcing kids through just to graduate to-- move them just to graduate. We don't want to have high schoolers that can't read. That's not OK. But we also don't want to hold people back automatically. If reading is the issue, we, we need to focus on those interventions. So I'd like to see some more work on this between General and Select File, on getting to a more moderate space in this, and I think that there's an opportunity here to really do something great in investing in our readers. So thank you, Mr. President-- Madam President. Madam President. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Colleagues, Senator Hallstrom would like to recognize 15 college students, located in the north balcony, from Peru State College. Please rise and-- please rise and be welcomed by your Nebraska Legislature. Turning back to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. Still waiting, I think, for maybe some of those substantive amendments to

come down. And I know everybody's excited about the, the Husker game tonight, too. And we've had a, a very long, very productive week together, so I think we'll hopefully be able to finish on a high note. But in the spirit of the bee discussion that has infused our budgetary deliberations and has been renewed in regards to this education debate today. Of course, it goes without saying that Nebraska designated the honeybee as our state insect, back in 1975, and carries with it as a powerful symbol so many connotations, in terms of collective action and spirit that are a part of our state's culture and fabric, and important to democracy, as well. So there's a lot of fun reading out there about the symbolism associated with the, the honeybee in that designation. Since I had an opportunity to open on my initial amendment on this legis-- or initial motion on this amendment this morning, I can tell you that my texts and emails from constituents and from citizens across our great state have, have been really eye-opening, and it's such an important part of how we center the state's attention to critical issues with this platform that we have the honor to steward during our course of service. And I've heard from a lot of adults who shared their experiences, struggling to become successful readers back when they were in school and kind of how, how they were able to navigate those challenges and be successful as a student and now as adults and in life. I've heard from a lot of parents who can relate to some of the stories that I shared about my kids, and they're sharing the stories from their kids as well. And of course, we've heard a lot from our teachers, who are on the front lines of these critical issues day in and day out, pouring their heart into helping kids learn and succeed and have the opportunity to be successful. I-- my mom was-- is, is a retired teacher now, and spent her whole life in education. First, at a very, very small rural school, Class 1 school, before she came into LPS to finish out her, her teach-- her, her career in the classroom. And I know, from spending time in her classrooms, all the weekends and evenings, doing bulletin boards, grading papers, helping out in, in her classroom, that there was no greater joy that she felt-- and I know this is a consistent thread for all of our amazing teachers. There was no greater joy when that, that kid literally had the light bulb go off when they were in the middle of a lesson, whether it was the spark on a, a, a, a mathematical concept, or whether it was the spark in terms of reading, or science, or social studies, or art, or whatever it might be. And recognizing you'll deal with challenging conditions and not a lot of money when you're in the classroom day in and day out, but it was that spark from kids that really fueled the passion to be there every day, to keep showing up, to keep making a positive

difference. And one thing that I want to kind of level set on today is, in addition to the stories, which are important to share and are generating a lot of good feedback from people who've had similar experiences, it, it seems one thing I'm hearing from my colleagues, one thing I'm hearing from citizens and teachers and parents, is a pretty clear recognition that we can't punish our way to success. Much like we can't cut our way to prosperity, we can't punish our way to success. So recognizing that there are important components in the legislation to provide more clarity, in terms of assessment, to codify--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --and expand-- thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I'm going to talk a little bit more about-- you know, I had talked about my son this morning, a little bit, and some of his experience with having a learning disability, and how really, you know, my take on it is every child is a little bit different. Some learn at a different pace. Some struggle as they go through life. I, I know I'd talked a little bit about him having some resources that we were able to provide for him, whether it was a tutor or going to Sylvan for extra help. He also-- within the school, they called it a resource room at that time, so he would go for extra help in the school with a, with a different teacher, and he would be taken out of the classroom and go and get extra help as well. And, and, and, you know, so he went through, at public school, through fifth grade. And then, we sent our kids to Central Catholic for middle school and high school. So when he went to, to Central Catholic then, in sixth grade, he struggled all through that time. And it's not that the teachers there didn't-- they, they really tried to help him a lot. I mean, they worked with him a lot. They partnered with the public schools in Grand Island to bring in-- I'd still call it a resources-- a spec-- special ed teacher, that I think she maybe came in once or twice a week, which really wasn't enough for him. So we eventually went ahead and moved him to Grand Island Senior High when he got into high school. And, of course, he struggled with some other issues along the way, but that's where he ended up graduating from, was Grand Island Senior High. My other 2 kids, they graduate-- graduated from Central Catholic. But-- and it wasn't, like I say, that the private school didn't try to work with him and try to help him, but there just wasn't the resources available

