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Education Committee
February 10, 2014

[LB1103 LB1077 LB779 LB1055 LB1061 CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Education met at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, February 10, 2014, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB1103, LB1077, LB779, LB1055, LB1061, and gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Kate Sullivan, Chairperson; Jim Scheer, Vice Chairperson; Bill Avery; Tanya Cook; Al Davis; Ken Haar; Rick Kolowski; and Les Seiler. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Education Committee public hearings. I'm Senator Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids, and I'm Chair of the committee. We do have most of our committee members present. Some of them are still in Executive Board meeting and introducing other bills, but I would like to introduce those who are here. To my immediate right is the Vice Chair of the committee, Senator Jim Scheer of Norfolk. To my immediate left...or far left I should say, Senator Tanya Cook of Omaha. To her right is Senator Les Seiler of Hastings. To my far right, as far as senators, is Senator Rick Kolowski of the Millard area. To my far right is Mandy Mizerski who is our committee clerk and will make sure that we have an accurate public record of this hearing. And to my immediate left is Tammy Barry who is one of the legal counsels for the Education Committee. We have a full docket today. We have, to begin with, actually five appointments that we will be hearing for...to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education and one for the Board of Trustees for the Nebraska State Colleges. And I think the first one will be calling in, so we'll probably interrupt some of my housekeeping details as soon as that phone call comes forward. We also have some pages assisting us. I think right now he may have stepped out to make a phone call but Nate Funk who is a student at UNL from Norfolk, he'll be helping in the short term. And then he'll be joined later by Tyler Zentner who's actually from my hometown, Cedar Rapids. He's also a student at UNL. In addition to the confirmation hearings, we have five bills before us: LB1103, LB1077, LB779, LB1055, and LB1061. So if you are planning to testify on any of those bills, I'd ask that you please pick up a green sheet that is located on the tables 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 is a form on the table to do that as well. And both of those will be the official...part of the official record of these hearings. With regard to the green sheet, we ask that you fill it out in its entirety before you testify; please print. And when you do come up to testify, please give the sign-in sheet to the committee clerk. If you do not choose to testify, you may submit comments in writing and have them read into the official record. But please let us know if that's your intent. If you have handouts we ask that you have 12 copies. And at this point, we will stop and take the phone call. Is this Mrs. Lauritzen?
[CONFIRMATION]

MARY LAURITZEN: (Exhibit 1) Yes. Hi, Mary Lauritzen in West Point.
[CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mrs. Lauritzen, for joining us today. And this is for your reappointment to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. So to start with, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your experience on the commission so far? [CONFIRMATION]

MARY LAURITZEN: All right. I am...I live in West Point. I am an office manager for Family Vision Center. We're an optometric clinic with three locations in northeast Nebraska. I've done this for 35 years. And I was appointed to the commission originally in 2000 by Governor Mike Johanns. I was then reappointed Governor Heineman in 2007 and then, once again, now. And in that time on the commission have seen huge changes which made this decision more interesting for me because I thought, do I give someone else this opportunity or should...as we phase it to another level of delivery of postsecondary education in Nebraska which had been face-to-face in a classroom when I first came on the commission to now virtually almost all on-line in many cases. So lots has changed. And a historic perspective might be of some benefit. So that's what drives me. But it's a remarkable experience. And the biggest thing I think I've learned and the thing I like to define the commission as the \$1 million insurance policy that protects the huge investment people of Nebraska make in higher education. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mrs. Lauritzen. Senators, do you have any questions for her? So is it fair to say in terms of your historical perspective but also things that are changing, do you have some unfinished business so to speak that you'd like to accomplish in your next term? [CONFIRMATION]

MARY LAURITZEN: Always just the enlightenment that comes from what goes on in Nebraska and to see what opportunities come about and the prevalence of the importance of the community colleges in Nebraska because that's where the job growth is going to be and that's where the activity, at least at that entry level. Not everyone is going to be a surgeon or an engineer and so we need that of course. Where we live we need welders and we need people who know how to drive trucks and run farms. So it's a...that part, I want see...make sure that comes to fruition. And we are in a period of change on the commission. We will be selecting a new executive director. And again, I felt kind of responsible to that degree to be involved in that as well. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you for your comments, and thank you also for your service. Seeing no other senator wanting to ask a question, this concludes our conversation with you. Thank you, Mrs. Lauritzen. [CONFIRMATION]

MARY LAURITZEN: And I appreciate being able to do it this way. Thank you, Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, take care. I also will take this opportunity right now to offer

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if there's any testimony in support of Mrs. Lauritzen. Also, if you are so inclined and want to give favorable testimony for all of the appointments, or in reverse actually, then we could do that later on, too, after we hear the other three appointments. So I'll give that opportunity as well. So anyone at this point wishing to speak in support of Mrs. Lauritzen's appointment? Anyone in opposition? Or a neutral capacity? Okay, we'll go on. Well, and before we do that I'll welcome Senator Al Davis...has just joined us, and he represents the Hyannis and Sandhills area. We'll go on to our next appointment, William "Scott" Wilson. Welcome, Mr. Wilson. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM WILSON: (Exhibit 2) Good afternoon. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: This is, I understand, a reappointment for you for the commission. Could you tell us a little bit about your background and also your experience thus far on the commission? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM WILSON: Yes, ma'am. I grew up and lived in Nebraska for over 50 years. So I'm married to the same wonderful woman, Lisa, for over 20 and we have 2 beautiful daughters. I'm a graduate of Papillion High School. I was lured up to Wayne State College to play a little football. So I did complete my bachelor's degree in business with an emphasis in management there. I currently work for CenturyLink. I've been there for 28 years. I like to joke a little bit about it. I have in my desk drawer five name badges: Northwestern Bell, US West, Qwest, and now CenturyLink for any of the folks that remember that. So hopefully we're done doing that kind of business. But started my career with them kind of on the outside. I was a lineman and a technician, worked my way up, got into management, and now I'm managing engineers for them. So I kind of found a home in engineering and construction there. And always have continued my education as I'm a firm believer in that even within my own business. And in fact, I took my very first on-line...I'm very proud of it. It took a year, but I took my very first on-line class. So it was a very eye-opening experience from what the folks or, you know, a lot of the students are experiencing now. And I got certified in ITS cable design, for my company asked me to do that. But it was more interesting and just the process of what that was about. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Tell us a little bit about your term on the commission and what you feel you've been involved in and accomplished. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM WILSON: Well, when I got first thrown on the commission it was right in the height of the community college Metro Tech battles. And I'm sure everybody remembers those. So we fought through a lot of that stuff, but what we've seen is...and what one of my goals and continued goal is is to try to close the gap or increase the numbers of the folks in Nebraska, you know, going to higher ed. I'm a firm believer that education is the key to any type of success in life including economics, social. I mean, it forms our culture. So the committee itself...or the Coordinating Commission itself has really moved

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me to think differently about different geographic groups and try to reach out and help them and do the things that we need to do to improve education in the state of Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, very good. Thank you very much. Any questions, comments? All right, Mr. Wilson. Thank you for your service. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM WILSON: Thank you very much. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Again, anyone wishing to comment at this time? We will move on to the next appointment, Mr. Dwayne Probyn. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

DWAYNE PROBYN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I understand this is a new appointment, so if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and why you'd like to be on the commission. [CONFIRMATION]

DWAYNE PROBYN: (Exhibit 3) First of all, let me tell you that this is a great honor for me to have this opportunity because of many of the things that I've done throughout my life have been oriented around education for me and my family. I was born on a small farm in central Illinois, the sixth of six children. We had a, what I refer to as a utilitarian type of farm. We paid the bills with the Hampshire hogs. And my mother also raised leghorn chickens, and in fact, at one point in our life, she and I ran a milk route. We milked about 55 head of Holstein cows. And so hard work is never very far from my vocabulary. I am currently married. My wife, who is sitting in the back of the room, and I have four grown daughters and four grandchildren. And I say that the Lord probably has a special place in his camp for me because I had four girls and a wife and even a female German shorthaired pointer. So I'm not immune to the things that happen in the female end of the business. I was educated in central Illinois around Peoria. And I'll get into a little bit of my industrial background, but I went to Timber Township High School, graduated first in my class. That sounds like a big deal until you know that my class was only 33. But still, I did graduate valedictorian. Went on to Bradley University right after high school and got my bachelor of science degree from Bradley in electrical and electronics. And then soon after that I started looking around for an opportunity in the aerospace business and was fortunate enough to catch on with General Dynamics in Pomona, California. It had always been one of my dreams to work in the missile industry, and I was a Terrier Tartar guided missile engineer for General Dynamics-Pomona assigned to the West Coast and had responsibility for all up and down the East Coast for my first assignment. And that transfixed to the area around the Mediterranean. I rode the Terrier Tarter guided missile frigates and destroyers. And a couple of the nuclear around-the-world trips was kind of interesting for me as well. After some period of time, it became apparent that if we were going to start raising a family I needed to get out of the airplane seat. So I had an opportunity to join Caterpillar Tractor

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in Peoria, Illinois, who was introducing an electrical drive type of truck, analog and DC type of truck. And so they hired me, and I served through the various chairs at Caterpillar for about 37 years and had several overseas assignments including one in the Far East, one in the Great Britain area and then came back. And since I was a farm kid, it was apparent that the new thrust with Caterpillar was to get into the ag equipment business. And so I moved in 1998 with Tina, my wife, and we started up the CLAAS Caterpillar combine facility and was there for a little over three years. And we more or less underestimated the resolve of John Deere in being able to come into the ag business and take it away from them. So Caterpillar decided to divest themselves of the equipment business of ag. By that time I'd had so much time in that it was either stay in Omaha or move back and manage one of the large Midwestern plants. At the time, Tina had started her ascension to the top of the bank program that she currently is employed by, so we decided we'd stay in Omaha and still reside there which we moved to in 1998 and absolutely love it. At that time, I completed my master's degree, also an MS in science with an emphasis on industrial management and education. And even though, you know, they say the half-life of a graduate degree is something less than five years, there are things that I still remember from my graduate program and have still been applicable to the kind of business that we are currently in. I am the executive director of the Nebraska Advanced Manufacturing Coalition. This is a program that was a first of the statewide rollouts. We have 13 area directors across the state. We were very intent on making sure that it did blanket the state and was not merely an east coast of Nebraska, flavor-of-the-month type of program. And it still is beginning to now take on legs of its own, and we're now in 36 states. We call it the "Dream It. Do It." organization because we think that young people, if they can dream it, they can do it. And like some of the other comments that I just have heard. It is very important that we understand the challenges that we are being met with in industry. Upwards of 80 percent, it is estimated, of industry today are lacking the technical skills for jobs in the manufacturing and related industries. And it's in those kinds of skills that I really look forward to providing some guidance. I feel that our program is very much connected with the industrial environment across the state. And since I've spent the majority of my career in the types of manufacturing organizations that we currently find or wanting for that kind of help. I know the talk. I walk the walk. I've been out on the bricks. I've seen all types of programs, and this seems like this is just a perfect fit for me. What do I expect to get out of this? We have a program that I am very much involved with. It's a CDT. It's a career dream team candidate program where we emphasize these kinds of careers for the 16- to 26-year-olds. And I use these folks, half of which are from community colleges. The other half are from colleges and universities; UNL, UNO, Wayne State, Ball State, you name it. We have graduates from there. But I use these young people to a great extent when I go out on programs at high schools and community colleges and universities because I find that the kids who are already out there and have caught on to a very interesting environment and excited about their programs are a much better advisor than old gray-haired suits like me because they can talk the talk of the young people. The most immediate program that I see for myself is getting acquainted with the other

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commissioners and understanding where the pressure points might be for our program as we go forward. So once again, thank you very much for the opportunity. I apologize if I ramble a little bit. My wife says if you ask me a question, it's like taking a drink out of a firehose. But I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have at this point.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Probyn, for that nice overview. Any questions for him? I think you covered it very thoroughly. So thank you for your interest in serving.
[CONFIRMATION]

DWAYNE PROBYN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Again, any other testimony at this point? We will now move to our next appointment, Lori Warner. [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: Good afternoon. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mrs. Warner, for joining us. And I noticed that you also are a new appointee. So perhaps you can tell us about yourself and why you'd like to be a commissioner. [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: (Exhibit 4) Absolutely. Again, I thank you for the privilege and opportunity to serve. That's one of the things that I was taught as I was raised by my parents is that when you have opportunities to give back that you should if you are able to. My background is that I am from Madison, Nebraska. I grew up there. I went to college at Peru State, and I graduated with a BS in education, elementary ed and special ed and speech and drama. I also met my husband at the time when I graduated, and we are both in the National Guard and served for six years. And he swept me off my feet and took me to Minnesota for 19 years. So I apologize I left the state. However, I have a passion for Nebraska, and I decided in 2005 it was time to come back home and be closer to our parents as they are aging. My parents live in Norfolk and my husband's family lives in Minnesota, so being in South Sioux actually works really well for both of us as we're both close to our families. When I was in the Guard, I also learned a lot about giving back and what's important and education has always been at the forefront of everything that I've done. I actually have continued schooling pretty much throughout my whole life because it is lifelong learning. As we all know, there's different situations in your life where you need to keep learning if you're going to continue to be successful. And I have continued to do that in every community that I have lived in, I've actually been through their leadership program. So I've been through Leadership Faribault, Leadership Beatrice, Leadership South Sioux City, and Leadership Nebraska. I think it's really important that again, we can understand what our state has to offer, and I think that's very important. On the other side, I serve really well with the different communities I've worked in because I am the...part of the

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Chamber of Commerce. And as the Chamber of Commerce executive, it is important for me to work with businesses. And I see the needs of what the businesses are at and what they're looking for, and we have a skills gap issue right now in many, many of our communities across Nebraska. And as we're talking about that skills gap issue it becomes...our students can't just graduate and go into a career unless they're properly trained. There is a lot of issues that we don't have people that are ready, you know, to go out into the community and work. So we need to see some type of postsecondary education, and that's why I decided that I wanted to get back involved and become part of this committee here because through the community I can see where those needs are. And I think I can help and explain some of the differences from a business point of view as well, that these are the...what businesses need. These are the skill areas that we're missing and how can we make that happen, whether it's looking more into having the colleges start earlier working with the dual credits at a high school level, or whether it's just getting the kids more interested and getting them to understand that you really do need some type of postsecondary education? I think there's a misconception out there a lot of times with our kids because we're not getting to them young enough. We're not teaching them early enough saying that you really do have to have some kind of education. Whatever it is you choose to do, it has to be something beyond high school. And so I think I can bring that to this committee and help share that from the business standpoint. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. Thank you, Mrs. Warner. Any questions for her?
Senator Seiler. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SEILER: I just got to ask, what was your maiden name? [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: Walton (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SEILER: Walton. [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: John-Boy. Had lots of teasing. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SEILER: No, I grew up in Madison. [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: My mom and dad lived there for 50 years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, any other questions or comments? Thank you for that overview, and thank you for your willingness to serve. [CONFIRMATION]

LORI WARNER: Thank you. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Those are the four appointments for the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. So at this point, I will ask if anyone would

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like to speak in support of any of those appointments. Anyone wishing to speak in opposition? Or in a neutral capacity? All right, we will now move on to our next appointment and that is to the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges, Jess Zeiss. Welcome, Mr. Zeiss. [CONFIRMATION]

JESS ZEISS: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: It appears you are a new appointment to the board of trustees so if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and why you'd like to serve. [CONFIRMATION]

JESS ZEISS: (Exhibit 5) Well first, thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to talk to you today. Again, my name is Jess Zeiss. I'm originally from Wayne, Nebraska, currently reside in Omaha with my wife Dana and 8-year-old going on 16-year-old daughter Lexi. I've been employed with First National Bank for over 17 years, currently the managing director of the investment department there. I'm a 1993 graduate of Doane College and several banking schools throughout the state and country. I'm also very honored that the Governor had the faith in me to ask me to serve on this board, and I look forward to the year ahead. So thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. Going into it, any particular thoughts you have on particularly the role I guess of state colleges in Nebraska? [CONFIRMATION]

JESS ZEISS: Yeah, you know, being one of the largest employers in Omaha, we see on a daily basis our young people coming in who are interviewing for employment. And I recognize a lot of them are from Nebraska. However, they're educated outside of the state, and I don't know why. It's kind of concerning that you see a lot of them coming back, but why are they leaving in the first place? So as I was talking to Chancellor Stan Carpenter a couple weeks ago, the RHOP program, those type of things, we need to expand on that. Those are the type of things that are going to keep our young kids here and not leave in the first place. So that's a trend that's kind of disturbing. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, very good. Any other questions or comments for Mr. Zeiss? Seeing none, thank you very much for your service. [CONFIRMATION]

JESS ZEISS: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Anyone wishing to speak regarding this particular appointment? [CONFIRMATION]

STAN CARPENTER: Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee, I'm Stan Carpenter, S-t-a-n C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I am the Chancellor of the Nebraska State

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College System. And I've had the opportunity to chat with Jess several times since the Governor nominated him. And we talked about the state colleges and his interest in the state colleges and his knowledge of the state colleges. And I think that he would be a terrific addition to our board. And I would hope that you would act positively on his nomination. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Stan. Any questions for him? All right. Thank you for your comments. [CONFIRMATION]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Anyone else wishing to testify? All right, this closes the hearing on our appointments. Just wanted to finish up with a few more housekeeping comments. I started to say that if you do have handouts to give when you testify on any of the bills that we have before us, that you have 12 copies for the pages to hand out to the committee. When you come to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Tell us your first and last name and spell both of them, again so that we ensure we get an adequate record. Would ask also that you turn off, please, all your cell phones, pagers, anything that makes noise so that we don't detract from the testimony being given. The introducers will give the introduction to the bills being heard. They are not limited by the light system, but all additional testifiers will be. We will use the light system today. You will have five minutes to give your testimony. When there is one minute left, the amber light will come on. And when the red light comes on, you should wrap up your testimony. And then there will be closing remarks reserved for the introducing senator. So with that, I think we will begin our hearings. And I will turn it over to our Vice Chair.

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And while you're changing locations I guess I'd be remiss if I didn't note that the amount of quality and quantity of the personnel serving that are based out of northeast Nebraska as children. So evidently there's a lot of good things going on in northeast Nebraska, being somewhat unbiased. Okay, we will open the hearing on LB1103. There is a little change in our normal procedure because I do have four or five people that are scheduled to testify to begin with. So I will ask those to come forward in the order that I have them, and then I will open it up to any proponents from that point forward. So Senator Sullivan...

[LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer and members of the Education Committee. My name is Kate Sullivan, K-a-t-e S-u-l-l-i-v-a-n. I represent District 41 in central Nebraska, and I'm here today to introduce LB1103, my priority bill for the session and quite frankly, some of my priority for the remaining time that I have here in the Legislature. On the floor of the Legislature last week, one of my colleagues asked me if I thought that we were having a crisis in education. My first thought is, my, a crisis

is a terrible thing to waste. (Laugh) But rather I replied that I didn't think that we were necessarily in crisis because I believe strongly that not only do Nebraskans truly value and put a high priority on education, but today we do have in Nebraska a strong educational system with many good quality schools and good educational leaders. But all the more reason to come together to make it even better, stronger, and to ensure a stable future. With ever-growing needs and challenges in the face of limited resources, we must not only be wise in the use of those resources, but we must leverage those resources to get the most out of them. I realize there is no shortage of ideas and opinions about what role education should play in meeting those challenges and why education is so important. Just look at President Barack Obama's Web site on education. He says, "To prepare Americans for the jobs of the future and help restore middle-class security, we have to out-educate the world and that starts with a strong school system." Well, what then should that school system or educational system look like? Well, I like this comment made by Ken Kay, CEO of EdLeader21, a professional learning community for educational leaders committed to 21st century education. And he says, there is no single version for 21st century student success that is the same in every school district. For the vision to make an actual difference in students' lives, it must come from and be embraced by the leaders of the school and the district. A vision that is born of genuine, authentic, passionate leadership is never simple, never cookie-cutter, and never easy. But it is necessary. And while the creation of a system of public education is a primary responsibility for the state, the operation of the system is a local function. So truly it must be a partnership, a shared responsibility that brings us together for a common vision. As Burt Nanus of Visionary Leadership said, "There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, achievable vision for the future that is widely shared." So I'm here today to ask you to embark on a journey with me, a journey that will reach out to all who are involved in education of our young citizens including the young people themselves, to all who have a vested interest and engage them in conversations about a vision for education in Nebraska. How do I think this will work? Well, logistically I'm asking you as members of the Education Committee of the Legislature to help me develop the structure and framework of the conversation. But then I want the conversation to take place all across this state, in board meetings, in boardrooms, in business lunches and school lunchrooms, in small groups, in large groups, in communities and organizations. Does that sound overwhelming? Well, not necessarily because fortunately these conversations are already starting to take place. The Nebraska School Board Association is involved in a visioning process, and when I mention this process to them, they responded wholeheartedly. At a luncheon last week with teachers of family consumer science, they, too, were working on a visioning process. And certainly, as you have heard and I hope will hear in testimony today, business is very, very interested in the direction of education. They want a talented, skilled, ready-to-work work force, and that comes out and grows out of the educational system. This whole process involves everyone; students, parents, teachers, policy makers. And it goes the whole continuum of education starting of course with our early

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childhood education which we have spent a lot of time discussing so far this session; K-12, certainly postsecondary education, P-20 education. Ideally I want some of these conversations to take place among unlikely partners, groups who may not normally come together to converse. Our challenge as this committee will be to bring these groups together in what initially might be some uncomfortable conversations. But that's what true and honest conversations can do, bring us together, divergent opinions to come together with a common vision. The road map is not clear yet. I hope that this public hearing will bring forth some ideas to help us develop that road map. Ultimately, after these conversations happen and we have a chance to coalesce the ideas discussed and brought to us, we would eventually, under this bill, hold at least three public hearings to vet the collective ideas that we've heard. What then? Well, part of that will be revealed in the conversations. At the very least, we would give and offer a report to the Legislature. And then of course there may be legislation introduced. And there will be the need for further conversation. The road map created will not necessarily have an ending but rather an ongoing discussion. Term limits brings forth new senators with new ideas, and that's good. But the end product of this visioning process will be a constant reminder to all policy makers who come and go that this is what Nebraskans said they believed was important in education. Does it change over time? Absolutely, it will not be a static document. It will, I hope, be revisited and referred to often as new policies are created and discussed. Some may say this is too lofty a goal, that it will simply produce a document that will get dusty on the shelves. Well, I offer this for you to think about in this process. This visioning process is not to find new principles or new arguments never thought of before. Not merely to say things which had never been said before, but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject in terms so plain and firm as to command their ascent and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take, neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing. It was intended to be an expression of the American mind and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. These words were offered by Thomas Jefferson on the purpose of writing the Declaration of Independence. I hope they will in part be part of our guiding light as we develop this visioning process. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Any questions on the opening?
Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Senator Sullivan, I have a lot of time this summer so...(laugh) I thank you for this. The one thing I was wondering about on the fiscal note, it talks about the Legislative Council has sufficient staff and resources...what do they mean by Legislative Council versus the committee or...? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I think it means all of us. If you remember, the Legislative Council was all of us that came together at the session that we had before this session began. I think that's probably what they're referring to. [LB1103]

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SENATOR HAAR: Oh, okay. Gotcha. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And I'm glad you mentioned that because I don't have a fiscal note attached to this because whether it's us as policymakers or all the people, whether it's the school board association, teachers, educators, we're all...it's incumbent on all of us to a certain extent to be part of this visioning process as part of our positions and jobs. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, thank you for that. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Senator Sullivan, on the report being filed to the Clerk of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2014, will a year be enough time do you think? Or do we think in terms of two years...I'm thinking of the tax commission this year and the work of TEEOSA and the water commission the same way. That was a tremendous number of meetings and a lot of different locations to do what they were doing. And I know we don't have a total format in place yet that...is there a flexibility beyond that as far as continuation of calendar if needed? [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I would certainly hope so. At the very least, this is something that granted, it needs to have somewhat of a time line, but it also has to be an ongoing conversation. So depending upon what we hear, what we as a committee decide, I think that a continuing time line might be in order. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you so much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you, Senator Scheer. Senator Sullivan, I just wanted to make a point. I had lunch today at the Baptist church with these young people that are here today. They did a nice job presenting to us about bills and the positions that they support and one of which was Senator Scheer's bill that we're going to hear this afternoon, LB779. Several of those students there have been in foster care, have been from one school to another school to another school. Senator Scheer's bill is the bill which talks about extending college credit universally so that if a high school student takes a class, it will be transferred to any school. And I think they made a really good point to us over there today. They said, you know, for people that are in foster care moving from high school to high school, it would be valuable if the same application could be made to our high schools across the state. So when we have our discussion about that, I think that's something we should think about because obviously our goal is to get kids through school, and we need to find ways to do that and make it easy and

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affordable for students who are challenged already by the foster care system to move through. So I would hope we would could talk about that this summer. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: You're absolutely right, and if you remember in some of my comments I said that there should not be any cookie-cutter approach to education. And we have to be responsive to the individual needs of students. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Anyone else? If not, I'm assuming you'll stay around to close. The first testifier that I have on the list Imani Wilson from Lincoln East. Welcome. [LB1103]

IMANI WILSON: (Exhibit 1) Hello, my name is Imani Wilson, I-m-a-n-i W-i-l-s-o-n, and I am a current high school senior at Lincoln East. I want to thank Senator Sullivan for the opportunity to appear before you today to offer my support for LB1103. I support LB1103 because the research and planning process recommended in this bill is necessary to ensure that Nebraska's educational system continues to be relevant and effective in preparing Nebraska's youth to become leaders in the community and successful in the work force. There are already some actions being taken to expose students to skills they will need in our changing world. For example, currently at Elliot Elementary, my former elementary school, the CLC or after school program is making efforts to expose elementary students to the world of computer science and computer programming by having professionals come in and talk with the students and giving the students hands-on opportunities with many coding projects. I believe students need more opportunities like this. And Karen Reiners, a local engineer would agree. I met Karen Reiners when searching for someone to interview for my story assignment for our high school newspaper. I was doing a story about a girl in my graduating class that is interested in pursuing chemical engineering, a heavily male-dominated field. I then sought out to discover why women are shying away from STEM careers such as engineering. Karen Reiners from General Dynamics offered a solution. She said, I think if there were more programs that exposed females to engineering throughout their K-12 education they would have more of an interest. And I couldn't agree more with her. The study will allow the committee to learn about new educational approaches in the state and to consider how to implement policies so that students gain exposure to future careers and learn the critical thinking skills to develop the confidence needed to create new solutions to tackle tough problems. My hope is that the committee will study the educational needs in Nebraska and work to improve the Nebraska educational system as a whole. Because the public education system caters to a diverse population of students, it's easy for some students to fall through the cracks, especially considering not all students have the same learning style, and not all students share the same interests. LPS had an outstanding 2013 graduation rate of 87.1 percent. And the state-calculated graduation rate was 83.7 percent, both up from 2012. However, there is still a significant achievement gap between minority students such as myself and my classmates. In LPS, 81 percent of African-American students and 74 percent of Latino students graduated on time with the class of 2013. I think we as a community not only

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can but must do better than this. And LB1103 will help by pointing us in a direction that will help narrow this achievement gap. I believe that every high school student regardless of race, gender, or economic status, should be at the very least able to attain a high school diploma. And my hope is that this committee will work to discover why it is that some of my peers are not graduating and then initiate programs and policies that will enable these students to walk across the graduation stage each May. My hope is that the committee will diversify our current system by seeking to discover students' interests and making learning a more engaging experience in order to achieve maximum success for all students in the classroom. In considering this bill, I think it's important to recognize that the jobs that will be available to me are not the same jobs that were available to my mother. And the jobs that I will have to choose from are not the same that will be available to a current 1st-grader. As our society changes, it's important for our society to adapt, and given that education is a primary avenue for success, I believe it is imperative that our education system also adapts. The work proposed by this committee will better enable Nebraska youth to adapt and will be valuable in preparing students for the future. Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and hope you see the great potential in LB1103 to help not just individual students but the entire state of Nebraska. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any questions for Imani? Thank you. Very well done. [LB1103]

IMANI WILSON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Next, I have Scott Adams and Claire Richardson from Freeman. Can we get a second chair up? Thank you for your patience. [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: Thank you. And thank you for having us today. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: The floor is yours. [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: I'm Claire Richardson, C-l-a-i-r-e R-i-c-h-a-r-d-s-o-n. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: And I'm Scott Adams, S-c-o-t-t A-d-a-m-s. [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: And we're here to talk about LB1103. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: LB1103 I feel is important because education is not only learning how to do math, science, social studies, and your basic core things that you do in school. But it's also developing a work ethic, how well you do things and how you look at education as a whole. I'm currently a junior at Freeman Public Schools which is K-12. In K-12, we have around 400 kids in school. I've been attending Freeman since my kindergarten year, and I think it's special in a smaller school where I can walk down the hall and have

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a conversation with just about everyone that I meet. Education at Freeman is not the same as other schools, but I don't think that sets me back at all. At Freeman we still have our basic core classes. We also have classes that other schools have such as FFA, ag classes, business classes, and personal financing. And I don't believe that going to a smaller school limits me at all in having any of those classes because I'm still prepared for going to college and going to a four-year college, a two-year college, the military, or right into the job world. And I believe that education is probably the most important thing for our young people. It always needs to be a priority on everyone's agenda. [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: I have been going to Freeman since 3rd grade. And before I lived in Adams, I had gone to three or four different schools. So even though I haven't really switched a lot since I've been in high school, I still kind of know the feeling of having to go through different schools. And I think that education, no matter if it's kindergarten or secondary school or postsecondary school, is one of the most important things for a person because it helps you prepare for what you really want the rest of your life...what you want to become of the rest of your life. So I think that there are both...there are really good things that are happening in our school because we do have...although we have strict standards that we follow, I think that the students at our school, especially at our school since we do have a small school and we're not restricted to...there are so many people in this class so we can't have enough...we can't put any more people in this class because there are so many already. In here we have a lot more opportunities to...like if I want to be...if I want to take calculus and physics, and I have to take English, I can take all three of those classes. But I can also take an ag class, like I can take plant science. And I can also take two business classes so I can be well prepared for what I want to do in my future. And I think that there's a lot of students in my class who don't want to go. I want to go to a four-year institution. But there's kids in my class who want to go into the military, or there's kids in my class who want to go to a two-year institution. And I think that all of us have been fairly well prepared, fairly well-rounded for what we want to do, for what all of us want to do. That being said, there are some changes that could be made as far as gearing toward the classes that are required to be taken. I think that British literature is not a class that is going to be necessarily useful for someone who wants to go to school to major in agribusiness or to major in welding. Just because it's not a class that is...you're probably not going to need British literature if you're going to be a welder. But at the same time I do think English is a very important skill to use, so if...along with math, social studies, and science. So I think that the core classes should still be kept in place, but I think that there should be different options like you can take British literature or you can take a different...like American literature or language arts. And the same with math, if you don't want to take calculus you can take probability and statistics or something like that for the other core classes as well. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: And another thing to keep in mind is letting kids choose their classes

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is assuming that they know what they want to do with the rest of their lives, which really is a big question that kind of concerns most kids and, you know, puts a lot of pressure on them to, you know, figure out what they want to do right now with the rest of their however long they're going live out their lives in the career field and hopefully staying in Nebraska. It is a big question for freshmen as going in to figure out what kind of classes they want to take and looking at the choices that are offered. So it's just something that Senator Sullivan is correct about where it needs to be an ongoing conversation instead of a--as she put it--a cookie-cutter way of looking at it. Thank you for hearing us today. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, thank you. Questions? Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Thank you for being here. Appreciate that. It's a little scary for us too. (Laughter) We've talked quite a bit in here about, you know, different sizes of schools and so on. Do you do anything over the Internet? Do you do any of your class work over the Internet or distance learning? [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: I haven't personally taken any on-line classes, but I know my best friend takes...is in college courses through Southeast Community College. And she's taken...I think she's gotten some of her credits for her pharmacy tech...that's what she wants to...I think that's what she wants to major in. And I think that on-line courses are pretty widely used throughout our school. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: They're definitely used at Freeman. We have... [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: I know...we actually have a trig class, a trigonometry class that a lot of students take on-line. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: It didn't fit quite into their normal schedule right. So I think it's five of the kids that would be in my trig class now are actually taking trig through I think it's HTRS over distance learning, and that's just so they're able to take that. And we have career academies. We have a nursing through Beatrice I know that people can go and do and also take on-line courses. And we have courses available through UNL and SCC. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Good, thank you very much. [LB1103]

CLAIRE RICHARDSON: You're welcome. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? If not, thank you very much. And well done to both of you as well. [LB1103]

SCOTT ADAMS: Thank you. [LB1103]

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CLAIRE RICHARDSON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Next proponent I have listed is somebody from the State Chamber of Commerce. Anyone from the Chamber here? Okay, Dennis, you're filling in today? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Did you get a new job, Dennis? (Laugh) [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: (Exhibit 2) Yes. (Laugh) Senator Scheer and members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dennis Baack, D-e-n-n-i-s B-a-a-c-k, and I'm here to testify for two today. I'm actually here to testify for the Community College Association which I am the executive director of, and I also serve as the chair of the education committee for the State Chamber. And so I am...and I have a copy of the testimony from the State Chamber. The State Chamber in the last couple of years has been doing a study, and Richard Baier was the head of that for the State Chamber, of the Forging Nebraska's Future. And one of the things that they found as they traveled around the state and visited with their business people is, one of the things that's most important to business and industry today is a good educated and skilled work force. And that's why they're so interested in this project. We need to make sure that there's a good connection between business and education, and that's why we're interested in it as a community college. We need to make sure that what we're doing in the community colleges matches up with what business needs. And we want to make sure that the things that they're doing in the high school match up with our needs so that our students can succeed when they come to the community colleges. So with that, I'd be happy to answer any questions if there are any. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions for Mr. Baack? Senator Seiler. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: Thank you very much for testifying. It seems to me like we've got a bottleneck like at Hastings where we only have 18 slots for welders. We have about 18 slots for tool and die people, have tremendous amounts of applications wanting those type of people. Has your group proposed a program to expand on that? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Well, part of it is, Senator Seiler, is the fact that we're not getting students to sign up for the spots. We have plenty of capacity to do it. We could train more welders, we could do a lot of that, but we're not getting the number of students that we need signing up for those spots. And part of that is not knowing what careers are available and stuff out there for students. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: At the high school level. [LB1103]

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DENNIS BAACK: And I think there needs to be a good education in that area so they understand what a welder does and how skilled that position is and how it has maybe changed over the years. I think people sometimes have a perception of some of these jobs that are out there that are probably not up to date with what really goes on out in business and industry. So that's a good part of it, but we're willing to gear up our programs as much as we need to if we get the students in them. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: I agree. I thought a welder was a guy that took a rod and... [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Me too. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: Instead, when I visited a bunch of the manufacturing plants in my district, they were all running computers. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: You wouldn't even recognize it, would you? No. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: No. Thank you. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Sure. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other...Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Thank you for being here. I noticed...I was just looking quickly at the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce testimony. Item two says, increase expectation levels and academic rigor, create a dynamic education system, and so on. One of the things we've been talking about in this committee is the relationship between poverty and these things that are on here. And so I'm wondering if they're ready and willing to engage us in that discussion and the fact that it might take some more money to do that. To really get at poverty I think we're all recognizing the value of preschool education, especially in high-risk families and basic parenting almost, which may actually cost more money spent on education. Can you give me any feedback on that from that committee? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Well, I would think, and from my discussions serving on the Chamber board and stuff, I think that business and industry is ready to step forward on some of that. I think they need to do that. They need to start looking at the data, and it shows how that early childhood education is a real positive to start to get people out of poverty. You know, and I...so I would guess that they're ready to step forward on that, too, and definitely to have the discussion about it. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Maybe some higher taxes. (Laugh) [LB1103]

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DENNIS BAACK: Well, I don't know about that. I'm not going to get into whether or not they support higher taxes. But I think they do see the value in investing in education. I really do. And if you look at data that shows why do industries move, or states that they go to, one of the main things that they look at in a state that they're going to move to is the education system. They want that education system to be up to standard because they know that as these jobs change and those students talked about it. The jobs are going to be so much different in the future. The jobs that my grandsons are probably going to have aren't even invented today. So we need to make sure that our society is working towards those and making adjustments all along as we go so that we make sure we have an educated work force there for the jobs that are going to exist. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Now I don't know whether or not it's going to involve higher taxes, but certainly investing more money as we start to talk about almost birth through 12 or whatever. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: It may challenge all of us to change our priorities on some of the spending that we have today to make sure that we get enough money into education and what's necessary for our society may do that. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: And certainly not leaving out junior colleges. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: That's correct. We don't want to forget about the community colleges. That's right. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Thank you. Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Davis. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Couple questions, Dennis. First of all, we always hear that we're short on these particular industries like welding and things. And hand in hand with that we are exporting a lot of college graduates to other states who are from four-year degree people. So are we doing enough to fill the slots we've got? I mean, how do...are the community colleges going into the high schools and saying, hey, these jobs are pretty good jobs. Why don't you come and spend a day and look at our program? Are you doing that? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: We are, and we actually...and most of the colleges will have a day in the summer where they bring all of the advisors and the career people from the schools and stuff to talk to them and find out what those careers are like. One of the programs that I think that we have...a number of years ago we had a program where our instructors would go out and spend two to three weeks in a business and industry over the summer, you know. And when they weren't teaching they would have a chance to

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do that. I think that would be a really good thing to have. And I know we have some of that going on now, but I think that's really an eyeopener for a lot of those teachers and advisors and stuff when they actually see what's going on in business and industry. I don't think we understand that very well. And I know that our faculty were just amazed by it and how much they changed their curriculum and stuff when they went back because they saw things have changed. And so they were very interested in making those changes and adjustments to make sure that we were meeting those needs. But yeah, I think we're trying to do everything we can to get those students interested in those careers. And quite frankly, for the community colleges, not many of our students leave the state. We have about 90 percent of ours stay in the state. They don't leave, and then over 80 percent of them stay in the area where they are educated because a lot of those people are place bound. And so we do keep them here. But I think we always have to be watching for that to try to make sure we're fulfilling the needs that we have for business and industry here. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Dennis you mentioned the...thank you, Mr. Chairman. You mentioned, Dennis, the bringing in the advisors or the counselors perhaps for the summer. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Um-hum. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Do you get many teachers coming in, because the constant of a teacher as an advisor for a homeroom or a dedicated time during the day and then working with those students over four-year time period of a very close analysis of their record of accomplishment, what they're doing, the credits they're gaining, and what directions they might want to go? We all know 400 students to a counselor is not a healthy number. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Right. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And that's very, very difficult to get to know the kids in detail, in depth and to do something of that nature. Are there systems that you'd like to see more of a positive nature in high schools that would deliver services and help those kids better than we're doing right now? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Oh, I think we can always do better than we're doing now. There's little doubt in my mind about that. Yeah, I would like to see more of the teachers and stuff come back too. And I don't think when we have counselors up, I don't think we limit that. I think there are teachers that do come that aren't necessarily specifically assigned

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to be a counselor. They do come to our campuses and stuff to see what's going on. But could more of that happen? Absolutely, it could. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: We've lost some of our certification programs for industrial technology. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: For example, it's very...one or two schools now, maybe. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I'm trying to...Kearney, I know that's about it. It may be the only one. That's a real detriment, yet a small college can't take on all those programs that a bigger school might be able to do. Lincoln dropped...UNL dropped their program a number of years ago, and it really limited the opportunity to pick and choose the industrial tech teachers which are very hard to find sometimes. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: I think that's very true, and that's one of the things that...I know it's not on the agenda today, but we're going to be talking about career academies again next week. And I think that's one of the other areas that we can start working and where we get more people to understand what those jobs are like out there, so they know what jobs are available to them. And I think it also will help as we work with those schools on the career academies to get the teachers more involved in that process, too, which I think is very, very positive for all of us. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Very good. Are you also working with the trades and industry people as far going out to the all levels of whatever might be done in construction? [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Right, with... [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: The unions are really helpful with that. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah, without a doubt. All of the colleges have advisory committees for all of their curriculums and stuff. And what they use is local business and industry people. And they usually get them together two or three times a year to make sure that our curriculum is still matching up with what they're doing out there in the field to make sure we're not educating our students and then they're really not job ready when they walk out the door. We want them job ready when they walk out the door. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: That's hard to do. [LB1103]

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DENNIS BAACK: It is. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I agree. Thank you so much. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Sure. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? If not, thank you, Dennis. [LB1103]

