

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Appropriations Committee January 25, 2022
Rough Draft

STINNER: Good afternoon. Please take your seats. We're about ready to go here. It's amazing who shows up when you have \$1 billion to give away. Well, welcome to the Appropriations Committee hearing. My name is John Stinner. I'm from Gering and I represent the 48th District. I'd like to start off by having the members do self-introductions, starting with Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. I'm Steve Erdman. I represent nine counties in the Panhandle.

CLEMENTS: Rob Clements, District 2, Cass County and part of Lancaster.

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

HILKEMANN: Robert Hilkemann, District 4, west Omaha.

STINNER: John Stinner, District 48, used to be all of Scotts Bluff County, but I picked up Banner and Kimball.

KOLTERMAN: Mark Kolterman, District 24: Seward, York, Polk, and a sliver of Butler County.

VARGAS: Tony Vargas, District 7. That's downtown and south Omaha.

DORN: Myron Dorn, District 30, Gage County and part of Lancaster.

STINNER: Assisting the committee, excuse me, assisting the committee today is Tamara Hunt. And to my right is our fiscal analyst, Keisha Patent. I hope that's pretty close. Our page today is Jason Wendling. He's from Chicago. We're trying to bribe him into being a permanent resident and taxpayer to the state of Nebraska. At the entrance, you'll find green testifier sheets. If you are planning to-- on testifying today, please fill out a signed-- in sheet and hand it to the committee clerk when you come up to testify. If you will not be testifying at the microphone, but want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there is a white sheet sign-in at each entrance where you can leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record at the end of today's hearings. To better facilitate today's proceedings, I ask that you abide by the following procedures. Please file-- silence or turn off cell phones. Move to the reserved chairs, which we don't have reserve chairs, but when you're ready to testify. Order of testimony will be introducers. I have invited testifiers today, so we'll go with the introducer, the invited

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testifiers, and then we'll open it up and start the procedure by what we tried to post and let everybody know. And it's really the Governor's bill, so we're going in order. So for an example, healthcare, under the healthcare emergency responses, that's a category for us. It's, it's in the guidelines. So we will call up healthcare facility capacity expansion. We'll have proponents, we'll have neutral, and we'll have opponents. And so you have the opportunity in those categories to come up. If you come out and you sit there and you're not in that category, I may throw something at you, so. I should probably have one of those flags like a referee, you know, you're out of bounds. Anyhow, I better go through the rest of it. When we hear testimony regarding agencies-- well, that's, that's-- we ask that when you come up to testify, that you spell your first and last name for the record. Be concise. It is my request that we limit your testimonies to three minutes. There's just going to be a lot of testifiers, as you can see. I'd like you to abide by the light system. We'll try to hear as much as we can. We're asking you to give us the information that you have. I actually passed out a checklist with, with the lobbyists and hopefully the associations, so you can give us that information. And then we'll, we'll compile that information and obviously then make our recommendations to the Legislature. And then again, the Legislature has their opportunities to, to change whatever they want to change. We ask that you be concise and in three minutes. Written materials may be distributed to 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 need 12 copies. If you have written testimony, but did not have 12 copies, please raise your hand now so the page can make copies for you. With that and the other thing I want to add is in the bottom of each category, we have other. That's open testimony relative to public health, relative to negative economic impact, premium pay. That gives the public an opportunity to express an opinion or to recommend something that may not be in the Governor's or in a bill, OK? If, if there's a bill out there that's representing your interests, I would suggest that you show up at the day that bill is presented to the committee. So this is really your opportunity to get two bites of the apple, one here and then one when the bill is rep-- presented. With that, we'll begin today's testimony on LB1014. Budget director, please.

LEE WILL: Ready?

STINNER: Good afternoon, yes.