for him to be successful there. And I think it's that way for every child. They're-- some kids-- I have 2 granddaughters in Omaha, that-- I mean, they're like in first and third grade, and they're reading more than I would have ever read when I was probably even in high school. So I really commend them and my daughter for getting them interested in reading and, and all the things that they're doing. You know, I had the opportunity this morning to meet with some students from Grand Island. They're with the JAG program. And you know, we got to talk a lot about-- you know, they go to an alternative school in Grand Island. And so, you know, they struggle with, with either-- they've had some struggles in school with maybe some academics, or maybe they've had some other issues that led them to alternative school. We didn't really go into that, but they talked about some of the life experiences they've had of growing up in poverty, and how that really affects them academically. And so, I know that one of the students also-- I thought it was really brave of them to talk a lot about what, what, what their situation was and how she struggled with some-- not only just with poverty but also with the mental health issues. And she was a strong advocate for herself. I commended her for that. And I talked to them a lot about how, as young people, you need to have your voices heard, whether it's coming down here and talking to, to senators, as they did, or even on the local level, talking to, like, your school board, or talking to other community leaders, and just talking about, you know, maybe some of the struggles that you have, and how maybe you-- if you have ideas, and how you can change things. I think those are all great things that, that young people can do. I know I've had the opportunity to talk to eighth grade students, fourth graders, I've talked-- I talk to as many of the students in Grand Island as I can, or come when they invite me to come and speak. It's always interesting to have them ask me questions about how can I get involved or how can I be more-- have my voice heard more. And, and I, I also go back to my son, and I tell him the story of when he was a, a teenager, a young teenager, they wanted a skateboard park in Grand Island, and how they went and advocated on their behalf, and how they did get the skateboard park. And it's still there in Grand Island today, and they've actually just re-- redid it. So I mean, those are all things that young people can do. And then I also want to say one other thing that, you know, it's not just one person's fault in how this is all happening. You know, it takes parents, the school district, teachers, and students, you know, all working together to make sure that students can be, can be successful. And so the more we can get everybody on board, the more successful students can be. And, and sometimes--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

QUICK: Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Madam President. In the time that we've been discussing this measure, I've had through social media, on Instagram, on Facebook, through our email, I think my staff told me somebody physically came by the office today even, a lot of people have reached out, text about this measure. Most of them teachers, some of them parents. And I'm sort of happy that there are so many people engaged in this debate from the second house right now. And by that, I mean from the general population. Because, you know, it's, it's kind of the end of a, of a week, and you never really know who's listening. So it's been interesting to hear some of the feedback from people who have reached out to me already. I shared one teacher's concern that it would-- that, that increasing retention in our schools would have more older students learning with younger students, that that could cause some, some social challenges, I suppose. But another thing that someone else raised was that one of the things we need to do to improve outcomes for learning in children is just measurement, like having the data to actually know what people are achieving, what students are achieving, and being able to correlate that back to what was taught, to what was it that the, the teacher was doing, what was their training, what is it the school is providing? And I can think of a handful of times in this Legislature, when we've had amendments to add measurement tools to education policies that were defeated. And so I just sort of have to reflect on how many opportunities we've had in this legislature to help kids, to increase educational outcomes in ways that are proven through data, that are proving through research, but the thing that makes its way to the floor is this punitive, punishing, regressive, retention. And I actually learned the word retention this year. We call it getting held back. And I guess getting held back doesn't sound like such a slick phrase or such like a term of legal art or something like that. I learned recently that we call it retention now, but holding kids back in third grade who aren't at the right reading level, I don't think it's that kids fail to read at their grade level by third grade because they weren't threatened enough. And I keep thinking back to something one of our colleagues said, that these kids have to, quote unquote, have consequences. I wrote, I wrote that down on my sheet, that there have been no consequences for kids who are poor readers. Given that many of you, colleagues, are poor readers yourselves, can't you relate to the shame

