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Appropriations Committee
March 01, 2017

[LB580]

The Committee on Appropriations met at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, in Room 1003 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB580. Senators present: John Stinner, Chairperson; Kate Bolz, Vice Chairperson; Rob Clements; Robert Hilkemann; John Kuehn; Mike McDonnell; Dan Watermeier; and Anna Wishart. Senators absent: Tony Vargas.

SENATOR STINNER: (Recorder malfunction)...hearing. My name is John Stinner. I am from Gering and represent the 48th Legislative District. I serve as Chairman of this committee. I would like to start off by having members do self-introductions, starting with Senator Clements.

SENATOR CLEMENTS: I am Rob Clements. I am from Elmwood and represent District 2.

SENATOR McDONNELL: Mike McDonnell, Legislative District 5: south Omaha.

SENATOR KUEHN: John Kuehn, District 38: seven counties in south-central Nebraska.

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Robert Hilkemann, District 4: west Omaha.

SENATOR STINNER: John Stinner, District 48: Scotts Bluff County.

SENATOR BOLZ: Senator Kate Bolz, I represent District 29 in south-central Lincoln.

SENATOR WISHART: Senator Anna Wishart, District 27 in west Lincoln.

SENATOR WATERMEIER: I am Dan Watermeier from Syracuse: District 1.

SENATOR STINNER: Senator Vargas is out of town so he will not be with us today. Assisting the committee today is Jennifer Svehla. On the cabinet to your right you will find a green testifier sheets. If you are planning to...on testifying today, please fill out a green sign-in sheet and hand it to the page when you come up to testify. If you will not be testifying at the microphone but want to go on the record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there are white sign-in sheets on the cabinet where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record at the end of today's hearing. To better facilitate today's proceedings, I ask that you abide by the following procedures: Please silence or turn off your cell phone; move to the reserve chairs when you are

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ready to testify and, since we don't have reserve chairs, you can ignore that. Order of testimony: the introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral, and closing. When you...when we hear testimony regarding agencies, we will first hear from the representative of the agency or the bill's sponsor. We will then hear testimony from anybody who wishes to speak on behalf of the bill or the agency. We would ask that you spell your first name and last name, for the record, before you testify. Be concise. It is my request that we limit your testimony to five minutes. Written materials may be distributed to the committee members as exhibits only while testimony is being offered. Hand them to the page for distribution to the committee and staff when you come up to testify. We do need 12 copies. If you have written testimony but do not have 12 copies, please raise your hand now so the page can make copies for you. With that, we will bring...we will begin today's hearing with LB580. Senator McDonnell. [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: (Exhibit 1) Good morning, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mike McDonnell, M-i-k-e M-c-D-o-n-n-e-l-l. I represent Legislative District 5 in south Omaha. I am here introducing LB580 to appropriate funds for the Office of Violence Prevention, to expand funding for programs across the state of Nebraska that help to reduce crime and, thus, reduce the number of individuals in our already overcrowded prison system. Last year Senator Bolz introduced LR532 to study the effectiveness and success of the Office of Violence Prevention. Her study found that, while the program is well regarded and effective, it is underfunded and could benefit from additional strategic planning. I appreciate the work Senator Bolz and her staff have done with the study and research into the effectiveness and needs of the Office of Violence Prevention. The Office of Violence Prevention was established in 2009 through the passage of LB63, introduced by Senator Mike Friend, which was a comprehensive criminal justice bill with the goal of adding law enforcement's ability...aiding law enforcement's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute gang-related crimes. The mission of the Office of Violence Prevention is to provide leadership and aid in the development, growth, and overall assessment of violence prevention programs throughout the state of Nebraska. The Office of Violence Prevention has one staff member, an executive director, who is responsible for administering the grants to the organizations in Nebraska. From 2014-2017, the annual appropriations for the Office of Violence Prevention grants has been \$350,000. In 2016 the Office of Violence Prevention administered \$350,000, through a competitive grant process, to organizations with a history of documented success in helping reduce crime in Nebraska. The grants ranged in size from \$8,000 to \$181,956. The programs that received grants emphasized violence prevention in various ways, including intelligence-led policing, antirecidivism efforts. Most of the organizations that receive grants funds are nonprofits; however, the city of Omaha Police Department Gang Unit received \$82,000 to pay the salary of a full-time gang unit intelligence analyst. Each organization or entity that receives grant funding through the OVP is required to develop goals, objectives, and performance indicators to help OVP evaluate the success of the grants. Among the 2016 grantees were: Black Men United-Intro into the Trades and Soft Skill Training, a program designed to provide entry-