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LEE WILL: Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Lee Will, L-e-e W-i-l-l, and I am the state budget administrator of the Department of Administrative Services Budget Division. I'm appearing today on behalf of Governor Ricketts in support of LB1014, which comprises the Governor's recommendation on the utilization of American Rescue Plan Act funds, or ARPA. The state and local fiscal recovery plan allocated funding to both state and local governmental entities. The state of Nebraska, 93 counties, 4 metro cities, and 525 localities identified as non-entitlement units of government or NEUs were eligible for a total of \$1.7 billion. The state has received \$520 million, with an additional \$520 million pending certification by the U.S. Treasury Department no later than May 22. These funds have specific requirements that are outlined in statute and clarified by the interim and final roll and additional FAQ documents provided by Treasury. LB1014 provides for FY '22 federal fund appropriations, signifying the first \$520 million and FY '23 appropriations, which will be available upon receipt of funding from the U.S. Treasury, signifying the second \$520 million. The Governor's recommendations for ARPA funding utilizes categories of the public health response, negative economic impacts, water, sewer, and broadband, premium pay, and funds to administer these dollars. The rec-- the recommendation includes \$199.4 million for public health response to support healthcare capacity in the state, including items such as \$40 million to assist with the public health response to ensure sufficient hospital capacity to meet the needs of the state; \$40 million for four projects, \$10 million each, to expand mental healthcare for adults and children, as well as capacity for an adolescent educational facility; \$35 million for the replacement of rural ambulances; \$15.5 million to assist the Youth Rehabilitation Center-Kearney Campus; \$10 million for a joint rural health complex between UNMC and UNMK-- or UNK. The Governor's recommendation also includes \$504.7 million to address the negative-impacted industries, demographics, and regions, including \$165 million for workforce development, \$90 (million) of which is for the community colleges, and \$75 (million) for workforce housing needs throughout the state; \$100 million for shovel-ready projects to address eligible projects related to arts, culture, humanities, and sports complexes, while ensuring eligibility under new ARPA guidelines; \$60 million for the Site and Building Development Fund for disproportionately impacted areas and COVID mitigation tactics; \$60 million for the low-income education assistance program for low-income children and family in need of educational opportunity. The Governor's recommendation includes \$284.2 million for water, sewer, and broadband, which includes \$100 million

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for the Perkins County canal to ensure water resources are available for the state for generations to come; \$60 million for drinking water projects in the state; \$50 million for STAR WARS Committee projects-- and as a note, \$128.7 million has also been applied for under the capitol projects fund. That was in addition to the ARPA dollars, \$1,040,000,000, and with a plan to be constructed by September 22 to address broadband needs throughout the state. So you see in the Governor's package, there's, there's not broadband articulated. It's because there's a, a different financing element that provides for that. Two technical changes to the bill, as presented or requested, to ensure the Governor's recommendations are articulated correctly with LB1014. These include, these include expanding language for the community colleges to allow additional students to take advantage of community college programming and eliminating the term "children" from the mental health facilities section to ensure adults can be served as well. A handout has been provided to the committee outlining these changes. To address more specific questions, several cabinet, cabinet agency directors will follow me, including Director Riley with the Department of Natural Resources, Director Macy with the Department of Environment and Energy, Director Goais with Department of Economic Development, and Director Arp, representing the Crime Commission. And with that, I'd be happy to take any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions?

DORN: Oh. Thank you--

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you for coming here, I guess. The question I have is the, the Capital HVAC replacement--

LEE WILL: Sure.

DORN: --\$23.9 million. At one time, that was all included. I call it-- those funds, those funds were all out there allocated to complete that project. Could you explain this request a little bit?

LEE WILL: So in the Treasury guidance, it says that the funds have to be budgeted for. Since those HVAC replacement were in the future allocation years, those dollars were not actually budgeted for, they were allocated or planned for. So that allows for the opportunity, with public health mitigation and HVAC improvements, for this to go forward in our line in, in looking at the guidance with Treasury

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because it had to be budgeted for, not allocated for the project. It has not been budgeted yet.

DORN: So this was more of a-- I call it a use than a project out there that we know is going to be done in time and say use of those funds for that, then instead of out of the budget now. This will not be then out of the budget or is this because of increased cost?

LEE WILL: So \$10.5 million of the HVAC replacement is increased cost, but the additional--

DORN: 12-- what is it--

LEE WILL: Yeah, \$12 million is in relation to the, the finalizing of the project. So we believe that we can finalize the dollars-- the project with ARPA dollars, freeing up general funds in the future that haven't been budgeted for, but would have been, had they been budgeted for if we didn't finance it.

DORN: Thank you for those comments.

LEE WILL: Sure.

STINNER: Additional comments? Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: Thank you very much, Chairman Stinner. This is along the same lines. When I was reading through the Capitol heating, ventilation, air conditioning, are there-- is the replacement we're doing to increase ventilation r.e. COVID-19 or is this existing work that you're paying for with ARPA federal funds?

LEE WILL: So as ARPA defined it, is increased ventilation in public, public facilities, which this would be one of them. Other states are also doing similar things with their public buildings for ventilation systems. And yes, it is a project existing and it will mitigate COVID-19. It is a mitigation tactic, the HVAC replacement, so it would fall underneath those guidelines and those thresholds.

VARGAS: Would we have done this even if COVID-19, we didn't have federal dollars, we would have been paying this out of our General Funds?

LEE WILL: Most likely.

VARGAS: OK.

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LEE WILL: But not budgeted for as termed by Treasury.

VARGAS: OK, I just want to make sure we're mindful and careful about what we're actually--

LEE WILL: Sure.