DENNIS BAACK: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Next will be Jessica Kolterman on behalf of the Farm Bureau. Welcome, Jessica. [LB1103]

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Thank you. It's my first time before you this year. So happy to be here. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, welcome. [LB1103]

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: We really appreciate...oh, for the record, my name is Jessica Kolterman, K-o-l-t-e-r-m-a-n. We really appreciate the opportunity to come before the committee to talk about this. I've been involved with the State Legislature over the past 14 years either through being a staff person or serving in an advocacy role. And I think this is the first time that I've been looking at a study that's this overarching with the visioning. And I think that's a great thing and we appreciate Senator Sullivan bringing this forward. We talk to our membership a lot about education and the different aspects of that here in the state. And I wanted to share with you a couple of things that they bring up to us in conversation. And we hope that these things might be considered when you look at doing some visioning. The first thing of course, and it's not my favorite topic. I know it's not yours, but it's the school finance aspect. And that's something that is obviously of concern to our membership. And I don't think you can have an adequate conversation about visioning within the state without in some way talking about some of the discrepancies between rural and urban. And that's something our members would like to see discussed. The second thing, Senator Sullivan was gracious enough last year to introduce a bill that we talked to you about relating to agriculture in the classroom. And with agriculture being the number one industry here in the state, we'd like to look at more ways that we can incorporate agriculture learning into general curriculum. And that's something that we continue to work on. We've had some conversations with the department and will continue those dialogues, but we'd also like you to maybe look at that as you continue this discussion. And the third area that Mr. Baack also touched on is the career education aspect. We talk a lot to industry people around the state, but also not just businesses but just in agriculture in general. It really seems that there is a disconnect to getting people back to communities into jobs. And,

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you know, when I went high school, I graduated in 1997, it was kind of assumed that you were going to go to a four-year university. And for most people that seemed to be the direction that we were encouraged to move forward. And while that was the right path for a lot of students, it wasn't necessarily the right one for everyone. And I think that you brought up the counselors. That's certainly something that needs to be talked about. And we'd encourage that conversation. We have a longstanding relationship with the career education programs in the state through programs like FFA, but that's just the beginning. And we certainly welcome those conversations and happy to be part of them. So those are the areas that we would like to see included in a visioning process. And I'm sure as we continue to talk to our members as this moves forward, we'd be happy to share any other thoughts we hear from them. So we thank you for considering this and certainly would be welcome to being involved at some point. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Jessica. Any questions? If not, thank you very much, Jessica. [LB1103]

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: All right, thanks. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Next would be Commissioner Blomstedt from the Department of Education. [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: Good afternoon, Senator Scheer and members of the committee. I'm Commissioner Matt Blomstedt; my last name is spelled B-l-o-m-s-t-e-d-t. I do want to thank Senator Sullivan and members of the committee for your support of this important effort to examine the future of education in Nebraska. As I've said, it's an intimidating thing to have you sit in front of me, but to have you also looking back and behind you with all these students here. I mean, quite frankly this is why we're talking about what the future of education is and what the future vision should be for the education system in Nebraska. As you look, one of the things I like to talk about...as you look towards the future, who's actually going to make a judgment on how we did in the public education system and the education system for all. It's kids that are actually entering kindergarten today...will be judging us 15 years from now saying this was a good experience or not a good experience. And I'm always pleased to see students saying that they had a good experience in their schools...that we prepared them well. However, we also have to take a critical look at what we're not doing well. One of the areas where I think we have an opportunity anyway is to really start to invest in systems that expand educational opportunities for all students really across the state. And I know that the State Board and I have been talking about what are our goals. What do we need to do to invest in the system of education? What are the types of things that we need to bring to the table ultimately as far as this conversation around vision? And I will promise you this, that we have a lot of very committed folks at the Department of Education that would be happy to engage in the conversation. When you mention finance, when you mention curriculum, when you mention really, the assessment and accountability provisions that

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we're talking about right now, there's quite an opportunity in front of us, an opportunity to lay out the future for education...begin to lay out the systems that we think are going to be critical for us. When I look back on looking through some of the history...and I've kind of enjoyed doing a little bit of this. There was a...well, I guess the last elected Superintendent of Public Instruction actually laid out in 1950 or 1951, he was looking at 50 years prior and what we needed by the year 2000. And it's really interesting because he said, we have to do a better job of preparing our teachers. We're going to need a school finance system by the year 2000 that's going to be robust enough to take into consideration the needs of school districts. We're going to have to end up looking at accountability, essentially is how he put it. We need to make sure that it's all working. And I look at that and I go, huh, it is somewhat the role of the State Board, role of the Commissioner to work with the Legislature to come up with what this vision needs to be. I will tell you, and I think as Senator Sullivan mentioned, there's a lot of opportunities to engage others that haven't normally been engaged in these conversations. Certainly, I was glad to have Dennis Baack here both in his role as the director of the Community College Association but especially in his role working with the State Chamber. I think it's important that we engage our business community, our local communities in this conversation. It can't just be about what the vision is from educators professionally, the role of the Legislature in that vision. But it really has to be the broader community at large. There's lots of others to include, voices from folks that are interested in what we need to do for poverty students, what we need to do for early childhood. So there's a lot of different voices, a lot of opportunities to bring those things together. But I do think it makes sense that we find a way to engage players that haven't normally had an opportunity to talk with one another about these things. I think there's assumptions made that the business community wants one thing and educators try to do something else. And I call that kind of the bright shiny object. When you talk about not having welders right now prepared, quite frankly, about 15 years ago we started investing in basically English and math in high school. A lot of welding programs, a lot of career education opportunities were set aside, and we weren't using a vision for what we needed to have in the future. We have to make sure that we protect against that in whatever vision we come up with. I'm certainly happy to engage in that. I know members of the State Board are. Certainly our staff at the Department of Education is standing ready to assist you however you see fit. So I appreciate the opportunity to be here and take any questions you might have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Commissioner. Any questions? Senator Davis.
[LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you, Senator Scheer. Thank you, Matt, for coming. When I was running for office a year ago--a little over that, two years almost now--one of the things that I talked a lot to my constituents about was that we needed to work on entrepreneurship in rural Nebraska because that's the only way we're going to reverse the population loss. And it's still going to be a taxing chore. Do you think there's a place

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for that, and how do you go about teaching that in schools? How do you teach innovation? [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: Yeah, I think actually among the things we have to start to really focus on is that notion of being creative and providing opportunities for individual students to pursue interests of their own. And that gets...you know, at one point in time we did that at scale. We'd find larger schools that could bring a lot of these large types of opportunities together and then we'd have a big enough class that we could teach a class. I think we've moved from the industrial age to the information age. We have an opportunity to actually individualize more student opportunities to engage them in a way that we haven't done in the past. Part of that really comes down to what I would almost consider kind of a, you know, personalized learning plan for students. They keep track of their own data. I think I probably said that before. But you can watch students that are keeping track of what they want to accomplish and whether or not they're accomplishing that. I think students that show an interest in having their own business, being entrepreneurial, wanting to return to rural Nebraska, wanting to return to Omaha, wanting to return to Lincoln, wherever they want to be, demonstrating that there's all sorts of opportunities for them to do that, and I think that's going to take community conversations as well. We quite frankly end up focusing on those areas that we assess is my view, schools do. It's somewhat of a mistake that we make as educators relative to that process. Realistically, we have to focus on that whole engagement of the student, and that would give us a chance to look at entrepreneurship and a lot of other issues I think as well. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: And then another question, is the emphasis on testing actually causing more turmoil than it's really worth? [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: It's a great question because number one, we have to find a way to make sure that we're accountable relative to the investment made in education. However, I do think that...you know, and I have my own kids in school and my oldest who is aware of my role relative to now and previously that will talk about how much time they spend in assessment and testing. And I think we have to start to really examine how much time we're doing that. And what we're really interested in is being able to kind of what I would say, put our toe in the water and find out how well schools are doing. At the same point in time we're also interested in individual students and what that data is that they show. I unfortunately had to miss my own kids' parent-teacher conferences, but my wife brought back plenty for me to review. And I was doing that last night. So I was able to look at NeSA Assessments, I was looking...as a parent, I want to see that data quite frankly, and I think as a state we want to be able to see that data. However, at the same point in time, we don't want them spending hours and hours, number one, preparing for assessments. We don't want to have...we've actually recently run into some issues on the writing assessment. I feel extremely frustrated when we're losing teaching time in schools on the assessment

process and then especially not having it work very well. That bothers me quite a bit. And so, you know, I don't know that we're...we're at a point in time where we always...where we have to be aware of how much time that assessment is taking and are there other ways that we can get the data. And quite frankly, some of those other ways we get the data come down to individual students' experiences and how they're actually keeping track of that and whether or not they feel they're advancing. My quick thing on standards, college- and career-ready standards, quite honestly, as a parent I look at it and go, hey, look, my kids aren't going to live in my basement after they're done with their education career standards because quite frankly, you don't...college readiness is really about being prepared to take a next step towards a career. And we want to make sure that every student has goals. And I think that's where career education, quite frankly, has done a very good job in that arena, something to learn and something we've kind of unfortunately moved to the corner. It needs to move back to the forefront. [LB1103]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Matt, thank you for being here today, and thank you for your comments. There's so many things to touch on it's really good to have your conversation with us today. I think the balancing act between local control with accountability will continue to be decade long as we look at where we are, what's happening as far as the State Department of Education. I find that we're not very good at sharing best practices within a school district, within a state as a whole, or state to state. What could you do to help nurture that because we have so many good things that are going on and so many things that are correct and would be good for all kids, but we don't seem to know what our neighbors are doing many times? Would you address that? [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: Yeah, I mean I think there's a couple ways. One is the true notion of best practices is, this working over here for this set of students, and there's a research base that you can use the data to kind of guide you relative to that conversation. I think the other thing is, is where are we investing money relative to the systems that help us do that? So if you think about educational content right now, and if every school is out there trying to organize their content and have a delivery system for that content so they can personalize learning, and if everyone is doing that, that's not a best practice. The best practice is finding a way to do that efficiently at some scale that seems appropriate. Also, professional development systems, and I would come back around to that because we reinvent the wheel is quite...and you've seen it in your education career. I mean, we reinvent the wheel constantly. And so what we need to do is actually create a fairly persistent wheel that's always there that others can pull from. And so I think that we're going to have to build systems that help share those best

practices. I mean, I think if you look at the what I would call the YouTube generation of learning, a lot of folks--me included now, by the way--will look...if I've got to do some home improvement project, I'll search on YouTube and find out, you know, what types of videos are there. We're seeing that type of learning being fairly prevalent relative to an educational practice, but we have to be prepared at least to be able to organize that to be effective in an education system but also a professional development system. And you're starting to see more and more teachers take video of themselves relative to see what they could really do to improve. You see...equivalent of giving a speech in front of a mirror, I guess, from the old days. But quite frankly, the ability to see how it's working is one of those things. But they are sharing those practices, and we need to create systems that allow them to do that more effectively. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Would you comment on National Board certification, as we look at teacher preparation and training, in-service, as well as pre-service, the whole aspect of in-service? Once you're in a district, that's the standard for the national level that has tremendous power. [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: I think...yeah, standards...I mean, National Board certification is at least, you know, some...it gives you some assurance that you've have certain preparation, right. And so I think that's a good thing, but we could, at least, or maybe ought to look at what's the fidelity of the training process that gets them to that certification level and is that something worthy of looking at. Maybe there's certain types of programs or processes that we could actually develop in Nebraska that would actually help us continuously improve our educational experience for students through some types of organized professional development system like that. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? If not, thank you, Commissioner. [LB1103]

MATT BLOMSTEDT: Thanks. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: That is the end of my list, so I will open it to any proponent of LB1103. Welcome, John. [LB1103]

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. We appreciate Senator Sullivan bringing this bill forward, and the two statewide associations are prepared to help in any way that we can to have these conversations and do the work that needs to be done to make sure that we take a serious look at our education system statewide, get people outside their comfort zone, and have some direction. With that, I'll conclude my testimony. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, John. Any questions? [LB1103]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, John. Next proponent. Welcome. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: (Exhibit 3) Thank you. Good afternoon. Mr. Scheer, thank you. Chairperson Scheer and Senator Sullivan and members of the Education Committee, my name is Linda Richards, L-i-n-d-a R-i-c-h-a-r-d-s, and I am president of the Ralston Board of Education, and I appear today on behalf of my school district for the purposes of supporting LB1103. For the past 18 years, I have served my local community as a Board of Education member. And during that time I've testified before this committee several times. Each time it seems I was here the topics were essentially the same. For several years, it felt like the movie Groundhog Day. On several occasions, I asked this committee to address the issues facing education in Nebraska by not just choosing numbers randomly and thereby picking winners and losers, but rather establish priorities and goals. We need to collectively work together to address the needs of all of our students in Nebraska. LB1103 is the beginning of that process. It has been difficult as a school board member and parent feeling that efforts that we undertake locally are disconnected from the state and our funding reality. The proverbial cart before horse or funding before vision. LB1103 asks the Legislature to recognize that a common vision for public education is both needed and necessary for our future. The stakes are too high, the lives of our students are too important, and the responsibility is ours collectively. The Ralston Board of Education is eager to work with this committee in the visioning process and encourages the committee and Legislature to look for existing resources that are assisting districts throughout Nebraska in our current efforts of individual district visioning. School districts across the state work diligently to create vision through continuous improvement. Boards accomplish this along with community engagement and accountability. As you endeavour to accomplish this for the state, please keep this in mind. Locally elected board members are setting the vision for their communities in partnership with parents, students, staff, and local communities as a whole. Your respect for the work that presently exists by incorporating local district feedback about the great work happening in all of our Nebraska schools is encouraged. A framework that would allow Nebraska's leaders from across the state to have a healthy conversation about education that does not begin with how much can we afford, but rather arrives at the conclusion of what we will all need to do to invest in our future and have the investment pay the dividends that Nebraska needs to retain and grow the next generation of productive citizens. This conversation is what we as locally elected board members and advocates for Nebraska's students want to have, and we ask you for your leadership in bringing us to the table to have that conversation. Now, one such framework...and I know Senator Sullivan has asked in various places that I had the ability to visit and see her speak, that we bring ideas for what this framework might look like. And so today, one such framework and resource that I'd like to present to you is the

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AdvancED process. The Ralston School District has undertaken this process of continuous improvement and visioning at a district-wide level, and we believe that the framework assists schools in addressing essential areas to be effective. There are five areas. You do have a handout that I did provide you that walks you through just the outline of those standards; purpose and direction, governance and leadership, teaching and assessing, resources and support services, and continuous improvement. I provide that information. There's also a Web site that I would direct your attention to for the committee to review. And I ask that you consider this framework as a place to at least begin a conversation as you look at the framework that you're going to bring about. We are in that process right now in Ralston. And so we certainly invite you March 2-5, should you wish to see the process in action. Feel more than welcome to come to our district and observe how that process works. I appreciate your time today. I appreciate your service to this state. I appreciate this bill, and I am really proud to be here today, to be in this chair in support of this bill and look forward to working with you in advancing it. I'd answer any questions if you have any. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Linda. Questions? Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Yes, thanks for being here. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Yes, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Your five standards, this is what your school board is going to be working on. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: We have been. And there's...and I will give Senator Sullivan a detailed outline of...this page that you have here just gives you an outline of what the topics are. We have been working building by building with AdvancED certifications. It's an accreditation ostensibly, Senator. It's a way for us to be viewed as effective or where we need areas of improvement. And so first we started out looking at it at the building level. And then this year we are doing a district-wide accreditation process in which we'll use those five areas to ostensibly be evaluated to see where we're strong, where we're weak. As a board, we've committed to...that these areas will be how we structure our policy manual and how we'll govern the district in looking at these being the five areas of our concern. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: And this is not state mandated. It's something you decided to do. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Correct. Now, you do have multiple school districts across the state that use AdvancED in some capacity, whether it be at a building level or at the district-wide level. So this vernacular if you will, this use of this platform is out there for you. [LB1103]

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SENATOR HAAR: And who runs your sessions? [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: We have folks that come from various districts, including even out of the state of Nebraska who will come in and...actually the week that we're being observed and that data is being reviewed and our buildings are being looked at. So we'll have someone, I think, as far as from Wisconsin coming on the team. They're typically educators, cohorts that come, whether it be a superintendent or it also might be a building administrator level, as well as teachers. And so they're observing and looking at the district through those lenses of those five areas. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: How do you finance that? [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: We have invested local dollars. Our local taxpayers have supported us with that being a part of our budgeting process. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, I'd be interested in more detail as well. Thank you. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Can absolutely provide that for you, Senator. You bet. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Anything else? Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Mrs. Richards, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: You're welcome, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Mrs. Richards, thank you and good to see you. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Good to see you, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And again, I know what a great zealotness your district and your board have for the community and your education having spent some time working with your district. It was an excellent experience, and you have a great product that you produce. In our conversations today and other places you hear about college and career readiness. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And I use those terms in the sense that we're only half right when we say that because there's two other Cs, citizenship and critical thinking... [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Yes. [LB1103]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...that you emulate very well in your district and respond to very well. If people would see the opportunities from early childhood center in your high school all the way through your Avenue Scholars program that you also have, which is still in Ralston. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Correct. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: You've had a great reach...outreach to your student body and all range of students for years. Getting on that kind of sheet... [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Yes. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...has been very important. What's been the secret in Ralston that's made that happen? [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Well, I think visioning processes are what help any organization, when you have that vast array of interests, trying to figure out how to focus and what will be the priorities. It's not always looked as pretty as it does today, Senator. So I thank you for those comments, but having been on this board for 18 years, I have been in the years when we were not focused. We were not with a clear vision. And so we were doing a lot of things that we thought were going to help kids and we thought were important, and they helped some kids. And they were important to some extent, but they didn't necessarily get the breadth of what we needed to have accomplished, accomplished. And so we have refined that step by step over these last...solidly over the last ten years of being a Board of Education member I feel where we have incorporated visioning processes. And we've used outside frameworks like this AdvancED, tools that we can draw upon that tell us not how to go about it. You won't see in this document how. What you'll see is the what. And I think in a good, solid visioning process you get some guidance about what are the principles, what are these tenets that we can all agree. My husband is a Lyons-Decatur grad, proud cougar. And, you know, what's important there, the...how Lyons-Decatur goes about educating their kids is going to be different than how Ralston Public Schools goes about it because of distance, because of things that we have, access that we have. But the what, the fact that our kids have the opportunities is what we need to have a conversation globally, across the state about. And so when I look at guiding principles, things that we can use to at least begin those conversations...if we can agree, if we can get into a room and have a great conversation, if it's not AdvancED and maybe it's something else that we find that will work there. But we've had great success with AdvancED and we believe that these are five areas that all districts, regardless if you have 15 kids or if you have 5,000. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And they match the things we work on here... [LB1103]

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LINDA RICHARDS: That's right. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...the Breaking Ranks program, for example... [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: That's right. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...for high school, to get where you are today with a lot of those. So thank you very much. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: You're welcome, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Anybody else? If not, thank you, Linda, very much. [LB1103]

LINDA RICHARDS: Thank you very much. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, good afternoon. [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: Good afternoon. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Whenever you'd like. [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: (Exhibits 4 and 5) My name is Justin Wayne and I am appearing today as president of the Omaha Public School Board in support of LB1103. OPS believes that K-12 education in Nebraska will benefit from a strategic planning process. OPS is currently going through a process itself for strategic planning. As part of the process, we have looked very honestly at what we're doing right and areas of improvement. This will allow us to strengthen our core and correct some of our weaknesses. We believe that our students will benefit from this work that we're doing inside of OPS but also from the work that you guys are going to embark upon. As part of the OPS strategic planning process, we had a facility study or a facility assessment done. And that's kind of what I want to talk about today. Facilities are an integral part the education process, and it's almost like the infrastructure that is needed for our students to become what we believe they should be, productive citizens in our society. So we believe it's imperative that as we embark as a state on a strategic planning process, that we also look at the facilities and infrastructures that are needed to make sure our students across the state get there. We believe that this issue of facilities and infrastructure transcends the urban and rural split because facility inadequacies needs to be addressed both in urban and rural areas. Somebody mentioned earlier, I believe it was Senator Haar, about distant learning. If enough students in a classroom can't get on the Internet and actually be able to participate in that distant learning because of technology and infrastructure issues, that can happen anywhere across the state which limits our ability to embark on distant learning as a state. The samples that I provided for