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level soft skills, career assessments, introductory trade skills, and safety training. The first year pilot program led to the direct training of 35 students. All were either incarcerated or ex-felons, and ten others were ex-felons who were provided support but did not participate in the training. Of the 45 individuals served, 13 were unincarcerated, and 9 of the 13 were connected to the employment opportunities, and 4 were connected to additional training or education. Black Men United has secured agreements with local construction companies to hire four students from each class, upon their release. Lancaster County Operation Tipping Point is a steering committee with the community partners and justice stakeholders addressing the increase in violent, gang-related crime in Lincoln. LPD Gang Unit receives referrals of youth who are engaged in anti-risk (sic--at-risk) behaviors. And at the OVP, outreach coordinator works with the youth and the family to assess these risk factors. LPD is also able to provide enhanced training to the gang unit as part of their efforts to prevent, intervene, and suppress criminal gang activity in Lincoln. NorthStar Foundation athletic engagement and outreach program provides athletic engagement and outreach programming for low-income, at-risk young men in north Omaha. NorthStar has five core programs: academics, athletics, art, outdoor and experimental learning, and employment readiness. And the athletic engagement and outreach program recognizes that sports can have a large impact on a young man and they provide opportunities to learn about developing important values such as respect, responsibility, reliability, teamwork, and character. Priority for funding was given to the communities and organizations seeking to implement violence prevention programs which would have the greatest benefit to the state and whose goals include reducing street and gang violence and reducing homicides and injuries caused by firearms. In 2015 Senator Mello introduced LB167, which passed through the Judiciary Committee with an 8-0 vote and passed with an overall 47-0-2 on the floor. LB167 included the creation of a youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas as an additional primary focus. With this additional focus, the Office of Violence Prevention is able to award grants funds to programs such as NorthStar Foundation and the Hope Center for Kids to focus on the community engagement with youth in the high-risk areas. The current cost of incarceration is \$36,742 per year for an inmate. As of 2016 the Nebraska Corrections' annual costs reports noted 5,392 inmates. Looking at the math, it is \$198,112,864 each year to house inmates. Last year \$350,000 was appropriated, which the OVP was able to provide grants funds for 12 different organizations. Each organization has a different impact on those they serve. Omaha and Lincoln PD are able to target combating gang violence, and Black Men United have students who have graduated through their program who now are active members of the community. NorthStar Foundation, Center for Holistic Development, and the Hope Center for Kids work at engaging youth with structured, positive, healthy activities as alternatives to high-risk behaviors. The testifiers following me will be able to provide more-detailed responses regarding the impacts their programs have had on those they serve and to further stress the importance of the grant funding through the Office of Violence Prevention. The appropriations request is LB580, is \$1,050,000, which is just over a half of 1 percent of the overall Corrections' budget. This appropriations request, while large, would increase the current annual appropriations by \$700,000, which would

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allow the Office of Violence Prevention to expand its ability to provide funding for programs aimed at helping to reduce crime and emphasize violence prevention across the state of Nebraska. I'd like to answer any of your questions if you have any. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Questions? Senator Bolz. [LB580]

SENATOR BOLZ: We've talked about this off the mike a little bit but, just for the record, you know, this year we're in the mood of looking at other funding streams and cash fund sources. And I think that the Ignition Interlock excess funds might be an appropriate funding source for this purpose. Of course it comes from folks who have broken the law, and there are always excess funds in that fund. And so I just wondered if you would be open to that further discussion. [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: Absolutely. You know, you look at the idea of government and labor and education and business coming together to try to do something positive for the community. This is an example of that. This is private-public partnerships. This is people stepping up and working together. And every dollar is going to make a difference in one of these people's lives to be...possibly help them to be the best version of themselves. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Very good. Senator Hilkemann. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Senator, on your second page here it said that they have an executive director. Is this a full-time position? [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: Yes, it is. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: And to max it, they...and this full-time person is administering the \$350,000? [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: The grants, yes. Yeah. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: That's their sole position. [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: Yes. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB580]