VARGAS: --allocating to COVID-19 response or for infrastructure development and I'm worried that this is something we would have just done regardless and I appreciate you answering the questions.

LEE WILL: Sure.

STINNER: Additional questions? Would you repeat the number on the broadband that is not here?

LEE WILL: Sure, yeah, \$128.7 million.

STINNER: Tell me, does that have to be spent by a certain time?

LEE WILL: Yeah, I believe it is the same time frame.

STINNER: Same time?

LEE WILL: Yeah, so we are having-- there's going to be some constraints there. We believe that we'll be able to spend about \$120 million by that point on broadband specifically. So it is kind of lining up with the dollar allocation we received, but, you know, everybody's going to be looking for fiber optic. Everybody's going to be able to look for employees, telecommunications, contractors. So we're pulling from the same pool so hopefully we can get done when, you know, \$120 million--

STINNER: Comes back to the workforce and--

LEE WILL: Absolutely.

STINNER: --the lack.

LEE WILL: Right.

STINNER: Tell me this, when I look at this public health and negative economic impact and water and sewer, it kind of breaks down 20, 50, 28 percent. Was there-- as you set out and looked at this-- these dollars to allocate in the various areas, was, was there more emphasis placed on the negative economic impact? Was that intentional or did this--

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LEE WILL: Yeah, I think part of it is, you know, the October hearing, obviously, a lot of folks came in and testified and we got those exhibits from the committee. So you have to look at those and you have to weigh what's one-time financing with one-time dollars, one, what fits the ARPA guidelines? And then you kind of construct a project now or a proposal now. I think negative economic impacts, obviously, I think it's just inherent that COVID-19 had a lot of negative economic impacts throughout the state. So that was one, I think just on the face of it, we kind of knew it was going to have to be prioritized.

STINNER: Very good. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

LEE WILL: Thank you.

STINNER: We'll now hear from the Department of Natural Resources Development. Good afternoon, Director.

TOM RILEY: Good afternoon, Senators. I do have a few handouts, but I might be a couple short, so the page is going to make a couple extra copies.

STINNER: OK.

TOM RILEY: So I have those.

STINNER: Can I, can I interrupt you? I-- just so people understand, we do have an overflow room on-- in 1307. I guess it is set up so you can watch. So if you watch and, and you get to testify and you wanted to watch the rest of it, it's, it's available to, to you. So just wanted to make sure everybody understood that.

TOM RILEY: All right, thank you, Chairman Stinner and committee members for having me here today. Good afternoon. I'm Tom Riley, R-i-l-e-y, and I'm the director of the Department of Natural Resources for the state. I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on some of the elements of LB1014's appropriations to Agency 29, that's the Department of Natural Resources. I want to begin with expressing my full support for the Governor's budget recommendations. And I'll keep my remarks limited to the \$100 million allocated for the Perkins County Canal project component, the department's \$10 million data collection component, and the \$23.1 million for an interstate irrigation system that's recently experienced a failure. A portion of the bill's allocation of funds is to the STAR WARS priorities and it's also for water-related projects, but that will be addressed by others. And due to the time constraints that the Chairman has indicated, I'll

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just leave you with some materials that I have available for you as well to explain at least the Perkins County Canal component. So with that, the Perkins County Canal is essential to preserving and protecting the waters here in the state of Nebraska. Governor Ricketts has recognized that after her people, water is our most important and most valuable resource. Nebraska needs to build this project so we can fully enforce our rights under the South Platte River Compact. That's a compact that dates back to 1923. A continued lack of action would be a historically big miss for the state. We know Colorado is pursuing projects that would use the very water that Nebraska is entitled to use under the compact by constructing this project. Without substantial funding for the project in the current biennium, we'll permanently miss the opportunity to ensure Nebraska's continued access to our water. To be clear, the entire project would not be eligible under the ARPA requirements. This is why the Governor's recommendation also includes both ARPA and state funding. However, certain components of the project will address documented water quality concerns throughout the South Platte River consistent with the provisions of the ARPA bill related to the Clean Water Resu-- State Revolving Fund. Following my testimony, Director Macy of the Department of Engineering-- or Environment and Engineered-- Energy will discuss the eligibility of these projects. In addition, other elements will qualify as necessary investments to water infrastructure to protect water supplies for Nebraska's future populations. LB1014 also provides our agency \$10 million to support investments in our water and data-monitoring efforts. Water data is crucial to making decisions and informed decisions regarding water use and the quality of our water. These investments by the department will support the expanding states' existing-- expanding the state's existing networks while also working to support the increased community-based monitoring projects that are in place. This \$10 million investment is clearly eligible under ARPA's necessary water and sewer infrastructure provisions and will help to ensure effective water monitor-- monitoring for a wide range of water investments that the state is import-- supporting. The bill also provides \$23.1 million to the Critical Facilities Infrastructure Fund [SIC] for state aid associated with the permanent repairs for the Gering-Ft. Laramie irrigation system. This canal is a central conduit for water that comes down the North Platte River that supports several communities throughout the basin and the valley. With that, those are the end of my remarks and I would be happy to take any questions that you might have.