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you are...one is of New Mexico, and one is from a company named Jacobs that does multiple statewide assessments throughout the country. And in the last page, they listed about five or six different states that they do this in. And what you'll find interesting is that New Mexico and these other states have a statewide assessment of where their facilities are, how much it may cost to improve them, but also gives a checks and balances of local school districts to make sure the local school districts are making sure their facilities are up to date and are on par with what the state of Nebraska decides they want to go into. Now about each state has a different funding mechanisms. The purpose of the facility study or assessment is to make sure that the overall picture of the state is clear on where the state is going, not just curriculumwise, but facility to support that curriculum piece that we're going to add to. So that's what we're here to ask for, to make sure that this be a part of it. We believe it's a great idea to have a strategic planning process across the state of Nebraska. Omaha Public Schools thanks you for your effort in developing a statewide strategic plan. We look forward to working with this committee in this process. And I would be happy to answer any questions at this time. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Justin. Any questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Justin, good to see you. [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: Good to see you, too, Senator. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And also I know from the history of OPS you had a very large bond issue not too long ago. In a number of years, that made fantastic changes to a number of your facilities, especially your high schools, a couple of them. And there's no doubt a need for continuation of some of that. Looking at your alma mater, Northwest, or looking at Bryan or Burke, they're behind the curve a little bit on some of the facility needs as you look at where your future might go. What...are you asking today about anything concerning facility funding, or is it just a general statement of support for the process we're looking at? [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: At this time we are not asking for any financial support or anything like that. I mean, I don't think any district would ever say no (laughter) to the idea of more funding. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: We haven't found one anyway. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, if you're offering... [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: So if there is money, sure. But what we're saying is that as we engage on this, we also know this is a common thread whether in rural Nebraska or urban Nebraska, that the needs for facilities to be updated. And we just feel it's a critical

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piece that we want this committee to make sure that we raise it and make sure it's aware of that we believe it's a critical piece because of what you just said, Senator, and the fact that we have a huge number that came out in the Omaha World-Herald, around \$600 million. And we believe other school districts are in the same situation. But how does that align with everything statewide? That's the critical question that this LB1103 is going to answer. And we just want to make sure facilities are a part of that conversation. [LB1103]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Your comments about technology infrastructure are extremely important and that changes so rapidly, and to have adequate experiences for our students before they move on to the college level is extremely critical so they're not behind the curve on any of that. But I thank you for your comments, and I thank you for the mutual service we shared together in the past, and for what you're doing for the Board of Education right now. Thank you. [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: Thank you, and may I just comment on that? We know that we're not the only school district that has copper wire in some of our buildings. And as the district moves to state on-line testing, that becomes a problem because of bandwidth. And so kids have to take their tests sometimes in shifts, or one part of the school is taking a test and the other part has to rotate over, and it is a technology infrastructure issue. And that's across the state of Nebraska, and I think that will be critical as this committee moves forward. [LB1103]

SENATOR SEILER: You might not say copper wire in your buildings too loud. (Laughter) [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: So noted. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? Thank you for coming up, Justin. [LB1103]

JUSTIN WAYNE: Thank you for your time. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, Troy. Whenever you're ready. [LB1103]

TROY LOEFFELHOLZ: (Exhibit 6) Good afternoon. My name is Troy Loeffelholz; that's T-r-o-y L-o-e-f-f-e-l-h-o-l-z. I am the superintendent of Columbus Public Schools in Columbus, Nebraska. I am representing the 12 member schools of STANCE; that's Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education. And we are very supportive of Senator Sullivan's LB1103; what an incredible opportunity the Legislature has, the Department of Education has, school districts, parents, students, the business community, what an incredible opportunity to set the vision for the future of education for the state of Nebraska. But again, this is about strategic planning. And if you think having a lot of schools ask for money through TEEOSA, just wait until you get into

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strategic planning and start trying to get everybody's special interest with that as well. So I encourage you to really follow a simple process of strategic planning because every organization, every group needs to check its current reality to improve performance and the outcomes of what you're trying to do. Strategic plan is not a plan to plan. It's a plan to design and accomplish goals that lead to improvement. And I think as you work through the strategic planning process...and I think what Senator Sullivan has set up here in LB1103 does an excellent job of going through a seven-step process of a strategic plan. But it also should involve a collection of ideas. And those collection of ideas have to include school personnel, specifically teachers in the classroom. They have to involve parents and students, like I said before. And they also have to involve community leaders, business people, etcetera. We felt the intent to conduct a strategic planning process, to create a statewide vision for education in Nebraska is something that is long overdue. STANCE would like to offer our assistance and be actively engaged in those meetings, work sessions, and/or focus groups with individuals and representatives with educational interest. That involves taxpayer groups, business community, and other interested entities. We believe there are several bills in this session that would be good policy if gathered together under one focused vision. I feel like sometimes in education we are reaching for a lot of things to try to put a Band-Aid approach to a lot of issues. For example, early childhood programming, TEEOSA, expanded learning opportunities, we've talked about college and career readiness. We've talked about facilities, etcetera. One that's going to be heard today...LB1077 is one of those bills, the early college experience through dual-credit opportunities. We believe those bills along with the other bills that have been introduced this year have a strong piece, or should be a strong piece of that visioning process through the strategic plan. You heard some testimony from some students within the state here. Obviously, that's a tough act to follow. They're the ones in the classroom learning. They're absorbing everything that we provide for them. Everything from STEM education to career opportunities, whether small school, large school, it didn't really matter, there are opportunities out there for our children in the state of Nebraska. The question becomes then through the strategic planning process is, what does that look like? What does accountability look like? What does the future of education look like? I've been in the business 26 years and from when I started in 1988, it's a whole lot different in 2014. So as we look towards the future, I encourage you to involve as many people as you can from across the state in this process so that we're planning out for the next 30, 40, 50 years. I know that's hard to do, especially with technology changing every 18 months. But as long as we have a strong strategic plan, I think we have to commit then to that continuous management of that plan and develop those action plans because it should be a working document. And as we go through things and as we implement things, we check those things off and monitor those things and then look towards the future and really expand that process. With that, I will answer any questions if any... [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, Troy. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1103]

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TROY LOEFFELHOLZ: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, Nancy. [LB1103]

NANCY FULTON: (Exhibit 7) I just have this fear this chair is going to be rolling right out. Good afternoon, committee members. My name is Nancy Fulton, N-a-n-c-y F-u-l-t-o-n. I am a 34-year classroom teacher and now serve as president of the Nebraska State Education Association. I'm here today on behalf of our nearly 28,000 members; that includes teachers, support staff, higher ed faculty, and retirees. And we stand in support of LB1103. NSEA's vision is a great public school for every child. We believe that the strategic planning process to create a statewide vision for education as stated in LB1103 is a noble goal, and it fits hand in hand with NSEA's vision. NSEA looks forward to a close collaboration with the Education Committee, other education policy partners, and others as mentioned today as the visioning process moves forward. Our members understand firsthand what a quality education means for the vitality of our state and for the students who receive that education. We do touch the lives of every public school student from pre-K to graduate school. We are ready, willing, and able to work to develop a statewide vision for education that will enhance the pursuit of the good life in Nebraska. And I do thank you for the opportunity to say a few words this afternoon. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Nancy. Any questions? I see none. [LB1103]

NANCY FULTON: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks for stopping. Next proponent. Welcome, Ron. [LB1103]

RON WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Scheer, Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee. I'll try to be as brief as I can. I am Ron Withem, R-o-n W-i-t-h-e-m, with the University of Nebraska and here to indicate that we're very supportive of LB1103 and believe that this is a study of a visioning process for all of education--K-12, higher education--and more importantly, how they work together. One thing I think I'd like to bring up for the record is that there are things in process that deal with this issue, and I hope the committee will rely upon those. There is, for instance...and I see Carna maybe is going to comment. There is a statewide plan for higher education in place that was written as part of the creation of the Coordinating Commission and was rewritten in the late 1990s. I believe Mr. O'Neill, when he gets up to speak he'll probably talk with you about the P-16 Initiative. There is an annual report of higher education again, from the Coordinating Commission that was created by a legislative committee ten or so years ago when Senator Pederson (phonetic) chaired the...I believe the number was LR194 committee. In terms of the University of Nebraska, the Board of Regents believes very strongly in a strategic framework process

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and every one of their meetings involves a portion of it where they examine one of the strategic initiatives of the university to see how they're doing. This is an important process. We believe it involves, as I indicated before, all levels of education. And we stand ready to participate. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Ron. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Welcome back up, Stan. [LB1103]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator Scheer. It's good to be back. Senator Scheer and members of the committee, my name is Stan Carpenter, S-t-a-n C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I'm the chancellor of the Nebraska State College System, and we are here today in strong support of LB1103. We think it's critically important that we have this kind of visioning process and appreciate the fact that you all are willing to take that on. We anchor rural Nebraska, as I say from time to time, and we produce somewhere between 20 and 25 percent of the school teachers in the state of Nebraska. So we think this is something that is good for us and good for the state. And we look forward to participating in it. We are an organization that believes in strategic planning as well, whether it's at the system level or at the college level. And at each one of our board meetings, whenever there is an action item to take place or a discussion item, there is a notation as to what part of the Nebraska State College System strategic plan that refers to. So we think this is a good idea. We're always looking for ways to improve our service to the state of Nebraska and to our students, and we want to make sure we provide only the best educational opportunities for our students as well. We focus, as you know, on access and opportunity, and we want to make sure that we're doing the very best job that we can in that as we serve the students of Nebraska and students from around the nation as well. So we look forward to being part of this process and hope that you will take favorable action on it. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you very much. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB1103]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, Tip. [LB1103]

TIP O'NEILL: Thank you, Senator Scheer. Members of the Education Committee, I'm Tip O'Neill; that's T-i-p O-'-N-e-i-l-l. I'm the president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska. We are in support of LB1103 and look forward to working with the Education Committee during the interim and working on the strategic planning process and then coming forth with a statewide vision for the future in this process. Couple issues, first of all...couple questions that I have...first of all, how does this bill interrelate with the current P-16 process that we have? And I know that Senator

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Sullivan probably, you know, may answer this question in the Executive Sessions or in her closing today. But in that process, the Governor, of course, chairs that committee, the executive director of the EducationQuest Foundation, University of Nebraska president, and the Commissioner of Education...our old buddy Matt no longer gets to sit between Dennis Baack and myself but has to move up to the front of the group and be responsible...I guess, are the cochairs. And again, of course with a Governor who will be leaving, with a new university president to be forthcoming and the university currently in a search for a director of the P-16 Initiative I guess at the vice president level in the university central administration, that process is currently kind of in flux at this point. So this will be an interesting process as far as LB1103 is concerned, to see how that interrelates. And so it will be interesting to see how that all works out. Second, you know, this will be very interesting because as I see the groups coming forward to the education committee on a regular basis, you know, I see urban school districts, rural school districts, equalized school districts, unequalized school districts, two-year public colleges, four-year public colleges, private colleges, parochial schools, taxpayer groups, business groups, farm groups, early childhood advocates, students, parents, and a whole bunch of other groups, and I think they all define educational success in a different context. And to bring these groups all together to come forth with a common statewide vision for the future will be a great task for you and for all of us to bring all of those groups to the table and to say, this is what is going to be best for Nebraska in the future will be...if we can do it we'll be wonderful. So I wish you the best, and we do support LB1103. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB1103]

TIP O'NEILL: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome, Jon. [LB1103]

JON HABBEN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Scheer, members of the committee. A couple of things, if you'll recall back to the first meeting you had during your interim study and the minutes that were produced and there was this what appeared to be a gigantic list of topics and questions and possibilities. And I thought to myself when I saw that, oh, my gosh. This is going to collapse under its own weight. This thing is huge. It goes everywhere. I think that will be your challenge when it comes to a strategic planning process. As previous testifiers have indicated, we're talking about all kids in all schools all the way across the state. It may seem that it's hard to get very specific, but at the same time, what you're taking on with LB1103 is a wonderful assignment. NRCSA supports you doing this, leading this, and supports your efforts to address all the kids in the state and where they are, all the schools in the state and their communities. And we really appreciate the fact Senator Sullivan has introduced this, happy to participate if you think there's a role for us. And we wish you well. Thank you very, very much. [LB1103]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, Jon. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Welcome, Carna. [LB1103]

CARNA PFEIL: (Exhibit 8) Thank you. Senator Scheer, Senator Sullivan, and the committee members, my name is Carna Pfeil, C-a-r-n-a P-f-e-i-l, and I'm the interim executive director of the Coordinating Commission. First, I wanted to applaud the committee and Senator Sullivan for introducing this bill. Hopefully, this process leads to a shared vision for education in Nebraska and something that we can all agree is crucial for the state to move forward. I hope the actions outlined in this bill also can result in a long-term benchmark to help guide all of us in education, particularly now that the makeup of the Legislature changes more frequently than it used to. The Coordinating Commission looks forward to participating in this process, particularly in the light of the duties as assigned by the state. The Nebraska Constitution and the statutes assign the Coordinating Commission the responsibility for comprehensive planning for postsecondary education. The commission approved the state's first comprehensive plan for postsecondary education in 1992. Since then, it has undergone several revisions to keep it current and relevant to the state's higher education environment. In 1999, the Legislature directed the commission to review and revise the comprehensive plan in collaboration with higher education governing boards. The ensuing process in 1999 and 2000 included many joint meetings with members of the governing boards and their representatives. The process also included focus groups on higher education issues held in communities throughout the state as well as meetings and surveys and other communications with higher education and their stakeholders. The collaboration process resulted in a widely shared vision of what postsecondary education can and should become in the future, as well as mutually agreed upon major statewide goals. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide direction for the future of higher education in Nebraska. It identifies goals that will lead to an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated higher education network. The Coordinating Commission uses this plan to facilitate many of its statutory decision making. I've provided a copy of the executive summary of the statewide plan. And we believe that this may assist you or give you some ideas of how you go forward in your visioning process. We spent many, many hours in a very constrained time period to put this together. The Coordinating Commission will certainly need to revise this plan as your process goes forward. We look forward to working with this committee and the entire Legislature as this process continues. Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Just real quickly, the date of publication of this document is what? [LB1103]

CARNA PFEIL: Two thousand. [LB1103]

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SENATOR HAAR: Two thousand. [LB1103]

CARNA PFEIL: And it probably needs to be revised again. Things have changed. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Additional proponents? Good afternoon. [LB1103]

NATALIE PEETZ: Hi, Senator Scheer, members of the committee. My name is Natalie Peetz, N-a-t-a-l-i-e P-e-e-t-z. I'm a registered lobbyist for First Five Nebraska here today to testify in support of LB1103. Early childhood education seems to be the buzz. We're excited about that. You've already heard about the support from the business community. They understand the importance of our future work force and the problems that we face all across Nebraska. I want to thank this committee for its support of early childhood, in particular Senator Sullivan for her leadership on this issue. We're happy to participate in these discussions, bring some resources forward to help you with those discussions. We also offer for those that have not had an opportunity to tour an Educare facility, we would love to have you come through as part of your discussions and take a look at that as well. So with that, thank you. Any questions? [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Senator Haar. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: I'd like a tour. [LB1103]

NATALIE PEETZ: You got it. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Why don't you contact my office on that? [LB1103]

NATALIE PEETZ: We'd be happy to do that. [LB1103]

SENATOR HAAR: Thanks. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, Natalie. [LB1103]

NATALIE PEETZ: Thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other proponents? Now turning to opponents, are there any opponents to LB1103? Seeing none, do we have anyone in a neutral position? Seeing none, Senator Sullivan. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer and committee. And I do also thank everyone who spoke in support of LB1103, students, people who are concerned about our work force needs, educators. You can see where this reaches out to a lot of people

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who have a vested interest in education. And there are a lot of people and entities already working on this, so I would be naive to think that the Education Committee has the corner on the market on this. And I expect that we will reach out to all groups who are not only currently doing it but have already done some goal setting, for example the P-16 Initiative. So we're going to be reaching out to a lot of these groups and engaging them in conversations and also indicating how they can continue their conversations as well. It will raise old issues, new issues. And it certainly isn't lost on me the comments of Mrs. Kolterman from Farm Bureau. Of course finances and money will ultimately end up in the conversation, but I wanted to begin this conversation sans money because we need to look at what our goals and priorities are. And once those are identified then it states a case for putting the appropriate resources behind those priorities so that we can achieve them. So it's going to be not an easy process. I'm not, again, naive to think that it will be. But I do think it's going to be time well spent. I think it's an effort needed. And it will reap many benefits not only for education but our citizens in this state. So I thank you. [LB1103]

SENATOR SCHEER: (Exhibit 9) Thank you, Senator. And before closing I would note that we have one letter of support from OpenSky Policy Institute, Renee Fry. And with that I will close the hearing on LB1103 and now open the hearing LB1077. [LB1103]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer. I'm here again. My name is Kate Sullivan, K-a-t-e S-u-l-l-i-v-a-n, representing District 41 in the Legislature and here to introduce to you LB1077. The bill would create the Shared Responsibility for Access and Success Act. But I'm also here today to ask you not to advance this bill but rather to start the discussion on some topics that I'm quite sure may find their way into the visioning process that we just talked about. The intent of the act would help students find success, whether through postsecondary education or careers, while recognizing the responsibility we all share for that success both individually and collectively. Students, families, communities, preschools, high schools, colleges, businesses, and taxpayers all have a stake in assuring that the entire continuum of education works together to assist and encourage our students to become productive citizens. The act would provide funding for several things, some currently being funded, some not. It would provide funding for dual-enrollment courses, we've already seen the benefits proven through that with the Access College Early Scholarship Program or ACES; funding for college entrance exams, we already see some schools providing the ACT through ACT pilot project; funding for college placement exams and academic remediation given in high school so students do not start out behind when they get to college; provide funding for need-based education...need-based aid rather--for postsecondary education students, looking at some different approaches for how we currently do that; funding for trade certifications for those high school students that are ready to get started on a career. But truly, today my purpose is not to focus on the details or certainly the answers but to really bring out what I think are some questions that need to be asked per all of the things that I identified would be important to fund.