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SENATOR STINNER: I noticed this point I was to develop or prepare a strategic plan to establish goals and priorities. Since this program is ongoing, don't they have a strategic plan now? [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: Yes, it's to help to actually improve on their strategic plan and see how we can grow throughout the state of Nebraska. Right now, I mean, Omaha has benefited off this. The city of Lincoln has benefited off this. I believe the whole state should have the opportunity to benefit off this. It's working, it's helping, it can make a difference. And we're investing a dollar today to save a number of dollars in the future, based on the idea of someone not going down the wrong path, possibly being incarcerated for \$36,000 a year or a youth being incarcerated for \$106,000 a year. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Additional proponents. Good morning and welcome. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Good morning, Senators. Thanks for having me this morning. Lieutenant Ken Kanger, K-e-n K-a-n-g-e-r, with the city of Omaha, the Omaha Police Department. I'd like to talk a little bit about LB580, why we are proponents of this bill and how important it's been to the Omaha Police Department, specifically the Gang Unit. I went to the Gang Unit in about 2012. I spent my previous time in the Homicide Unit, so I've seen both sides of what gang violence could do to this community. The positive side of what I get to do now is I get to work with kids, hopefully to keep them alive and to keep them from being incarcerated for significant parts of their life, if not their entire life, because of gang violence. And what I am here to tell you about is OVP and how it's really benefited the Gang Unit specifically with regards to the Omaha Police Department. I was going to talk about the intelligence analyst and the intelligence-led policing a little bit, but I wanted to digress and talk a little bit about how we started receiving funds. I think it was around 2010. We started a program, a gang specialist program and, primarily, because the chief has said this and we obviously firmly believe it, that enforcement isn't the only way we deal with things, right? Incarceration rates are a concern throughout the state, and the Police Department understands that as well, that enforcement isn't how we lower violent crime and how we get guns off the street, in and of itself. We have to deal with intervention and prevention, and we have to allocate resources for that. The Police Department has done significant things for that. And one of the first in pilot programs was in 2010, when they went to the Office of Violence Prevention and they introduced a gang specialist program. We started the actual program out of the funding that we got from that office, and it's been paramount to what we're trying to do. It basically gave us an individual who had experienced gang life, who experienced

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the decisions and the things that these kids encounter as they grow up, somebody these kids can relate to, parents can relate to. And they start working with these kids at a young age. And they're working with these kids in the schools--middle schools, high schools--they're going to the Douglas County Youth Center, they're going to the Nebraska Youth Facility. And they're mentoring these kids, they're dealing with decision making, anger management, all the things that they know are important for these kids to develop to help them make the appropriate decisions. And it's such a successful program we added a second, again, through funding through the Office of Violence Prevention, in about 2014 or 2015. So we currently have two, one working in north Omaha, one working in south Omaha. Out of that we developed a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club. And I tell you that because it's important when we send these gang specialists into homes, into schools, and we're dealing with these kids, that we're not only talking about the things that can cause them to get involved in gang violence, but we provide them with resources, right? They have to have some kind of resources because they have to have something to do on their idle time. So our partnership with the Boys and Girls Club has only expanded the program because now we send gang specialists in, talk to these kids that are experiencing these type of activities, maybe in low-level violent crime, before they get too involved and are incarcerated, and give them the resources through the club and through all of the other resources Senator McDonnell talked about. Our partnerships with the Hope Center, our partnerships with NorthStar, our partnerships with a lot of other community groups--PACE, the Police Athletics and (sic--for) Community Engagement. So I wanted to talk a little bit about that, because those gang specialists are reaching thousands of kids during the course of the day. Tomorrow I'll be in Monroe with one of our gang specialists, and we're going to be showing them videos of "The Interrupters," individuals out of Chicago and other places that directly relate to these kids. We're going to show them a motivational speaker named Inky Johnson, who is out of the University of Tennessee, who lived the gang lifestyles...entire family was incarcerated, but he had a dream to make it to the NFL. He got hurt and now he's using motivational speaking and talking about all these things that these kids need to consider with their decision making...having goals, having aspirations. And I can go in and talk to these kids all day long, and they're not going to pay as much of attention as somebody they really relate to, like our gang specialists and like these other programs that we put in front of them. So I wanted you to consider that and think about that a little bit. But even out of that, we spent a lot of time with Lincoln and the program, again, that Senator McDonnell talked about. We went down to Lincoln and talked about our gang specialist program, and they have a similar one, I think, in that Tipping Point. And we collaborated to make sure, because we have gangs that travel from Omaha to Lincoln, Omaha to Grand Island, sometimes Omaha to Kearney. And I'll talk about that. Our gang intelligence analysts, the reason we implemented that is, again, intelligence-led policing. We have to be on the forefront; we have to be in front of things. We can't be reactive and just have an operation...and incarcerate and arrest the kids. And our intelligence analyst, although it does do enforcement, he spends a lot of time analyzing data from our ShotSpotter system, where we're recognizing shots fired and allocating resources; that's the enforcement piece. It puts out most active bulletins, so everybody