that young kids feel when they struggle to read at the same level as their peers? Don't you relate to the anxiety when somebody hands you a sheet of paper, and you know that you're going to struggle to read it? That the eyes of, you know, 2 million Nebraskans, plus potentially more, are on you, as you're reading something on the floor of the Legislature and you're struggling? Isn't that a consequence? And don't you think that when someone is, you know, seven, eight, nine years old. And they're in a classroom, and they are struggling with self-esteem issues of their own, it's hard to be a little kid, the social dynamics are already starting. Don't you think that there are already consequences that they're experiencing as well? I don't think that people struggle in school because they don't get consequences. I think that we have increased punitive consequences, and that is a failure of the system long before third grade. So the question becomes, why aren't we investing before third grade, before it becomes a problem, instead of just defaulting to holding the kids back? I've made the point that for just a little more than the cost of LB1050 as amended, we could afford to feed all the kids in school in Nebraska, with federal funds as well. So there are low-cost ways to help educational outcomes for kids. And so, it's so frustrating that the solution that does come before us is a punitive one, is a punishment, is holding the kids back because, quote unquote, the poor readers don't have enough consequences. I think that taking action to punish these kids is going to probably end up in worse outcomes for them than better. Another thing that a-- I've taken notes on the messages I've gotten. Another thing that was suggested was--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

HUNT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

IBACH: Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Madam President. And later good afternoon, folks that are still engaging in the debate and sticking with us through this really important topic. I really, again, appreciate the insights from my colleagues that are on the Education Committee working on the issue, and then also folks like Senator Juarez, who has served on the school board and other capacities that are related to education. So I wanted to go back to parts of the AM that were still concerning to me, and that I felt like are not resolved, and if this measure moves forward, can be addressed from General to Select. But it's around some of the data and reporting, which is Section 16. So I do have a, a, a

bit of heartburn because I think, as we talk about data and reporting overall, it's important to think about how data informs our decisions and the policies that we make. And I am going to go back and revisit LB653, which this body passed, which looked at the suspension of kids, K through second grade. And there were 2 amendments. One was mine that was offered to improve LB653, which specifically looked at data. And it looked at data because we know, from NDE's perspective, that there are disproportionate populations of young people that are impacted by suspensions. My amendment said, let's make sure that every district is providing that, making it readily accessible on their website, because it should be what they're collecting already, and it's disaggregated by key indicators, which was not adopted by this body. However, in this amendment, if folks have not looked at it, it has Section 16, which is about the reports, which I think is a start but still does not give full accountability around how data can inform policy and some of our decisions. So in here, it has that the Commissioner of Education shall file a report electronically with the Clerk of the Legislature relating to the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act. And then, it starts to outline what can be included in but is not limited. So it has number of students identified with having a reading deficiency, not pers-- persistent reading deficiency-- but not a persistent reading deficiency-- which, I don't know what the difference in that would be; who were identified as having a reading deficiency, but not a persistent reading deficiency, for a portion of the school year and who are no longer identified; it has the number of students who were identified as having a persistent reading deficiency for a portion of the school year, but not the full school year; and then that the report is filed July 1, 2029; and that-- who were also retained in grade 3 pursuant to Section 12 of this act; for whom a meeting pursuant to Section 11 of this act resulted in agreement to retain the kid-- so it just kind of talks about, like, what happened. What it doesn't talk about is the disaggregation and collection of demographics for this portion. Because we know, from national data, as well as the current data that NDE is collecting around reading proficiencies, suspensions, and other measures of education, that we have to have those data points in order to make informed decisions and ensure that they are not disproportionate-- groups that are disproportionately impacted by what we passed. My first time on the mic, very early in this debate, I talked about parents being able to make the best decisions for their kids, and what does that look like. And there's already currently data available to us that shows English language learners and students of color, particularly black, native, and Hispanic, are disproportionately impacted by some of the measures