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STINNER: Just as a note, these are expert witnesses and testifiers that are invited, so I won't hold you to the three minutes. If you have additional comments that you want to make, that's fine.

TOM RILEY: I do not.

STINNER: OK. I'll open it up to questions.

DORN: Can I get those from you?

TOM RILEY: Absolutely.

DORN: Start them around here.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you for coming. It's interesting concept, the canal-- the project there in western Nebraska. Why has this come to the forefront all of a sudden? It was a 1923 contract and no other governor or anyone else has ever spoken of this. Why all of a sudden is it at the front of the line?

TOM RILEY: Thank you, Senator Erdman, and let me address that by sharing with you that Colorado has been working hard to develop projects and in 2016-- and this is in some of the information I provided to you-- developed a study, the 1256 study, that identified some of the very projects that we're talking about. Two-hundred eighty-two have recently been confirmed, just at the end of 2021, that, that are being developed; 17 of those are already completed, 81 are still in their planning stages. So each year that passes, it's more water that we potentially wouldn't have access for. So really, the time is now to be able to do that. I might also add that the front range is experiencing tremendous, tremendous growth. My understanding is nearly 70,000 folks a year are coming to the current range. All those people are thirsty and need water for their municipal and industrial needs and the water that Colorado wants to access is the water identified under this provision of the compound, Article VI, which is the winter flood-- wintertime flows.

ERDMAN: So maybe this is an unfair question, but there may not be anybody sitting around this table in the front and they live long enough to see this happen. Is that a fair assessment?

TOM RILEY: Well, I hope we all have a long and happy life and it-- they are-- these are long projects. Any kind of water project, large

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infrastructure project does take time, but we need to start now. Colorado is spending 20 times the amount of, of money that we're asking for for this project to take the very water that we want to protect, 20 times. That's, that's in their own information. It would take some time. You'll have to do design plans. We'll have to do all the environmental permitting and those things, but if we don't start now, we miss the opportunity.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? Now we do have a compact and I would presume that you are-- you do have a method of making sure that we're getting the water as addressed in the compact. Is that correct?

TOM RILEY: So that's correct, Senator. The compact does have two different provisions. One is for the irrigation season, the time from April 1 to October 14-- or 15. And at that time, the state of Colorado needs to regulate their water users if we have a flow less than 120 CFS in the river. That goes on now. The other provision is for the winter and this is for 500 CFS that the state of Nebraska would have access to and there's not explicitly a need for them to regulate to that right now and they don't do that. This particular provision in the compact gives the state of Nebraska a 1921 water right, a 100-year-old water right, and those uses in Colorado would be subject to the provisions of the compact to that water right.

STINNER: But Colorado is in compliance today with the compact?

TOM RILEY: So in terms of their summertime flow--

STINNER: Right.

TOM RILEY: --120 CFS, Colorado, we believe, does what they need to in terms of administration. That's something we'll investigate further as we open up dialogue with them. For the 500 CFS, there really isn't a mechanism for them to need to do that.

STINNER: I believe that we appropriated \$200,000 to study the flows in the Platte. Is that study being conducted now or--

TOM RILEY: So, so that's, that's re-- that's correct. Senator Stinner, you've pointed out that you did give the department some, some money to look upstream and evaluate the conditions of the South Platte River and maybe to Senator Erdman's earlier question about, you know, why now, well, that was in response to this report from 2016 in Colorado

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that really showed how quickly they were starting to look at these projects to make use of the water during the wintertime season.

STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thanks for being here today. Can you tell me how you came up with \$500 million as a, as a fiscal note to this bill?

TOM RILEY: So the, the \$500 million is generally informed by a previous study that was done by the Bureau of Reclamation in the 1980s and it laid out a potential system that would include a canal and a system of reservoirs. I use that to update some of the costs and components to develop some of those general costs.

KOLTERMAN: So is that all, is that all spelled out in the information you just passed out or do you would just-- I mean, \$500 million is a lot of money.

TOM RILEY: It is a lot of money. And I think again, a better way to answer that is Colorado, for that same amount of water, is spending 20 times that request, but, but projects of this nature are very expensive and they take a lot of money and time to, to put them.

