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Education Committee
February 04, 2014

[LB864 LB967 LB984 LB992 LB1069]

The Committee on Education met at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 4, 2014, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB992, LB864, LB984, LB967, and LB1069. Senators present: Kate Sullivan, Chairperson; Jim Scheer, Vice Chairperson; Bill Avery; Tanya Cook; Ken Haar; Rick Kolowski; and Les Seiler. Senators absent: Al Davis.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: (Recorder malfunction) We have most of our committee present here. To my immediate right is Senator Rick Kolowski of Omaha. To my far left is Senator Ken Haar of Malcolm, and to his right is Senator Tanya Cook of Omaha. And to her right is Senator Les Seiler of Hastings. To my immediate left LaMont Rainey who is one of the legal counsels for the Education Committee. And coming in is my noble and reliable Vice Chair, Senator Jim Scheer of Norfolk. And at my far right is Mandy Mizerski who is the committee clerk. We also have helping us today a page, Nate Funk from Norfolk. He's a student at UNL. And he may be joined...I don't know what this weather is doing to everyone, but we have another page, Tyler Zentner who actually is also from Cedar Rapids and is also a student from UNL. Today we have 5 bills before us, LB992, LB864, LB984, LB967, and LB1069. And so if you are planning to testify for any of these bills, please pick up a green sign-in sheet that is at the table at either entrance. If you do not wish to testify but would like your name entered into the official record as being present at the hearing, there's a form on the tables to do that as well. And this, too, will be made part of the official record. Regarding the green sheet, we ask that you fill it out before you testify and please print. And it's important to fill it out in its entirety. When you come to testify, please give the sign in sheet to the committee clerk, and this will be part of the accurate public record. If you do not choose to testify, you may submit comments in writing, and we have several of those today. And they will be read into the official record. If you have handouts, make sure you have 12 copies for the pages to hand out to the committee. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name, and please spell both your first and last names again to ensure that we get an accurate record. I'd ask that you please turn off your cell phones, pagers, or anything that makes noise so as not to distract us from the testifiers. We will be using the light system today for all the testifiers, the introducer excluded from that requirement. You'll have five minutes as a testifier to make your remarks to the committee. When you see the yellow light come on, that means you need to start wrapping up your comments. And when the red light comes on, I'd ask that you...your time has concluded. So I think that takes care of all the housekeeping. We have one member of the committee who is not able to be here today. Senator Davis from Hyannis, he's out of town. And Senator Avery from Lincoln I think will be joining us later. So with that we will begin the hearing, and we will start with LB992 to create the Early Childhood Data Governing Board (sic--Body) being introduced by Senator Howard. Welcome.

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SENATOR HOWARD: (Exhibit 1) Thank you for having me. It's my first time here. Okay, and I have an amendment for Nate to pass out. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Sullivan and members of the committee. For the record, I am Senator Sara Howard, H-o-w-a-r-d, and I represent District 9. Last year, the Legislature made tremendous strides in increasing access to quality early childhood care and education through the establishment of the Step Up to Quality Child Care Act and increased investment to the Early Education Endowment Fund. To leverage these investments and those made in the future, we must be able to transform early childhood data into actionable information. Action requires effective and efficient collection of early childhood data across departments and agencies. To that end, today I am introducing LB992 which seeks to create an Early Childhood Data Governing Body. The purpose of the governing body is to develop a plan to create and sustain a unified early childhood data system in Nebraska. The bill brings together a team of decision makers with authority over budgets and agency policies, stakeholders who understand data and how it is used, and information technology professionals. I have passed out an amendment to this section to add the executive director of the Foster Care Review Office or a designee. The FCRO has knowledge that will be critical in this effort, and I thank them for suggesting that they be a part of the governing body. There are also a few technical changes that will need to be made. You should have an e-mail from my office detailing those changes, and I believe they are already in your marked-up copies. All right, LaMont, look. [LB992]

LaMONT RAINEY: Yes. [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: All right, thank you. The Early Childhood Data Governing Body will propose a plan that will include fully integrated data from the State Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services to improve coordination and streamlining of services, guide resource allocation, and provide greater accountability for investment in early childhood services. The body shall report to the Health and Human Services Committee and the Education Committee on its activities January 1, 2015, and July 1, 2015, and complete the plan and provide a written report to the Governor and Legislature by July 1, 2016. This summer, Senator Nordquist held a meeting attended by senators and stakeholders on LR257. He asked attendees to prioritize issues and determine what would have the greatest impact on early childhood education in our state. The unified data system was a top priority of that group second only to work force development. It was also chosen by the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council as a priority to improve early childhood education in Nebraska. Because of the weather, you should have received written testimony about these recommendations; one from Sarah Ann Kotchian--I have a hard time with her name--with the Holland Children's Movement, and Barbara Jackson from the Munroe-Meyer Institute. But I want to emphasize how important breaking down the silos between agencies and departments is to Nebraska's children and their futures. The ability to analyze data, to support policies and strategic public investment, to expand

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access to Nebraska's high-quality early childhood care and education services is critical to learning and development and to our state's economic future. I have no doubt that this committee is dedicated to early childhood education and to giving Nebraska's children the best start possible. Each year, Nebraska invests millions of dollars in young children through the Child Care and Development Fund, Head Start, early childhood care and education funding, TANF, Title I preschool programs, special education preschool grants, and early childhood mental health funding. Yet there remains skepticism among our colleagues of its efficacy. This is why comprehensive data is so important. It's not enough for experts to make pronouncements, and we can't always speak about the brain science. We have to be able to make the case to our colleagues and to the public that our policies and the millions we invest are guided by the critical impact they have on Nebraska's children. LB992 is essential to making that case. I thank you for your time and attention to this bill, and I would be happy to take any questions. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Howard. As I listen to you and read the bill, certainly you're seeking collection of data and collaboration among all the entities involved to improve outcomes. And it's a little hard to anticipate what they might be. But by the same token, what would you expect would be improvements in what we're currently doing that might come about from this effort? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: I think by having an early childhood governing data--and that's an excellent question--data governing body, we would be able to monitor those outcomes to prove that we're doing a good job. Coming from a healthcare background, we have constant quality outcomes that we measure annually in order to see if we're doing a good job or if we need to change focus or do something differently. And I think being able to gather data across both Health and Human Services and the Education Department, we would really be able to guide our work so that our investments actually improve outcomes, so that we can see that our investment is improving outcomes. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Any other...Senator Scheer. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Good afternoon, Senator Howard. One thing, just a matter of record, you mentioned Mrs. Jackson's letter. And I just wanted to make sure, for the record, she was entering that as an individual, not on behalf of the institution. And for whatever reason I don't want her to have a problem via that. So I just wanted to make sure the record states it as she is...the letter is from herself according to what I've read. To your bill, I'm not a big fan of huge numbers, and this looks to me like huge numbers. I mean, I think 17 people. No way to pare this down to a number that...I mean, there's a lot of representation from not a lot of different entities, you know, a lot from Health and Human Services, a lot from the Department of Education. No way to consolidate those numbers down to a smaller group that might be

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able to function a little more pragmatically? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: That's a good question, and I'd be happy to work with the advocates and with you to consider having smaller numbers. I think the goal was to make sure that we have the true decision makers at the table, and that because early childhood is impacted by a variety of different programs, that making sure that each program was represented so that we were able to gather quality outcomes from each of those diverse programs. But yes, that's something that I would definitely consider. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: I just didn't know if there was a specific purpose for necessarily each one being on there or if it was just a list of everyone that's usually involved in those type of discussions. And certainly from looking at the Department of Education, I don't know that they would not trust one or two of those people to be on board rather than six- or seven-type deal. That may be true of the other entities that are on here. I just know from my experience the larger the number it gets, a lot of times the harder it is to reach a consensus and move forward. And that's the only reason I bring that. So thank you, Senator. [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Haar. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: Yes, thank you. It wasn't entirely clear from this. Do you see this as an ongoing body or just an initial planning, maybe an ongoing? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: You know, I see this as an ongoing body, and then with...I'm sorry, that is incorrect. I see it as just for the development of the plan. Although I do think that as we look at quality outcomes, it may be something that we convert into more of an outcomes monitoring group as opposed to, we're creating a plan where we learn how to share data with each other and learn how to manage the IT functions within sharing that data. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: And then you mention that this would be like from birth through eight years old or something like that. The other part then is interface this with the K-12 stuff, right? And that would be part of the goal as well. [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: I would hope so, yes. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, thanks. [LB992]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Avery. [LB992]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Senator Howard, where would the administrative home for this body be? Where would you put it? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: That is a good question, and that is something we'll need to work out because right now it doesn't have a home. One of the challenges is sort of working out the coordination between the two agencies. The expectation is that both agencies would proffer administrative support as necessary. But yes, it does need a home. Thank you for pointing that out, Senator Avery. [LB992]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, it just happened to me on a bill of mine this year. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That occurs to me then...do you know at this point in time how much of the coordination and conversation is taking place among the entities and particularly between Department of Education and Health and Human Services? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: So that's a good question...that it's unfortunate that Sarah Ann wasn't able to make it today. There is some coordination and meetings already occurring around data. I think they needed a more formal structure and a deadline which is what is provided in the legislation. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. Senator Kolowski. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Senator Howard, with the plan to collect this data and fiscal and other information and all that's being put together here, you need to judge it against a standard or a set of standards about early childhood education. What are you using as that set of standards or will next speakers help clarify that for us? [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: Well, my hope was that I would be able to leave the outcome measurements to the experts on the panel. It's sort of a takeoff from my healthcare background in that generally physicians don't enjoy being told what their outcome measure should be because they're challenging and each patient is different and so if they are able to create their own outcome measures. But everybody on this committee, on this governing body does have a background in early childhood education or their piece of it and should be able to create qualitative measures around the work that they're doing. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Will you be here for closing? [LB992]

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SENATOR HOWARD: I have to waive closing. I have to go to...I have to speak, and then I'm going to Banking. But I do believe in this bill, and I really do appreciate your listening to my opening and for the testifiers who come behind me who made it through the weather which is wonderful. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. Thank you, Senator Howard. [LB992]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, we will now have proponent testimony on LB992. Welcome. [LB992]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you. Good afternoon. Madam Chair, members of the Education Committee, my name is Jen Goettemoeller; that's G-o-e-t-t-e-m-o-e-l-l-e-r. I'm here on behalf of First Five Nebraska. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I also want to thank Senator Howard for her commitment to young children and to ensuring that we know what we have and that we use what we know. We certainly support the concept of using data wisely. Before I come to testify, one of the questions I always ask myself is, what data is the committee going want to know? I know hearings can be long and tedious, so I want to be sure that what I offer is worth the time it takes you to listen. And of course I want to bring information that is useful. I think that that's what this bill tries to do as well. When it comes to early childhood, we do already know what works. We know what children need, and in most cases we know how to make sure they get it. We have some data about how individual early childhood investments are performing, how effective they are at closing the achieving gap for children who are at risk of failing in school. But we rarely pool all the data together, and that can keep us from targeting our investments even more wisely. Developing a better data system is critical to evaluating the quality and effectiveness of early childhood investments. The governing body proposed in this bill would have a very lofty charge in front of it. But this is an important conversation to have because there are questions we should be able to answer right now that we can't answer because we don't integrate the data that does exist. So just wanted to ask you to consider utilizing LB992 as the first steps toward a unified early childhood data system. First Five Nebraska believes systems that serve parents of young children can yield the strongest outcomes when they are integrated, cost effective, and evaluated on the quality of their results. Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jen. Senator Cook. [LB992]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Jen, for coming today. As you were testifying I was thinking back to all of the hearings that you attended on behalf of the Planning Committee during this interim. How do you see this body interfacing, or the work of this body mixing and matching and coordinating with the work that is

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done...the research that's done on behalf of the Planning Committee? Because as I'm looking at early childhood, I'm distinctly remembering conversations and data that was gathered in that area. [LB992]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Yeah, thank you for the question. I think that's an excellent point. I think this data governance body, and anytime we can use the data and use it very wisely that it will be a great resource for the Planning Committee and for others as well. I do recall a number of times that the Planning Committee had some very important questions about early childhood. They wanted to know sometimes, well, how many of the children who are in an NDE preschool grant program also utilize the child care subsidy and some of those things that we just can't answer right now, but we could if we integrated the data a little bit better. [LB992]

SENATOR COOK: All right. Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you. [LB992]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB992]

LINDA COX: (Exhibit 2) Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Linda Cox, L-i-n-d-a C-o-x. I am the data coordinator for the Foster Care Review Office, and I'm here to offer our support for LB992. The Foster Care Review Office is an independent state agency not under Health and Human Services or the courts. We are charged with tracking children in foster care, reviewing their cases, and reporting on their outcomes. The proposed early childhood data system would answer key questions about children age birth through eight. As of January 27 of this year, there were 1,580 children in that age group who were in foster care in Nebraska. The State Ward Statistical Snapshot of 2012 showed that children in the foster care system are vulnerable to poor academic outcomes. For example, nonwards had a graduation rate of 87.4 percent while state wards had a graduation rate of 43.7 percent, a very significant difference. Experts in child development and brain development confirm what common sense has told us for a long time. Early childhood education is critical to the educational outcomes for students. The question is raised as to why there's such a difference in the educational outcomes for students that have been in the foster care system. Some of this is due to their early childhood experiences which may have included chaotic living arrangements, frequent moves, frequent changes in child care providers, some of whom were not able to provide quality care, parents who were too busy dealing with their own issues to spend quality time with the children or to teach them the basic skills needed for school readiness, parental substance abuse, parental mental health issues, domestic violence in the home, needing special care due to disabilities, poverty-related issues, and the trauma associated with abuse or neglect.