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within different jurisdictions, other law enforcement agencies know who are the most active gang members, in case they travel to their community. We have a monthly meeting, gang intelligence meeting, that people from around the metro, Lincoln area...and we're talking about Corrections, we're talking about Probation, Parole, and we share all the data with respect to gang violence. So it's all safer. And incidents that occur in the Correctional Center can spill out into the community and cause violence in the community and, likewise, can cause violence in the Correctional Center. So we need to share and collaborate that. Our intelligence analyst puts all that stuff and that information together, but the different and the spin to that you don't see with a lot of intelligence analysts is he's also out doing community presentations. But we're also using the intelligence that he sees to deal with our intervention and prevention. And how we do that is...what's the largest source of intelligence now for almost anybody? It's social media. People are hooked up to their phones through social media--Facebook, Twitter. Ladies and gentlemen, so are gangs. And the things that they do for recruitment and everything else is through social media. So we're using those resources for enforcement, to educate communities throughout Omaha and other locations if they travel to Grand Island, gang members. But we're also using it to identify kids that we see have a propensity to get involved in gang violence. And then we can allocate our gang specialists to meet with them, address their parents, provide them those resources that we share every day. When I sit in the Omaha 360 meeting, who's also mentioned in the Office of Violence Prevention, and we collaborate on ways to deal with that youth through all those pieces that I talked about. And then we're going to refer those kids to our PACE program, Police Athletics and (sic--for) Community Engagement. Senator McDonnell talked about the importance of athletics, helping kids deal with adversity, giving them avenues and venues so that they're not getting involved in that type of violent crime. And I apologize if I went over, but I am happy to take any questions that you folks may have. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Questions. Senator Wishart. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: First of all, thank you so much for your service... [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: ...to our state. So how long have you been working with the Omaha Police Department? [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Twenty years. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: Twenty years. Okay. So can you talk to me a little bit about the changes that you've seen in terms of gang activity over those 20 years? [LB580]

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KEN KANGER: The biggest change...I mean obviously we've had gang activity. One of the things, with respect to this program and this bill especially, is we had over 3,500 gang members in 2010 and 2011. When we started the gang prevention specialist program out of this office and the funding that we had and our intelligence analyst, now we're down to about 2,500. And we're still looking at that to see the benefits of those programs. And we've had gangs since the 1980s. Obviously some of the numbers have increased. We're seeing younger kids get involved in gang activities. And the biggest thing that I see right now, and I mentioned it very...at the very end, is the social media. We have to...we have to adapt with the things that we see in the community. And kids, at a young age, have access to cell phones, they have access to YouTube, there's videos out there that gang members are using to recruit, that are influential, with weapons, power, things of that nature. And we see young kids listening to these songs and videos that talk about gang violence; and it's influential. And we really have to devote a lot of resources to our youth to make sure that that influence doesn't lead them to more violent crime, incarceration, by educating them to the perils of some of the stuff that they're seeing on social media. So really the social media piece, but I think our numbers are looking a lot better because of the programs I spoke about this morning. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: And specifically in terms of the PACE program, I had read somewhere or heard somewhere that they, especially with gang graffiti, that your program has received a national award for elimination of gang graffiti. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: I don't know if the PACE program has received a national award. I do a lot with the PACE program. I volunteer myself. My gang officers go and coach all summer long and all the fall with their baseball and their flag football program. And it's probably one of the most inspirational things that I've seen in 25 years of police work, because you didn't see that years ago. You saw the enforcement piece. And several years ago, you...you know Officer Kerrie Orozco died in the line of duty. She did a lot with PACE. And one of the most rewarding parts of my career was watching her coach youth athletics...5:00, 6:00, 7:00 on a Friday night, and then she was riding around in a cruiser doing enforcement activity at 30th and Ames and other locations. The community is safe, and we have to keep those two things together. We have seen a reduction in graffiti. And it's because these kids are involved; I firmly believe that. But the relationship between law enforcement and the kids, as well as the parents, that are developed out of programs like that, NorthStar and other things, where they see the police in a venue, in a light other than a search warrant, an enforcement action, that trust level is there and they communicate with us. They communicate those problems where we can allocate resources. And those kids are more comfortable speaking with us, and they see us in a different light than just enforcement piece. That PACE program and all the athletic programs--Hope, Hope Center, Village Basketball, are all integral pieces to intervention and prevention. [LB580]

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SENATOR WISHART: And one last question. I know in Lincoln...my husband has served five years on the Lincoln...for the Lincoln Police Department. And I know one thing that they are really trying to do is get more diversity on the police force. Do you see these kind of programs, where you have police officers connecting with younger kids in, you know, a community setting, in a different way than enforcement, is also a way to inspire kids to maybe look at going into the police force? [LB580]