KOLTERMAN: What I'm getting at is, you know, we've been studying prisons around here for several years now, pretty much ever since I've been here. And that's a lot of money we're looking at there as well, but we've kind of gradually planned for it and spent maybe \$20 million here and \$50 million there. And all of a sudden, we-- we're going to spend \$500 million. I-- it just seems to me like we've pulled a number out of the air and said, let's move forward with this. Would that be accurate?

TOM RILEY: No, the, the number that we're talking about is based on evaluating the components and elements that it would take to build a canal and reservoir system.

KOLTERMAN: Can you supply us with any kind of a breakdown of how that-- for the future, how that breaks out?

TOM RILEY: So I'd be happy to provide the bureau report and that lays out an extensive project. And we looked at the components that we think would be necessary to fit our needs to develop the 500 CFS.

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KOLTERMAN: And is a, is a dollar amount next to each step of that project as it moves forward through the years?

TOM RILEY: Let me see if I'm tracking your question correctly, Senator, the dollar--

KOLTERMAN: Well, all I'm getting at is we're going-- you're asking us for \$500 million away, some ARPA, some not. Is that broken down over the next ten years? Because we can't allocate for the future.

TOM RILEY: So--

KOLTERMAN: We can't appropriate for the future.

TOM RILEY: So I'll answer that by saying that the-- it's really looking at the cost to design and construct the actual facilities and the timeline to do that construction would come after design plans are approved, but we do need to start now. And again, I'd, I'd to remind you that Colorado is investing a large amount of money to do-- to use these flows right now. And the longer we wait, each year, that's more water that passes through Nebraska and again, with the pressure of development in the front range, those projects are going to keep advancing. The news media right now looking at what the Colorado State Legislature is doing, they're concerned about, of course, our call on this compact and look to be potentially accelerating some of those very projects that we're talking about even further. So that means even potentially less water that would be coming down the river and we're talking about an amount of water, senators, that really is the equivalent of what Lincoln and Omaha might use for their municipal supply out of the Platte River each and every year, every year. And that's what this compact gives us. It gives us the right to maintain that water each and every year in perpetuity. Without that option and not having that water available to us, we could lose up to 90 percent of it that comes into the state now. So it's really about protecting that available water resource that we have right now and not losing it to, to another state.

KOLTERMAN: All right, thank you.

TOM RILEY: You're welcome.

STINNER: I hope you're open to coming back and talking-- we're in a time constraint period right now, but come back, talk to, to the committee, maybe over a briefing, over a luncheon or something along those lines.

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TOM RILEY: Absolutely.

STINNER: These are big-time dollars. It's 10 percent of the total revenue that we're going to set aside and we can't appropriate it into a cash fund-- I get that-- for usage, but we have to, we have to be prudent about how we, how we allocate and appropriate money, so.

TOM RILEY: Yeah, I'd be happy to come--

STINNER: We'd love, love to have you back. I think there's a lot of moving parts here, a lot of questions that a lot of people have proposed and we just want to be sure that our decision is sound.

TOM RILEY: Absolutely. I'd be happy to, to come back any time and, and maybe just a follow up, you know, the Governor has said that the state really has this financial ability now that puts us in a different spot and Colorado continues to advance their, their own work. So the time is now to do it and I'd be happy to present additional information as, as I get it and I talk to my colleagues in Colorado as well.

STINNER: Thank you.

TOM RILEY: Thank you, Senator.

STINNER: Our next testifier will be from the Department of Ener--
Department of Environment and Energy and thank you for coming.

TOM RILEY: Thank you.

STINNER: Afternoon.

JIM MACY: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Senators Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jim Macy, J-i-m M-a-c-y. I'm the director of the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy here today to testify in support of will be LB1014. Before we begin, I'd like to thank Governor Ricketts for recommending investments in water and sewer infrastructure as a part of this bill to appropriate the American Rescue Plan Act funds commonly known as ARPA. To quickly add to Director Riley's testimony, we will review to make sure all the projects meet the test and guidance given through the U.S. Department of Treasury. On the Perkins County Canal project, water removed from the upper reaches of the South Platte River will improve habitats for fish, plants, and wildlife benefits downstream, reduce contaminants such as nitrates, and more water provided into the Platte River system is best at the most critical times of year. Creation of wetlands as a