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The foster care system itself can create further issues for the children with the inherit instability of temporary foster care, changes of placements that can mean changes in school, and the trauma of separation from the parents. And there are many children who are not in the foster care system who share some of these risk factors. When we review the cases of children in foster care, we want to ensure that we are adequately addressing any educational issues for these children, as well as addressing the children's current and future safety and identifying and offering suggestions to remediate any barriers to the child achieving a timely and appropriate permanency. Participation in the Early Childhood Data Governing Body would enable us to better utilize existing data from the other participants and to share the unique data that we obtain from our independent reviews of the cases of children in foster care. And we would love to be able to share that more effectively with them. This would further the goal of answering key questions about publicly funded early childhood services. We urge the committee to adopt this bill, and we thank Senator Howard for including the Foster Care Review Office in this important process. I'd be happy to answer any questions. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mrs. Cox. How do you feel that knowing some of the information or gaining some of the information you might have through this participation in the governing body might impact the way you basically do business with the Foster Care Review Board? [LB992]

LINDA COX: There is a possibility that there are some other indicators that we need to be looking for during the course of our reviews. There may be the possibility that some of the information that we've already gathered about these children could be helpful is...you look at this very specialized population and how early childhood services could best help these children who so often come into the system with some real serious educational gaps and how we could help those children to achieve a better life for themselves through closing those gaps. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Senator Haar. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: Yes, thank you. You mentioned educational outcomes with a huge gap. Was this the outcomes when they graduate from high school or are you talking preschool or...? [LB992]

LINDA COX: We find that there are outcome differences that happen with graduation rates, that happen with being able to read at third grade, at every stage up. Some of these children enter school not being able to identify colors or count to ten. There are a lot of educational deficits that these children have had because of some of the trauma that they have experienced as young children. And I'm thinking that anything that we can do to help these children overcome that would certainly improve their outcomes over a lifetime. [LB992]

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SENATOR HAAR: Do you have the kind of data that you need when it comes to like K-12 in the public schools so that this is just the beginning of that? Or how do you see all that fitting together? [LB992]

LINDA COX: Right now there's not an integration of the data. Well, there is some discussions that have taken place in various venues talking about different subpopulations of foster care. But I would really like to see a way that we could better access some of that data so that we could utilize that as we are measuring some things that are needed to happen in order for those children to really have a good outcome. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: So do you think that's already possible with...once kids are in first grade up through 12, or would this improve that as well? [LB992]

LINDA COX: I think that some of that data may be already available. I also think that being able to focus on that population that is so vulnerable can help the system look at, how do we help those children, or how do we help the children who are at risk of becoming part of that population. [LB992]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, thanks. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Scheer. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. This may not have...I'm sure it has nothing to do with the bill, but I'm going to ask anyhow. When you find out that children in your program are needing specific services, do you believe that you have those services available for them throughout the state? [LB992]

LINDA COX: We are not a direct service provider. We serve an audit-type function. We do recommend those kind of services when we see a child who has a deficit. And because our program utilizes trained citizen volunteers from across the state, many of them who are current or former educators, a lot of times they can refer to programs that would be able to help these children. And we do refer that, and we discuss that with the Health and Human Services people that are in charge of that child's services. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, that didn't answer my question though. And I'm not trying to put you on the hot seat here, believe me. What I'm trying to find out is, do you believe that you have adequate services? Are there adequate services for your clientele or the cases that you audit throughout the state? [LB992]

LINDA COX: I think there are very significant geographic differences as to what is available for the children and what is not. [LB992]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony, Mrs. Cox. Welcome. [LB992]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 3) Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the Education Committee. For the record, I'm Jay Sears, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, and I represent the Nebraska State Education Association. We're here today to testify in support of LB992, and we commend Senator Howard for her forward thinking on these important data issues. We support the concepts in the bill, but I'd suggest to you that there may be another entity that already exists that we might put all of this in together. And as you can see in my second paragraph, and I'll read it for the record. With a few additions to the membership of the current P-20 Governing Council and expanding the charge of the P-20 council, the same outcomes might be reached, and a whole new government bureaucracy might be avoided. The addition of early childhood education representatives and a broadening of the scope of the P-20 Governing Council will improve the flow of information among the appropriate agencies and avoid reinventing the wheel. What I'm suggesting to you is it's important that we gather the data that Senator Howard is talking about. We already have currently in statute and operating right now a P-20 Governing Council and a P-20 data group that's looking at how do we put all the data we have about young children from birth through, you know, 20, meaning through graduate school. And we shouldn't be duplicating and using up resources if we've got a program to deal with that. And I understand in reading the bill and in meeting with Senator Howard that it's important that we ask the right questions and collect the right data. And that might be a little more cumbersome going through the P-20 Council than it would be going through a planning process, but I wonder how many data governing councils do we need out there if they're all supposed to be talking to one another. And so I just leave that for you as an Education Committee to chew on. The more silos we have, the more difficult it is to talk. And so if we can do that in a manner that will get us the data we need and the planning we need and get everybody talking on the same page, that would be useful. But that would conclude my testimony, and I thank you for the opportunity on this snowy day. So... [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Sears. Do you think the P-20...okay, there's a P-20 Governing Council under which there's a P-20 data board? [LB992]

JAY SEARS: ...board and I think the department probably can answer better because I don't get involved in that one anymore, so I can't speak directly to it. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, but to the best of your knowledge, do they venture into the area of early childhood in their data collection? [LB992]

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JAY SEARS: I couldn't answer that question. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, all right. Senator Scheer. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. That raises a good thought, Jay. And I'm wondering and understanding considering all of the specifics of those, but then are you sort of looking at perhaps like a subgroup of the P-20 that is more exclusively looking into the younger portion? Rather than redeveloping... [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Right. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: ...the wheel, just utilize a subset of that that would be more restricted to that specific area. Am I following that? [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Yeah, those are my thoughts is...with a little tweak of the direction and the charge to the P-20 council, we could start to focus on that piece. My major concern is, when we get more and more governing bodies of data they don't talk to one another. We don't talk well right now. And so how do we put that all together in a system that actually informs what we do policywise from birth to graduate school. And I think the lady in the amendment about the foster care piece definitely has some unique views and clientele to deal with that have particular issues that need to be put into that data piece also. Because when I look at what you all do as legislators, you want to make sure that we use our resources properly and that we're getting what we want out of the system. And so we need to put the system together so it speaks to one another. That's my thoughts about it. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Just to follow up and I like simpler than more complicated. The only thought I would have perhaps on this one, and I'm not articulate on that subset either, but it would appear that there might be a group that is not represented under the current P-20 that would have the expertise and the knowledge that we're trying to gain that's broadened from. And so that may be part of the reason not to follow your lead. I don't know. [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. Yeah, and I agree with you. It may be a particular instance that this group needs to work together before we bring it all together, so just thoughts on a snowy day. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Jay, thank you for your comments, and I was wondering from the P-20 or P-16, all the different groups we've had in the state. I'm not sure how much we've really gotten done sometimes on those, and do you...is the P-20 under the Governor's office or State Department of Education? Where

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do we have that out? [LB992]

JAY SEARS: It's a partnership. So the Governor is part of it and the Department of Education and the university system. And so there are representatives at the executive level, the branch that's above my pay grade, that are doing the planning and the pieces. And I think as you look at Senator Howard's legislation, that would include those people at that level also who have the knowledge and whatever. But we need to dig down deeper into the data piece of it where we have the expertise as previous people have testified. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: My concern would be, I hope it's not a black hole of inactivity... [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Yes, definitely because... [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...that it falls into and then we lose the emphasis of what we're trying to get down to. [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Right, and I understand why Senator Howard would bring this one is it's an important piece. If it has its own legislation and its own body, it's going to do its work. And it...the more we branch in one. But my concern is, let's get it all back together in a system so it talks to one another. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. [LB992]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: (Exhibits 4, 5, and 6) Any further proponent testimony on LB992? I would like to read into the record that we do have letters of support from Aubrey Mancuso for Voices for Children in Nebraska; also from Sarah Kotchian, Holland Children's Movement; and a personal letter from Barbara Jackson who is speaking as herself, but she is with the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the Nebraska Medical Center. Now we'll have any opponent testimony on LB992. And anyone wishing to speak in a neutral capacity. Welcome. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: (Exhibits 7 and 8) Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Eleanor Shirley-Kirkland. Madam Chair and Education Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about an early childhood unified data system. I've been an employee of the Nebraska Department of Education in the Office of Early Childhood since... [LB992]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Excuse me, ma'am. Could you spell your name, please?
[LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Oh, I'm sorry. Eleanor, E-l-e-a-n-o-r; the last name is Shirley, S-h-i-r-l-e-y-K-i-r-k-l-a-n-d. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Certainly. I've been an employee of the Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood since December of 1997, and I've worked with various work groups and committees in both Nebraska Department of Education and in collaborative efforts with the Department of Health and Human Services, specifically public health, to explore issues surrounding early childhood data in Nebraska. I'd like to provide a brief summary about work that more recently precedes the introduction of LB992 which proposes to create and provide duties for the Early Childhood Data Governing Body. And one of the requirements in this bill is for the data governing body to propose a plan to develop a statewide early childhood unified data system and so on. Since September of 2010, the Head Start State Collaboration Office, in the office of Early Childhood at the Nebraska Department of Education, was charged with coordinating a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA funds for special initiatives and development of our Early Childhood State Advisory Council. And Senator Howard in her introductory remarks mentioned the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council which we call ECICC. The ARRA funds were made available for the project period of September 1, 2010, through August 31, 2013, and my role at that time was to coordinate the grant activities as designated by the Governor's office. The council selected a unified early childhood data system as one of its priority areas for the grant, and as advised by the Governor's policy research office, we were asked to develop recommendations for a unified early childhood data system to inform the state regarding early childhood program effectiveness and children's success in school and in life, as we were not in a position as of September 2010 to actually create a unified early childhood data system. So a committee was designated to develop those recommendations through a collaborative process with stakeholder input, primarily through two early childhood data summits. The first one was in 2011, and the second in 2013. And participants included data specialists in state agencies, local community program administrators and data managers, researchers, and private partners. And that is the copy of the final recommendations report that was distributed to you. I'd like to just highlight the three primary recommendations from the report related to early childhood programs and services, and this report also describes functions of a unified early childhood data system. The first recommendation is to establish or appoint an early childhood data governance body. That would also set policies and protocols for data sets needed to answer questions about early childhood while also adhering to privacy, security, integrity, transparency, and data quality. Data policies would include things such as what data to include in the systems, who will have

access to what data, who is responsible for hosting an early childhood data reporting system, and how the data should be analyzed and reported. The second recommendation is to create unduplicated state identifier or ID for each child birth to kindergarten entrance age, parent or caregiver of young children, and staff in early childhood programs, and others in the early childhood work force. Currently, Nebraska does not require one single ID for children served with public funds regardless of which state agency administers and manages those funds. We do know we have many data sets that speak to early childhood programs and services and that many children's data are in various data sets in both Health and Human Services and in the Department of Education. Some services are also offered to children through their parents or caregivers. Parents and caregivers may also have a number of IDs to receive these services from various programs. Similarly, early childhood programs across Nebraska may have identifying information entered into multiple data systems. They may also operate in multiple sites and locations, and their employees could have many IDs as well. Without a single ID for programs, sites, and professionals, it prevents us from better understanding where programs are and what services are offered. Lastly, the third recommendation proposes that all publicly funded early childhood care and education programs participate in the unified data system by collecting data elements determined by the governance body, and encourage participation from privately funded programs. I see the light is on, so I'll just summarize. Without systematic requirements for reporting across the programs, the data are not useful for informing quality or helping us confidently or clearly understand our work in relationship to child outcomes. The recommendations indicate formal data sharing agreements and systematic data linking strategies could address redundancies and lead to streamlined efforts that translate to potential cost and time savings in the long term. And then on the last page of my written comments, the recommendations also identify some potential barriers and strategies to address those barriers through some operational changes. Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Eleanor. Any questions? Are we getting the cart before the horse? I mean, are we...and you've already outlined some things that would make coordination and work being done in early childhood even better, but that's not necessarily what the governing board would do. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: You know, I don't know personally what the data governing board, all of their functions and requirements might be. But the cart before the horse comment...we do have the recommendations report that was generated with broad base stakeholder input. So I would anticipate perhaps that a data governing body, if that was so selected, would use this report as a way to frame their discussion. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Do you have any opinions on...Senator Avery had made the comment earlier, where will the source be in terms of, where will the governing board emanate from. Do you have any opinions on where that should start based on your

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knowledge and experience? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: I do not. I know that the Nebraska Department of Education would be happy to host or be the home for coordinating anything of this nature. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I haven't gone to the point in the report where it talks about some of the challenges, but I would imagine perhaps...would you anticipate some resistance to instigating a state ID for all the children involved? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Well, that was part of our discovery, if you will, through developing these recommendations. People are very concerned, and they should be, about confidentiality, privacy, and we must adhere to federal and state regulations around HIPAA, FERPA those kinds of things. So definitely would be considerations and I think that is some of the concern maybe across the state. There haven't been that many comments about it, it's just that people say, if you do anything around unified data or data sharing, please be mindful of people's unique information and of the laws and statutes that are in place. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Senator Scheer. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, thanks for coming, Eleanor. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Sure. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: A couple questions, one, this data system then is just under the process of being developed? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: We have not started any development of a data system. As I mentioned, we don't have any authority to actually create that... [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: ...but we did have the advice from the Governor's office to develop these recommendations. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, and do you have any knowledge of what the proposed amount might be to develop this? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: In terms of... [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Dollars. [LB992]