that we are talking about. And so to not have that represented in a portion of reporting, I think is a misstep and a missed opportunity to make and collect the right type of data to continue to improve policy. And then, "little p practice" within our districts and local schools, I think it's a continued conversation around the data that is missing from this reporting. It is very broad, and I-- again, doesn't align to other measures that are coming alongside of this, like the, the reading coaching data, and some of the other pieces around the institution of education that would make it-- make the student successful or not. Right? It's not just on the student, but all of the other parts that come alongside. And so, I see my light is up and that Madam President is probably going to ding me, and tell me my time is up. And so, I will see how many times I have on the mic to finish this thought around--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Juarez, you're recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. And I'm sorry that I missed my last time slot here. I'm trying to get to organized from my desk. OK. I just wanted to, I guess, open up with a positive that I have, in regards to reading in our state. And this is just a fact here. While states with comparable policies, Arizona, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Ohio, have seen fourth grade reading increases, there is no evidence that these results are being sustained into the secondary years. The effect with the policy intervention appears to fade completely by eighth grade. Nebraska already outperforms all those comparison states except Ohio, so there's a positive, for a change, that we can discuss. The bill introduces new require-- requirements without clarity, including undefined, transitional settings for retained students. Retention usually means repeating all aspects of third grade, not just reading. And again, the emphasis on creating an ambiguous and unfunded mandate. Districts are already implementing universal screening, MTSS frameworks, targeted tutoring and intervention, and the science of reading. Recommend continuing investment in high-quality, grade level instruction, early identification and intervention, pre-K to, to third, to third grade, teacher development and coaching, and family literacy and engagement. And that's one of the reasons why I mentioned the topic to the parents that I met yesterday, with the Heartland Worker Center. I, I think that that really is a successful step to take, family literacy. I

wanted to talk-- mention some of the proven research-based interventions that improve reading outcomes, explicit systematic foundational skills instruction, which is structured literacy/science of reading, high dosage, one-on-one or small group tutoring, multi-tiered systems of support, as was mentioned in the-- in my earlier comment, response to intervention, intensive teacher professional development in the science of reading, which OPS has already been on top of that development also, high-quality early childhood and summer literacy program. I really do think that as our session is coming to an end here that emphasizing this summer literacy program I think is really important. I know that when I was growing up, I always participated in the summer reading program at the library. And I'm very fortunate that I have always loved to read. And I always remember going home with a stack of books. And of course, since I grew up poor in, in south Omaha neighborhood. I actually would walk to the library myself, to go get my books and bring them home. And as I've told, as I've told others, I know I was a nerd, but I'm not ashamed of being a nerd. I did enjoy reading, and I think that reading definitely leads to success. That's why I'm so supportive of trying to emphasize this message. As and I-- and as I mentioned earlier, I will continue to work with other groups to get our reading results improved. Thank you, and I yield the rest of my time.

IBACH: Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Madam President. Still just trying to catch up to speed on this bill, but I think we'll probably get to a vote on it in the next 20 minutes or so. Not normally at a loss for words. I've been, I've been reflecting a lot on, on my, my time here, my 8 years here. I have mostly had, you know, counting down the days types of feelings. But I have also been trying to think about the positives of this experience, and I had a lovely conversation yesterday with Senator Riepe, about-- yes. I had a lovely conversation with you, Senator Riepe. I'm as shocked as you are-- about how our brains work to help us forget things that are hard, and just remember more of the positive things. And my brain isn't there yet, but I'm trying, I'm trying to get to this point where I can think of the positive things from my experience here. And I do think that I, as an individual, have grown a lot in this job, from how I approached it my, my first year, my first biennium, to now. And a lot of that comes with building relationships with people who have different-- I wouldn't say values than me, but different priorities and different backgrounds from me. And it-- that experience in, in this place is been just-- one of the most positive parts is getting to know people who I would never have