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part of this project will provide new habitat for wildlife with all together, the Platte River system will be improved across the state. With appropriate design elements, this is eligible under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The Ft. Laramie-Gering irrigation canal: six Nebraska public water systems in the vicinity of the canal face continued compliance with challenges with Safe Drinking Water Act for the naturally occurring contaminants of arsenic and uranium. Maintaining the canal, formed in 1926, may contribute through recharge, the delicate balance of quality, and the regional aquifer. At the Department of Environment and Energy, we make eligibility determinations for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund programs. We're responsible for determining what is eligible for assistance through those programs. Critical sanitary and storm sewer improvements-- improve the needs have been identified and the location of the Nebraska State Fairgrounds. If left unresolved, persistent flooding issues could cross over into the livestock facility programs, potentially resulting in untreated discharges of wastewaters. Improving the State Fair's storm water drainage system and creating a new wastewater system will maintain a clean watershed in the Wood River, protect human health, support economic and recreational activities, and provide healthy habitats for fish, plants, and wildlife. The bill will also allow for \$60 million to restore and protect drinking water systems. Much of that funding, \$50 million in total, will be provided to systems in rural areas. One is the Cedar/Knox rural project, which is under an administrative order to return into compliance with the safe drinking water standards. Not only are they facing sustainability concerns due to public health, but also the eventual loss of their raw water intake in the Lewis and Clark Lake due to ongoing sedimentation deposits from the sand delta. Other communities are facing drinking water standard compliance issues. Several are hardened-- or hurdled with costly regionalization projects, such as a means for returning into compliance. These are examples along with any flood impacted water systems not eligible for FEMA assistance where the department would be directing those funds. The remaining \$10 million will be used to replace lead service lines throughout the state. In 1986, the Safe Drinking Water Act banned lead, requiring the use of only lead-free materials into public drinking water systems. Ideally, no lead should be present within a system provided for human consumption and these ARPA funds will result in the removal of over 1,300 residential lead service lines throughout the state. Other supplemental federal funds are also earmarked on this particular issue. This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have.

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STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JIM MACY: Thank you.

STINNER: Our next invited testifier is from the Department of Economic Development. Welcome.

ANTHONY GOINS: Thank you.

STINNER: Good afternoon.

ANTHONY GOINS: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. For the record, my name is Anthony Goins and that's spelled A-n-t-h-o-n-y G-o-i-n-s. I am the director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. I appear before you today in support of LB1014, which contains Governor's recommendation for ARPA funds. As the Governor said in his State of the State Address, Nebraska is emerging as one of the-- from one of the most trying periods in our history in a position of strength. For this momentum to continue, it is imperative that we address economic needs and challenges head-on in 2022 and beyond. It is with this in mind that the proposed budget begins with funding for workforce housing. We are all aware of the challenges we face to attract and retain skilled workforce. This has been amplified a great deal by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many employees still have not returned to the labor force. Housing is a primary obstacle to attract talent. My department is proud to lead the efforts to expand and maintain our housing inventory. Moving on to many of our local businesses and commercial development landlords are stretched thin due to the pandemic. Retail restaurants and other establishments have shown their resilience and ability to adapt, yet many commercial landlords have yet to be paid rent while they work with businesses to keep doors open. The Governor's recommendation contains funding for real estate leasing assistance, which will allow us to provide support during this ongoing period of challenge. As we work to sustain and grow businesses, we must remember our state's strong agriculture backbone. We have a chance to help a high-tech processing facility in North Platte region, whose projected impact will benefit the entire state. By investing resources to support meat producers, we can also alleviate issues in the supply chain and resolve pandemic-related challenges. Furthermore, my department, under the guidance of our Governor, is poised to continue a mission to nurture economic development of north Omaha, an area of our state which has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This bill contains funding for a wide range of projects and

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improvements in north Omaha that will bring renewed focus on jobs, housing, and vitality to this epicenter of commerce and culture. In a similar vein, as we assess the pandemic and the obstacles it has created, I will speak to the importance of the Governor's request for Site and Building Development Fund. That has been a powerful tool to help communities attract and retain job creators. Funding for SBDF in 2022 will allow us to continue investing in disproportionately affected communities across Nebraska, leading to a stronger and more resilient local economies. Finally, the Governor's recommendation contains funding for LB566, the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act, which allows us to help communities across Nebraska resume important tourism, quality of life, and other projects that have been stalled by COVID-19. I will conclude by thanking the committee for its time and consideration and to express my department's appreciation and gratitude to our state lawmakers. We thank you for convening once again to make decisions that will impact and enrich the lives of everyday Nebraskans. We look forward to working with you to achieve mutual goals on behalf of this state. I thank you for your time and I'm happy to take your questions.

STINNER: Very good, thank you. Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: Thank you for being here, Director Goins.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: And I had a couple questions on some of the proposals that you just brought up--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: --for clarity, but I did have one before then. So you mentioned a little bit about rental assistance and housing. My understanding is there is an emergency rental assistance fund at the federal level and we're one of the two states that haven't applied for about \$120 million. Is that true? Do we plan to apply by a March deadline? Can you speak to that?