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ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Dollars? No, I do not. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, and... [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: I would have a guess, but it would be a wrong guess. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, well, I don't want to do that. The other thing, you know, you've talked about the noncommon ID. So I want to make sure I'm understanding you, that a child that is two may receive a state nondescript ID but when they enter kindergarten in the school system, they would receive a different nondescript ID number, so there's right now really no way to follow that child with any certainty across the educational gamut and through their...at least through their high school career or college career if we don't have some type of consistent way to make sure that Student A is Student A regardless when they were at two years old, in second grade, or a freshman in a university or a community college or whatever it might be. Would that be safe to say? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: That is accurate, yes. And we find that children that are served by public schools...we have more capacity right now to look at outcomes data, but we don't have a unique ID for each child to help follow their progress and development throughout their formal educational years. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, thank you very much. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Sure. [LB992]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, ma'am. I wanted to thank you for your comments and for the material that you shared with us. Are you connected with and working with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the university? Are you assisting with any of that direction and process (inaudible)? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: I have participated. I was appointed by the then president Milliken to serve on the search committee for the executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, and then I was asked to participate in the institute's strategic planning commission, of which I did do that. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And so your work at the state department is connected with and impacting and in conjunction with things at the institute, would that be correct, part

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of them? [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: There is a connection, but in terms of a full partnership or designated functions on my part related to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, it's more in a partnering and a collaborative capacity to help inform what we hope the institute will be about. So I have a partnership, but I am not directly linked in terms of function or operations of that institute. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, do... [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: I hope that makes sense. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Well, I would hope we would have a united front... [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Yes, absolutely. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...for early childhood education. That's the important piece. And back to my earlier question about judging according to what standard of acceptance of what we want early childhood programs to look like. And back to that circle, I guess. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Right. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And I would also concur with Senator Scheer. The early days and stages of the Learning Community, we had great difficulty with 11 districts getting student information that he was talking about and having concise, year-by-year, comparable student data on the individual student because of...well, we had a variety of reasons why people were not cooperating at that early time. It's much better now. We're getting a lot of information that...they are getting a lot of information that we couldn't touch at the time. I hope we can break down those barriers because it's a real impediment to following a child when you have one out of three or one out of four or one out of five families moving every year. They can be in different districts in different situations all over the country. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: And I guess my response to that, too, is it would...these recommendations incorporate not only the educational data, but also any kind of other publicly funded programs or services. Even Mrs. Cox that testified earlier about foster care children, that would be a way to incorporate children in specific populations, maybe have a better understanding of their unique situations and the services and resources that they might access in terms of mental health, physical health and development, and things of that nature. [LB992]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB992]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB992]

ELEANOR SHIRLEY-KIRKLAND: Thank you very much. And my contact information by the way is on there, so you can call me if you have any questions. [LB992]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other testimony in a neutral capacity? If not, this closes the hearing on LB992. We will now move on to LB864, allocating funds to the Early Childhood Education Grant Program, being introduced by Senator Mello. But in his absence as a new father... [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: Alas, I am not Senator Mello. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: (Exhibits 1 and 6) Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Sullivan and members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Trevor Fitzgerald, T-r-e-v-o-r F-i-t-z-g-e-r-a-l-d. I'm the legislative aide for Senator Heath Mello. Senator Mello represents the 5th Legislative District in south Omaha and is unable to join us today, as the Mello family welcomed their first child over the weekend. Last session, as Senator Howard mentioned on the previous bill, the Appropriations Committee's biennial budget included an additional \$4 million each year for the Early Childhood Endowment and an additional \$1.9 million each year for the Early Childhood Grant Program. While these numbers represented a significant additional investment in early childhood education over past budget years, several senators on the committee expressed a desire to do more in future years if budgetary conditions allowed. Given the large number of bills on the subject being heard today in the Education Committee, it is clear that early childhood education is a priority for a number of members of the Legislature. As originally introduced, LB864 would have allocated an additional \$500,000 in each of the next two fiscal years from the Education Innovation Fund to the Early Childhood Grant Program. After introducing the bill, Senator Mello visited with Senator Sullivan to discuss possible additional funding for early childhood education through the Education Innovation Fund and also signed on as a cosponsor to Senator Sullivan's LB984, which would also appropriate Education Innovation Fund dollars to the Early Childhood Grant Program. The committee is just receiving a copy of AM1758, a white copy amendment which would replace the provisions of LB864 with a new concept which would also be funded through the Education Innovation Fund. Under the amendment, \$200,000 would be allocated each of the next two fiscal years to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to pay for studying of issues and the implementation of programs related to improving both the quantity and quality of Nebraska's early childhood work force. In consultation with the State Department of Education, the institute would propose a set of recommendations to (1) address the shortage of qualified early childhood teachers, (2) improve professional

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development and coordinate certification training and preparation programs for early childhood educators in Nebraska's two-year and four-year colleges and universities, (3) develop induction and mentoring programs for new and existing teachers, and (4) ensure that the early childhood work force is developing the capacity to support and sustain Nebraska's goals for improving early learning and developmental outcomes for young children. A number of early childhood advocates had originally intended to join us for the hearing but, as we have noted already, the storm may have scared a few off. The committee should have received a letter in support of LB864 and AM1758 from the Holland Children's Movement, and our office will forward any additional letters of support that we receive to the committee. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Trevor. Have you and Senator Mello discussed...and I guess my question is, is it unique or are you setting a precedent by indicating that these funds would go to a specific institution of higher education? Has this been done before or do you know? [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: I don't think it's necessarily unique. I would have to double-check because I seem to recall some similar allocations that have been done in this manner. But, I mean, given that it's geared for a specific purpose, it's not an open-ended appropriation by any means, but would be happy to look into that just to confirm. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. All right, very good. Any other questions for Trevor? Will you be here for closing? [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: I will. Hopefully, I won't be needed. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. All right, very good. We will now entertain proponent testimony on LB864. Welcome. [LB864]

SAM MEISELS: (Exhibit 2) Thank you. Good afternoon. Madam Chair and honorable members of the Education Committee, my name is Samuel Meisels, S-a-m-u-e-l M-e-i-s-e-l-s. I am the founding executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. It is my privilege to appear before you today to speak on behalf of Nebraska's youngest, most vulnerable citizens. In these remarks I wish to reinforce the significance of your commitment to young children and their families, and share my perspective on the urgency and benefits to Nebraska of devoting energy and resources to the early years of life. I want to begin by applauding the Education Committee's continuing interest in early childhood and your efforts, and those of your colleagues in the Legislature, to understand and strengthen the early childhood agenda and ensure that Nebraska is investing in vital programs, services, and supports for children birth to age 8 and their families. Of course, much work remains to be done and

that's why we're here today. As I believe most you know, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute is a four-campus, universitywide, research, training, outreach, and policy institute at the University of Nebraska. Our job is to improve the learning and developmental outcomes of children from birth to age 8, with a laser-like focus on those children who are most at risk, including those living in poverty, children growing up under conditions of high stress and significant familial challenge, and those at risk for or identified with developmental delays. Like many of the children I'm referring to, we are in our infancy, a mere nine months old, working hard to understand the needs of Nebraska's children and families. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the days and months ahead to build on the many good efforts underway in Nebraska, and to sharpen our state's focus on how to best support the nearly 60,000 children between the ages of 0 to 5 who are most at risk and the additional approximately 40,000 at-risk students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. I come to you today not as someone whose domain is politics or the political process, but as an educator and researcher whose entire adult life has been dedicated to understanding and supporting young children and what they need to grow, learn, develop, and thrive in order to become successful, contributing members of our society. What we know is clear. First, the science. Neuroscientists teach us that 85 percent of neuroconnections are formed in the first five years of life. Brains, skills, and health are built over time but starting early is what counts. More than 150 high-quality scientific studies confirm that early intervention can have a major short- and long-term effect on cognition and on social-emotional development. Second, return on investment. Evidence show us that intervention in the lives of young children, particularly those living in poverty and those at risk, pays off. For every dollar we invest in early care and education, we as a society stand to gain at least \$7 in return. The long-term benefits of high-quality early childhood programs are seen in reduced arrests and increased high school graduation rates, more employment post-high school and more college enrollment, fewer teenage pregnancies, and lower medical expenses. Third, social capital--the impact of all of these efforts on society. The social capital argument for early childhood education is deeply persuasive. Enrollment in quality pre-K costs around \$8,000 per year. Incarceration in juvenile detention costs around \$90,000. Do the math. We have choices. But let's not forget that pre-K is not magic nor are its benefits automatic. We can offer universal pre-K but we can't guarantee universal results. As one commentator said recently, early childhood education is not an inoculation. It is an investment. And like any investment, it needs to be entered into with thought and consideration. It's of great importance that our investments in early childhood be in high-quality programs. Nebraska took a major step in this direction by passing the Step Up to Quality early childhood rating and improvement system last June. Beyond this, we must encourage programs to teach more than cognitive skills, as important as these are. In addition, we must help children learn to enhance their self-control, curiosity, intentionality, and many other social-emotional skills. But if we're truly to achieve high-quality early childhood programming in this state, and if we're going to be successful in developing the dispositions fundamental to productive citizenship, we must address the shortage of

qualified early childhood teachers, caregivers, and administrators in Nebraska. What's needed is improved professional development; coordinated certification, training, and preparation programs across all of the state's two- and four-year colleges; high-quality mentoring programs for new teachers; and assurance that the state's early childhood work force has the capacity to support children's cognitive and social-emotional development. When all is said and done, we know that programs targeted toward the earliest years outstrip those focused on older students many times over. It's time to make a commitment upstream where children are youngest, most vulnerable, and most responsive. Early interventions can make a difference that can last a lifetime. I thank you for your attention to these details. I look forward to working with you and am happy to take any questions you may have. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Meisels. I know you're new still to this position and assessing what's going on in Nebraska, but do you have any early indications of what our shortages are with respect to work force and early childhood? [LB864]

SAM MEISELS: I do have some indication of that. I have not yet done a study of that; that's what we're..in part, what we're here to talk about. And I think it's very, very important that we have an empirical base to move from. But certainly in talking to people and going around and visiting, talking with those in the Educare network where we have the highest quality, what I see is the greatest need, the greatest shortage, is in the birth to 3 area--the area of birth to 3 caregivers. That's where we have the fewest trained personnel. That's where we have the least amount of preparation in higher education throughout the state. That seems to be a very significant set of issues. But as far as I can tell, we have issues that extend throughout the early childhood continuum of birth through the end of 3rd grade, and there is a great deal, I think, that has to be done on all counts in that area. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: So if our biggest weakness is in the area of birth to 3, what sort of...well, we look at early childhood preschool programs as being a certified teacher in early childhood development. Is that the kind of individual that would fill that slot in working with birth to 3, or what kind of training are we looking at? [LB864]

SAM MEISELS: It depends, of course, on the kind of service being delivered. A lot of services in birth to 3 are delivered in home-based settings, and some of those services are actually delivered by MSWs and people with certifications of one kind or another. It's not necessary that that be the only way to do it. It can also be done through paraprofessional help. But it is very important that there be supervision that comes from someone with a strong background in child development and someone who can look both directions as it were, to the youngest point and to the older end of the spectrum. So we need someone who has perspective, who has studied child development, and who I think is a degree...has received a degree in early education. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions for Dr. Meisels? All right, thank you for your testimony. [LB864]

SAM MEISELS: Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: (Exhibit 3) Thank you. Madam Chairman, members of the committee, I'm Ted Stilwill, T-e-d S-t-i-l-w-i-l-l. I'm the CEO of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. I appreciate this opportunity to address the committee on this bill; and, if you don't mind, I'll report our Coordinating Council's position on the other two bills, because they're the same. Strongly support each of those bills. Because I think we've come to a realization and the members of the council have come to a realization, as Dr. Meisels has very eloquently just demonstrated, that early childhood education is such a critical answer to the major issues facing education in Nebraska today. And that major issue, in our mind, is poverty and the need to help students from poverty at the earliest possible time. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex situation, I've tried to put before you in my testimony just three sets of information. The first I would guess you are very familiar with, that when we look at 11th-graders across the state of Nebraska and we look at those whose families are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, we see that only 52 percent of them, at 11th grade, demonstrate that they can read at a proficient level. That's roughly half. That means roughly half are not able to read at a proficient level, may not be able to seek good, entry-level employment, probably are not going to be successful in postsecondary education. Obviously some individuals will do very well but as a group we know that these young people will struggle. That's not good for these students and it's certainly not good for our economy to deliver that major part of the work force, year after year, with that deficit of skills. We also know that poverty is increasing, so this probably isn't going to away. Increasingly, when we look at solutions to this problem, where we cannot stop with remedial programs at the secondary level, when we're at the middle school or elementary level, we know very clearly from the research that's readily available now that this problem begins before these students enter kindergarten, when the members and subcouncil of two of the learning communities studied this problem, intensely in north Omaha, the research that they studied was so conclusive that many poor children, particularly African-American poor children, started kindergarten a year or two behind and never caught up as a group. Now certainly individuals did, but as a group with those certain characteristics, their fate seemed already defined. When we look at Educare--and the folks on the subcouncil, the folks on the Coordinating Council, looked close at Educare and looked at the results they were getting--at the two Omaha sites, have been in existence about ten years, and so now they can follow those students into 3rd through 7th grade; and they find that as a group, and it's small in size, but they're reading above the state average. These are kids from 100 percent poverty that in 3rd through 7th grade are reading above the state average. They'll keep evaluating and keep following up, but those results are truly