known otherwise in my life, and building friendships with them and relationships, just beyond here. And it's not just people who are here in the body. I've talked about ones that were here before. I have mad love for Senator Tim Gregert. Attorney General Mike Hilgers is a friend of mine, and Senat-- former Senator Julie Slama is a friend of mine, and those are people that I probably would never have crossed paths with or even built friendships with if it weren't for the opportunity here. And I love when I have the opportunity to work on something with someone who I clash heads with more often than I don't, and that's when like, the real magic happens, is when we find common ground. So I just wanted to share those thoughts, because I have been reflecting a lot on my time here. And while it has been challenging personally, professionally, emotionally, a lot while I've been here, it also has been a gift. And getting to know my colleagues and being pushed by my colleagues to think differently is a gift, so I thank you all for that. And I hope that you all will continue to push one another to think differently and continue to have conversations. I was, I was counting votes, I think it was yesterday, on one of the amendments, and somebody was asking about vote counting. Do it. Count votes. Doesn't have to be for yourself. It is the best way to talk to each other. You go around and you talk to every single person that you can, and that's how you get to know people, really. And it-- you-- not even if you're trying to persuade or not, just trying to figure out where we're at on a, a bill, it's really-- it's a great thing to do. And I just encourage you all to keep an open heart and an open mind, and then wonderful things might happen as a result. So I look forward to seeing what we do with literacy in Nebraska on this bill, and I hope everybody has a good weekend. Thank you, Mr. Presi-- Madam. Madam. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Sanders, you're recognized to speak.

SANDERS: Good afternoon, Madam President. I rise on a point of privilege, and, I think, a very fitting addition to the debate on LB1050. I am here to recognize a truly remarkable young Nebraskan, Wilson Munsterman. And I speak briefly on-- I will speak briefly on LR483. I came to know Wilson when he contributed to my 2023 interim study, LR2029, which examined the lack of education and resources available to foster and adoptive families. Even Wilson stood out for his thoughtfulness, maturity, and willingness to speak honestly about his experiences. It is especially meaningful to recognize him today, because Wilson has shared that the experience of preparing his testimony for LR2029 helped inspire him to write Marked by Adoption, a book that has already touched and educated so many others. Wilson is

from Omaha, Nebraska, and his courage, insight, and determination deserves recognition from this body. As reflected in LR483, Wilson is an adoptee from China who wrote *Marked by Adoption* to help explain the challenges and perspectives of adopted children, from his own perspective. He published his book as a student at Creighton University, where he is studying business administration. With wisdom beyond his years, Wilson choose-- chose his own story to help others better understand the lifelong realities that adopted children may carry with them. Wilson's work has already made a meaningful impact. His book reached number one release status on Amazon, earned placement in the collection of the Library of Congress, joined the shelves of Creighton University Memorial Library, was added to adoption agency reading lists, was featured by the Adoption Medicine Clinic at the University of Minnesota, and recognized by Governor Pillen. Those are extraordinary accomplishments for any author, but they are especially impressive, impressive achievement for someone so young as Wilson, who is 19. There is something deeply admirable about a young person who chooses not only to achieve, but to contribute. Wilson has done both. He has taken his own experience and turned it into something that educators encourage and guides others. Nebraska should be proud of Wilson Munsterman. I know I certainly am. He represents the very best of our state: thoughtful, courageous, accomplished, and committed to making a difference in the lives of others. So today, I am honored to recognize Wilson through LR483, and to congratulate him on the success of *Marked by Adoption*. I have no doubt that this is only the beginning of good work that he will continue to do. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Colleagues, Senator DeKay would like to recognize 20 students in the north balcony, from Elkhorn Valley FFA. Please rise and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Turning back to the queue, Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak. This is also your third time on the mic.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mad-- thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome to the students. I know we always appreciate and enjoy when we have student visitors here. And what a great time to have young leaders in the building, as we talk about solutions and ideas to improve our education system in Nebraska. So, I want to also just perhaps do 2 things in this time at the mic, which is my last time to visit today. I'm sure you're all very excited about that. But I, I want to kind of set the record straight in terms of where we are procedurally, and do a little level set in terms of where we are with education policy writ large, in Nebraska. So I'm going to continue to work with my friend, Senator Murman, and, and other stakeholders on