ANTHONY GOINS: You know, Senator, let me gather some additional information on that. I'll come back and respond to that very specifically. I do know that we have rental assistance very specifically for renters and the assistance that this is speaking to now is for, for commercial--

VARGAS: Got it.

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ANTHONY GOINS: --which is going to help stabilize, stabilize our economy and, and keep tenants and those commercial facilities. But in terms of the federal piece, I'll, I'll get some information on that and I'll report back to the committee.

VARGAS: I appreciate it. It's just--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: --you know, \$120 million is a lot of money and it can help out a lot of people. That's good for renters and for the, the homeowners as well.

ANTHONY GOINS: Absolutely.

VARGAS: A couple of questions about the programs you mentioned. You mentioned to the Site and Development-- Site and Building Development Fund--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: --\$60 million.

ANTHONY GOINS: \$60 million, yes, sir.

VARGAS: You know, one of the words you used, disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and how is-- if you can sort of ballpark-- I mean, how about how much of this \$60 million is going to go to some of the highest-need communities in Omaha? I'm looking to north and south Omaha that have been disproportionately impacted.

ANTHONY GOINS: Correct.

VARGAS: Can you speak to that?

ANTHONY GOINS: I can, absolutely, absolutely. So Senator, I would say of that \$60 million, I think we will look to north or south Omaha, but let me also state that there are some areas in our rural communities that have also been disproportionately impacted. So I think as a, as an agency and working with the Governor, we will look at economic criteria from a disproportionate standpoint and follow the Treasury guidelines and make sure that that is appropriated fairly and equitably across north and south Omaha and areas that are rural community-- in our rural communities that are being impacted.

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VARGAS: And then the, the \$12 million is allocated for north Omaha--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes sir.

VARGAS: --and the 24th Street. You know, I'll just say this. My hope is, and I'm not sure if you want to reference this, that none was applied for South 24th Street. I don't know if you want to comment on that, but for the \$12 million that is being allocated for the North 24th Street, if you could speak to how that-- those funds plan to be utilized by DED?

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. So I think as you look at the fact that that is in Senator McKinney's district, what you're looking to do is, is it's all about-- really about workforce and job creation on North 24th Street as well as some level of beautification. I think there's parts of the plan to talk about broadband. It talks about development of commercial space. It talks about development of retail space and really bringing back beautification to that street, creating aspirations in that street to bring back jobs and an area where folks in that particular vicinity can socialize and, and bringing that street really back to its former glory.

VARGAS: All right. Last question and then I'll bring it back. And I didn't see south Omaha represented in this and if you want to respond to that, it would be great if you could, because you just mentioned about economic distress in south Omaha, which is represented by at least two senators on this committee, was very, very hard hit from COVID-19.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: So if you want to respond to that and the second piece of that was just on the workforce, I agree that we have both rural and urban needs that we need to address. I noticed that \$50 million is going to rural workforce in your proposal and--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: --\$25 million, half, is going to urban when I would say most of our hardest-hit communities in COVID-19 are more in the urban center.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: So proportionately, I don't know if you want to speak to that.

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ANTHONY GOINS: I can.

VARGAS: Yeah.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir. So I think the first-- could you repeat your first question, Senator?

VARGAS: South Omaha not being represented in this.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir. So what I would say in terms of the Site and Building Fund, that \$60 million, we, we will see a portion of that that will be allocated for south Omaha. I think secondly, we have \$25 million around workforce housing. That will also be a portion that will be allocated specifically to support south Omaha and workforce housing. And then the, the last thing I'll say is we do have a focus on south Omaha. Let me share with you what we've done. We, we've, we've hired a representative, Marta Sonia. I work very closely with Yesenia Peck and we're looking to open an office in south Omaha, very similar to what we've done in north Omaha. I think economically, we, we kind of looked-- we looked at north Omaha, I mean, the unemployed-- if you look at 2019 unemployment rate there, it was over 9 percent where the state average was right at about 2.9 percent. So, you know, when we look at the data, that, that area just, just was a larger outlier, but it doesn't negate the fact that we are clearly, clearly understanding we also need to look at south Omaha, as well as some areas in our rural communities that, that may not be up to the same economic standards as the entire state. And the second part of your question?

VARGAS: No, you answered it. I just want to make sure that the east side of Omaha gets-- has been hit very, very hard in terms of a lot of different metrics and--

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

VARGAS: --we are responding adequately when we're talking about economic development.

ANTHONY GOINS: Sure. Absolutely, sir. You mentioned the \$25 million versus \$50 million. What I'll say is in terms of a greater part in Nebraska, when we look at growing greater Nebraska, we've got to have more housing. We need, we need workforce, but we also need, we need broadband. And there are opportunities to expand in some of the smaller towns in Nebraska and so we look at, you know, the middle-income housing. That is more around workforce where the \$50

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million is geared more towards what do we do to help grow the greater part of the state specifically to a workforce and what do we do to help create more talent retention? And so they are two very different needs and so the Governor's-- under the Governor's leadership, we, we-- that, that's the allocation that we're recommending.