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remarkable. They beat whatever else we've done by a considerable fashion. So we've tried to incorporate those things in the work we're doing in north Omaha. I can talk more about that if you like. But finally, one point of information which is less commonly talked about in the early childhood conversation, and I think it's a critical point, it kind of makes sense but it isn't broadly discussed. So if you look at families in the most intense poverty, they need stronger intervention. But that intervention, while it might cost more, has a much higher return on investment. So Tim Bartik, for example, you've heard quotations for economists talking about return on investment for early childhood, he's really looking at targeting those, the poorest families and those students, and seeing in terms of earnings, a \$96 return on investment for every \$1 spent. We're excited about the work we're doing in north Omaha. We appreciate the Education Committee's support for our partners, the school districts, and other agencies that are providing early childhood education. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Stilwill. Senator Cook. [LB864]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Stilwill, for coming today. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: I'm not really a doctor, but that's okay. Thanks. [LB864]

SENATOR COOK: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Stilwill. Thank you, Ted. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: I've sometimes played one on TV, but that's okay. No, I'm sorry. [LB864]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, you, for coming today. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR COOK: And I would like to hear more about the status of the project on the north side and what you're...the kinds of programming you're anticipating focusing on in that location as it might differ from the location of the Learning Community on the south side of Omaha. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: Thank you, Senator. They started out being pretty different endeavors. South Omaha, actually with help from Senator Howard, identified a strategy to help the parents of...mostly it's, you know, children in kindergarten or 1st grade, parents to learn English and to learn parenting skills and to learn school engagement skills. That's going very, very well. We're up to between 180 and 200 families now, and we hope to keep expanding that with our partners there. The program in north Omaha is...started out being decidedly different, working with partners on early childhood education, because

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the folks in Subcouncil 2 wanted to focus more narrowly on a smaller geographic area, because they didn't have resources for all of north Omaha. They wanted to focus on early childhood for the reasons that I've explained, and they wanted to work with partners that had resources to bring to the equation, because the needs were so overwhelming. And so this last...this current year, we partnered with the Omaha Public Schools. We're offering eight early...they're offering eight early childhood classrooms for 3- and 4-year-old students, four at Kellom Elementary, four at Conestoga Elementary. We are adding the components with Learning Community funding that Educare would normally provide. That's very intensive instructional improvement in terms of a full-time coach for every four instructional teams; that's one full-time coach at each school. Additional professional development days, 15 days of professional development. These are the kinds of things you typically wouldn't see in K-12 education. We are providing additional support for the families in terms of people to work with the family's engagement, and quite a bit more. The more unusual part of it is working with Metro Community College. Metro is using those classrooms as a clinical site; so they concentrate their folks that are getting two-year degrees or childcare associate certificates, and they can...their faculty comes with them when they student teach. They go into the classroom with them. They have classes there. We're going to open a Learning Community center of north Omaha that's really going to be a parent community center. It's well on its way to being...it's being built now; it will be open this fall. And that will house support for not only these educators in the 3- and 4-year-old classrooms, the instructional teams; but we're also starting this spring with early childhood services to reach out to childcare providers in those neighborhoods to provide additional training and support for them, and that will get us to another 300-500 children. And then the third piece of the equation, it'll be based in the new center, is reaching out directly to parents, parents of very young children who may not be even in childcare yet, but parents of those who may be in childcare or parents who may be in the center-based programs, and that will be the third outreach kind of work that comes from the center. We're working with...Creighton has now come on board. They are acquiring an early childhood faculty personnel, have an early childhood program. The same kind of clinical setting where the teachers being trained there will be trained in these classrooms at that center. They'll hold classes. Their faculty will be placed at the center in north Omaha. So we're excited about it. It's a...sorry, for a lengthy discussion, but it's actually for me pretty brief. So I'd be happy to answer any other questions you might have. [LB864]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam. Mr. Stilwill, thank you very much for your testimony and for your comments. You mentioned Metro and Creighton. Could you fill us in on UNO and what's happening in that area? [LB864]

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TED STILWILL: Sure. We started with, a couple of years ago, talking with potential partners, and we've talked with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, we've talked with other private schools in the area that...all of whom are suppliers for particularly the Omaha Public Schools and the need to...the school district told us there was a need to have folks trained in more of an urban setting, to have their clinical experience in classrooms such as those that are up in north Omaha. And I'm confident that, while Creighton is going to...is our first partner, there will be other private and public schools. And frankly, I think that this kind of preparation that includes this kind of clinical experience is so critical that there won't be room for all the people who want to place student teachers or the institutions at just these eight classrooms or even the additional Educare classrooms that we're working with. But this same thing can be replicated, but the idea is not to spread your student teachers all out over, you know, ten different districts. If you can concentrate them, bring the faculty with them so they can go with them into the classroom while they're trying out projects, trying out experience, and then have other student teachers with them; then they can come back down the hall and talk about what's happened and debrief, much as you see in a medical school with folks making rounds and coming back and having seminars and talking about what happened. That's a luxury that doesn't happen in traditional teacher preparation programs. So I'm confident we'll accumulate more. But we had to start somewhere. Creighton was able to strike an agreement with Metropolitan Community College so that the credits earned in the childcare program at Metro, it looks like all of them are going to transfer directly into Creighton's program, not as elective credits but as actual credits. So that's a pretty remarkable kind of partnership. And I think we'll see more and more of that as time goes on. But you have to start somewhere. And frankly, it's been our philosophy that it's a little better to start small and learn how to do it and get it right, and then expand it. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Your connection with Educare is vital, of course, and that's been extremely important. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: I can't tell you how vital the intellectual property that comes along with working with Jessie Rasmussen and Gladys Haynes and Jane Happe and others. They could not have been a stronger partner and more supportive in helping us try and extract what they're continuing to learn and continuing to improve in their program. And they've been an essential partner. And, in fact, in the new center in north Omaha, this fall, they will operate entirely at their cost two infant-toddler programs that will be part of that clinical setting, and there's more that I can talk about, but. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: You're into your fifth year of operation as a Learning Community, and your emphasis, as you described it, about the whole child and whole family has really been crucial in making the significant gains and differences you're talking about. You have not elaborated upon, but there certainly seems to have been a

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very positive, open working relationship with the Omaha Public Schools. And to go on record with that, would you explain a little bit more so we have that? [LB864]

TED STILWILL: Yes. When we first...I first talked to the former board of education at the Omaha Public Schools about this project that I've just described, the superintendent at that time said, this was truly a historic partnership. And honestly, I wasn't quite sure what he meant. But the fact of the matter is, we have such a close working relationship. Last week, we had another one of our Wednesday 3:00 meetings which we were doing every week or every other week; now we're doing them once a month to get this program aligned, meeting with the assistant superintendent, the director of elementary education, four or five others depending on what we were talking about, that kind of critical commitment of upper echelon leadership in the district as well as the principals at Kellom and Conestoga, the support of the personnel department, it simply could not have been any better or any more collaborative. We were involved in jointly hiring the person who is the coordinator for the program. They couldn't have been more supportive. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Thank you for your counsel, as well. Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Scheer. [LB864]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. I'm not going to waste a lot of time here because this legislation isn't about you, and you're doing some fascinating things and I appreciate your time. Just a couple comments that I'm hoping that as we move forward, you know, we're looking at the lowest 20 percent, you know, if my kid was at the 21 percent I'd feel terrible he wasn't getting that. And I just hate to see any child left behind and I'm...it isn't a commercial, but I mean, everyone that doesn't get service we are looking at the statistic up above where 48 percent of the kids in 11th grade don't read at a proficiency. And that's a terrible waste, it really is. And the fact of the matter is that, you know, poverty is not an isolated instance in any community, and my last point would be I'm hoping that at some point in time you are able to start sharing your best practices with other communities throughout the state, that they might be able to start getting some of the similar and same results that we're starting to see in some cases in yours. So thank you. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: Thank you, Senator. I have the same hope. And actually Dr. Bartik who wrote this book where I got the statistic agrees with you wholeheartedly that best public policy is not to have just a targeting strategy, he calls it; but also to have a universal strategy at the same time for the very reasons that you have stated. So thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: But following up on that in our emphasis and continued attention

to early childhood, we talk early childhood education. But what you just said is it needs to be, in some cases, more targeted. Is that a fair assessment? [LB864]

TED STILWILL: I think the point I'd like to make is that as with any kind of services, medical services, for example, if two of us entered a hospital with very different conditions, I might have the flu and somebody else might have a much more dire condition, we would expect that the intensity of services that we received would be appropriate for our condition. And so while universal early childhood education is a huge step forward into something that we would strongly support, it's also important to acknowledge that some families who have so many adverse conditions surrounding those, you know, 1- or 2-year-old kids, that it's going to take more support. If...you know, as I was talking to somebody who works with these families this morning, and she said, you know, if you're visiting a home and you notice a blanket in the bathtub because people sleep in the bathtub to be safe from bullets, that's a different circumstance than people who are just struggling to pay the rent. Pretty graphic example, maybe a little over the top, but when...there's lots of research that when these adverse conditions pile up on a family and affect those young people, that it's going to take stronger intervention at the earliest possible time, possibly even prenatal but definitely in the first year or two of life, if you're going to turn that around. However, turning it around, while it will cost more, is going to yield the greatest results because if you follow that child, as I think we're now able to do, you can see the results in terms of reduced earnings, the other kinds of things Dr. Meisels mentioned. Those costs are going to be greater. It's different depending on the individual circumstance. So to get back to Senator Scheer's point, I think just to acknowledge that a broad early childhood strategy is critically important but it's also important to acknowledge that within that there may need to be services...the kind of thing that I'm talking about in north Omaha where we will be working directly with parents of very young children or helping to train childcare providers, if that happened there would not be necessary in the area that I lived in the western part of Omaha, it wouldn't make any sense. There isn't any need for it. But there is probably need for stronger early childhood, although most of the parents in my neighborhood have their kids in early childhood programs and they're doing great. But there certainly are those in that district, as well as in other parts of the state that would benefit from universal access, whether it's paid by the parents or paid by somewhere else on some kind of a sliding scale. But just to acknowledge that in some cases the intensity of the outreach may need to be different if we're going to reach these families with the children with the very most critical needs. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Senator Kolowski. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thanks, Madam Chair. Mr. Stilwill, one of the things you've addressed is the limitation you have on the money that you're using and the number of students that you're reaching in a small geographical area of OPS. As that spreads, hopefully, over time, the base will expand and as the students are moving up grade

levels and aging as they're going along, your work with Superintendent Evans and OPS and the entire Learning Community, a set of superintendents and districts, the changes in teaching behavior and styles of teacher behavior will have to grow in each of those years, because those students are no longer as they used to be, and the differences I think you're going to have to look at and the potentials with each of those colleges and university connections will have tremendous impact upon the urban area as we get better and better at what we're trying to do now. It's not just early childhood then. It's the entire K-12 spectrum. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: It at least becomes K-8 fairly immediately, where the next phase for next year in our contract with the Omaha Public Schools...well, I mentioned the very intense coaching that we're providing in the 3- and 4-year-old programs, we're going to start moving to some degree more intense coaching up to kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade teachers... [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Right. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: ...so they can get some of the benefits. We can't expect that you'd have a really intense program when, you know, when kids are 3 and 4 and then all of sudden when they're 5 the parents...or the teachers are just, well, how come all these other people are getting all this support? Our whole theory of action here is the intensity of the support for the adults working with these kids. If it's greater, it will make a much greater difference. And I think we'll be able to get to that proof of concept. It won't happen next year but it will happen I hope shortly thereafter, and be able to realize the opportunity to share some of what we've been doing as others have shared with us. [LB864]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your testimony. [LB864]

TED STILWILL: Thank you, Senator. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome back. [LB864]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the committee. My name is Jen Goettemoeller, J-e-n G-o-e-t-t-e-m-o-e-l-l-e-r. I'm here on behalf of First Five Nebraska to ask you to advance LB864 with AM1758. I appreciate Senator Mello's commitment to early childhood and I just want to recognize that for years this committee has understood the importance of and invested in early childhood. Even during the most difficult of budget times you all have gone to great lengths to ensure our public investments are maintained and also of the level of quality that reduced the achievement gap. When it comes to young children, we do know what works. Our public-private Sixpence programs, for example, are having enormous impact