KEN KANGER: It's a great question. I spent yesterday afternoon at McMillan Junior High, having lunch with them. I go up there every so often with our gang specialist. And every so often they see my badge hanging around my neck. And several of them have asked me: can I wear that badge? It's a gold badge; they want to know if it's real gold. But I am just telling you the story because it's exactly what you're talking about, Senator. I throw them the badge. They look at it. And I tell them, why can't I hang that badge on you in 10 or 15 years? And they think. And in that same lunchroom last week, an individual came up to me and says, you with the police? And I say, yes, I am. He said, I don't like the police. I said, you don't? I said, do you know me? And he said no. And I said, you don't like me then. And he said, well, no, I didn't say that. I said, well, you said you don't like the police, and I am a police officer. And we engaged in questioning back and forth for a few minutes, and he got confused. And at the end of the day he said he didn't really know why he didn't like police. He didn't have any problem with me. He'd never met me before. But some of these kids...it's engrained in them from a young age. And these relationships and these programs set those things apart--the lunch hours, the PACE programs, going down to Village Basketball and supporting those kids and involved in their activities. And we go to a lot of their high school...or their grade school and high school activities, and they see us. And a lot of times they're nervous. What is the Gang Unit doing at a junior high wrestling event? Or what is the Gang Unit doing at a junior high football event? Well, we're here to support you because, you know, even when we go--and I didn't mention it, I know I am speaking too much probably--but our intelligence analyst goes to an Adopt a Unit program at the Youth Center. And we go there because the kids think we want to put them in jail. They think that that's what the Gang Unit and the Police Department do. At the end of the day, we wish we didn't have to put anybody in jail. And we educate those youth. And that Adopt a Unit program is for kids that are really doing well in the Youth Center. We bring them pizza, we engage in them, and we have these conversations and tell them: Let us know when you get out, have a plan for when you get out, let us surround you with all these programs we talked about. You like soccer? We'll put you in PACE. You like baseball? We'll put you in PACE. You want to play basketball for NorthStar? We have all these resources because of the community involvement and 360 and all our networks. And then we can develop those relationships. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Senator Clements. [LB580]

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SENATOR CLEMENTS: Thank you, Officer Kanger. And I appreciate your passion and your service. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Does it show, Senator? I apologize. (Laughter) [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Yeah. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: I couldn't wait to get down here. I've never testified in a setting like this. But if you're going to ask me to come down and talk about this type of stuff, I love to do it. [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: From the money point of view, is there a cost share or matching funds? Or does the state fund all of this 100 percent? Do you know? I should have probably asked this of Senator McDonnell. But are you aware? [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Well, it depends on some different...the different programs. We receive funding nearly every year for a lot of different programs, and I don't believe the gang specialist program was a match. I can't recall 100 percent. I'd have to look at that. I know the most recent, the gang intelligence position, wasn't a match, but there were some promotional items that came out of that that we also have. I was going to bring in Nerf footballs for everybody but didn't know if it was appropriate. But we have them. We provide them to the kids. There was a match fund that the city did with that for some of our promotional things, because we'll take them and give them to the kids. Our number and our resources are in there, as well as pamphlets and flyers for parents. So some programs, some of the things that fund out of the Office of Violence Prevention, we do match. But the majority, to my knowledge, the city of Omaha doesn't. [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Thank you, Officer. Maybe we'll get that information from someone else. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Thank you very much. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Thanks for your time. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: I don't know why you guys would ever have a... [LB580]

SENATOR BOLZ: Just... [LB580]

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SENATOR STINNER: ...motivational speaker, because you're...Senator Bolz...just a minute, please. [LB580]

SENATOR BOLZ: I am...I am sorry to be late to the game. I wanted to make sure that I...that I didn't speak out of turn. I just wanted to clarify that the bill does require a local match for new projects. So just to put that on the record in response to Senator Clements' question. [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you very much. [LB580]

KEN KANGER: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Other proponents. Good morning and welcome. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Good morning, Senators. My name is Scott Hazelrigg; Scott, S-c-o-t-t, Hazelrigg, H-a-z-e-l-r-i-g-g. I serve as president of the NorthStar Foundation, the only all-boys, extended-day, after-school program in greater Omaha, located at 49th and Ames Avenues in Omaha. Over 75 percent of our students reside in the 68104 and 68111 zip codes. These zip codes represent the lowest household incomes in Douglas County and are beset by a variety of challenges. Eighty percent of our boys live in single-parent households, the majority of those single-parent, female-led households. Our boys currently reside...or are in the 4th through 10th grade and come from 24 north Omaha area private and public schools. The average free or reduced lunch percentage for those schools that we serve is over 85 percent. Our boys know, firsthand, the loss of life caused by gang violence. Our staff of educators work with students more hours each year than our boys are in classrooms. Many of our boys are in NorthStar 240-260 days a year. Thanks to Office of Violence Prevention funds which, in part, provide matching funds for an external evaluation consultant, we are seeing the following: low involvement in high-risk behaviors, including drinking, drugs, and gang activity; increased school engagement, specifically in things that kids like--technology and basketball; and we are seeing really good, positive impact on our parental engagement. This is a hard nugget. Many of our parents are working two and three jobs. And being able to engage actively and building a partnership between educators, parents, NorthStar staff, and students is critical to the long-term success of the boys we serve. Thanks in part to OVP funds, our student enrollment numbers for January 2017 are 52 percent higher than January 2016. We currently actively see 275 boys each week at some point. This summer that number will swell to over 400. A typical NorthStar boy, as I said, in 2016 spent more days at NorthStar than he did at school. When you ask a young man at NorthStar what he aspires to do after high school, a common answer is: I want to play in the NBA. Unless we have a secret recipe for training five-foot-tall 10th graders into seven-foot-tall