this issue, if this bill moves forward today. And I'm going to take him at his word, which I know is good and sound and trustworthy, that if-- as this measure continues to move through, if we're not able to find significant consensus, that it won't come back this session. But if we can continue to do the hard work off, off the mic, in between General and Select File, I know, I know he will keep his word. And I know that might be the best way to bring a lot of complex stakeholders together to figure out what the next best iteration is for Select File, after hearing some of the feedback and concerns expressed today, which I think was really, really fantastic debate. So the other thing that I just want to make sure to point out here, is that there's a lot of statistics out there in regards to educational policy and metrics for academic success. And that's, that's a good thing, that a lot of different stakeholders are looking at what's happening in Nebraska and our sister states, kind of just generally, so that we can see where we're doing well and have a clear-eyed assessment of where we need to do better. And I want to point out a couple of things. So this is from the Nebraska Department of Education, in January of last year, where they helped to provide an analysis that actually, Nebraska's fourth and eighth graders were scoring higher than the national average in math, and that we're about at the national average for reading. Nebraska was also outperforming many other states across the country in math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. And then, after it goes through kind of an analysis of where we were at that point in time as compared to our sister states, the, the news release also details what I think is a very exciting development, and that is the fact that the Nebraska State Board of Education has identified literacy as the key priority for the state. And they've set a goal to increase third grade proficiency in language arts to 75% proficiency by 2030, which is just a few years away. And in order to accomplish these sound goals, the Nebraska Department of Education was awarded a \$55 million comprehensive liter-- literacy State Development Grant. And it's a five-year grant, and it's about pouring into pre-literacy skills, birth to grade 12, with an emphasis on disadvantaged kids. So I, I, I, I want to make sure that that is not divorced from the conversation. We talk about that a lot in Education Committee, and it's part of the, the context-- the important context for, for this measure. Additionally, when you look at metrics like the ACT, compared to our peer states, and particularly our peer states that test everybody, like Nebraska does-- and not everybody does-- Nebraska really continues to stand out there in terms of student performance. When you compare us to the 13 states with more than 90 percent of kids who are taking the ACT, actually only Montana and

Wisconsin scored better. So, I, I know that there are different metrics out there. I, I, I think it's important that we're clear-eyed about the challenges that we have with reading, but I also don't want to paint too gloomy of a picture that doesn't recognize the incredible success of our students and compared to our sister states, at various levels and at various points of time. And this comes, despite the fact that Nebraska consistently ranks at the top-- at the lowest bottom for U.S. starting teacher pay. I think our current ranking right now is 49th out of 50 states. It levels up and gets closer to the national average as teachers progress through their careers and is particularly higher in urban districts, like Omaha and Lincoln. But, we, we have successes to build on--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --in Nebraska education, and I think this can be a part of that. Thank you, Mr. Pres-- Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Madam President. I know I talked earlier about talking to the JAG students that were here, and, and, you know, some of the life experiences that they'd had, and how maybe that-- maybe set them back, maybe, in some of their academic time, growing up, and going to school. And I still think that's one of the things that we don't-- we're not really taking into account here, either, is maybe that, you know, we're, we're taking into account, maybe, kids who have a disability of some type, or something like that, or maybe, maybe they have autism or a developmental disability, and we're taking that into account, but we're also not taking into some of the more-- like, like peo-- kids that live in poverty. You know, I was talking with my sister one day, and we were just talking about the differences, maybe, between Grand Island Public Schools, you know, and how large they are compared to a smaller public school, like where she worked at. She worked at Twin River, which was in Gen-- Genoa, so it's Silver Creek and Genoa, a, a consolidated school. And she taught third grade. And she talked about, you know-- I talked about some of the kids who live in poverty in Grand Island, and how that can-- you know, how they move, and how maybe they attend a different school, and she said the same thing happens, even in the smaller schools. And they would have students that would come through, periodically, where they-- maybe that-- they lived in Columbus, for example. And then, maybe that parent lost a job, or maybe they lost their, their housing there, and so they moved to someplace like Silver Creek or Genoa, and then they