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statewide, and are actually closing the achievement gap for children birth to 3, as well as helping parents create more stimulating environments at home. The outcomes I would suggest are among the best in the country. But you have heard that our early childhood work force hasn't been able to keep up with the demand. We do have a tremendous asset, though, now in the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the university. Like other successful public-private ventures in early childhood, the Buffett Institute will, I believe, make our public investments more successful than they could be on their own. Working in collaboration with the Department of Ed to address shortages of qualified early childhood professionals statewide will particularly benefit rural Nebraska where resources are more limited. You'll also be getting I think more out of this than the \$400,000 you invest with Senator Mello's amendment. The private investments in early childhood work force development, specifically through the Buffett Institute, will complement the public investments. Nebraska is fortunate to have the opportunity to collaborate with the private sector on this emerging work force issue, and I would ask that you advance LB864 with the amendment. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jen. Any questions for her? Thank you for your testimony. [LB864]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome back. [LB864]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 5) Thank you. Madam Chair, members of the Education Committee, for the record I am Jay Sears, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, representing the Nebraska State Education Association. Initially NSEA supported the legislation that Senator Mello has introduced and we also want to add to that written testimony that we do support the amendment that Senator Mello has brought forward. We think focusing on what are the needs for our early childhood education and using \$400,000 out of the Education Innovation Fund is a good use of the dollars to really get us a baseline of what's out there, what do we need, and what do we need to produce. To add to that, I'm fortunate enough to be on an advisory committee, along with 17 of my teacher colleagues and then 16 of the educator preparation institutions and also 17 of the administrators and school board representatives along with a community college representative and an ESU representative on what's called the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education. It's an advisory body to the State Board of Education. And we work with revising the endorsements, the subject area pieces where we train people in educator preparation institutions to provide the instruction for our young people. We've just gone through a process of revising our early childhood education endorsements so that we can focus on what you've heard about. The knowledge and skills and research that we've gained in the past few years, just about birth to 3, requires an education and a training for people just in that small time frame. And then we also have to focus on the 3- and 4-year-olds that we call preschool in programs there. And it takes a special skill and

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knowledge to work with those. And then we've divided into a third area and focus of kindergarten through 3rd grade. That takes another whole skill set to deal with. And so we're prepared in getting the higher education institutions prepared to prepare the workers that are going to be needed in early childhood education. So again, seeing public and private and whatever dollars we can put together in the state of Nebraska to work on the front end of education is very important to us. So we'll be testifying on your bill also and supporting that process, and reminding people that part of that Education Innovation Fund goes to help loans for teachers who are trying to get those endorsements also. And so we're very strong and we're very...hold on very tight to that part of the Education Innovation Fund that helps subsidize and provide loans for educators who are getting those new endorsements so that we have the trained people to work with our young people. So thank you very much for the opportunity to testify. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Sears. Any questions for him? Thank you. Any further proponent testimony on LB864? Anyone wishing to speak in opposition; or in a neutral capacity for LB864? Trevor to close. [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: Very briefly, Senator Sullivan. Thank you. Senator Mello wanted me to note that in 2010 the Legislature did appropriate \$10 million to the university from the Education Innovation Fund. So I'll check with the Legislative Fiscal Office on the details on that because the authorizing language on that I think has since been repealed from that statute. But I'll check on that and get more information to the committee, so. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you very much. [LB864]

TREVOR FITZGERALD: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. [LB864]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: (Exhibits 6 and 7) And I failed to indicate that we had two letters of support for LB864: one from the Holland Children's Movement and also one from the Nebraska State Board of Education. [LB864]

SENATOR SCHEER: We will now open the hearing for LB984. Senator Sullivan. [LB984]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer, and thank you, Education Committee. My name is Kate Sullivan, K-a-t-e S-u-l-l-i-v-a-n, of Cedar Rapids representing the 41st Legislative District and here to introduce LB984. But first to I guess remind all of us and underscore that as you've heard in testimony thus far but also know full well, that the Legislature has recognized the importance of early childhood education. And we have continued to support it, and with this legislation and some additional ones as well, we are continuing that support. And as a committee, as

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an Education Committee I think you have come out very strong and with collective support for this and indicating that we have a goal of 100 percent access to early childhood education for all Nebraska children in the year prior to kindergarten. And to be more specific, LB984 indicates that any additional monies available in lottery funds be directed to early childhood grant programs administered by the Department of Education, and furthermore with LB984 to add the intent to appropriate an additional \$4.6 million for 2014-15 for this grant program. Now I think this bears a little bit of explanation because first of all, the \$4.6 million is not actually a request for new General Fund monies. Rather, it represents an additional allocation beyond the current TEEOSA request in LB725, which by the way you're going to be hearing tomorrow morning on the floor. To translate this into actual dollars, the current appropriation for TEEOSA for 2014-15 is \$940 million. Current law says \$899 million for TEEOSA. Under LB725 in which we recommend lowering the local effort rate, it puts more money into the TEEOSA formula, it moves it to \$935 million. So if you do the math, \$935 million versus what's already appropriated for TEEOSA, \$940 million, that's where I come up with the approximate \$4.6 million that I want allocated specifically to early childhood grant program. I think it's also...gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit more about the Education Innovation Fund from which we fund these early childhood grants. First of all, the money comes into the Education Innovation Fund through sales of lottery tickets. It brings in approximately \$7 million annually. Right off the top, \$500,000 has to go to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund. After that, of course then dollars are paid out for operating expenses and then certainly payment for prizes, for people who have a winning lottery ticket. Of the money remaining in that fund, 44.5 percent is designated and via statute shall be used for education as the Legislature may direct. And that's where we come in. Of the 44.5 percent, 19.75 percent goes into this Education Innovation Fund which we're talking about in the early childhood grant programs, but then 24.75 percent is distributed via the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund which helps needy students going onto postsecondary education. Now the other important thing to remember is that all of these funds that I just mentioned and delineated under statute end on June 30, 2016. So we as an Education Committee will have the responsibility via a lottery fund study this next year to decide how we want to continue distributing the funds through the Education Improvement Fund. Just to give you an idea of the current allocations, \$1 million--and I think Mr. Sears mentioned this--\$1 million each year goes for the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund for forgivable loans for teachers. It also funds bridge programs, also assistance for military students, and then grants that we've been talking about. The grants for the early childhood grants in programming for both birth to three and to the preschool; also, for differentiated curriculum like gifted programs, and also distance education equipment and incentives. So to end with how I began though, LB984 adds \$4.6 million to the Early Childhood Preschool Grant Program: three-year grants awarded to school districts. It requires districts to match the grant dollars with local buy-in and commitment, and then after the three years of the grant program, the pre-K students are included in the TEEOSA formula. So in conclusion, we continue our support with LB984 in recognition of the value of early childhood education. I know that

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there will be some hopefully that will follow me that will give testament to the importance and the research that supports this investment. But again, I ask for your support and would be willing to answer any questions. Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Any questions on the opening? Seeing none, we will now open testimony for those proponents, please. [LB984]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator Scheer, members of the committee, John Bonaiuto, J-o-h-n B-o-n-a-i-u-t-o, representing Nebraska Council of School Administrators and Nebraska Association of School Boards supporting Senator Sullivan's efforts in LB984. I would say that Senator Sullivan is focusing on a very critical area that we just heard a lot of testimony in the previous bills on. I wanted to really highlight the fact that in this bill that I appreciate Senator Sullivan trying to capture dollars that have been budgeted for education, and from past history, when these dollars have, if you will, been left on the table...and we saw this happen in the last legislative session, that they are redirected to the General Fund for A bills in other areas. And so I really applaud Senator Sullivan's efforts to keep the money in education and focus on the early childhood dollars with the \$4.6 million. I also think that having this committee study future lottery allocations and targeting those dollars...because those dollars are so important to funding various areas that need some targeted resources that do not come from the General Funds. With that I will conclude my testimony and answer any questions. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions from any of the committee members? Thank you, John. [LB984]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, Jon, again. [LB984]

JON HABBEN: Thank you, Senator Scheer, members of the committee. My comments are very brief. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Your name, please. [LB984]

JON HABBEN: Oh, J-o-n H-a-b-b-e-n. I need to write that on my paper. I do want to let you know that we concur with everything Dr. Bonaiuto said. We are also highly concerned with appropriated dollars, the formula comes up with less, what happens to the remainder? We want to keep those in education at every opportunity. Early childhood is a terrific location for those funds at this time. The discussion on the Education Innovation Fund, very timely, you've heard that it is going to sunset in its allocations. There are other interests for those dollars just like those that are getting those dollars right now remain interested in keeping them. It's an excellent discussion to have, an important discussion to have. We're talking about an awful lot of money and

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certainly focused on education by statute. That's all I have to say. Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions for Jon? Seeing none, thank you very much. Next proponent. Welcome back again. [LB984]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: (Exhibits 1 and 7) Good afternoon again. My name is Jen Goettemoeller, G-o-e-t-t-e-m-o-e-l-l-e-r. I'm here on behalf of First Five Nebraska to urge your support of LB984. I also have brought with me today a letter of support from Jim Krieger who is the CFO at Gallup and the chairman of Nebraska's Early Childhood Business Roundtable who was not able to be here today. Just want to thank you for your continued recognition of the importance of early childhood. The additional appropriation, the \$4.6 million appropriation to the preschool program included in this bill will go to the existing preschool program operated by the Department of Education. It has quality standards that are built into it that help schools continue to provide the kind of early childhood experiences that do close the achievement gap for children who are at risk of failing in school. In addition to quality standards, the preschool program is successful because it encourages parent engagement. The best high-quality early childhood programs involve parents from the beginning not only, as you know, is a parent a child's first and most important teacher, but setting the standard of parent involvement in the early years means a better chance that parents will continue to be involved once their children enter the K-12 system. I distributed a map for you here that looks similar to one that you may have seen before. It shows that over 62,000 children in Nebraska ages birth to five are at risk of failing in school. That's 41 percent of all children who have yet to enter kindergarten. About six weeks ago, the Census Bureau released these new numbers that show the situation, especially in rural Nebraska needs serious attention. That trend has been growing in the wrong direction for at least 14 years. And this bill will directly address that problem. The vast majority of the department's preschool grant funds go to programs in rural Nebraska. In addition, we support allowing lottery allocations for early childhood to remain in place after June of 2016. Stable funding for early childhood will allow school districts to provide robust, high-quality opportunities that do close the achievement gap for young children who would otherwise struggle and need increased resources in the K-12 system. LB984 is sound and responsible public policy. And frankly, you're not going to get a better return on investment than investing in high-quality early childhood programs. Please advance it from committee. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, Jen. Any questions? I guess not. Thank you. [LB984]

JEN GOETTEMOELLER: Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Go ahead. [LB984]

JOHN SKRETTA: (Exhibits 2 and 3) Good afternoon, Senators. My name is John

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Skretta, J-o-h-n S-k-r-e-t-t-a. I am the superintendent of the Norris School District, and I'm providing proponent testimony on behalf of both the Norris district and STANCE. STANCE is Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education, a coalition of midsize school districts promoting best practices. Want to share with you...you've got a couple handouts coming around. One of them is our collaborative proponent testimony, and essentially what we want to do is just make sure that we share the love here. And I can ditto on the preceding testimony and thank you for your support of early childhood education. And just to reiterate that those dollars are a great investment in helping to close the achievement gap. And the notion of making a commitment to universal access for early childhood programming for all Nebraska children in the year prior to kindergarten makes all kinds of sense. The hand out that you've got that's got some slides, color slides on it, is a curriculum program report from the Norris preschool program. We've got four classrooms of preschool. We run 2 in the a.m., 2 in the p.m. serving 63 children now this year. And that gives you kind of a summary in a way that's probably more compelling than me droning on about the research basis on closing the achieving gap and how we remediate skills deficits with those youngest children because there's some cool pictures of cute kids doing great stuff in there. And so I wanted to share that with you and just wanted to speak just a little bit more specifically...when we talk about achievement gap, sometimes we don't have a real clear notion of what that means. And when we're serving kids who need the skill sets the most for kindergarten readiness, preschool programming that's high quality, from highly qualified educators, can really make a big difference in some things like preliteracy skills that are really fundamental to kindergarten success and that put a kid on a trajectory to some of the other issues that you've thought a lot about and deliberated a lot about already this session, like 3rd-graders reading at grade level and how college entrance exam pilot programs can help put kids on a path to postsecondary success. And the earlier that we can provide effective interventions with some things that start just like print orientation, knowing that a page of print is left to right and top to bottom, and helping a preschooler understand how to hold a book and what a book looks like and where the cover is and acquiring a more functional vocabulary before kindergarten, those are great things to be able to do. And so we just wanted to emphasize our support for LB984. Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, John. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB984]

JOHN SKRETTA: Thank you. [LB984]

KAY STILWELL BERGQUIST: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon. I'm standing in for Renee Fry this afternoon...chair...she couldn't make it. So my name is Kay Stilwell Bergquist, and that's K-a-y S-t-i-l-w-e-l-l B-e-r-g-q-u-i-s-t, and I am the education policy analyst at OpenSky Policy Institute. OpenSky is a data-driven, statewide, nonpartisan Nebraska organization focused on budget and tax policy. We're here today to testify in support of