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seniors on a regular basis, our students probably need to come up with secondary, equally exciting goals. That's a lot of what we work on in building their educational skill set and the skill set for them to dream other dreams off the court. We opened three years ago, and what we identified, though, was one of the best ways to engage youth and to connect with them was through basketball. We used that as the entry point. OVP, for instance, helped us to connect, in a meaningful way, to students through what they like so that we could help them to see other things that they may truly excel at. Building a strong support system for our boys, before they're approached and engaged in gang recruitment, is key to changing the course for the young men we serve, before that course is set. OVP funds complementing the charitable support that NorthStar is able to match allows us to reach, teach, and retain young men in the community who know all too well the negative impacts of gang violence. Great boys become great young adults when they have options and opportunities that are more significant than the allure of being a part of a gang, a gang that may be their support structure, their source for food, for money, and may provide them with the sense of belonging that's missing in their lives because of limited resources. And lack of structure during the most dangerous hours, especially of 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. every day, can be challenged and changed through excellent role models, mentors, champions, structure, and opportunities that they otherwise would not have. Often the only identified option for young men in poverty may appear to be the road that is too often traveled. We, along with other partners mentioned already here today, are actively engaged in changing that road. Our state has much to be proud of. Our state also, in order to achieve its full potential, has to acknowledge and thoughtfully address the reality that generational poverty, coupled with economic and social isolation in a community like northeast Omaha, is doomed to repeat itself for future generations unless we directly change that pattern. The dollars invested in this effort through the Office of Violence Prevention are leveraged dollars. Coupled with charitable support, OVP focus dollars...they come with strings. They come with accountability. They come with clear direction for organizations like NorthStar to make a meaningful impact in the significant challenge and a report back on how we're doing. OVP dollars are not a blank check but a catalyst for impacting a very specific, very critical need in our state. I thank you for your consideration of LB580. While faced with difficult decisions this legislative session, we appreciate, I appreciate, our staff appreciates, and the community we serve appreciates your consideration of continuing to invest in our community. We have great young men who can become great contributors to our community and state. We need to flip that equation and change that road. The Office of Violence Prevention has been a critical partner in helping to do that. Thank you, and I would entertain any questions. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Questions. Senator Hilkemann. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Scott, it's good to see you again. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Nice to see you. [LB580]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: His father was our first pastor when we were in...we moved up to Omaha, so. Scott, what's the total budget of NorthStar? [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Yeah, thank you. Our total program budget is \$1.7 million. It was \$1.6 million in 2016. Our budget for this year is \$1.7 million, in the context there's two things that fall under that budget. One is the NorthStar Afterschool program and summer program. We run 40 days each and every summer, from 7:30 in the morning until 5:00 and, basically, we're running all day summer school. And then we also have a program, the Omaha Outward Bound School, which serves an additional almost 2,000 students in schools in and around greater Omaha and also Lincoln. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: And the amount of funds that you receive from this program? [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Yeah, so this past year we received \$66,000 through OVP funds... [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: ...in the past budget cycle. But again, as I mentioned in my testimony, many of those dollars also come with a matching requirement. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Right. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: And that's a key piece of the puzzle of...the majority of our funds then are charitable support. About 5 percent of our budget is earned income. I like to say often we have plenty of clients; the challenge is our clients can't pay. I would use this as a quick...just a side note piece of the puzzle. Last night I was at the Creighton basketball game. And you say: Well, what kind of boys are you working with? Tell me about what they look like. What do...what's their experience? And on the left side of me was a young man who's a 10th grader. And his mother was in prison for about 120 days in 2016, and his father had been released, after 7 years of incarceration, in 2015. We met him about the time that his father was being released from prison. The young man on my right has an uncle who's on death row in the state of Nebraska. We're not working with kids who have a few challenges; we're working with great young kids who have significant challenges and, if there is not a change in their course, if there is not a significant opportunity for them to engage positively, regularly, with organizations and individuals that can help them to see a different path, they will become the next generation of their family. We are fortunate and humbled because many partners, including the state of