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Questions such as: What are the barriers that stand in the way of student success? How can we make sure all students graduate from high school ready for the next step? How can we provide access to postsecondary education for all students? How do we convince students and families that they can access a variety of options for education and careers? How can we increase our return on investment by encouraging the successful completion of postsecondary programs? What does it really cost to be a full-time college student? And who should pay the cost, in what proportions, and in what circumstances? How can we draw on all of the educational resources of our state? What should be the student's responsibility in financing their education? How do we balance choices for students and the responsibility for making economic decisions? How can we help students find success when their interests do not lead them to postsecondary education right after high school? And how can we help business and industry to have the qualified workers they need? And, of course, what are we willing to afford? This measure takes the approach that there are shared benefits and there should be a shared responsibility for educational success. Quite frankly it asks a little bit more from all of us. But I believe these are topics that deserve a serious discussion. These are topics that can influence the future of our state. And again, I ask you...I'm not interested in advancing this bill this session. I just ask for your serious consideration as we discuss these issues that ultimately affect the success of our citizens and our state. Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. Questions? Seeing none, okay. We'll open it proponents for LB1077. Welcome back, Linda. [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: (Exhibit 1) Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Sullivan and Senator Scheer chairing. Education Committee, my name is Linda Richards, L-i-n-d-a R-i-c-h-a-r-d-s, and I am president of the Ralston Board of Education. I appear on behalf of our school district today in support of LB1077. Conceptually, LB1077 is a bill that will assist districts like Ralston to continue the efforts we have already begun to assist students and families in accessing postsecondary education and skill development while finishing their graduation requirements. The Early College Experience Program outlined in this bill will allow districts to increase the dual-enrollment opportunities provided to students. The continued growth of these opportunities could encourage more students to pursue additional learning while in high school. The incentive to do so comes from the ability for students to take a class and have that class count for college credit. Now as a parent who just registered our son for his freshman year at Ralston, which I can't believe, these opportunities for dual-enrollment classes and help with the fees associated as outlined in LB1077 convey to me the desire of the state to encourage our high school students to not just do the work for the now, a high school diploma, but for the future, a career. The fees associated with dual enrollment may seem small to some, but for some taking multiple courses, students of families with limited resources, or students not sure what they want to do in their future, the fees can be a barrier. Dual enrollment also provides students with the ability to enter

postsecondary education with credits. For most students and their families, this means less cost once they reach college. Credits earned mean less credits needed towards a college degree. Every dollar saved in this is that much less debt for our students. And for the past three years, Ralston Public Schools has afforded our juniors and seniors with the opportunity to take the ACT with no cost to their family. With a cost on the average of about \$9,000 annually or to date roughly \$30,000, the investment in our students for this important step in their education is important. Again, with the goal of reducing the barriers to seeking additional education after high school, the cost to take the ACT should not be a barrier to those who cannot afford the college entrance exam. Now, along with the college entrance exam is the preparation that accompanies the test. Preparatory programs such as the John Baylor Test Prep used by Ralston High School is an example of how a district can assist students in not just access to the test but the test-taking skills necessary to succeed in the test. The investment by Ralston Public Schools in this resource for our students is a part of what LB1077 addresses as well and looks to, I think, expand across our state to assist additional districts in doing so. The addition of addressing the costs associated with remediation and trade certification for the individual student is also a positive component in LB1077. Some of the costs associated with accessing postsecondary education and skills development are borne by school districts, but often those costs are passed through to the student and their family. I believe that if we are holding our students accountable for results on state-sanctioned testing and placing a higher level of expectation on what a high school diploma means, it is our responsibility as leaders in this state to do our part in supporting Nebraska students by diminishing if not eliminating the barriers that exist to accessing that postsecondary education and skill development that they need for Nebraska's future. I thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important issue. I hear from Senator Sullivan the goal is not to advance LB1077 but to begin the conversation. We look forward to providing you any data and information that you need from our individual district as you look to build out and have conversation about this legislation and look forward to helping you in any way that we can. I'd entertain any questions, Senators, that you might have. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Linda. Any...Senator Haar. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Just briefly, what's the percent of poverty students in Ralston? Do you know? [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: We're above 50 percent in all buildings. We're cresting, I think, probably a midpoint of 50s district-wide... [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: ...if not higher, Senator. I'm sorry I don't have exact number today for you. [LB1077]

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SENATOR HAAR: No, no, that's fine. I was just... [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: But it is over 50 percent. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah, and I like the title very much of the act and so on. But this starts way back in kindergarten and preschool, doesn't it? [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: Preschool, yes, it does. Absolutely. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: ...because it seems to me that our kids going on to postsecondary is really related to poverty, isn't it quite a bit? Just speak for a second on... [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: Well, it is because I think we're seeing in the opportunities...I think Senator Sullivan brought it up, the ACE has been a tremendous success. Just visited with one of my high school administrators before coming over here this morning, and we have a huge number of our students who took advantage or are taking advantage of those dollars. We have students who are looking to take classes at Metro part of the time so that they can diminish their costs. And so there are programs that we're accessing for our students. The dual enrollment is so important because while you're sitting in a high school classroom, if you're a child of poverty or a student of poverty and you're taking a class already in that setting, knowing that you have the ability for those credits to go somewhere will propel you. It will at least open that door. It will open that conversation that we can have with a student to say, this is viable for you. It's critically important I think for all students, but certainly our students in poverty see it as a barrier. These fees can be...as I mention even a \$25 fee can be something that a student will look at and say, I don't know if I can manage that. They might be working a job to provide for the family. They might be doing some things that those dollars go elsewhere. And so it might diminish their ability to access even that dual-enrollment class because of that. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Good. Thank you. [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: You're welcome, Senator. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any others? Thank you, Linda. [LB1077]

LINDA RICHARDS: Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Additional proponents? Welcome back, Dennis. [LB1077]

DENNIS BAACK: Senator Scheer and members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dennis Baack, D-e-n-n-i-s B-a-a-c-k. I'm the executive director of

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the Nebraska Community College Association here to speak in favor and support of LB1077. The way that we have done scholarship aid and stuff in Nebraska has not really been looked at for a number of years. We've not really done a total assessment of that in looking at how we do that aid. And I think that Senator Sullivan certainly has all the right questions that we need to answer as to how we do student aid in this state and to make sure that we're targeting that student aid where we need to target it. We don't put a lot of money as a state into student aid, but we need to make sure that we're targeting those dollars and making sure that it's getting to the students that need it and that it's being successful. So I think this study is a good idea and we'll see what we come up with at the end. But I think we need to get through this process and make sure that we're targeting those dollars where they need to be targeted for. And with that, I'd be happy to answer any questions. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thanks, Dennis. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1077]

DENNIS BAACK: Thanks. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Welcome back, Stan. [LB1077]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator. Always good to be back. Senator Scheer, members of the committee, I'm Stan Carpenter, S-t-a-n C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I'm chancellor of the Nebraska State College System, and we're here today testifying in support of LB1077 because we think it is time to take a look at the need-based aid program that we have here in Nebraska. And we have many students who do participate in the early entry program for our colleges from high schools. So both of these programs, the NOG Program and the ACE Program are important to us. Obviously the bill is complex and we could not figure out the impact on us at this point, so I'm pleased that Senator Sullivan is looking to begin the discussions. And we want to participate in those discussions with you because it is critically important to make sure that our students get as much support as they can. That is after all what we are about in the Nebraska State College System. And if there's a way to improve on this and make it easier for students to get to our institutions, that's what we're interested in because, as I've said before and you know, we are institutions of access and opportunity. And I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have on this bill. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. [LB1077]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. Any other proponent for LB1077? Welcome, Brian. [LB1077]

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BRIAN HALSTEAD: Good afternoon, Senator Scheer, members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Brian Halstead, B-r-i-a-n H-a-l-s-t-e-a-d. I'm with the Nebraska Department of Education and the State Board of Education in support of LB1077. From the board's perspective, this is continuing the conversation in these areas, not beginning it, because we've been doing a lot of this right now. Dual-credit courses, we're doing the pilot project for the ACT. There are a whole number of issues that are out there that this bill continues the conversation on, and we'd be more than happy to work with the senator and the rest of you on each one of the programs in this, better defining it and refining it to ensure our students are the ones receiving the services and the funding they need to be successful Nebraska citizens. So with that, I'd end my testimony and take any questions. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Questions? Senator Haar. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: This is kind of interesting...this going to be quite a challenge because there are so many little kingdoms involved in all of this and so many elected boards and so on. How do you see all these boards and interests dancing together? [LB1077]

BRIAN HALSTEAD: Well, you know that brings up a whole number of questions, but I'd go back to, let's focus on the students... [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB1077]

BRIAN HALSTEAD: ...and what they need to be successful. And then I think you'll find that a lot of the things we're currently doing can be done, but it may challenge some of the structures that were created in the 20th century, some of them that date back to the 19th century. And maybe we need to look at the structures that are in place and whether those need to be adapted. But if you focus on the students and what they need, I think you're going to find the answers that you're going to need to address and move forward collaboratively on the process. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Great answer. Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any other questions? Thank you, Brian. Additional proponents. Good afternoon. [LB1077]

KRISTIN YATES: (Exhibit 2) Good afternoon. Good afternoon, members of the Education Committee. My name is Kristin Yates, K-r-i-s-t-i-n Y-a-t-e-s, and I am the assistant vice president and director of institutional research and planning at the University of Nebraska here today to testify in support of LB1077. First and foremost, I want to thank you for providing the opportunity to engage in the thoughtful consideration of the issues addressed in this bill. Although there are a variety of significant provisions contained within the bill, I will focus my remarks today on those sections pertaining to

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the postsecondary program and its proposed changes to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant. It's been about ten years or so since any major modifications to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program have been implemented. Given the importance of these issues, we welcome the opportunity to be part of the discussion. Anyone who has read the newspaper or listened to the news recently is aware of the increased profile of educational issues and the public dialogue. It is clear that increasing the percentage of the population with a postsecondary credential has become a priority at both the federal and state levels. This priority must be realized if Nebraska and the nation are to develop a future work force that will allow us to remain economically competitive. There's a pressing need for funds to enable increased college access in support of this goal. This is especially true among low-income and first-generation students, and this need will likely increase as demographics continue to shift both nationally and locally. While I welcome the opportunity to engage in a robust discussion of the topic, I will note that the bill as currently drafted contains some provisions which may ultimately prove detrimental to ensuring access and degree attainment as the majority of students attending Nebraska postsecondary institutions. It's my belief that the postsecondary program provisions of this bill as currently articulated do little to support a quality of access to higher education and quite a lot to promote the concept of college choice. Given the challenges we are facing in regard to access, the lingering effects of the recent economic downturn, and some uncertainty about the future of the economy, good public policy demands we choose access over choice. The University of Nebraska has made a very public commitment to college access through our Collegebound Nebraska Program guaranteeing more than 6,600 Pell-eligible undergraduate students across our campuses that they will pay no tuition if they have a family income under \$53,000. Funds from the Nebraska Opportunity Grant are an integral part of meeting this obligation, and a decrease in our state grant funding would detrimentally affect our ability to meet the needs of these students. In closing, I once again applaud the committee's willingness to take a closer look at these important issues. One question I believe we may need to ask ourselves up-front as we undertake the process is essentially, what problem are we really trying to fix by revising the criteria for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant? The program has generally worked well since its revision in 2003, and there may be in fact no need to fix what isn't really broken. In addition to my testimony today, I'm providing the committee with data which provides some history on the Nebraska Opportunity Grant funding as well as current enrollment patterns by postsecondary sector. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about these materials. With that, I'll end my testimony. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Kristin. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Any more proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? And finally, any in a neutral position? Good afternoon. Welcome. [LB1077]

TRICIA SHARRAR: Good afternoon. Vice Chairman Scheer, members of the Education Committee, my name is Tricia Sharrar spelled T-r-i-c-i-a S-h-a-r-r-a-r. I serve as the

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associate provost for academic administration at Creighton University. My testimony this afternoon is in a neutral capacity on behalf of Creighton University and LB1077. We understand LB1077 is intended to encourage dialogue relating to higher education policy in Nebraska. We would like to thank Senator Sullivan and the committee for your recognition and leadership in recognizing the importance of higher education discussions in Nebraska. Creighton University supports your efforts. Creighton University believes that there is room for improvement in Nebraska's postsecondary education policy. As you all know, Creighton University has an outstanding legacy and an exemplary present day reputation for offering purposeful education established on academic excellence, social justice, and personal growth. Few institutions have the breadth and depth of academic programs and the ability to bridge these programs like Creighton. We offer education in eight health profession programs: dentistry, nursing, medicine, pharmacy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, emergency medical services, and public health on the same walkable campus with programs in the arts and sciences, law, and business. The opportunities to bridge our academic offerings for the benefit of our students and our society are limitless. Our university's outstanding reputation for the pursuit of excellence comes through the contributions of our faculty; passionate scholars, inspired teachers, and tireless researchers. And we continue to invest in our academic programs as knowledge rapidly expands and is shaped by international developments in the humanities, the sciences, law, healthcare, and business. At Creighton, building on our Jesuit Catholic values, we educate competent, compassionate, and committed students who are willing and able to become agents of change. Joining the Big East Athletic Conference affords Creighton an opportunity to build an awareness and an outstanding Nebraska university in markets where we historically have not had significant name recognition. Creighton will take advantage of that opportunity by increasing marketing efforts and alumni outreach in those areas. We will have an opportunity to communicate to a wider audience of prospective students the academic excellence and the uniqueness of Creighton. Clearly, participation in the Big East benefits Creighton and the entire state of Nebraska. We look forward to keeping pace with the likes of Georgetown, Marquette, DePaul, and others. In doing so, it will be necessary to work closely with the state of Nebraska, and Creighton stands willing to be a partner and an asset to the committee. While we agree with the many concepts that will be explored in the future of LB1077, we believe action can be taken by the Legislature now as we explore other avenues to provide the very best education in Nebraska from early childhood to college. Most specifically, we believe passage of a grant program for Nebraska students attending Nebraska independent colleges and universities is good public policy and should be considered by the full Legislature now. College applicants are looking for the best fit for the interests and what particular colleges and universities can do to advance their careers. Nebraska independent colleges and universities awarded more than 41 percent of bachelor's and advanced degrees in 2010 and 2011 including 55 percent of the degrees in business, one-third of the degrees in education, and more than one-half in the health sciences. Despite this contribution to our state, Nebraska provides less support to students in independent

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colleges and universities than we did in fiscal year 2001-02. And the percentage of dollars allocated to student grants compared to appropriations for higher education operations in Nebraska ranks the lowest of any Big East or Big Ten Conference state. Choosing a college should be based on your personal and professional goals and whether a college or university can accommodate your educational plan. Creighton offers a breadth and depth of educational possibilities that rival and surpass many expensive East Coast institutions at a more affordable price. We strive to make Creighton education available to deserving students by providing financial aid. As Creighton continues to be competitive with our peers in Big East, we hope to partner with the state for a grant program to better assist Nebraska students who choose to attend a private college or university in Nebraska. And at this time I thank you for your time and would be happy to answer any questions. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Tricia. Any questions? Guess not. Thank you very much for coming down. [LB1077]

TRICIA SHARRAR: Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Do you need a two-wheel cart, Tip? [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: What's that? [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: You need a two-wheel cart for that? [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: (Exhibits 3 and 4) I'll tell you what, I'm glad I don't have to carry it back to my office, 12 copies. Members of the Education Committee, my name is Tip O'Neill; that's spelled T-i-p O-'-N-e-i-l-l, and I'm the president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska. Members of AICUN include Bellevue University, Bryan College of Health Sciences, Clarkson College, College of St. Mary, Concordia University, Creighton University, Doane College, Grace University, Hastings College, Midland University, Nebraska Methodist College, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Union College, and York College. Our colleges and universities collectively enroll more than 32,000 students and award more than 40 percent of the bachelor's and advanced degrees in Nebraska. We appear in a neutral capacity on LB1077, but we are positive about many aspects of the bill. It appears that the formula for determining institutional allocations for student grants in the postsecondary program will be improved from the current allocation formulation for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program. We have questions about the details of how the allocations will work. For example, we believe there needs to be a determination of full-time equivalent students by institution in making equitable allocations. We believe it is also unclear in how the averaging calculation works, but those details can be adjusted as we work on this legislation over the interim. We are particularly encouraged by the creation of a college-ready program. Too many students who graduate from high school are unprepared for college work,

which we believe leads to college students who may fail to graduate on a timely basis or may fail to graduate at all. We like the fact that college placement exams are given at a time when high school students can remedy their academic deficiencies before they graduate from high school and can begin their college careers well prepared. We do have questions about how the Early College Experience Program will work with the provision that involves the promotion of negotiations with postsecondary institutions on reducing tuition and fees for dual-enrollment courses. We do hope that such a provision would not force high schools to always choose the cheapest option for dual-enrollment courses, especially when a higher-quality option would provide a better option for students. The reason for our neutral testimony is that we believe the ultimate success for the postsecondary provisions of the Shared Responsibility for Access and Success Act will depend on how we fund it. And I provided the committee members with a packet of information with a copy of the most recent survey from the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs. Now that's the big packet that has a lot of information in it. But if you look at the second page of the other side of the information, I kind of synopsised information from table 14. And what that is is I took all of the states in the Big Ten and the Big East Conferences and took a look at what percentage of the higher education budgets does Nebraska spend on grant programs compared to what we spend on higher education operating programs. And you see where Nebraska ranks when you compare it to rest of the Big East and Big Ten states. We rank very, very low. In fact, we rank last among those states. And what that tells me is unless we begin to look at the type of money that we spend on student grants and significantly increase it, it doesn't matter how the allocation formula works in any student grant program. You're not going to make much progress in providing money for poor kids to attend colleges and particularly the college of their choice. Right now we spend three-tenths of 1 percent of the entire higher education budget in Nebraska on students who attend Nebraska independent colleges and universities even though we award more than 40 percent of the bachelor's and advanced degrees. So I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions? Senator Haar. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: So is it a matter of the total number of dollars or how it's allocated? [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: It's both. It's both. I mean if you tripled the total amount of dollars that were currently allocated to the grant program that we have now, I probably wouldn't be over here arguing about the funding formula. [LB1077]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Tip, the only thing that I might say in relationship to that...you know, you talked about being dead last... [LB1077]

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TIP O'NEILL: Um-hum. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: ...as far the funding, but some of that might also be...I think if you took another graph of the state support of the higher education systems within the state as part of the tuition costs, we're very, very high. And so one could make the assumption that those funds are going to try to make education more available to all levels of economics within the state. However, not that yours is not important, but, you know, sometimes we get so busy carving one niche out of the total dollars... [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: Sure. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: ...that we have to look at the broader picture as well. And I don't want to let that as an isolated comment go out as though we're shorting higher education because... [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: No, that's true. We tend to be a low-tuition state when you compare, probably to those others states that we compared to in that graph. Now, you know, I can make the argument that when you compare the percentage of Pell Grant-eligible students at public institutions, particularly in the University of Nebraska system, you know, that that percentage of students is comparatively low when you compare that to all the rest of the four-year institutions in Nebraska. So you could make the argument that we are subsidizing students with low tuition who don't necessarily need to be subsidized. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Fair enough. I can agree with that. I just didn't want it... [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: Sure. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: ...to appear that we weren't, you know, as a state providing funding... [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: Right. Right. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: ...for the higher education. So any other comments? Thank you, Tip. [LB1077]

TIP O'NEILL: Thank you, Senator. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Other neutral position. Welcome back, Carna. [LB1077]

CARNA PFEIL: Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Anytime. [LB1077]

CARNA PFEIL: (Exhibit 5) I'm going to sit up on the edge because I feel like this little kid at this big person's table. I seem to shrink when I get in this chair. We are...Senator Scheer and members of the committee, my name is Carna Pfeil, C-a-r-n-a P-f-e-i-l, and we are here testifying neutral on this. And I'm only going to address just two of the parts of the bill. We think...and I was around when we've had this discussion a number of times, of how are we going to fund financial aid. And the last one, it was decided that we should follow the student. And I think you've heard from several people. That's the most important thing. We need to know what the students really need in this process. So...and as I said, I'm just going to address two of the pieces that actually have to do with the commission. The Coordinating Commission currently administers the Nebraska Opportunity Grant which awards grants to low-income Nebraska students attending Nebraska postsecondary education. Through this program, the state awarded more than \$15.1 million in grants and nearly 16,000 students in 2012-13. Each recipient averaged nearly \$1,000. The Nebraska Opportunity Grant draws on a combination of state and lottery funds. We believe the Opportunity Grant as currently structured is efficient and effective, and it helps the neediest of students afford postsecondary education. The new program proposed in this bill would replace the Nebraska Opportunity Grant. The Coordinating Commission would effectively administer this new program if this is what we truly believe is the best way to do it. But we have concerns about a couple things. And one of them is cost. The Nebraska Opportunity Grant is what we refer to as a decentralized financial aid program. In this case, that means that the Coordinating Commission every year informs each postsecondary education institution approximately how much funding they will have available for their eligible students based on a formula. The postsecondary institutions recommend which of their students should receive grant funding and how much. And then they submit that information to the Coordinating Commission. We review and approve or deny those recommendations and then disburse the money to the institutions who then provide the funding to the student. With the current process, postsecondary institutions review the students to determine the appropriate amount of the Opportunity Grant they should have. In that context, they are looking at the full financial aid package. The new program proposed in this bill would shift that process from decentralized to centralized meaning it would be...the commission would be taking the lead role in determining how much grant funding each student is eligible to receive. While the commission could operate this type of system and do it well, this would eliminate some of the flexibility that the current process provides which allows the financial aid departments in each of our institutions to look at the circumstances and the needs of the students. We would be removed from that because they are working with them on a continuous basis to put that financial package together. As you can see, we submitted a fiscal note, and this is an expensive process when you go from decentralized where really the expense is at each one of the institutions. And if you bring it in centrally, then it's going to be expensive. And it costs for administration. It would probably cost additional money to automate the process

because we have found that we don't have enough people to handle all of the paper. So this would be an expensive process. And the current program in the Nebraska Opportunity Grant, only about 28 percent of our students are actually funded through this program. Next I want to talk about the early college experience. And I think I'm going to run out of time, but I will start on this. We operate what is called the ACE Program, Access College Early. And we have operated this since 2007. This is the most successful program that I think I have ever worked with in the 20 years I have been in education. It is tremendous. And our students are all low income, and they get money to take dual-enrollment courses. They are...they go on to college at higher rates, and remember, these are all low-income kids. This last year 82 percent of those kids went on to college. Now you compare that to the current, and it's 77 percent for non low income and 53 percent for low income. I think I'll stop there. You have the rest of the information. We just think it's very important that you consider these. Both of these programs, if they are put together the way that the bill says, they would be expensive to operate. But we would be happy to do that. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Carna. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1077]