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LB984, a bill that calls for the appropriation of additional \$4.6 million for fiscal years '14-15 for early childhood education. We support LB984 as we believe Nebraska could benefit greatly from an increased investment in early childhood education. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research's The State of Preschool 2012 report, Nebraska ranked 18 out of the 40 states that have early childhood programs in terms of access to such programs. But we ranked last among these states in terms of state dollars per child enrolled in early childhood education. Extensive academic research shows the powerful societal and economic benefits of investing in early childhood education. The Perry preschool study in Michigan in the 1960s was a random assignment experiment that followed those preschool kids through age 40. And in that study researchers found participants in the preschool program were more likely to have higher earnings, were lower welfare recipients, and had lower rates of criminal activity than children in the control group who did not receive that early childhood education. According to Timothy Bartik, senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employee Research, early childhood education can bring more and better jobs for a state and thereby promote higher per capita earnings. And I think Mr. Stilwell indicated...talked about return on investment. Bartik's research shows that for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs, per capita earnings of state residents go up \$2.78, or a 3-to-1 return on that investment. This return can reach as much as 16 to 1 when factoring anticrime and other benefits into the equation. More workers with higher skills pays off in higher wages and better jobs for the entire community, not just those who attend those preschool programs. Bartik also acknowledges that cost can be seen as a barrier for early childhood education. His research indicates it would cost about \$30 billion to establish a universal early childhood program for all 4-year-olds in the United States. However, according to his research, this works out about \$100 per capita, and the \$30 billion investment would pay off in \$83 billion of extra earnings. So he argues that any state government that can afford this cost, if there is the political will to do so, would see a return on that investment. But he also acknowledges that there is a profound barrier in the long-term nature of investing in preschool. It takes 15 to 20 years to see that payoff, but the payoff is real. Early childhood education increases the career earnings of a low-income child by 10 percent while increasing the career earnings of a middle-class child by about 5 percent, and a community return on investment of almost 3 to 1. But it's an investment now for the future, and that leaves his audience with the question of whether we are willing to pay more taxes now to improve our community's long-term success. OpenSky supports LB984 and increased investment in early childhood education. We feel the evidence is clear that support for early childhood education programs is a true investment in a better Nebraska. And I thank you for your time, and I will nervously answer any questions you might have. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Are there any question? Your lucky day. [LB984]

KAY STILWELL BERGQUIST: Yes, thank you. [LB984]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Well, welcome back again, Jay. [LB984]

JAY SEARS: Must be my day, right? [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Still 28,000 strong? [LB984]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 5) Senator Scheer, members of the committee, Madam Chair, for the record, I'm Jay Sears, still, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, and I still represent the Nebraska State Education Association. NSEA is in support of LB984, and our previous testimony on early childhood bills should reinforce for you our commitment to early childhood education. Just remind you also that as we invest in the front end of education of the early childhood years, we also have to invest in the educators and the development of their skills and knowledge so that we have appropriate educators working with our children. So that's my testimony. You have the other written parts, but again, NSEA is in support of capturing that \$4.6 million to put it into early childhood education. So thank you very much. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Jay. Any questions? All right. [LB984]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: (Exhibit 6) Thank you. Any other proponents? Are there any opponents? Is there anyone that wishes to testify in a neutral position? And before you close on LB984 we have received a letter from the Holland Children's Movement in support and Nebraska State Board of Education. Senator Sullivan to close. [LB984]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator. And very briefly. Just to first of all thank the people who spoke in support of the bill, and also the importance of making sure that \$4.6 million continues to go to educational programming. And what that means in terms of the potential for moving us farther along the goal with that additional money being put into early childhood programming, we can actually see 30 new programs being instigated in school districts with approximately 460 additional children being served. So we are moving forward on our goal. Thank you very much. [LB984]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any final questions for Senator Sullivan? If not, that will close the hearing on LB984. And as long as you're there, we might as well start on LB967. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: (Exhibits 1 and 2) Thank you, Senator Scheer. My name is Kate Sullivan, K-a-t-e S-u-l-l-i-v-a-n, representing the 41st Legislative District here to open on LB967. And not to say, recall what we did this last summer, but this is a result of the Education's interim study on school finance and represents, in essence, the Education Committee's state aid bill for this year. If you recall, when we first met we wanted to start

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with a blank slate as we looked at school finance. We also found though in our deliberations, in our hearings that it's a large task to completely overhaul our funding formula. And we also heard in testimony, in public hearing, in conversations, that perhaps there are some things about our funding formula that really aren't so bad. And so that what we ended up with as we listened and learned, we extrapolated some features to change and improve certain features of our state aid to schools. And that's what LB967 embodies. It basically does three things: number one, it phases out the teacher education and instructional time allowances; secondly, it provides \$2 million from that Education Innovation Fund for school district reorganization grants; and thirdly, it again continues to underscore and add intent language for the goal of all children to have access to early childhood education in the year prior to kindergarten. A little bit more detail on each of those, the teacher education and instructional time allowances, in our public hearings conducted this past summer, we heard testimony time and time again that these allowances were no longer needed; that the teacher education allowance no longer represented a unique cost of districts, rather it simply is the cost of doing business as we have seen more and more teachers see the need for an advanced degree. Secondly, with respect to the instructional time, we heard that there is inconsistent use and application and in some cases questionable accuracy as to the application of this allowance. Now admittedly, some districts have come to expect these allowances. And they're concerned that they will not retain the level of funding even though--and I emphasize this--even though the funding is not necessarily going away. It goes back into basic funding. But just because they've come to expect an allowance, that is no reason to keep it. So the rationale for phasing it out, if you recall in some of the quite contentious deliberations we had last session, there was indication...don't pull the rug out from under us. Don't just take away this allowance. Hence, in this LB967 we are phasing out the allowances. We are giving districts time to prepare. Both the aid and the allowance in both the teacher education and instructional time are reduced by 50 percent for the 15-16 school year, and phased out completely for 16-17. Now, with the reorganization grants, as I said, it designates \$2 million for Education Innovation Fund for school district reorganization grants. To qualify for these grants, the consolidations would have to be approved by the State Committee for Reorganization of School Districts. The grants would equal \$125,000 per each district involved in consolidation. There's also some stipulations involved. It would require that the districts conduct a study to be completed before consolidation to determine improvements in efficiencies in educational opportunities. The reality is there are unique costs when districts go through this process of reorganizing and consolidating. And we're recognizing this in saying that they need some additional short-term help. And we also know that the depopulation of rural Nebraska is continuing, and these kinds of conversations and ultimate consolidations are happening. And the third component of LB967 is adding intent language that states the goal, again, of ensuring that every Nebraska family has access to early childhood education at a minimum the school year prior to when the child is eligible to attend kindergarten. As you've heard numerous times today, research shows this is a good investment. We must retain quality

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standards for these programs. And it moves us along the path that we're on. We've heard these issues brought to us before in our public hearings. LB967 is not a big game changer, but the recommendations of changes that it makes are significant, important, and useful changes. So that's the essence of LB967. Now, not to complicate things but to indicate a dimension, I'm offering AM1712 to LB967. And I would like the page to hand that out now to members of the committee. I entered this, introduced it last Friday, and it was printed in the Journal, for the express purposes of allowing us to have the opportunity for a public hearing. But ultimately I hope to attach this amendment to LB725 when it comes up for General File debate. I haven't seen tomorrow's agenda, but it's quite possible that it will be on the agenda as early as tomorrow. So to that end, I want to go into fairly distinct detail about what this amendment does. The amendment would simply focus the calculation of the student growth adjustment correction on the difference between the estimated growth and the actual growth. The issue being addressed grew out of a clerical error that was made by several school districts in their student growth adjustment applications. This was brought to my attention after LB725 had already been advanced. So hence, this is the process that we're using to give it a public hearing, but ultimately then to attach it to LB725 so that we can have a correct distribution of aid under TEEOSA. The districts were focused on the growth and their formula students and did not realize that they were incorrectly including their preschool students in the calculation. In past years, the inclusion of the preschool students actually was not making a difference in the initial calculation of the Student Growth Adjustment because the preschool students were included on both sides of the calculation. However, in statute the calculation is based on the difference between the fall membership from the prior year and the estimated average daily membership for the aid year. With changes in the data systems, the department is able to use the district's actual fall K-12 membership from the prior year and only needs the estimated average daily membership from the district. When that estimated average daily membership includes preschool students, the estimated growth is exaggerated, and the district actually then ends up receiving more than they should have from the adjustment, hence the problem. And a problem also occurs in the calculation of the student growth correction under the current language. The correction is currently based on the difference between the estimated average daily membership and the actual average daily membership, instead of the difference between the estimated growth and the actual growth. With the changes in this amendment, no school district will get any more or less than they should over time. The amendment avoids penalizing districts for a simple error and avoids causing unnecessary instability in aid. Now the department did release another state aid model this morning reflecting this amendment, and the link was sent to your offices. But I'm also handing out a printout that focuses on just the changes that would result from the amendment and the impact that it has on school districts, so if the page could hand those out to you. And I think by looking at those you can easily see on the far right-hand column, the districts that would be impacted by this change. So as I said, in some ways complicates the whole process of LB725, but in essence I think by giving voice to this amendment in this public hearing but then

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eventually attaching it to LB725, it will avoid giving any state aid inaccurately to any district. So with that, I'll be glad to try to answer any questions. I think that someone is here from the Department of Education if there are any clarifications that need to be made with respect to the modeling and this amendment. But also with LB967 I'll be glad to answer any questions as well. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions for Senator on either the bill or the amendment? [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I'll move aside. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Seeing...oh, excuse me, one moment. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, Senator. Okay, yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Senator Sullivan, just to understand this, is it relating to a particular set of districts that had miscalculations in their figures to the state department? [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And if I'm understanding the whole story correctly, if the state made an error and you handed your numbers in and they overpaid you, they would come to you and get that money back. If you as a district made an error and sent that in to the state, they're under no obligation to tell you that you made an error and that you're short on money that you should be getting, does that sound right? [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Well, we do the modeling so that a school district will look at the models and identify if they see a red flag or not which in this case it was pointed out that they in fact had the potential of...well, it appeared there should be a correction. And so then they contacted the Department of Education asking that a correction be made. But according to the interpretation of the statute, they couldn't do that. And so that's why we're making changes in this amendment. It allows the department to make the adjustment prior to when the aid is given out. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, and it... [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Current statute does not allow that. It only allows that the aid be distributed and then the correction be made which would then result in a correction for the next time aid is distributed. So by allowing the correction to be made now before the aid is distributed, then it avoids the possibility of a swing up or down for adjustments that would need to be made for a particular part of the TEEOSA formula. [LB967]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And again, asking that if there is a recognized error on the part of the district or on the part of the state department, they now have the right to notify the district and... [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...square that away... [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: That's easier language than... [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That's the essence of the amendment. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...trying to understand that. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, exactly. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. And these are the losses or gains that you have estimated... [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...on the list that we have here. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Cook. [LB967]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Senator Scheer, and thank you, Senator Sullivan. This is the hearing on LB967, and now we're...and this amendment, I guess we're kind of going through the...technically, if it's been heard in a hearing then it could be potentially amended onto a bill that's on the agenda. I guess it's kind of a rhetorical question, but if we're all meeting here in the Education Committee, and there's an amendment that's been drafted to a bill that's already on our agenda, I guess I'm wondering why we didn't know that there was going to be this thing printed in the Journal and drafted just kind of mentioned to the Education Committee out loud. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Well, okay, first of all, we sent out an e-mail to all the Education Committee last week with this amendment... [LB967]

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SENATOR COOK: Okay. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: ...indicating that this was the process that it was going to be using and then indicating also that this was brought to my attention...I mean, had I known about it early on, it would have been brought out as part of LB725. But it was brought to my attention after we had already advanced the bill. Now I want it to be attached to LB725 to make the correction before the TEEOSA aid bill is approved and aid is certified so that they don't get money that they don't really need...that they shouldn't, so that they don't actually then in the next go around have to make a correction so that they have this up-and-down swing with the aid that they will be receiving. I know it gets confusing, but it was the best I could do to accommodate the concerns of the impacted districts but also to stay true to the fact that we're trying to make TEEOSA aid more stable and predictable. [LB967]

SENATOR COOK: Okay. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Kolowski. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, sir. Two districts are being hit very, very hard here. And have they been contacted by us to the possibility of this? [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Well, the model has been made public as of today. So they have seen this. I have not...I think you will be hearing from at least one district impacted by this, but I can't tell you that I have received any response. Now in the long run...it's a little a hard to explain this, but this correction in the long run does not have fiscal impact. Admittedly, we're seeing the total bottom line is a \$2.7 million decrease in the total TEEOSA package for the '14-15 school year. But again, to avoid the swings of, okay, I'll give it to you; now you have to take it back as a correction, then there will be no long-term negative fiscal impact. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I have no problem with what you're doing because I think it's correcting an error that should not have been there. Of what the State Department of Education can or cannot do under certain circumstances, there should be open communication both ways if there's an error at either end. And that should not be an impediment. Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other comments, questions? If not, we will open testimony for proponents on LB967. [LB967]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator Scheer, members of the committee, John Bonaiuto, J-o-h-n B-o-n-a-i-u-t-o, representing Nebraska Association of School Boards, Nebraska Council of School Administrators. And we want to support the Education Committee's bill and thank you for the work that you did over the interim and knowing how many meetings

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you had and how hard you worked to try to develop good policy in this bill that has a number of moving parts to address complicated issues. I'm going to speak on one area knowing that there will be many testifiers probably to address the other areas. The groups I represent are very appreciative and support the School District Reorganization Fund and the money that will become available to them in grants from the lottery funds or the Education Innovation Funds and the thoughtful process allowing them to not only have grants but to have an expenditure lid to spend that money if the districts meet the criteria to access the funds. From our experience that there are boards that have had discussions and having a little extra help does get them to talk a little more seriously about moving in a direction that might be very beneficial for the districts involved. So we appreciate you having heard that information and listened to what people had to say and incorporated that into the committee's bill. With that, I'll conclude my testimony. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you, John. [LB967]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Jon. [LB967]