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Nebraska, have invested in helping us to be able to connect with them and, to be honest with you, to create the opportunity for our staff and our volunteers and those we work with in the community to be able, on a Tuesday night, to sit at a basketball game and have meaningful conversations with young kids who can be our future. So thank you for what has happened in the past, and appreciate your consideration today. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: How many community partners do you have, Scott? [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Yeah, so last year...a couple of ways of answering that. Last year, through the Omaha Outward Bound School, we worked with, when I said community partners: schools, nonprofits, and others. We worked with over 85 different organizations. So it may be students who play on a PACE baseball team, who come and work with Outward Bound. It may be students at Northwest High School or Benson High School who we may be working with in school. In the case of Outward Bound, which is our experiential learning program, we have staff who are at Northwest once a month, and those students are all at our location once a month, in building a longitudinal relationship, but also their skill sets, to deescalate conflict and to resolve conflict peacefully. NorthStar...we, on a given week, will have somewhere between seven and ten different, other nonprofit partners that may be working with our students or we may be working with their students in collaboration. Girls Inc. happens to be a natural complement and is about four and a half minutes away from us. Well, if you say: What do boys say is their criticism of NorthStar? We don't have any girls. And you know what? That's true; we don't have any girls. But we know where to find them. And we have a great partner in that organization that's doing terrific work in the same community with the same families. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Senator Clements. [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Of your \$1.7 million budget, do you know how much OVP contributed? [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Yeah, so here...I apologize, I am pulling out my phone. But I can tell you exactly that number because, on my way down here today, I texted a member of my staff and said: Can you remind me exactly what that looks like? And the answer to that question is, in totality over the past three years, we have received \$155,293. This is over three budget years... [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Okay. [LB580]

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SCOTT HAZELRIGG: ...in OVP funds. In 2015-16 we received \$67,390, and in 2016-17--so the current cycle we're in--we're budgeted for \$63,965. [LB580]

SENATOR CLEMENTS: Thank you. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: You bet. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB580]

SCOTT HAZELRIGG: Thank you, Senators. Appreciate it. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Additional proponents. [LB580]

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Good morning, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Good morning. [LB580]

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: My name is Christy Abraham, C-h-r-i-s-t-y A-b-r-a-h-a-m, and I am here representing the League of Nebraska Municipalities. And we want to thank Senator McDonnell for introducing this bill. As you've heard from the past two very compelling testifiers, these grant funds go to amazing programs. In the past, these funds have gone mostly to the city of Omaha, again, doing wonderful things there. And as you received a letter from the city of Lincoln, they also received some grant funds. The rest of the state really isn't receiving these grant funds. And so the League is very supportive of this effort to look at a statewide strategic plan and, with the additional appropriation, we are hoping that additional communities could be included in these grant funds. There are other communities in Nebraska, unfortunately-- I am thinking particularly of our first-class cities--that also experience violence and firearm injuries. And I think they would greatly benefit from these funds. So I am happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB580]

CHRISTY ABRAHAM: Thank you so much. [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Hi. How you doing? [LB580]

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SENATOR STINNER: Welcome. [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Oh, yes. My name is Willie Hamilton. I am the founder, director of Black Men United in the Omaha Kumani Center. If you don't mind, sir, could you pass a few of these out? [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Could you spell your name, please? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: (Exhibit 2) H-a-m-i-l-t-o-n, Good morning. I am writing today in support of LB580. Again, my name is Willie Hamilton. I am the executive director of Black Men United in Omaha, Nebraska. I am the father of three children: Damien B. Hamilton, staff sergeant, United States Army, currently stationed in South Korea; newly married Jamel Hamilton and his wife Janel; and, of course, my lovely daughter Alexia Marie Hamilton, a freshman at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Here's a little bit of information about myself. I am originally from Louisiana. I was raised in a family of nine children: six boys, three girls. My oldest sister, Rose, died at a young age of 47 from pancreatic cancer. Out of the 13 boys born to the 9 of us, 10 are ex-felons. This has devastated our family. Because of the barriers around health, employment, housing, drug addiction, voter restriction, etcetera, the number of my family and friends who are impacted by the criminal justice system has truly moved me to effect change and to become an advocate for them. Metropolitan Community College Re-Entry...I am sorry. First I had to educate myself about mass incarceration and the effects it's had on the black and communities of color. For the past three to five years, we have worked with Michelle Alexander, Department of Corrections, Metro Community College Re-Entry with Ms. Tommie Wilson, elected officials, Harambee group, 7th Step organization, to look at why so many individuals have such a high rate of recidivism. Fact one: one of three (sic--eight) African American men, or 13 percent, have currently or have permanently lost their right to vote, a result of a felony conviction. The rate is seven times the national average. On any given day, 1 out of every 14 black children has a parent in prison. After educating ourselves, we started facilitating community discussions, bringing in decision makers to talk about solutions, based on Re-Entry programs. Through these efforts, Black Men United created our Intro to the Trades program, which is currently being taught at the Nebraska Youth Correctional Facility in Omaha, Nebraska. The technical curriculum was created by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and our program is funded by the Office of Violence Prevention. Our Intro to the Trades program is targeted to individuals, ages 18-25; however, if a person is older and had...are interested, an exception may be made. We are working to create a prison-to-prosperity pipeline for the young men, because technical skills are only part of creating a strong employee. Other key components that are taught is: soft skill training, life skill training, financial literacy, basic entrepreneurship. To ensure the highest quality of interaction and engagement, each class has no more than ten students. The final goal is to be a bridge as they transition back into the community. We are opening a larger program in conjunction with the Department of Corrections, the Urban Pre-Vocational Training