CARNA PFEIL: Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Anyone else in a neutral position? Welcome, Jeremy. [LB1077]

JEREMY MURPHY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Scheer, members of the committee. My name is Jeremy Murphy, J-e-r-e-m-y M-u-r-p-h-y. I'm the associate director for education issues for the Nebraska Catholic Conference. And we're testifying neutral on LB1077. We would ask the Education Committee to be open to ways in which the four high school programs might be made more inclusive to assist the educational preparation and attainment and success of all high school students including those who attend private schools, especially but not necessarily limited to the Early College Experience Program and the College Entrance Program. The legislation as drafted explicitly includes private postsecondary educational institutions as eligible institutions, and we think the same policy on eligibility should be made available to students enrolled in private high schools and that these students should not be excluded. The diocesan superintendents of catholic schools would like to explore ways of making these programs more inclusive and hopes the committee would be open to that. We would note that per the statement of intent, all schools that prepare students for postsecondary education should be part of the discussion being encouraged by this legislation. And students enrolled in other than public schools should be included within the hope of approving the success of all citizens. And as the fiscal note indicates, the Access College Early Program that's in place now...it's my understanding that that's available to poverty students, whether they attend public or private schools. If I'm incorrect I'm sure someone will correct me on that. But that's my understanding. We

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would hate to see that program go away. That's been a successful program. And I think that's all I have. For what it's worth, I'm an alum of Creighton School of Law. I can't resist telling you that after Creighton's testimony. Thank you. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Chairman, aren't you also a native of Norfolk? [LB1077]

JEREMY MURPHY: I am. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, I just wanted to make sure I noted that. Any other questions for Jeremy? Seeing none, thank you. Any other on a neutral position? Seeing none, Senator Sullivan. [LB1077]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer and committee. And thank you for all who testified because truly this is just the beginning of a conversation, and in so doing I don't in any way want to diminish what is currently being done to improve and expand access to postsecondary education for our students and achieve success. That's my goal in this. And I was encouraged to hear that it's perhaps...while some of these programs are working really well, it's been a while since we've revisited them, and it's timely for us to do that. And I really do encourage all who testified to work with me in this process because those questions posed need to be answered before we make any significant changes. So I thank you all for your attention and for the participation today. [LB1077]

SENATOR SCHEER: Any questions for Senator? If not, there is no other testimony to be entered, and this hearing is closed. And we will take a five-minute break before we start on LB779. [LB1077]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay folks, I think we will resume the hearings. The next bill on our hearing agenda is LB779 to change duties of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education relating to transfer-of-credit policies introduced by Senator Scheer. Welcome. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan and my four friends on the Education Committee that are still here. [LB779]

SENATOR AVERY: Your former friends. (Laugh) [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: I'm here to introduce LB779. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Oh, this is your stuff, not mine. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: And this is about trying to get college credit for students for classes that they are taking. And I want to distinguish between the fact that a student

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may get credit, or transferable credit in this case, from one state-sponsored institution to another. But a lot of times what happens, these classes are transferred and they are accepted but they go into their gen ed or nonrequired educational status rather than the requirements. This happens all too often, and it is a great expense for students, sometimes the parents of students. And it is also an expense that is borne by the state because we are teaching students essentially the same class but perhaps a different number, perhaps a little different title in one institution or another. Our society is quite mobile anymore. Students are moving from one location to another. And so consequently they may start in Chadron. They may end up a year in Wayne. They may end up a year in Lincoln, and then may end up back at their final year at Kearney. It's almost impossible for someone to graduate in four years if they do that simply because all the different institutions have varying requirements as far as what the specific courses are for graduation. So they may require something that...in a 200-level course, and we'll say it may just be a normal 200-level English class, but it's 212 perhaps at UNL. It might be 232 in Wayne. It might be, you know, 216 at Northeast Community College or Central Community College, and it may be 201 out in Chadron. And because they don't have commonality of numbering or the syllabus, the credits are transferred but they don't go towards, for example, their English requirement for their sophomore year at some point in time. What this bill would try to do is get all state-funded institutions, regardless of it's a four year or two year, on a playing field that everyone agrees what is what. And so that as students transfer, those credits truly are transferred to their requirements, not just the gen ed or their options. We need to get away from...and having said that, one of the things that we need to look at is the focus on graduating students. Too many times students get started and they don't finish because they may be going three years and they still have three years left simply because everything's transferred but not in the areas that they needed it to transfer. Now I know that years ago there was an agreement, the Nebraska Transfer Initiative, that was signed I believe by all the institutions in 1995. And I'm aware that they're working on a revised one at this point in time. But I also, in some of the discussions, know that we've been working towards this goal since literally 1992. That's over 20 years. That's far too long to make the students and the taxpayers of Nebraska wait for a consistent approach to transfer of credits within institutions that we're funding. I, like Senator Sullivan, am not necessarily wanting this legislation to go someplace this year because I'd like to give the institutions some time to try to work out any perceived difficulties on their part so that we really can have a formal policy and agreement in place and let them determine it rather than having outside forces trying to determine what is best for all the varying institutions. I'm not trying to use a hammer here. But I do think that it's important that all the institutions know that the Legislature is serious in regards to wanting the process to be streamlined and available to all students. So in closing, this is a serious bill about a serious problem that we have for a lot of students. And it certainly is not as bad as it may have been in 1995 or 1992. I will give them credit. It's probably better than it was in 2002 or maybe in 2007. But we're still working on it, and it cannot be that hard of process that those that are involved shouldn't be able to sit down on a couple different

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occasions and try to work out those functional problems amongst themselves so that the students in Nebraska are able to move from a facility or institution to institution where their jobs may take them because a lot of our students now are not traditional students. So they can't follow education by where they're at. They follow education by where their job or where their employment is at. So that does mean that they may be moving around the state several times during the given time. And we need to worry less about how many people we have in college and start worrying more about how many people we get to graduate college because ultimately that's the best and brightest use of the funds of the state of Nebraska are having graduates regardless if it's a two-year program or a four-year program. So that's the intent of LB779. And I guess I would answer any questions that anyone might have in regards to it. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Scheer. When...and maybe this will be clarified but does it come then as a surprise to a student sometimes if they think that the course will transfer and be part of their...meet their graduation requirements? Or is this disclosed to them, or do you know? [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, the real answer is, I don't know all the occasions. On some, these students that I've talked to the problems comes in...exactly what I've talked about. They may have attended Wayne State, Chadron State, UNO, UNL, wherever it might be, for two years. And because of necessity, then they move to another location and everything they were taking was going towards their credit so I think most of them assume because they're all state-sponsored or state-funded institutions that everybody is on the same like and likeness. And that doesn't necessarily always happen. And so I think it does catch them off guard to the extent that...like I have been told several occasions, yes, those credits do transfer. And that's what I've heard time over time over time even going back and several years ago even on the State Board of Education. They do indeed transfer. I'm not trying to imply that they are not given credit for them, but they don't count towards their degree in the areas that they need to count them. They go into the general ed. So in some cases, they may be taking...if they moved three different times, there's the possibility they could take a course, because it's a different term or a different title in three different institutions, essentially the same class three years in a row. And the other two will count towards their gen ed, but they're sitting there taking the same course essentially for the third time. And we just have to be able to stop that duplication. This is not a blame game. I'm not trying to fault any of the institutions. I'm just wanting to work with them so that they can come up with an approach that will allow students truly to move on a rapid base through their education of higher education regardless of if it's two years or four years. We need to get graduation, and that's the ultimate goal of anyone attending an institution. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Questions? Senator...which? (Laugh) Senator Avery, haven't heard from you yet today. [LB779]

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SENATOR AVERY: Thank you. Do you have any idea why this situation has developed? [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, you know, I think probably years ago...the answer is, no, Senator. But my guess is years and years ago, just like some things are now, it was sort of a silo approach and probably, our teachers are better than your teachers, or our textbooks are a higher level than your textbooks. You know, and that probably might have been the case 20 or 30 years ago, but I think we're much more transparent now than we used to be. And I think there is a...probably a pretty level playing field on a lot of the courses that we're talking about. And I think it's probably going to be...I would assume...here I am telling you it's going to be easy. I'm not the one doing the work. But I just believe there has to be a way to accommodate students so that their education can progress on a basis of the courses they've taken rather than having to retake classes because of numbering or syllabus changes. [LB779]

SENATOR AVERY: My own guess is that often what happens is one institution may look at a course taken at another and say, that's near what we do in our course, but it's not completely equivalent. I know that that's more likely the case at UNL. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: And I think that's probably true, Senator. I do think...I've heard in some instances, well, we think our instructional staff may be at a little higher pace or a higher educational level than some others. But to be quite honest, you know, you've got good teachers and you've got teachers that aren't as good as some of those great teachers. And so I'm failing to see that if I took a class at whatever institution and I got lucky and I got one of their great instructors and I then transfer to another institution and I got one of the so-so instructors...but now I'm really sort of taking it over again. You know, everyone has good...great employees and some good employees. So I...you know, we can't always utilize that some are at a higher level than others, especially when you get to larger institutions. A lot of times, especially in the early years, you probably, certainly are not getting your Ph.D.s teaching your beginning classes. So I just...I think there's some work left to be done obviously. We've been working at it for 20 years, and from my assessment I think, you know, it's time to wrap it up. The project has taken long enough. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Did you have something, Senator Haar? [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Yes, I did. I love the word "amongst" in your description there. Would this also just complicate it a little further? I mean with...especially like high school kids taking on-line education sorts of things and maybe getting advanced credits. Could you run into a real problem here between the content and the rigor and so on? [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: No, I don't think so, Senator, because this bill specifically targets only state-funded institutions. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: So you...what could happen is...in other legislation that I've envisioned would allow students--a lot of students--to take, for example, AP courses and possibly from either four-year universities or two-year community colleges on an AP basis. Well, those are state funded. And so those courses certainly should be able to be transferred into other institutions as they leave high school and go to a higher education facility within the state of Nebraska. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: And then...I'm just trying to think through the details of how something like this could work. So you'd look, for example, like comparing the beginning physics course at one institution against the beginning physics course of another. Are you looking at curriculum? How do you decide if two courses are the same course? [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, thankfully I don't have to decide, Senator, because that's why I'm trying to get the institutions themselves to make sure that's happening. And so if you are a president of a facility, either a community college or a four-year institution, and there's questions about one of your courses or a couple of those two different courses and the other five, six, seven of us that are getting together and that...it seems to be the only problem in that area would be you, then I would assume that you'll start working on that to make sure that it's compatible with everybody else. And likewise, if I have a failure in some area, then let's make sure that we address it and so that we're all on somewhat common footing. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Senator Scheer, thank you for bringing this forward. It's way overdue as you stated very well. I think it's an opportunity that we'll have in the state to be efficient and effective which hasn't been there for the students. And I look forward to the way they will come back from this discussion to see where we are. In 1969, I think I've mentioned this before in this committee, but Paul Kennedy was kind enough to drive me around the state with the birth of the community colleges as that was going on in our state. And as Randy knows, at that time it was Metro Tech Community College. There was that "tech" word that had to be in there to keep things alive for a while before that was dropped and we became like community colleges around the country. That plus our small colleges, the college system in our state, and all this is extremely necessary. We need to have this done and for all the reasons you stated; trying to get the physics course that will look the same or to have the comparability of transferability and understanding is an extremely important process.

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The point I want to make here is this discussion is a Common Core discussion for the universities like we're trying to have for the public schools. I wish we had more time to discuss that. And I'm sure our visioning will bring that up as we look at where we might be going in the future. And that aspect of having that common understanding of what is in a curriculum of whatever nature at whatever level is something that we need to spend the time on. And I thank you again for bringing this forward. It's a topic that needs to continue to be pushed. Lastly, there have been tremendous gains, and with UNO and Metro Community College we have some great opportunities that we're following up on in the Millard schools at the current time and other districts in the metro are doing the same. And we thank them in advance of all the other work for what they have opened up for students, tremendous potentials and it's going to cause great positive results for the future. Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. And I guess I would maybe end my introduction with the extent that, you're right. There are some great examples of things that are being done right around the state of Nebraska. This isn't a process that I think we're at 10 percent there. This is a process that we're, you know, probably 80 to 90 percent there. We just need to finish out the rough edges to make it so that it's all compliant with each other. So by any means, I'm not trying to imply that this has a long road to go. They've made vast improvements over the years. But it's been a long road. And it really does need to be finalized. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: We'll now hear proponent testimony. [LB779]

DENNIS BAACK: Senator Sullivan and members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dennis Baack, D-e-n-n-i-s B-a-a-c-k. I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Community College Association here to testify in support of LB779. We in the public higher education, the state college system and the university and community college, we've already had a meeting with Senator Scheer on this issue and have had some discussions about it. We are already following up on it immediately. We have a meeting scheduled for the 4th of March where the state colleges, community colleges, and university will get together and really start to compile what has happened with the transfer agreement over the years since it was put into place. It was put into place in 1995, not long after I took this job. I took this job in '93, and I...and that was one of the things that when I had been in the Legislature, I got an awful lot of complaints about student transfer and stuff. And so I said, I think we need to start working on something and putting things in place so that we can transfer our credits between the public institutions in this state. So we did have the transfer agreement. Everybody worked jointly on that. All of the institutions in the state signed on to that agreement. A lot of

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people have changed since then, since '95. And it's time to upgrade that agreement. We were already in the process of doing that before this bill was ever introduced. We almost have all the signatures again on this agreement, starting to get that back in place. I don't know that we'll ever get to the point where everything transfers automatically. I don't know if that ever happens. But we certainly feel like we ought to be able to work more on this, and we're going to work forward on that. We're going to work with Senator Scheer's office and make sure that we try to get to where he wants us to get to with this transferability of credit. We are also...I mean, in the community college system, we're also working with the university system. I know that at UNK now the...UNK has formed an agreement with Central Community College, and even some of their technical stuff is starting to transfer more smoothly into UNK now, starting to get that to happen. And Metro Community College and UNO have done a wonderful job down there in getting that agreement together and making sure that that works very closely for students. What we're trying to do is to make sure that the students get the best deal. I mean, we need to make sure that they're not repeating things when they go into different institutions. And we've done that by...a lot of our faculty sit down with faculty from the university, from the state colleges and go through our curriculums and look at the curriculums and see the kinds of things we're teaching in those courses to try to make sure that they do match up. And we're continuing that process as we go forward. It was interesting you brought up about the change in the name of the...from the technical. I actually carried the bill that changed the name of the colleges from technical to community colleges. And part of that was around the idea that the community colleges were just starting to do a lot more transfer education. There was a time when we weren't allowed to do transfer education. So that's how that occurred, and we became a little more comprehensive in those years. But I think we can pledge that we will...in higher ed that we will work very closely with Senator Scheer over the interim, and we're going to include his staff in these meetings and stuff so that these people are aware of exactly how this process works. And we're going to work towards getting to where he wants us to get. So with that, I'd be happy to answer any questions if there are any. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Baack. Did I get the impression then because of a variety of things, maybe changes in administrators, changes in faculty, that maybe there's been a little backsliding of this agreement that was put in place or just not knowledge of it or what? [LB779]

DENNIS BAACK: Well, I don't know I'd say it was backsliding, but I think that there's just some folks that are working in the field now that aren't necessarily aware that their colleges had signed those agreements and stuff and weren't necessarily part of the process putting it together. Most of those people have changed over the years. And I...you know, there's all new kinds of things happening all the time. We used to...the community colleges used to have a hard time getting students into engineering at the university because the College of Engineering said, you know, you either take the course from us or it isn't good enough. You don't count. Well, over the years we've

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worked that out. There was a federal grant a couple of years ago, and the College of Engineering started meeting with the faculty from the community colleges. And we were able to work out the first couple of years of courses for engineering can be taught at any community college. It's an identical curriculum all across the state and at the university. Those students can take those courses now at a community college anywhere in the state and transfer them into the university without...totally with...seamlessly. So we're doing a lot of those kinds of things. And I know the state colleges and everybody is working on those things. And I think we just need more of an awareness about how that occurred and what it needs to...and what we need to do to progress it because there's new things that need to be done all the time. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Seiler. [LB779]

SENATOR SEILER: Just a comment, I can tell you what the terror is of a college student when you...three weeks before graduation you're told you're two hours short. [LB779]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [LB779]

SENATOR SEILER: And I went over to the administration at Wayne State and said, wait a minute, I was told I was graduating. And they said, well, your Bible course doesn't pass for world lit. [LB779]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [LB779]

SENATOR SEILER: And this little gray-haired lady of four-foot-nothing walked out and said, I made that ruling and he graduates. Now I'm not sure they just wanted me off campus. (Laughter) [LB779]

SENATOR COOK: That does happen. [LB779]

SENATOR SEILER: It does terrorize you. [LB779]

DENNIS BAACK: It does. And Senator Seiler, I had the same experience. When I was getting ready to graduate from Colorado State University with a degree in history, they all of a sudden said, well, I don't know if you can graduate because you haven't taken general math and you haven't take Earth science. Well, I had taken trigonometry and two years of advanced calculus, and I had taken physics and chemistry. But they did count those eventually. But I mean, you know, I mean it's silly stuff like that that happens that gives higher ed a bad name, when those kind of things happen. And they shouldn't happen. That doesn't make a lot of sense. And I was going to have to stick around for another semester to take those kind of courses. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Anything else? Thank you. Welcome. [LB779]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 1) Thank you. Madam Chair, members of the committee, I'm Jay Sears, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, and represent the Nebraska State Education Association. And NSEA supports LB779, and it was great to hear from someone who has a memory as long as mine about 1995 and the process of working on transfer of credits. I think Dennis and I...and in all those meetings...and we've also had some of the same discussions about transfers of dual credit and those issues as they come across the state. And I can also tell you that my three daughters were consumers of transferring credits from many different institutions. And as my testimony points out, sometimes it gets very frustrating. And some of you all have had those experiences, too, that you're two hours short of graduation because you thought you were supposed to take this course and you didn't take that one. I think the best line today was from Senator Kolowski. We've got Common Core college standards, and we're talking about them. I'm glad everybody has joined the rest of us as we're talking about standardizing what we expect each in one of P-16 or P-20 students to learn. So we thank Senator Scheer for bringing the bill forward and hope he doesn't have to use the hammer. And it sounds like Dennis and the group are sitting down and trying to come up with that. It's one of the disadvantages, I think, of term limits and getting old and leaving is we don't have an institutional history anymore. We set out those programs, and they're working real well. And then we have turnover, and we don't go back and review those so glad to hear that it's working. And I thank you for the opportunity. And we'll see you at the end of the sessions today. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any questions for Mr. Sears? Thank you. [LB779]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB779]

TIP O'NEILL: Hi, Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee. I'm Tip O'Neill; that's T-i-p O-'-N-e-i-l-l. I'm the president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska. We're here to support LB779. I just wanted to relay to the committee that all 14 of the college presidents of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska have signed the Academic Transfer Initiative and expect to forward the signatures to the University of Nebraska provost at central administration who is kind of collecting the signatures and hope to do that in the next day or two. And I think we were kind of the laggards in terms of getting all of the signatures just because I had some trouble running down some of the presidents. But again, we have been extremely involved in getting transfer-of-credit policies. We appreciate Senator Scheer in allowing us to be involved if in fact there is a statewide process for transfer-of-credit policies because it's quite important to a lot of the institutions that I represent that we get students who come through the community

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college sector or transfer from other four-year institutions. Bellevue University, for example, is my largest institution in terms of enrollment and yet it has fewer than a hundred first-time, full-time freshman. So almost all the students at Bellevue are not traditional students. And so they come from somewhere else. They started somewhere else before they got to Bellevue. So anyway, we support the bill. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Tip. Any questions? Appreciate it. [LB779]