would live for there for a little bit. And she says, the next thing you know, they're gone from there and they've moved to somewhere else. So whether it's a job transfer or, you know-- but she, she knew of a couple that were-- that lived in poverty, and she said those children struggled in school. You know, there was no consistency to-- for them to learn, you know, in any one school, to build relationships with students, to build relationships with teachers. And so, I think sometimes we're not taking all that into account in maybe, some of the, the reading proficiency that happens, along with-- like I talked before, whether it's, you know, you know, you know, parents being involved with the students. I think when you see that happen, with-- the parents are involved with, with the, with the school itself, with, with their student, and having that involvement helps those kids to be successful. And then, then you have, you know, kids like my son, who struggled-- who had a learning disability. And both my wife and I would work with him when he'd get home from school to help him, and that was all through his school career, whether it was math or reading or anything, we, we would sit down at the table and work with him. And I know there was times that we grew frustrated trying to just help him learn. And, and there are some students that just are going to have that, that-- not-- they won't have the ability to pick things up as fast as other students, so we just have to make sure we're taking that into account. I don't agree with holding students back. I think that's a bad plan. I think maybe we should be investing more in early childhood education and finding ways that we can try to address it in that way, to help the students to be more successful. And like I mentioned earlier, you know, every child learns at a different rate. Like I said, I talked about my granddaughters from Omaha. They're so smart, and they're, they're-- I, I always told them they're-- you're, you're too smart for your own good, because they, they know so much. And they-- and-- like the youngest one, a first grader, she was saying big words that I don't-- and she seemed to understand what the word was, but I couldn't believe that she was talking and using words when she was probably in kindergarten and preschool. And so-- and it's fun to hear them talk and use those type-- that type-- those type of words, but I'm sure those are things that either they picked up talking with other students, wherever-- if they were in preschool, or in their school, or listening to adults talk and they just pick it up and they-- and they're able to use that, that. So. But again, I, I am opposed to LB1050, and I'm not for holding kids back. And with that, I'll yield the rest of my time. Thank you, Madam President.

IBACH: Senator Juarez, you're recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone again, everyone online. And I rise in support of FA1007. Boy, my eyes are getting bad. OK. I wanted to share this information from a teacher, because I do think it's important that our comments today reflect our voices. I'm writing to voice my concern for LB1050, the retention bill. As a career educator, I do not believe this is in the best interests of the students of Nebraska. If you have visited various schools and met with a cross-section of educators, administrators, and experts in the research, you know that not all students, or adults for that matter, are created equal. To say, as an analogy, that all, that all horses, if given the same resources and interventions, will reach the finish line at the same time, is ridiculous. Nebraska has always rated very high on the scale of public education and student achievement. I know this doesn't mean we can't do better. That is why educators are continually growing in their knowledge of best practices through coursework, in-service, et cetera. They are hearing from the experts. Educators are lifelong learners. We know that interventions, direct instruction, repetition, and other classroom strategies work, but it still does not account for the difference in student learning. We don't all learn at the same rate, but one-size-fits-all is not the answer. We cannot get all students to the same place at the time, when you understand learning disabilities, handicap needs, behavior-impaired students, low income, minorities, age, et cetera. I do agree that retention, as on an individual basis, is sometimes effective, but to consider putting all students in the same basket will be detrimental to their emotional and social behaviors. Studies show that retention looks effective for the first year or so. But by the end of 5 years, the advantage has reverted to where they were. There is also a concern for the already pressure, stress, and workload placed on educators to perform. The educators, for the most part, in Nebraska, work their tails off to get all students advancing at the rate they can handle. We are losing educators right and left, because students are coming with great needs, with many times, little parental support, so their burden is on them to fix all the problems from 8-3 every day, knowing many students go home to poverty, neglect, and lack of parental support. I urge you to not fall into the path some states are leaning toward, states that have much worse records than Nebraska. We need funding and additional support to continue providing the necessary interventions, such as reading specialists, interventionists, ELL teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, counselors, et cetera. I urge you to not fall into the path some states-- wait, I'm sorry. If you live in the real world of many schools with high poverty rates, minorities, and students with

disabilities such as autism, you know they need extra support, not just one more year of third grade. We are not all on the same path when we graduate. Some students will go on to college, some trade school, and some the workforce. Excuse me. Some will need care for their entire life. So to say that they should pass a test by the end of third grade or stay where you are, is not the answer. I'm sorry. I have spoken to many people and they said they would never get out of third grade if that were the case, but their teachers did not give up and continued giving the support and interventions needed throughout their school years. Some may even need support and interventions in college. Consider what a demeaning and stressful situation this gives to the students and teachers when you throw all students into one basket. At the end of the race, retaining students that don't make the cut, so to speak, will not change the outcome, because we all have our strengths and weaknesses. But how we feel about our achievements makes the difference, so don't put a letter on their back that says "you aren't smart or good enough" when they are 9 years old. Thank you very much to the teacher--

IBACH: That's your time, Senator.

JUAREZ: --who submitted this letter. Thank you.

IBACH: Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Conrad, you're welcome to close on FA1007.

CONRAD: Thank you, Madam President. I'd withdraw, please.