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program. This program is due to begin in the next four to six weeks, one step at a time. We created the UPVT program with specific goals in mind: enhance participants' employability through labor skills; reduce unemployment rates for not only returning citizens but for hard-to-employ members of the community. Students will have solid vocational training to enhance their value in the labor market. Students will be aware of the variety of pathways, including union opportunities, labor opportunities, as well as higher learning programs--options. To ensure the existence and success of future generations, we must place special emphasis on juvenile offenders. Since the rate of African American youth incarceration is growing as rapidly as adult offenders, it is crucial that policymakers establish grants to a state to improve workplace and community transition training for the incarcerated youth. These juveniles need skills to give them the tools to survive and contribute to society. Education, vocational training, emotional counseling, and drug treatment are among the services our state must provide. All young people deserve to live a quality adult life, including those who have been incarcerated and also those who have never been caught up in the criminal justice system. Some of our supporters who we are partnering with...for the training, for offered employment opportunities, (inaudible) training at the city of Omaha, MAPA, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the REACH program, 75 North, (inaudible) Company, the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, Omaha Public Schools, Laborers' Union 1140, the Office of Violence Prevention. And, of course, Governor Ricketts is one of our supporters as well. I would like to close with a quote from Terry Tempest Williams, and I feel it speaks to all of us. "The eyes of the future are looking back at us, and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time." Thank you for your time and your interest and your consideration. Any questions? [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Wishart. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: Do you currently have a wait list for access to your program? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Yes, ma'am. [LB580]

SENATOR WISHART: So in...you know, what is the average amount of people that are waiting, that are on this wait list, to have access to your program? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Conservatively between 30-40 people, but the number is most likely higher than that. We have the Urban League, we have ENCAP, we have veterans, we have ex-felons, we have individuals from Blackburn, all trying to get in our school. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Senator Hilkemann. [LB580]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: You...what's your total budget? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: To have a program for the whole year, it's \$220,000. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: \$220,000. And how much have you received from the OVP funds? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Approximately \$180,000 over the last three years. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: So more than three fourths of your funding has come from this program. Is that correct? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: No. We've actually gotten funding from other sources. We've got this fund from the city of Omaha, we've...Governor Ricketts, Katie Weitz, and a few others. (Inaudible). [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I guess I didn't catch that. You said your total budget is \$250,000? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: My total budget is \$250,000 for a one-year program. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Yeah. And you've received how much from this, from the...on an annual basis from this program? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Approximately \$65,000 over the last three years. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Oh, okay. [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Each year. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I am sorry; I missed that. [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: No problem. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I had a...I thought you said \$165,000. Sorry about that. So do you work with...do you work with Ron and Josh Dotzler? [LB580]

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WILLIE HAMILTON: Ron Kaminski? [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Pardon? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Did you say Ron Kaminski? [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: No, Dotzler with the Abide ministries. Do you work with them as well in this program? [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Yes. They actually used to be one of my tenants at the building. [LB580]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB580]

WILLIE HAMILTON: Thank you. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anybody in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, would you like to close, Senator? [LB580]

SENATOR McDONNELL: I waive. [LB580]

SENATOR STINNER: (Exhibit 3) Senator waives closing. That ends...that won't end our hearing. I have a letter from the city of Lincoln, Nebraska, Lincoln Police Department, in support of LB580. And that concludes our testimony on LB580. [LB580]