TIP O'NEILL: Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome, Stan. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Senator Sullivan, thank you. Members of the committee, I'm Stan Carpenter, S-t-a-n C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I'm the chancellor of the Nebraska State College System. And I just want to give you a few important...a couple of important data points about the state college system or about a couple of our institutions because we haven't gathered a whole lot of information since this bill was introduced. First of all, Wayne State College since the year 2008 to 2014 has taken in 1,050 transfer students. Most of them come from the community colleges. Some come from the tribal colleges as well. So they are a consumer of transfer students. Another interesting data point, I think, is that at Peru State College from the years 2003 to 2008, if we look at the graduating classes in those years...from those years, if we look at the 2003 entering freshman class at Peru, there were 188 students in 2003 who were first-time freshman. The number of graduates in that class four years later was 327. So we know that we lost students from...we didn't retain every one of those students. So we know that Peru is a big consumer of transfer students as well. We make it fairly easy for students to transfer in from accredited institutions obviously. And each of our colleges on their Web site has a place where a student can go and look to see whether a course at Mid-Plains Community College will transfer, for what particular purpose at Peru or Chadron or Wayne. So we try to make it relatively easy for students to understand what it takes for them to transfer to our institutions and what those courses will be used for. And we are interested in this bill. We want to work together with our colleagues both in public higher education and our private brothers and sisters as well to make sure the students can get the best bang for their buck here in Nebraska. And we will work hard to do that. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Stan. Just to clarify the use of the Web site, so they can go there and find out if it will in fact...a course will in fact transfer. Does it also tell them if it will apply for graduation requirements? [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Sure, it tells them if you're taking English 101 at Mid-Plains, for example, that will count for English 201 or 107 at Chadron State College. So there's a

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direct correlation there. And Peru has the best sheet I've ever seen in terms of laying it out. And I'm not certain...I'm sure that's on the Web site. I think it's on the Web site. But students can get information about how those courses transfer and for what purpose. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: So it's safe to say there's variation in terms of the accessibility of that information from institution to institution. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Yes, although I'm fairly certain that they all have it on their Web site so that a student who might be at Northeast Community College and might want to transfer to Wayne--and there are a lot of students who do that, we accept a lot of transfers obviously from Northeast to Wayne--can get on there and say, okay, I've taken econ 201. What will that count for at Wayne or at Chadron or Peru, where it says if you take econ 201 it's equivalent to econ 222 at Wayne? [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Gotcha. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: So we try to make it as clear and as evident as possible to students who want to transfer. And, Senator Seiler, I'm certain that Wayne didn't want to rid of you, but I know that Colorado State did want to get rid of Dennis Baack. (Laughter) I am aware of that. So be happy to answer any questions. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions for Mr. Carpenter? Senator Kolowski. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Stan, thank you very much for your comments. And one of the concerns I continue to hear from parents, and it was exemplified on some of the stories today about two hours short or one course short or whatever else, and that's the advisement program, the advisement services of a staff member to a member of their department or those they train in a particular area. Can you tell us about what you're doing in your discussions to help that aspect as well because as you're writing checks for all those college courses... [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Sure. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...it's a lot different than high school or going through a K-12 system? And yet we still need advisement at every level. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Absolutely. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: It needs to take place, and it needs to be point specific to help those students out. Would you elaborate on that, please? [LB779]

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STAN CARPENTER: Sure. As you might guess, Senator, our faculty are very involved in advising students, particularly in their majors. But they also advise other students. And so they meet with those students on a regular basis as they sign up for courses. There's also a degree-audit process that's automated now, and since we have a new system so that a student and his or her advisor can look at the degree audit to see where they are as they're progressing through the institution to say, oh, look, you did not take econ 303. You need to take that if you're going to graduate as a social studies comprehensive major or something. So next year you need to be able to do that. So we work hard to make sure that our students are well advised. I won't sit here and tell you that sometimes things aren't missed because our faculty, like everybody else, our advisors are human and they can miss something. But they work hard to make sure students don't have to stay around any extra time to make up a course that they missed. And we work hard if there are issues like that to put together an independent study if necessary so that a student can say, all right, how can I get this kind of knowledge and information even though the course is unavailable this semester or I'm already full loaded and I can't work it into my schedule. So we work hard at that as well. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: You bet. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: We know the expertise of academic counseling at UNL, for example, especially with the athletes. I have a son that went through that for five years and they watched it like a hawk because it's about eligibility. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Oh, absolutely. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: But every student, their checkbook needs to be eligible all the time... [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: Sure. No, and... [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...and not have to repeat courses or fumble along the way. [LB779]

STAN CARPENTER: No question about that, Senator. And we work hard to make that happen. Again, we're not perfect, but we work hard. And if there is a problem, we try to figure out a way to make it go away so that the student can get that information and can graduate in a timely fashion. [LB779]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB779]

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STAN CARPENTER: Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other proponent testimony on LB779? Any opposition testimony for LB779? Anyone wishing to speak in a neutral capacity? Welcome. [LB779]

CARNA PFEIL: (Exhibit 2) Thank you. Senator Sullivan and members of the committee, my name is Carna Pfeil, C-a-r-n-a P-f-e-i-l, and I'm the interim executive director of the Coordinating Commission. First, I want to thank Senator Scheer for bringing this bill forward. The transferability of credits for Nebraska's students is certainly an issue worth examining, particularly in this era where students take dual-enrollment courses and attend multiple institutions before they receive their postsecondary award. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, one-third of the students move from college to college before they get their degree. The commission already is required by statute to facilitate the transfer-of-credit guidelines for Nebraska's postsecondary institutions. In 1995, and you've heard this several times, but 1995, the commission worked with the institutions to create the first Nebraska Transfer Initiative which set forth guidelines for a common core of general education courses that would be transferable between the colleges. Statutes have given no one the responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the transfer initiative. What we currently have are guidelines, and therefore they are optional. Nebraska institutions continue to implement transfer agreements primarily on a case-by-case basis between institutions and sometimes even between colleges and departments within an institution. Nebraska is one of four states with no legislation or policy in regard to transfer of credits. The other three states are New Hampshire, Vermont, and Wyoming. If Nebraska Legislature were to enact a policy, we believe it would be appropriate for those policies to include the commission as it is already responsible for the transfer...facilitation of the transfer-of-credit guidelines. Ultimately, what is most important is that Nebraska students are awarded appropriate college credit for the work they have completed and have a clear understanding of the transferability of college courses they complete. We believe the best...we believe it would be best to accomplish the formulation of a state policy, whether it involves the commission or not. Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Carna. So back in...to the best of your knowledge, in 1995 when this agreement was initiated, did the commission...was the commission created at that point? [LB779]

CARNA PFEIL: We were involved in that and drew them together. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: You facilitated it, but then your responsibility pretty much ended at that point. [LB779]

CARNA PFEIL: They were guidelines, and they're optional. And we had some that

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chose not to be as involved in those guidelines as others. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And currently as this agreement is now being re-signed, I guess, by these institutions, does the commission...are you involved in those conversations at all? [LB779]

CARNA PFEIL: We are not. And I did request that we be involved in that process, and we were not involved. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Any other questions for Carna? Thank you. [LB779]

CARNA PFEIL: Thank you. [LB779]

TIFFANY MARIE HENG-MOSS: (Exhibit 3) Good afternoon, and I appreciate the opportunity to present today to the group. My name is Tiffany Heng-Moss, T-i-f-f-a-n-y H-e-n-g-M-o-s-s, and I'm a professor of entomology and associate dean in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. And I'm here to offer neutral testimony to LB779 on behalf of the University of Nebraska. I've been teaching college courses and advising both undergrad and graduate students for the past 13 years. I've also provided leadership for several curriculum initiatives that have involved partnering with community and state colleges in Nebraska to develop transfer agreements and course equivalencies. These curriculum initiatives have included redesigning the first-year experience for all students in the life sciences, developing a memorandum of understanding for a reverse transfer program between Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources along with a cooperative agreement for offering UNL's on-line bachelor of science in applied sciences degree completion program at Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. And then finally, serving on my college's faculty representation as the University of Nebraska developed and implemented a new general education program. Without question, during the 13 years that I've been with the University of Nebraska the number of students transferring from one public higher education institution to another has increased. At the same time, I've seen a number of transfer agreements at both the course and program levels increase. I've also seen transfer students entering with increasing numbers of courses transferring into our colleges' and the students' degree programs. At UNL this academic year, transfer students comprised 5 percent of the undergraduate population with more than 50 percent of those transfer students coming from other University of Nebraska campuses, state colleges, and community colleges. Regardless of the origin of the transfer students, faculty are committed to their academic success. Therefore, faculty are involved in the transfer equivalency process. They compare learning outcomes between courses under review to ensure that students completing courses at a sending institution and the University of Nebraska are obtaining comparable knowledge, skills,

and abilities. This is important because students who do not have the assumed prior learning are more likely to fail when they enroll in classes that rely on knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired from lower-division courses. If students fail as a result of accepting a course that is not equivalent, we all fail because students will have to retake courses, increasing their cost and time to graduation. Worse yet, we risk students might be dropping out. We have communication processes in place that have increased course transferability. For example, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources sponsors an annual transfer conference for all public higher education institutions that offer agricultural and natural resources courses and programming. This conference rotates among the campuses involved. During the conference, campuses update each other about new programs, program and course deletions, and any other items that might be of interest to the various campuses. Another example, which was already mentioned earlier, is the Nebraska Articulation Conference which brings together NU faculty and administrators with colleagues from Nebraska community colleges. And representatives from the Nebraska state colleges will be in attendance at the spring's Articulation Conference as well future Articulation Conferences. Lastly, campuses have been developing easy-to-navigate and up-to-date Web sites that identify transfer courses. So students, their parents, and their advisors can help them as they try to make that transfer in so that they are making informed enrollment decisions. This is all good news for students and for the Nebraska citizens because increased transferability leads to greater number of students positioned to complete bachelor's degrees and beyond. If Nebraska higher education programs are to continue to graduate students with quality degrees who are prepared to contribute to the state's work force and economy, it is important that the transfer-of-credit decisions remain the responsibility of faculty and the Nebraska public education institutions. Adding agency oversight will only disrupt the already strong communication channels for transfer that Nebraska's higher education institutions have established and which have benefited so many Nebraska students. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present to you today. And I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Dr. Moss. So you believe there's structures involved already to ensure that even if there's faculty turnover, administration turnover, that there is enough in place to make sure that these agreements continue? [LB779]

TIFFANY MARIE HENG-MOSS: Yeah, that's a great question. And so we have many different levels at the University of Nebraska by which we operate. And so you have those that are happening at the campus level, which there's automatic course equivalencies that are already in place. Then you have specific ones at the college level. And then those are determined going back to the departments where the faculty have the expertise. And so in this case, when we're talking about transferring, many times it's at the lower level, and so you'll have multiple faculty which can make judgments on those. And the thing that's really important to keep in mind is that we're looking at these course equivalencies based upon learning outcomes because we all

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have different missions at our institutions in that. And so it's really important that we think about the learning outcomes affiliated with those courses. And so what was already mentioned about the English courses, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has a series of English courses that directly transfer in as part of our general education program with many of the community colleges, state colleges in that. And when they do not transfer in to meet a specific requirement, rather as a general elective, many times that's because the learning outcomes are not aligned. And so what that means is students are likely going to be missing some important knowledge or skill sets as they advance to their upper division courses. And our fear would be then that those students would not be successful. And as we talked about, they'd have to retake a course causing them to spend more money increasing graduation rate. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you. [LB779]

TIFFANY MARIE HENG-MOSS: Okay, thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Anyone else wishing to testify in a neutral capacity? Senator Scheer. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: I'll try to be 2 minutes or less. But I think what you just heard quite possibly is what I would consider part of the problem. A student that is transferring into UNL has to have more security that he's going to be able to have his credits transferred than leaving it in the hands of three or four people that he's never met before, that may or may not think that the other institution that he's coming from, or may not like the other institution's instructors, play a vital role in the transferability of his knowledge. We as senators are providing funds to every institution that we're talking about from a state-funded basis. They should all be giving a high level of education to those students regardless of what campus they are attending. And for a campus to determine that another campus, wherever it might be, doesn't have high enough standards or high enough educational levels that they cannot accept those transfers becomes part of the pragmatic problem that we're facing. We need to break down those barriers so those students that are moving within the other institutions have the comfort and the knowledge that when they take a course in one institution it will--not, probably; not, it could--but it will transfer. If not, they're totally wasting their time, talents, and money if that institution and in that class. We have to do a better job. And I understand that everyone wants to make sure that somebody has a base education, that it's all based on the quantity and the quality of that education. But we as senators have to expect and demand that all of our institutions be providing a level of education that should be transferable to any one of the other campuses that we are funding. We don't...we cannot consider one system over another as a premier or the only institution that should have the capability of determining if credits are transferable or not. Students have to have to ability to know that when they sign up and they take a class and that class is comparable to others throughout the different community college or university systems,

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that they will indeed receive credit for that. And we as legislators, as senators, should demand that that class they are taking provides them with that education and that level of expertise so that they can move on and take the next level of class. We have to make sure that students, traditional and nontraditional, have the ability to take classes where it is most convenient for them and have the "assurity" that those classes will indeed move with them as they move from institution to institution. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Scheer, there were...some of the institutions that testified said that they're going to continue to work with your office to... [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Yes, ma'am. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I also heard from one testifier that when this was implemented in 1995, what was lacking was an entity to monitor the ongoing progress. And the entity that said that is not currently included in this. I'd like your opinion on that. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, I think we will include...I would like to include them perhaps in these discussions. But as I was sitting with my legislative aide, we thought that that might be something that would be commensurate to look at as introducing next year that somebody remains at the vigil to make sure that these agreements are being held to and enforced. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, Senator Haar. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah, well, I was blessed. I just went to undergraduate at UNL. I didn't have...my main problem was, you know, getting across 17th Street I think. But I can see where maybe, especially with graduate courses there... [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: This doesn't have anything to do with...this is all undergraduate. This is not dealing with postgraduate work. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Well, that's a clarification as well. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: I certainly understand somebody who's getting a Ph.D. and they're going to have one of these institution's initials after it. They want to be fairly secure that what they're putting out there as product is going to reflect well for that institution. What I'm talking about, Senator, is a freshman through a senior in undergraduate work being able to transfer those hours amongst and throughout the different university and community college systems that we have in place in Nebraska. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, and obviously there are feedback loops so if...because I'd hate to be in a teaching position where somebody just handed me somebody and I had to

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take that person with a... [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well...and absolutely. But what I'm talking about is undergraduate. And that's when you talked about, how do we know these courses are going to be similar? That's why it's so vitally important that these institutions together determine those minimum levels of agreed knowledge as we move forward so that if we all agree that we're all meeting that minimum, that doesn't mean that...your system may not give them more. But if we all are giving it what is necessary as part of that class syllabus and structure, then that class should transfer to any other institution. [LB779]

SENATOR HAAR: That's a good goal. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you, Senator Scheer. [LB779]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. [LB779]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: This closes the hearing on LB779. We will now move on to LB1055, to provide for tuition-free credits for veterans and military personnel as prescribed, introduced by Senator Janssen. Here in his absence is...(laugh) [LB779]

CHRIS KEETLE: (Exhibit 1) Thank you, Chairwoman Sullivan and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Chris Keetle, C-h-r-i-s K-e-e-t-l-e, and I'm the legislative aide to Senator Charlie Janssen. He sends his regrets for not being able to be here this afternoon. He made a commitment in his district for 6:00 that could not be rescheduled at this late hour. He really wanted to be here because this issue is near and dear to him as a veteran and as a college graduate who obtained his degree after his military service. I will be very brief. LB1055 would require each public postsecondary educational institution in Nebraska to provide for 15 tuition-free undergraduate credit hours for each enrolled resident student who is eligible for federal veterans' educational benefits or who is on active duty with the armed services of the United States. Senator Janssen introduced this measure to indicate Nebraska's strong support for our service men and women and our strong support for higher education. For background, certain service men and women and veterans are eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Important to note, in most cases a person may receive up to 36 months of entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. A copy of AM1719 to LB1055 hopefully has reached you. It clears up any possible misinterpretation of the bill's intent. After introducing LB1055, Senator Janssen received a courtesy contact from a representative of one of the college systems. This gentleman informed Senator Janssen that some of the institutions he represents were interpreting the green copy as an open-ended opportunity for beneficiaries to college hop from one institution to another, each time receiving an additional 15 credit hours. He said this interpretation could obviously skew the fiscal note. Clearly, this is not the intent of LB1055. And Senator Janssen would like to thank the college's representative and the Bill Drafters office for their assistance with AM1719.

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Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, Chris. Thank you. Any questions for Mr. Keetle? Senator Avery. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This fiscal note is pretty hefty. The amendment change that note in any fashion that you know of? [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: It would not. The colleges...after discussing with Senator Janssen, calling the office back for clarification, and this is the State College System, and they indicate on their section in the fiscal note that they ran their numbers for this fiscal note assuming that it'd be a one-time benefit. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: And so the bill would be a complete free tuition for 15 hours a semester? [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: In total, one time, one time only. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: Oh, one time. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: Correct. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: So you'll get it...okay, I get it. So it wouldn't carry over to the next semester. It wouldn't be every year you get 15 hours. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: Correct. And you're right in the respect that it could carry over if, for instance, you took 12 hours one semester, you could use that 3 hours in the spring but...correct. Yep. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay, thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Will you be here...oh, Senator Haar. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah, I can understand, for example, in the fiscal note why Metro Community College would have a rather substantial amount. Does Senator Janssen see then that it'd be legitimate for them to come to the state and say, we need to be covered for that amount? I mean, it's because of Metro's location obviously. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: I don't want to speak for him, but I suspect you're correct. Yeah. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay, okay. Thank you. [LB1055]

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SENATOR SCHEER: We'll probably find out pretty shortly. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Will you be here for closing? [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: I can be if you need me to be. And also, he wanted me to mention he'd be thrilled to talk with each one of you individually on the floor tomorrow if you have further questions. Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. We'll now hear proponent testimony on LB1055. Any proponent testimony? Anyone wishing to speak in opposition to LB1055? Anyone is a neutral capacity? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee, my name is Stan Carpenter, S-t-a-n C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I'm the chancellor of the Nebraska State College System, and I'm here to speak in a neutral capacity on LB1055. We are, of course, very proud of the way we deal with military personnel and veterans and their families in the Nebraska State College System. You heard us testify earlier this year on LB740 when we talked about how we work with veterans and folks in the military and that all of our colleges are...have been declared to be military friendly, that we market our programs to the military and to the veterans and to their families. Our institutions have participated in the Yellow Ribbon Program. And we currently serve over 200 students or family members, veterans, or active service members across the Nebraska State College System. So we like veterans. They bring a lot to our campuses. They bring a lot to courses even if it...on-line courses and so on and so forth. So we're here in a neutral capacity because we have some questions about the bill. And some of those were answered just a moment ago. But really what we would see here is that, Senator Avery, to kind of address your question, the impact on us is entirely due to basically the loss of federal funds in this case. So that if this were to become state law and these veterans were to get free tuition for 15 hours, most of the ones that we serve have a GI Bill of some sort or some kind of benefits from their service. And so that would be...we would have to forgo that kind of revenue. And so we think that could be problematic as well. I was glad to hear that the senator clarified that this is only good for 15 hours maximum. Our problem, of course, with that is as we were just talking about, students are mobile today. And so how would we know, for example, if a student took nine hours at Metro and then transferred to Wayne and said they wanted additional hours. We wouldn't know if they had had that benefit at Metro or not. There would be no way for us to be able to track that kind of benefit for veterans in that capacity. And I was glad to hear that it was only going to be a one-time 15 hour kind of transfer. Those things I think need to be clarified in the bill if it goes any further. And I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Avery. [LB1055]

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SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Were you referring to the Yellow Ribbon Program when you talked about losing federal funds or just the GI Bill? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: No, we're talking...most of the...first of all, Senator, two of our institutions don't have out-of-state tuition: Peru and Chadron. And so the Yellow Ribbon Program basically pays for half of the difference between in state and out-of-state tuition. [LB1055]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: So most of our veterans are getting coverage under the GI Bill and basically at 100 percent of in-state tuition. So that's what we would be losing. So if there was a clarification that said this bill, for example, only applied to veterans who weren't eligible for that kind of benefit, I think for us the impact would probably then be fairly minimal. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Haar. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: And I don't know much about this at all, so you said that generally tuition is covered by the GI Bill? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: For the students...for the veterans that we have in the institution...in our institutions. Our research indicates that most of those veterans have GI Bill coverage for the tuition that they pay to us. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: So is it...does it make sense then to simply give them 15 hours if it would be paid...I mean, in my mind I'm saying, you know, are we just giving away money that really doesn't benefit the student but just says, thank you? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Yeah, I would agree with you, Senator. And that's...maybe I didn't...I probably wasn't very clear on that, but that would be our loss. We would be losing federal funds. And our fiscal note I think we talked about \$146,000 to \$150,000 that we would lose. The great, great, great majority of that would be coming from federal funds. So if the bill were clarified to say something to effect that this would apply only to those veterans who weren't eligible for or did not receive federal funds, for us, that would be then...mean a minimal impact because most of those students in our institutions are already receiving federal funds to pay for the tuition. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Because I can see...and I appreciate the people who are veterans and so on... [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Certainly. [LB1055]