IBACH: So ordered.

CLERK: Madam President, Senator Conrad, I have FA1008, with a note that you would withdraw.

CONRAD: Yes, please.

IBACH: So ordered.

CLERK: In that case, Madam President, I have nothing further at this time.

IBACH: Senator Murman, you're recognized to close on LB1050.

MURMAN: Thank you, Madam President. No matter what side of this issue we're on, I think we can all agree that we want what's best for our children and for our students. So is it best to, you know, if we can't

get them proficient by third grade-- and by the way, the reports go in on the students, starting in kindergarten, so parents will be well aware of where their student stands before third grade. It's not necessary to wait until third grade to re-- retain the student if, if parents and teachers think that is the best thing for the student. The third grade is just the-- where the ultimate decision will be made that, you know, every chance is-- every support's been done, and they can't get-- the student can't get to the point where they need to be by third grade, the parents will really have to sign off to get them-- the student to advance. If the, if the parent thinks that that emotionally would be too hard for their child to be held back, the parents have that opportunity. And by the way, this is not punishment at all. I've heard several people say this is punitive, this is punishment. I've heard some from schools, even, that this is punishment. It's not that at all. It's trying to do what's best for the, the students. It's worked in other states. Many states are doing it now, I think, up to 17, and most of those states are ahead of us on the NAEP score. What we've been doing needs to be improved upon. We've, we've put a lot of the supports in, in place. This is just one more step that I think would be very positive, and with the parental override, it's, it's not a complete mandate now. We have the extra time to do whatever needs to be done at the local level, if they do determine that they'll be holding a lot of kids back. It-- it's all about accountability, too, for, first of all, the schools, and also for the parents, and I think that's important. It's, it's not good for the kids just to move them forward when they can't read. They've got to read to learn beyond third grade. So I think this is a very good bill the way it's amended, and I just ask for your vote to move it on to Select File. We can have further-- at, at that time, we'll figure out if we have enough support to move beyond that point. But I would ask at least for your vote to move this to Select File, and we'll determine where we're at from there. There's negotiations going on, so I think there is very possibly a path forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

IBACH: Colleagues, the question before the body is the advancement of LB1050 to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; those opposed vote nay. There's been a request to place the house under call. The question is, shall the house go under call? All those in favor vote aye; those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 37 ayes, 4 nays to place the house under call.

IBACH: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house is under call. Senator Guereca, please return to the floor. All unexcused members are present. The question is the advancement of the bill. There was a vote open. Senator Murman, will you take call-ins?

CLERK: Senator Guereca voting no.

IBACH: There's been a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Arch not voting. Senator Armendariz voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Bostar voting yes. Senator Brandt not voting. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh not voting. Senator Clements voting yes. Senator Clouse voting yes. Senator Conrad voting yes. Senator DeBoer. Senator DeKay voting yes. Senor Dorn voting yes. Senator Dover voting yes. Senator Dungan. Senator Fredrickson voting no. Senator Guereca voting no. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Holdcroft not voting. Senator Hughes not voting. Senator Hunt voting no. Senator Ibach not voting. Senator Jacobson not voting. Senator Juarez voting no. Senator Kauth voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes. Senator Lonowski voting yes. Senator McKinney not voting. Senator Fred Meyer voting yes. Senator Glen Meyer voting yes. Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Prokop voting no. Senator Quick not voting. Senator Raybould voting no. Senator Riepe voting no. Senator Rountree not voting. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Spivey not voting. Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Strommen not voting. Senator von Gillern not voting. Senator Wordekemper voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Quick voting no. Vote is 26 ayes, 10 nays on advancement of the bill, Madam President.

IBACH: The bill is advanced. I raise the call. Mr. Clerk, for items.

CLERK: Madam President, amendments to be printed from Senator Spivey, to LB1050A; Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, to LB1010; and a priority motion, Senator Fredrickson would move to adjourn the body until Monday, March 30, at 9:00 a.m.

IBACH: Senator, the question-- Senators, the question before the body is-- there's, there's been a request for a machine vote. Senators,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
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you've heard the request for the motion. All the-- excuse me. There's been a request for a machine vote to adjourn. All those in favor vote aye; those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 29 ayes, 12 nays to adjourn, Madam President.

IBACH: We are adjourned.