JON HABBEN: Thank you, Senator Scheer, members of the committee. My name is Jon, J-o-n, Habben, H-a-b-b-e-n, Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association. We support the bill, and I wanted to make a couple of comments about it. NRCSA, as we're called, has been promoting the concept of reorganization support funds outside of TEEOSA for several years. We felt it needed to be outside TEEOSA because it should not be a responsibility of TEEOSA to fund this kind of an issue that occurs annually throughout the state one, two, three, four times; hard to tell. Those discussions are going on constantly, and obviously they're difficult discussions. But in the end, when you bring school districts together in a reorganization there are support costs that you have. I think I've talked about them before, as have others. There are simply support costs that this kind of help makes that reorganization maybe move a little more smoothly. And that's a very positive thing. Reorganization can tend to be a pretty emotional circumstance. Secondly, the instructional time and teacher education; last year when there was a second piece added to those aid, teacher aid, instructional time aid, and while we supported the sunset of those two allowances for the last couple of years in all kinds of discussions in all kinds of groups, we also made the point that if something was a policy incentive or a policy type of...I don't want to say as if it were a normal part of state aid, but an additional piece added to it as per, we are going to do this to support or incent. We felt that if that were the case that that should be something that was incented across all 249 districts being eligible. And so when this came out in the final version of TEEOSA last year, that it included the allowances in limited fashion and aid to districts that did not participate in TEEOSA, we understood. We supported that. If it's going to be an allowance, we felt that all districts should be involved and that meant it had to be aid

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and not allowance for the nonequalized districts. However, we still stand in the same position that teacher education and instructional time are not necessarily appropriate to a state aid formula and equalization formula. And we don't change our position on that. We maintain the same position that we have for the last couple of years on that. And just wanted to make sure everybody understood that circumstance that resulted in aid and where NRCSA was at. So that said, those are the only points I wanted to make. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions for Jon? Guess not, thank you, Jon. [LB967]

JON HABBEN: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome. [LB967]

TERRY HAACK: (Exhibit 3) Welcome, Senator Scheer, Senator Sullivan, the committee. My name is Terry Haack. I'm the superintendent of schools for Bennington Public Schools. I'm here to testify in support of LB967. In particular, Bennington Public Schools is testifying in support of the amendment offered by Senator Sullivan allowing the Nebraska Department of Education and the school districts to make a correction on the student growth adjustment due to a clerical error in applying for the adjustment. I hope everybody has received the written testimony, and I just want to make it brief. Certainly, I hope you have the opportunity to read so. But if you would, go to page 3. What you'll see there is the actual application as it goes on the Department of Education. What occurs is you put your current...and as is talked about by Senator Sullivan, that is a pre-K number that Bennington put in there. The second line is again an estimate based on a pre-K number. Then you get the summed total. What we're looking for as a correction, and what the Department of Education rightfully did in their interpretation of the statute, is they make a correction on line 2 based on K-12 numbers. Thus, if you don't meet that 90 on line 3 based on the correction line 2, then you fall short of your estimated projection. And so that is the clerical error, and we hope that that will clarify it for the committee. And that is the need for the amendment. The first time that Bennington understood that it had a clerical error was two years after it made the application. And that is in the model of January 14. And at that point in time we saw we had a correction. In talking to the department, we fully understand how that clerical error was made and why the department couldn't make that correction at that point in time. The amendment simply clarifies statute allowing for basically line 3 to be the important number and not necessarily the product of math. And so we hope that the committee advances this bill, certainly takes into consideration the amendment offered today. Thank you very much. I'll be happy to answer any questions. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Haack, on...I must have a different

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page 3 than everyone else has. What are the numbers that you have on page 3? Would you... [LB967]

TERRY HAACK: I have 1,488, 1,578, and 90. Now those are pre-K numbers. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. [LB967]

TERRY HAACK: What the department did is match that with K-12 numbers of actual growth in line 2 which would have been about 26 students less. And so our actual growth would have been 64 students according to this math when in reality our growth was over 90. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, and those number aren't on here...state department. [LB967]

TERRY HAACK: That's correct, right. [LB967]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Questions, comments? Thank you, Dr. Haack. [LB967]

TERRY HAACK: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Other proponents? [LB967]

KAY STILWELL BERGQUIST: (Exhibit 4) Once again, Renee Fry could not be with us this afternoon, and I'm Kay Stilwell Bergquist, K-a-y S-t-i-l-w-e-l-l B-e-r-g-q-u-i-s-t, and I am the education policy analyst at OpenSky Policy. We're here today to testify in favor of LB967, and specifically, we want to talk about the provision in the bill that would eliminate the teacher education and instructional time allowances which in our research this summer we found to be regressive components of the school state aid formula. In theory, a state aid program that is designed to compensate for differences in local capacity to raise revenues, thereby providing more revenues to districts with greater needs and fewer resources would have a progressive structure. And despite the best intentions of most education funding systems, researcher Bruce Baker of Rutgers finds that state aid formulas often have what he calls stealth inequities. And that's what he defines as features of school funding systems that tend to exacerbate inequalities in per-pupil spending rather than reduce them and do so in a way that favors communities with the least need. And when we visited with the Education Committee this summer, we showed these two charts that also are handed out that shows the inequalities of the need generated by these two allowances. So these fall into that stealth equity category. Overall, TEEOSA is a progressive formula because it does target more state dollars to high-poverty schools. But these teacher education and instructional time allowances

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have that opposite effect as you can see by the charts. The intent behind the two allowances makes sense, but the consequences of these allowances has been the allocation of less aid to high-poverty, low-wealth schools which dilutes the equity function of TEEOSA. By eliminating these regressive components of the TEEOSA formula, more state dollars can be directed to where they are needed the most. Thank you for your time again, and if you have any questions I would be happy to answer them. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions? You lucked out again, Kay. [LB967]

KAY STILWELL BERGQUIST: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: (Laugh) Thank you. Any other proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? [LB967]

JASON HAYES: (Exhibits 5 and 6) Senator Scheer and members of the Education Committee, we are Jason Hayes and Larry Scherer, and that's spelled J-a-s-o-n H-a-y-e-s and L-a-r-r-y S-c-h-e-r-e-r. We are appearing together today on behalf of the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. We are presenting testimony in opposition to one part of LB967, the phaseout of the teacher education and instructional time allowance and aid provisions. NSEA stands in support of the other two portions of the bill to provide access to quality preschool services for all four-year-olds and support for school districts that reorganize. Because of the importance of the teacher education allowance, we oppose LB967 as it now stands. During the 2013 Session, the Legislature approved the retention of the teacher education allowance while adding a teacher education aid program for districts that did not receive equalization funding. The combination of those two programs represented about \$32 million in equalization and teacher education aid. NSEA worked diligently to ensure that the teacher education allowance remained in the state aid formula. The teacher education allowance was created in 2008 and was designed to reorganize the additional cost to school districts that come with maintaining a teaching staff and advanced professional skills and knowledge through the achievement of a master's degree or doctorate. Teachers holding advanced degrees have a measurable impact on student achievement. The Nation's Report Card, the National Assessment of Education Progress, reported in 2011 that for the fifth straight year, students with teachers who identified that they held advanced degrees scored higher on reading assessment than their peers whose teachers did not hold advanced degrees. Local and national research indicates that teachers holding math and science master's degrees raise students achievement. This research, which I have cited in my written testimony, shows the combination of in-depth mathematical and professional development has demonstrated to have a meaningful impact on student achievement both on standardized tests and on district level achievement measures. Advanced education and professional growth are not free. Those costs are an investment in our future. School districts that recognize the

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value of employing teachers with these credentials should be rewarded for doing so, not penalized with repeal of the current allowance. Under a repeal, districts that have relied on these allowances will lose state aid, while creating the unintended consequence of providing additional aid to districts that have not relied on these allowances. Elimination of these allowances will require that teacher education and instructional time allowances be folded back into basic funding. TEEOSA calculates basic funding for each school using an average of adjusted General Fund expenditures using a comparison group of districts with similar numbers of formula students. This same averaging calculation will result in approximately \$4 million additional formula needs. While NSEA does not object to greater funding for TEEOSA, it does object when the additional funding will go to school districts that have not prioritized teacher education and instructional time as important elements of their educational program. In addition, school districts that do not receive equalization aid will lose about \$2.5 million, or about 15 percent of their total TEEOSA aid. We ask that this committee continue to value teacher professional growth and instructional time as essential components of effective schooling and state funding. Please do not discard these incentives until the committee has identified a suitable replacement of equal or greater value through the visioning process planned in LB1103. We strongly support that new look at K-12 education in Nebraska, and we will do our part to generate an open and healthy discussion of these issues with our teacher members. Thank you, and if there are any questions, we will do our best to answer them. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Senator Avery. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Senator Scheer. I think you said that where you have teachers with advanced degrees, students perform better in the classroom. [LB967]

JASON HAYES: Um-hum. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Did that study...I presume this was a study that you did or somebody did and you read it. [LB967]

JASON HAYES: Yes, the two studies that I cited were The Nation's Report Card, the National Assessment of Education Progress in 2011, and then also on the UNL Web site, the MIM study. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay, do you know if they controlled for whether or not the teacher with the higher education experience actually had it in the field in which they teach? [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: I do not know the answer to that one. We will... [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, that would be relevant, wouldn't it? [LB967]

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LARRY SCHERER: Yeah, that would be relevant looking...yes, they did. We should ask Jay to come up. We could triple team. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: They did control for that. [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: They did control for that, right. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: So... [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: So these were teachers who did have... [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: So these were teachers...these were students in classrooms where the higher...the advanced degree was in the area in which they teach, the subject matter. [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: Right. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: That's critical. We don't necessarily do that in this state with the teacher allowance. [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: That's true, and that's why we support legislation which would focus that funding, that incentive for teachers who teach in the area where their degree is. And Senator Kolowski last year introduced a bill on our behalf that would have done that. So we support exactly what you're saying, Senator Avery. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, it's a little bit misleading to make the claim you did in your testimony without the qualification that these were people who were actually getting advanced degrees in the areas in which they teach. And that's the key to boosting the performance scores of those students because if you go out and you get an advanced degree in curriculum and instruction or administration, and you go back in the classroom and teach math, it's not going to do you any good. [LB967]

JASON HAYES: Yeah, we think that's a good point, Senator Avery. I think I would add to that that I think it would be shortsighted to just completely eliminate the allowances without going to some other alternative. And that really is our point is that doing that ahead of the visioning process that's contemplated for the interim in 2014 would be premature. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, then it's a question of fairness here too. If you live out in Hyannis, how close are you to a campus where you can actually find advanced courses? I know there's distance learning, but that's limited and not necessarily equally available throughout the state. If you live in Lincoln, you have no problem. If you live in

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Omaha, you have no problem. And many others...metropolitan areas, you have access to higher education fairly easily. But when you get out in some of the more remote areas of the state, that's not the case. So if you want to punish those teachers, not give them the opportunity for advanced degrees and only limit it to those areas of the state where you have colleges and institutions... [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: No, I think that we would be supportive of trying to equalize access to teachers with higher degrees. And, you know, one of the things that the loan program does...the loan forgiveness programs, it doubles the forgiveness if you teach in a sparse area, which it should. And I guess we believe that this particular allowance should also factor in sparsity in some way so that it equalizes the ability to attract those teachers. I think you raise another good point. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Do you have data anywhere on how many of the teachers who do avail themselves of the opportunity for advanced degrees...how many out of them actually do the graduate work in the area in which they teach? Or how many of them go into something other than that? [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: The Department of Education has some data from their loan forgiveness program where you sign a contract that you'll teach in an area and...so they probably know where those people are teaching and what programs. But I couldn't say for sure whether that data will answer your question totally. And there should be... [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: That's relevant and certainly would help us make decisions in this committee. [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: Sure. Sure. I agree. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Jason and Larry. [LB967]

JASON HAYES: Thanks. [LB967]

LARRY SCHERER: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Appreciate you going together in the essence of time. Welcome this afternoon. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: (Exhibit 7) Thank you. Good afternoon, Senators. I am Alan Bone, A-l-a-n B-o-n-e. I am president of the Westside Education Association, and I'm here today

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representing more than 500 professional educators of the Westside Community Schools in Omaha. I have been a Nebraska educator for 27 years having taught previously in the Arlington and Ralston Public School systems. Westside Education Association is opposed to that portion of LB967 that would eliminate the teacher education allowance from the state aid formula for funding public schools. Like thousands of my fellow Nebraska teachers, I believe that this part of the formula plays an important role in putting highly educated teachers in classrooms around the state. As an educator with a master's degree in English from UNL nearly 70 graduate hours under my transcript, I can tell you that such study is not cheap. A single three-credit-hour course costs roughly \$1,000 and even more once you add in the cost of books and travel. Fortunately, I've worked in school districts that have encouraged and rewarded my ongoing development by establishing financial incentives for doing so. My current district, the Westside Community Schools, even goes so far as to offer tuition reimbursement to teachers obtaining their first master's degree. Our negotiated agreement with the district requires that new teachers obtain a master's degree within the first ten years of employment with the district or face a potential pay freeze. But once teachers have obtained a degree, that agreement also provides for a significant salary increase. Were it to enact LB967, the Legislature would effectively penalize districts like mine for doing the very thing that has to this point been encouraged. Such districts offered incentives for advanced study under the assumption that the state would continue to support that approach. But removing the teacher education allowance would effectively say to those districts, just kidding. The fact is that the teacher education allowance represents just a tiny fraction of the dollars funneled through the state aid formula in 2013-14 at just 3 percent of the total. Both equalized and nonequalized districts receive a portion of this \$30 million and taking those dollars away could have unintended consequences. In particular, my concern is that lacking the state financial support provided by the teacher education allowance, my district and others might well reconsider their ability to continue funding provisions of our negotiated agreement that encourage and reward postgraduate study and achievement. For districts that are less committed to encouraging postgraduate study, the teacher education allowance is the only incentive to put highly educated teachers in every classroom. Removing that incentive sends a clear message to parents in those districts, incorrect I believe, that the Legislature doesn't care whether their children have access to teachers with advanced degrees. I don't know about you, but I have yet to meet a parent who has said, you know, my child has a good teacher, but we were hoping for somebody just a little less educated. Nor have I encountered parents who thought that a teacher's professional knowledge or practice was just a little too up to date for their child. What I have found is that parents respect teachers who pursue and hold advanced degrees. They want their children in those classrooms of those teachers. And I suspect they would be as dismayed as I am to learn that this committee proposes to make it more difficult for their school districts to maintain a staff composed of such teachers. Removing incentives to put more knowledgeable teachers in our classrooms makes no sense, particularly given the increasingly demanding nature of teaching, the needs of Nebraska's school districts, and the expectations of parents and