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SENATOR HAAR: ...and this is really important. On the other hand, if it doesn't benefit them in any way then I think we may need to look at that. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: I would agree with that, Senator. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Would the same thing be true of UNL? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: I don't know the answer to that question, Senator. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Okay. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam. Stan, the...my first reading of this was like it was double-dipping. I'm not going to pull any words on that because of the veterans' GI Bill aspect and how many hours you might take and whatever you're working on. The other aspect is the way it reads, for a student to be a full-time military and taking 15 hours, that's two jobs. I mean, that's a chunk of coursework to take when you're so active full time in the military. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Sure. I would agree with that. The way that I interpreted the bill, Senator, is that you could take 15 hours over the course of 3 years if you wanted to. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: So it's not a one chunk, this semester interpretation that you have to take it? I took it that way. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: That was my interpretation, Senator. But I didn't draft the bill, so I don't know. But that's the way I read it, that you had up to 15 hours over...I guess there is no time frame stated in the bill. So I guess you could take them all in one semester if you wanted to, or you could take it over a course of time. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, I didn't see it over time. I thought it was one chunk. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Yes, that's right. And then in our discussions...not in mine but Carolyn Murphy's discussions with Senator Janssen's office, my understanding is that there's a three-year kind of issue here for veterans to take the courses. And so when we talked to folks who know this stuff, they talked about the Veterans Administration actually counts the number of days that a veteran is in college to get to the three-year limitation of being able to access those courses. And, Senator Haar, I'm no expert in this either. [LB1055]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: There seems to be just unworked-out pieces. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: I think there's...this bill could use a little clarification, Senator. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: May I? [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Certainly. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And I say that not trying to negate services... [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Of course not. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...to a veteran in any way, shape, or form, or any veteran of any service. But I think we need to be more specific about what this would mean and how it delivers. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: I would agree with that, Senator, and that's why I talked a little bit at the beginning of testimony about how we try to serve veterans and their families and their dependents. [LB1055]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. Thank you for your testimony. [LB1055]

STAN CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome back. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: Senator Sullivan, members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dennis Baack; that's D-e-n-n-i-s B-a-a-c-k. I'm the executive director of Nebraska Community College Association here to testify in a neutral capacity. Our focus and look at this issue came up with all the same questions that the state colleges did and wondered how it interacts with all the various programs that are out there for veterans and wondered how all of that would fit together. So we do...we certainly don't want to leave the impression that we don't serve veterans because we do. We have veterans service officers on all of our campuses and stuff, and they do everything they can to make sure that those veterans get every benefit they can possibly get at our

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campuses. And we're going to continue to do that. I just think this bill needs some clarification and stuff if we're going to go forward with it to see exactly when those credits have to be used and make sure we've got some kind of tracking system if they go from one institution to another to make sure that there's some way of verifying that they've already had those free credits. But other than that, I'd be happy to answer questions if there are any. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. Senator Cook. [LB1055]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for testifying. Would this, from your reading the green copy, would the student, the veteran student be...or the active-duty student be eligible for money for developmental courses? That has come up... [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: I would assume so. [LB1055]

SENATOR COOK: Okay. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: I would assume they would be... [LB1055]

SENATOR COOK: All right, so they... [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: ...because if they...because if they come to a community college, they'd certainly have to be tested. They take the COMPASS test and whatever to, you know...and then if they're going to have to be in developmental, I would assume they are. I don't think there's any exclusions in it. So I would assume they would be. [LB1055]

SENATOR COOK: All right, thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Senator Scheer. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Dennis, you can hardly answer that and maybe you do. I know some acts provide for dependent coverage as well. Are you aware of either of the acts that are shown? What is it, the Veterans Assistance Act of 2008, the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Act of 2010...are either of those providing...under those two acts so I'm wondering if either of those provide any type of a dependent coverage. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: I do not know, but we can find out for you. I will find out. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: I mean because that may even broaden it maybe a little farther. It may not. I'm just not that familiar with acts that... [LB1055]

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DENNIS BAACK: And I don't know either, but I will.. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: And I can ask at closing, if he's still here. Perhaps he might know as well. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: ...but I will find out if that's the case. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay. Okay, thank you. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: You bet. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you. [LB1055]

DENNIS BAACK: Thanks. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other neutral testimony? Mr. Keetle for closing. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: If you'd like. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Sure. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: Those two acts referenced do provide benefits for spouses in some situations or deceased's children. His intent would be, that's simply how the resident enrolled student would be identified as being eligible for these credits, but this program, this state program would probably not apply beyond those terms. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, well, in reading it I'm not again, exactly sure that...because it says, if eligible under one of these two acts. Well, if I'm a dependent or a spouse and I'm eligible under that act...I'm not an attorney but it would sort of appear to me that I might be able for benefits as well. So that would be something that you might want to clarify as well. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Haar. [LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah, and I think we need clarification from the senator. I mean, since I pay federal taxes, the tuition benefits and so on for veterans are a benefit that we're already paying once. And so if we can supply some additional benefit, that might make sense but not simply paying it twice. [LB1055]

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CHRIS KEETLE: I'll make sure to let him know to catch you tomorrow morning.
[LB1055]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB1055]

CHRIS KEETLE: Thanks for the question. [LB1055]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: (Exhibit 2) Okay, any other...thank you, Mr. Keetle. All right, this closes the hearing on LB1055. We have now LB1061 introduced by Senator Lautenbaugh to change from elected to appointed boards for community college areas.
[LB1055]

BRENT SMOYER: Good afternoon. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good afternoon. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: In case you hadn't caught it, I am not Senator Lautenbaugh. I know we have a striking resemblance but unfortunately...(laugh) Sorry, it's late in the afternoon. I figured I'd try some levity. I'm not really as funny as I'd like to be. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: That was funny. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Thank you, Senator. For the record, Madam Chair and members of the Education Committee, my name is Brent Smoyer, S-m-o-y-e-r, here representing Scott Lautenbaugh. He does apologize. He had another hearing back in Omaha for the day job, going to court. So I am here to just basically provide a...well, actually it's kind of an opening that relates to both this and two other bills that will be coming up in front of the Education Committee as far as changing of boards from elected to appointed. You could all say it stems from the desire of Senator Lautenbaugh to see basically bloated and overused government entities shrunk down and basically give the taxpayers an opportunity to better associate with their elected officials and have a little greater control...degree of control over various boards and operations here in the state. Of course, that's my words and I can very easily read to you here Senator Lautenbaugh's words to better explain. In Nebraska, we elect more officials than any other state. In his past life as election commissioner in Douglas County, he learned that elections in Douglas County are the most complex in the nation. We have so many different levels of government, so many different elected boards with different responsibilities, jurisdictions, and subdistricts that primary election results literally number in the hundreds of different ballots. It's understandable that we have bias in favor of having people who govern these various entities be responsible to the voters. However, the senator believes in Nebraska we have reached a point where the system has almost become too complex and obscures more than it exposes. He likes to cite the example of

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the Millard School District, not that he's picking on Millard, just happens to be he knows who sits on the committee. For example, when you're concerned about education, does the problem lie with the local school board member, with your State Board of Education member, with your ESU member, or with your Learning Community Coordinating Council members? That's a lot of folks. Or does it...does the responsibility fall to your university regent or your Community College Board member? Some combination of all of them? Nobody really knows. With all these different boards, different elected members--and again, not picking on Millard, they are not unique, it's just an example--this level of complexity causes confusion, and frankly, vexes and upsets voters when they can't get answers to the simplest of questions. It leads to an unresponsive and obscure and often impenetrable government for our citizenry. And people often disengage as a result. We elect Natural Resource District Boards, Public Service Commissions, etcetera, and most of our neighbors have no idea what these boards do, who serves on them, where to find them and the like. The complexity we have created in the name of responsibility to voters has created quite the opposite from responsibility. Our government is largely opaque in this state and no one is readily identifiably responsible for much of what transpires. Senator Lautenbaugh thinks we need to take a step back. And that's where this bill comes in of course, LB1066, and of course related bills that will be coming before you. He's got this series of bills to basically pull the veil back, so to speak, including LR421CA which I don't believe...well, actually I do believe will be heard in front of you to eliminate the State Board of Education and provide with a commissioner appointed by the Governor. In the end, these are all done to reduce the amount of confusion faced by taxpayers. For example, the ESUs have over 160 members across the state, all elected, all balloted for. In the case of the Community College Boards, you are looking at 66 members, 11 from each of the 6 community college districts. Now to the bill itself after of course having addressed the senator's reasons behind the bill, we do understand that having each of the counties appoint to the 11...each district is made up of 23 counties approximately. And having each of those county boards appoint a member would then of course change the 11-member boards to 23-member boards which is not necessarily the intent. And we would actually leave it to the committee and of course working with the senator we wanted to find a more equitable division. We want to keep it to 11, of course, but allow the counties to have their voice in who gets picked because of course the county board districts do make up...or the county boards and the counties do make up the Community College Districts. And of course the taxing authority that the community colleges have goes through...is funneled through the county. So Senator Lautenbaugh felt that they should have some sort of voice. But as far as the mechanism, he is not advocating, as some have suggested, that we increase the size of the boards to 23 with the appointments. It's that we find a system that will allow each of the 23 member counties to voice an opinion and come up with an appointed board again, to make sure these community colleges operate appropriately and operate accountably to the voters. But at the same time, if the voters have a complaint then they know they need to go to the county and lay their complaints at the feet of the county commissioners. With that, I

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would take any questions over the technicalities of the bill, happy to help with that. And then of course, I believe Senator Lautenbaugh would waive closing given the fact he's not here. (Laugh) [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Smoyer. Any questions? Senator Cook. [LB1061]

SENATOR COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Smoyer, for coming today. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Yeah. [LB1061]

SENATOR COOK: As we were...we've talked a lot about the different levels of government across the state of Nebraska and how well represented we are in different contexts. Has Senator Lautenbaugh brought proposals related to institutions such as NRDs or other organizations across the state that are not related to education this year? [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Well, actually the NRD proposal was kind of set on the back burner for a brief time. It was not actually brought because of the taxing issues that went through there. The NRDs are of course their own taxing entity for the terms of a property tax and so in assigning the duties of the NRD you had to find a way to shift the taxes. And unfortunately we were not able to come up with a best mechanism for that just yet. But he was very interested in the NRDs. I know that's why it was mentioned in his commentary. As for the fact that he seems to be targeting education of late with the ESUs, with the State Board of Ed, etcetera, it just seems like more often than not in his experience he has found that again, with the local school boards oftentimes people will call and have things that are uncontrollable by local school boards or they will not understand what a regent does, not understand what anybody of that ilk does. And so we have gotten a lot of phone calls. It just happens to be those were where the phone calls were hinged. I know he does not have vendetta against education or education boards. In fact, he's a big fan. He's got a lot friends on the Omaha School Board, at least now. So I would not say that that was his goal at all. I think he just looked at the number of elected boards in between the ESUs, community colleges, etcetera, which are often so far down the ballot they don't get a lot of attention. That was kind of where he focused. [LB1061]

SENATOR COOK: Okay. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Scheer. [LB1061]

SENATOR SCHEER: Thank you, Senator. Just out of curiosity because we're talking about the 11 members, now community colleges are as well a tax collection agency. So

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if we're not electing them, which is done by a population right now, if their funding is based on valuation then are we going to break the entity up from a population standpoint again, or are you going to break it up by the valuation basis so that those that are providing equal valuation get equal representation or are we going by population? How did you think about that? [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: And Senator, that is a great question. Again, we...the proposal to give the appointment power to the county boards came from again, the idea of the fact that community college funding is directly tied to the county levy as opposed to say, the NRD, which is a...the divisions in the constitution are more stark. So that was a placement and in doing so I think...I know the senator was going to leave in your capable hands a certain amount of discussion as to how that would best be done because again, you know, you guys have your hands in education every day. And the senator is of course by trade an attorney and has a passion for it, but of course isn't...have the vast experience of this committee. So I do know that we are open to discussions as far a committee amendment or a sort of a change that would allow for these appointments to work most adequately. I do know one man, one vote is usually a traditional sense. But of course these aren't voted, they're appointed. But I would advocate personally as somebody who's had to work with the bill very intimately that a division based on population would be most appropriate. [LB1061]

SENATOR SCHEER: Okay, thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Haar. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: He was next but... [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Oh, well, I was kind of going from one side to the other. (Laugh) [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. Well, fine. I'll take my turn. I'm happy to take my turn. I feel kind of split on this because some people have said that in Nebraska there's representative democracy with a vengeance. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: I like that. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah. Yet on the other hand, way back in 1980s I was chair of the Lancaster County Democratic Party and we really worked hard and we had a Southeast Community College Board that went from a good old boys club to really a group that worked hard and...so we made...there was a real difference between those two boards because of the election. And so I just would not be ready to do this yet. I think that old question of, do we have too many elections, is a good one. But I'm not ready for it yet. [LB1061]

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BRENT SMOYER: Well Senator, if I may briefly respond, there will be other opportunities that might be less good old "boy-eeish"--I don't know if that's even a term--coming up so that you can possibly consider if that's...I mean if you feel torn on the idea, then maybe there's somewhere that we can see eye-to-eye. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: And it was that particular board. I mean, boards can be... [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Sure. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: ...very responsive or not responsive and because of elections, we change that. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Sure. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: And so I feel split over this one. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Fair enough. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Kolowski. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Brent, you delivered well. Thank you. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I don't agree with hardly anything. (Laughter) [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Fair enough. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: But you delivered your message, and that's the important thing. In the appointing process, you said the county boards would be the primary... [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Yes, yes. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...appointees...appointers. That just raises so many questions as to how many boards they would be selecting people for... [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Sure. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...and where they'd be coming from and cronyism was mentioned earlier. I would really be worried about how that would happen compared to the district elections... [LB1061]

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BRENT SMOYER: Sure. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...we have currently under each of these auspices. And I'm very comfortable with those. I think they represent their democratic process extremely well and compared to the reverse of, you know, flashing back to the Omaha politics of 1890 or something... [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Sure. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...and how that was all done. So I'll just let it lay at that. Thank you. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: No problem. And I guess if...may I, sir? [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Sure. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Well, I guess I would just...the one thing I would say, sir, is...and this is kind of where part of the inspiration that came from Senator Lautenbaugh is you look at the planning commissions for both Douglas County and Omaha and the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission and one of the things that made him a little more comfortable with this process is the fact that you would have multiple counties putting in for the 11 seats rather than one county, one seat which I know in the case of the planning commissions around here, they have worked very well...have splitting authority between the cities and the counties which again is kind of the impetus behind his idea anyway just to help you further understand, sir. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: But thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, and you will not be here for closing? [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: No, ma'am. No, ma'am. We really...I think I've said enough for today. (Laughter) [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, all right. Thank you very much. [LB1061]

BRENT SMOYER: Thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. We will now hear proponent testimony for LB1061.

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Okay, how about opponent testimony? [LB1061]

DENNIS BAACK: (Exhibit 1) Senator Sullivan and members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dennis Baack, D-e-n-n-i-s B-a-a-c-k. I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Community College Association here in opposition to LB1061. I just passed around a map that shows...this is just one of my districts. This is Central Community College which is headquartered out of Grand Island. And the different colors show which of the...each of the colleges have five districts, and then they have one member elected at large. And this is what would happen in these kind of cases. And I'm not sure...we're very, very concerned how that would work when you have...like there's the one district in the purple has seven full counties and a half of another county. I'm not exactly sure how you'd get all those commissioners together to appoint one person to represent that...or two people to represent that because there's two from each of those districts that serve. And those districts cross all kinds of county lines and everything else across the state. I think it would be very, very difficult to do. Plus we feel very strongly that the fact that they are elected by the people there...I think they're closer to the voters by being elected by those voters. And they do have property tax levying authority. And I think that makes them more accountable to their constituents. And I think this system has worked fairly well. And then if you look at this you see this is Central Community College. They have 24.5 counties. That means those 24.5 counties would have to decide how they do the one at-large person. They'd have to all get together to do that. And I'm not sure you could get 24.5 counties to agree that this is Monday much less agree on one person to represent the whole district. So I think there's some real difficulties with that. I think we've had...I agree with Senator Haar. I think the election process has helped in a number of cases. It's made boards better and made them more accountable to the people that they serve. And I think it has worked very, very well for the community colleges. And I know it's getting late. I could probably tell you a lot more, but I will stop there and answer questions if there are any. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Baack. Any questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1061]

SENATOR SCHEER: This is...last time. You have no more to come out anymore. [LB1061]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1061]

RANDY SCHMAILZL: (Exhibit 2) Great to be here. Good evening. Randy Schmailzl, president, Metro Community College, R-a-n-d-y S-c-h-m-a-i-l-z-l. Senator Sullivan and the committee, it's great to be here today and especially great to talk about community colleges no matter what the topic is. We're distributing a letter from our board chair in

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opposition by our board for the appointment of community colleges. You know, the election allows for a vetting by the public of candidates and, you know, it's widely known apparently in Nebraska since we have so many elected boards how the process works. And so I agree with Senator Haar also that the movement of the community college over the years have been traumatic and the boards being elected have helped. And I can tell you from my 25 years of service in many capacities at Metro, the elected boards have made a difference for our college. They've been overall a positive influence. They do set the property tax. The counties turn in the levy...the county...the valuation but our board sets the property tax. So for this year, Metro's property tax is 9.5 cents and then the statute that the Legislature sets in place creates limits for the property tax that we're able to set. But that 9.5 cents is over our 4 counties: Washington, Dodge, Douglas, and Sarpy. I've noticed in the last 15 years, our board in particular has taken on a lot of social issues because of its relationships with local school districts and school boards and poverty. And they focused on that as a board no matter what area of life they came from. Taking over the GED was an important item for Metro. Working with the local districts like Millard is important. And I know appointed people could do that but, you know, these board members stick with this for a number of years and learn about the community colleges and overall, sitting here this afternoon hearing all the testimony about education, we need elected officials, long-running elected officials in education that know how the business operates. So with that, I would stop and offer my opposition to appointment of community college boards. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Randy. Any questions? Senator Haar. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: Well, just kind of an observation, when I look at whether local control makes any difference or not, one of the issues is whether the boards really participate in decision making or just rubber stamp. And I get the impression that for Metro there is not a rubber stamp from the board. [LB1061]

RANDY SCHMAILZL: You are absolutely correct, Senator Haar. And I'm proud of that though. I mean... [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah. [LB1061]

RANDY SCHMAILZL: ...we debate it. And, you know, we'd like everybody, when we finally make a decision, to all vote for it but that doesn't happen all the time. But there's a big debate. You're right. And it's a well-done debate. [LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: And then people who are elected have to go out and defend that. [LB1061]

RANDY SCHMAILZL: They do. And if someone doesn't like this, they can use their ballot to elect someone else or get someone else to run and...so it's a good process.

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[LB1061]

SENATOR HAAR: Good, thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions for Randy? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1061]

RANDY SCHMAILZL: Thank you. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [LB1061]

JAY SEARS: Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the Education Committee. You can probably wonder why I got this one, right? Okay. For the record, I am Jay Sears, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, and I do represent the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. And NSEA is opposed to LB1061. As you know, it would eliminate community college boards and replace them with appointed boards. I ask you this question: how is this representative democracy and local control of government? Is LB1061 and its companion bills--which you will hear soon, LB1060 and LR421CA--an attempt to consolidate government institutions and political power? NSEA believes local governmental bodies should be directly responsible to their constituencies for the adequate quality of control of what's going on in those government bodies. Local elections of government boards provide this quality check through periodic elections and even recall elections. History has shown that consolidation of political power has not always resulted in good outcomes for citizens. In fact, it is contrary to our democratic principles. NSEA encourages the Education Committee to indefinitely postpone LB1061 and legislation similar to it. Let's keep our local control of government. It works. Thank you very much. And as a recovering government teacher, my keyboard doesn't work anymore after writing the testimony. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any questions for Mr. Sears? Thank you so much. [LB1061]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. Have a good evening. [LB1061]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other testimony in opposition? Anyone interested in testifying in a neutral capacity? Then this closes the hearing on LB1061 and our hearing for today. Thank you all for attending. [LB1061]