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teachers around the state. I respectfully ask the committee to maintain the teacher education allowance as part of the state aid formula. Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Alan. Any questions? Senator Haar. Oh, excuse me. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: (Exhibits 8 and 9) One sec, also, I am presenting two letters from other local association presidents who could not get here today due to the weather: Paul Schulte of Millard and Tracia Blom of South Sioux City. So... [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Yes, thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR HAAR: I'm sorry I got in...I had a hearing for my bill in another committee. So in the testimony from NSEA it says, local and national research indicates teachers holding math and science degrees raise student achievement. Now, you're not a math or science degree, but give us some anecdotal of how it's helped you be a better teacher, to get advanced degrees. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: The one example I go back to over and over again, part of my degree in English involved attending the National Writing Project one summer here in Lincoln. And frankly, my undergraduate preparation, which was not in this state so...it did not prepare me to teach writing. But I went to the Nebraska Writing Project and was exposed to other practitioners, to dozens of approaches and that truly changed everything about the way I taught, reading and writing in particular because...and I just say that I've talked to others who have gone through the same program and said exactly the same thing. That having those opportunities to interact with other practitioners in your discipline is invaluable. And the question that I asked myself every class I went to was, how can I use this in my classroom? And I'd say more often than not I was able to come up...make connections years later in some cases that benefitted me and the students I teach. [LB967]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Other questions? Senator Avery. [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: I think it's more of a comment than a question. I think that the fact that you were educated outside of the state has nothing at all to do with whether or not you get much training in how to teach writing. UNL doesn't do that either. (Laugh) [LB967]

ALAN BONE: I haven't been at UNL for a while, so I will not support or defend them. [LB967]

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SENATOR AVERY: Everybody wants to teach literature, so you put them in the classroom. They teach literature. They don't teach writing. Students can't diagram sentences. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: In the last 20 years that's changed pretty considerably because all teachers now, especially English teachers, are expected to teach reading and writing no matter what level, so... [LB967]

SENATOR AVERY: ...expected. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: It's because it's required. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Alan. [LB967]

ALAN BONE: Thank you. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Good afternoon, Bill. [LB967]

BILL MUELLER: (Exhibit 10) Good afternoon, Senator. Members of the committee, my name is Bill Mueller, M-u-e-l-l-e-r. I appear here today on behalf of the Millard Public Schools. Angelo Passarelli had intended to be here, but due to the weather he didn't get here. So I'm going to...I'm not going to read his statement, which I will have the page hand out to you. Millard does oppose those portions of LB967 that eliminate the instructional time and the teacher education allowances. Millard is a strong proponent of both of these allowances. And we would encourage the committee to look at these allowances as it undergoes or as it undertakes its visioning process in LB1103 which we strongly support. Sixty-eight percent of Millard's 1,700 teachers hold master's degrees. Millard actively recruits, tries very hard to retain experienced teachers with master's degrees. That number is very important to Millard since they have over 2,500 students enrolled in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses with UNO and Metro Community College. Additionally, instructional time is also a valued commodity in Millard. Millard has built 180 school days into its schedule through negotiated contracts over many years. They've also added time to their elementary and middle school schedules because they kept hearing from teaching staff that they didn't have enough time to teach our comprehensive curriculum. We value instructional time in our district, and we hold our professional staff accountable to use that time to increase student achievement. Mr. Passarelli has handed out an abstract of some research on the effect of instructional time on student achievement. Millard is of the opinion that both the teacher education allowance and the instructional time allowance have value and do have a positive effect on a student's academic achievement at Millard. Senator Avery, you talked about whether the advanced degree should be in the course taught. Millard would certainly be supportive of making that change to these allowances. We're not looking to try and game the system by having people get advanced degrees in subjects

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that they're not teaching. We would also be willing to further require that days be added to school calendars, not minutes every day. Millard has added days and not those minutes. Again, our request to the committee is that these be two of the issues that the committee looks at when you undertake your visioning process. You could still make the decision next session. We would hope that you wouldn't, but you could still make the decision to discontinue or phase out these allowances next session. We would hope that you would not prejudge that by eliminating them at this time, but again, would include those in your visioning process. I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you, Bill. [LB967]

BILL MUELLER: Thank you very much. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: (Exhibits 11, 12, 13, and 14) Any other opponents? Anyone wishing to speak in a neutral position? Seeing none, we have received three letters from proponents: Sandy Rosenboom from Crete Public Schools, the Nebraska State Board of Education, and Jen Goettemoeller from First Five Nebraska. We have received two letters in opposition: Mark Shepard from Fremont Public Schools, and Blane McCann from Westside Community Schools. Senator Sullivan to close. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator. Just wanted to point out a couple of things. A reminder primarily that on the results and the contents of LB967 are really the results of our deliberations over the summer on the interim study. And also, if you recall one of things that we talked about, and I think it would be borne out in the minutes of the Executive Session that we distributed to everyone, that at one time in the discussion of the teacher education allowance, I did propose to the committee that maybe we think about revisiting it. And you collectively decided that no, let's go forward on phasing out these two allowances. And also, I want to caution us. We haven't had the public hearing yet on my visioning bill. But we're really talking about two different things. The visioning is much broader than simply looking at the contents of TEEOSA, or whether or not one allowance should stay or not. The visioning process will look at what we want in education across the board, from preschool all the way up to higher education. And so to limit it to a discussion of...first of all, K-12 education and also specific components I think would be limiting us in our discussion of a vision for what we want in education. So again, I ask for your support on LB967. [LB967]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any final questions for Senator Sullivan? Seeing none, this will close the hearing on LB967. And we will now open LB1069. [LB967]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: You're going to get tired of me, aren't you? (Laugh) Again, I'm Kate Sullivan, K-a-t-e S-u-l-l-i-v-a-n, representing the 41st Legislative District and here to introduce to you LB1069 which is the annual technical bill for P-12 education. So it's

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nothing real glossy or glamorous, but are technical details that really need to be taken care of. And I will try to go through them briefly. First, it replaces references to the accreditation by the North Central Association. The Higher Learning Commission actually does the accreditation, but the statutes should not have references to private organizations anyway. So we're clarifying that. Secondly, it harmonizes with Nebraska Publications Clearinghouse requirements. The current provisions require the department to submit eight copies of all publications which is not consistent with the clearinghouse statutes that only require four. Thirdly, it authorizes school district expenditures related to programs and activities, really just a clarifying provision. Fourth, it requires the Early Childhood Training Center to approve training for the Step Up to Quality Child Care Act. If you recall, that was Senator Campbell's bill that we passed last year. And five, it updates special education definitions to reflect changes in federal terminology. Six, it further clarifies the final deadlines for distance education incentives. And those incentives come out of the lottery funds, and we've talked about the fact that the last payments are already required to occur before July 1, 2016. This just clarifies when the final applications and payments will be made. And lastly, it includes private postsecondary career schools in the reciprocity agreement for postsecondary distance education. Last session, the Legislature adopted LB331 allowing the Coordinating Commission to enter into agreements for the provision of postsecondary distance education across state lines. The change simply includes postsecondary career schools. So in essence, those are the details of the technical bill, and I ask for your support of LB1069. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Any questions on the opening? Seeing none, we will open for proponents of LB1069. Good afternoon, Brian. [LB1069]

BRIAN HALSTEAD: Good afternoon, Senator Scheer, members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Brian, B-r-i-a-n, Halstead, H-a-l-s-t-e-a-d. I'm with the Nebraska Department of Education. We're here to support LB1069. And Senator Sullivan gave you a full explanation of all of the technical changes in the bill. So I'll take any questions you might have. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Brian. Any other proponents? Senator Cook is a little concerned about the wind noise. (Laugh) [LB1069]

SENATOR COOK: I am. Yeah, it got a little dramatic there. Did you hear it? [LB1069]

_____: No. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Good afternoon, Tip. [LB1069]

TIP O'NEILL: Hi, I'm Tip O'Neill, O-'-N-e-i-l-l, Association of Independent Colleges and

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Universities. I had like seven pages of prepared testimony, but it got wet in the snow on the way over. But just wanted to say that the ability of Nebraska to participate in the national SARA project is very important. So this tiny little clarification with the Department of Education is really important to independent colleges and universities because we have a lot of colleges and universities that want to do distance education in a lot of states. And so our ability to participate in a national project is very important. So urge you to support this bill. It's very important. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Tip. Any questions? Seeing none, let's begin...oh, one moment, Tip. Senator Avery. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: You called...SARA project? [LB1069]

TIP O'NEILL: SARA. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: What is it? [LB1069]

TIP O'NEILL: It's an acronym. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: Oh, I know it's an acronym. (Laughter) How about telling me what the acronym means. [LB1069]

TIP O'NEILL: State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, yes. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: Oh, okay. That one. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Tip. [LB1069]

TIP O'NEILL: Thank you, Senator. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Other proponents? [LB1069]

SENATOR SEILER: It's like the Army, don't ask. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Good afternoon. [LB1069]

CARNA PFEIL: (Exhibit 1) Senator Scheer, members of the committee, my name is Carna Pfeil, C-a-r-n-a P-f-e-i-l, and I am the interim director of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. And I should have gone before Tip because I was going to tell you what SARA was. So I will do that. I'm going to just address just three sections of the bill, and that has to do with the changes to legislation so that we

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can enter into SARA agreements. And what is SARA? And that is the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, and it is a national group. And it has to do with on-line distance education offered by degree granting institutions. And right now because of a 2010 U.S. Department of Education law that they passed, every institution that offers on-line courses must be approved by the state in which they have students that are taking on-line courses. And some of our institutions, particularly UNL, they have to go to all 50 states. And every state does the authorization differently, and it's more expensive in one state than another. And so a number of the states got together, and actually Marshall Hill was here last year when he asked you to pass this legislation. And he actually has been involved with that group for about two years. He is now the executive director of the national group. But that is a way that those states got together, and they decided it was better for the states to do this work than it would be for the U.S. Department of Education to tell the states how to do it. So this was a way to put the responsibility back on the states. What it does is that now with the passage of the legislation that we did last year, Nebraska can enter into reciprocity agreements. And what that does is it allows us to authorize our institutions because we know best what our institutions are doing. It allows the other states to authorize their institutions. And so...and we all have to follow the same rules because the national group has set up national rules that we have to use to approve our institutions. That gives us the comfort to know that if an institution in Iowa is offering courses here, we know they are following the same rules as we would do if we were approving them here. And so that gives us all a trust level. When we approved the...when you approved the legislation last year, we forgot about the Private Career School Act. And part of it is because that was in the Department of Education, not a responsibility of the commission. And so we missed one little piece in there. And what the changes will do is it will allow out-of-state, private career schools to come in, offer on-line courses without having to be approved by the Nebraska Department of Education. And we need that change because the rules...the national rules say that each state does their own. So you can't stop an institution coming in from another state because they've been authorized by that state. We forgot to make that change. So this legislation...it just makes a change to Section 11, Section 12, and Section 13. And that allows for Nebraska and the commission representing the state to enter into those agreements. If we don't pass this, we can't get Nebraska approval to be part of the reciprocity agreements because we have a conflict. The Department of Education has one rule, we have another. And so it's now in conflict. The national will not approve that and so if we don't approve it, then our institutions won't be part of the reciprocity agreement and they will have to go to every state to try and get approved. So I ask for your support of this. Thank you. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Carna. Senator Avery. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I carried that bill for the commission last year. [LB1069]

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CARNA PFEIL: Yes, you did. [LB1069]

SENATOR AVERY: But SARA must be...have just come into usage in the past year because it didn't appear at all in our discussions last year. So I've learned something today. [LB1069]

CARNA PFEIL: They like acronyms in education. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1069]

CARNA PFEIL: Thank you. [LB1069]

SENATOR SCHEER: (Exhibit 2) Any other proponents? Seeing none, any opponents to LB1069? And are there any neutral position on LB1069? Seeing none, and before you close, I would make it a clean sweep as a proponent for LB1069, Jen Goettemoeller from First Five Nebraska supports this. So she hit positive on all five today. So she's the winner of the lottery. Senator Sullivan waives her closing. And with that, that would end the hearings for this afternoon. Thank you. Be safe on your way home. [LB1069]