VARGAS: Thank you.

ANTHONY GOINS: Thank you, sir.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you, Director Goins, for being here.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

ERDMAN: Can you explain to us, if you can, the thought process went into designating \$15 million for the meatpacking plant in North Platte?

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir. So I think when you look at our, our meatpacking industry, which is fairly fragmented, I mean, there's supply chain issues that are occurring right now and this meatpacking operation in North Platte will give us the opportunity to rectify some of those supply chain issues. I think we all know that beef is a large driver of the economy for the state of Nebraska. We, we, we're the world's beef epicenter. And I think anything we can do to kind of shore up supply chain issues and make sure that we continue to dominate in that particular space is pretty important and that's what this, this opportunity would do for us.

ERDMAN: Yeah, I appreciate that. Let me ask that in a different way.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

ERDMAN: My opinion is that's a small amount. It should be greater than that.

ANTHONY GOINS: OK.

ERDMAN: What was the, what was the reason for \$15 million and not \$100 million?

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ANTHONY GOINS: You know, Senator, I think as, as we looked at, you know, the division of the ARPA money, I mean, I think, you know, there will be opportunities and I think there-- that, that is a much larger amount, but I mean, you, you should have contributions from city contributions from businesses. And so I think we're going to look at it in a, in a, in an effort to bring funding together from different sources and so we felt like the \$15 million was an adequate amount to come from state government.

ERDMAN: OK, thank you.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you for being here, Anthony.

ANTHONY GOINS: Yes, sir.

KOLTERMAN: Can you-- would that project be eligible for the Imagine Nebraska Act? The beef, beef packing plant?

ANTHONY GOINS: The beef-- as I understand it, let me--

KOLTERMAN: There are incentives in there-- I think there's incentives for beef packing as well, so that could be in addition to the \$15 million.

ANTHONY GOINS: I think you're absolutely right about that. Yes, I can confirm, but I'm pretty sure that it would qualify, some elev-- elements of it would qualify for Imagine.

STINNER: Additional questions? I just have two, two comments to make. The federal rental assistance would be under HHS and not under the Department of Economic Development, so that might be a place to check out to see if they applied for the funding.

ANTHONY GOINS: OK.

STINNER: And then-- and just as a general comment, I don't see anything in here specifically for Scottsbluff either, so there you go.

ANTHONY GOINS: Senator, I promise you, we won't leave Scottsbluff out.

CLEMENTS: \$23 million--

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ANTHONY GOINS: We'll get you taken care of.

STINNER: Thank you very much.

ANTHONY GOINS: Thank you all for your time.

STINNER: Thank you very much. Our next invited testifier is Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Good afternoon.

DON ARP: Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Don Arp Jr., D-o-n A-r-p, and I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, otherwise known as the Crime Commission. I want to thank the committee for its consideration of the Governor's recommendation of federal fund appropriation related to the American Rescue Plan Act of \$47,700,000 for facility improvements to the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center. The funding will be nothing short of transformative for training, for the training center, and for Nebraska's law enforcement officers. It will quite simply redefine the nature of law enforcement training in Nebraska, both for those entering the profession and for those already wearing the badge. I have provided a handout with further details on the breakdown of the \$47.7 million plan, but at a high level, our plan includes: purchase of land for expansion, placement, and expansion of the driving track; construction of an indoor firearms range; development of a tactical facility; improvements to our outdoor firearms ranges; purpose-built space that supports cutting-edge training methods such as simulation in virtual reality; a video production studio; increased dormitory space; and operational and security improvements to the main building. These changes will allow the training center to provide for enhanced training for more recruits, provide for continuing education via multiple delivery methods, expand the number of learners on campus, improve our ability to isolate classes in response to a future pandemic, and attract full-time and adjunct instructors. The project qualifies for ARPA per Treasury's interim final rule, which notes the American Rescue Plan Act can support communities working to reduce and respond to increased violence due to the pandemic. Comparing 2019 prepandemic numbers to 2020 pandemic crime statistics found increases in criminal homicide of about 50 percent, aggravated assault of 5.34 percent, and arson of 5.84 percent, while related, yet movement-focused crimes such as burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft went down as people were sheltered in place during the pandemic. An accepted strategy to respond to the increases in violence, per the rule, is hiring of public safety personnel, which is further expanded

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by the rule to allow communities to quote use resources to rehire police officers and other public servants to restore law enforcement and courts to their prepandemic levels. The funding will allow us to be well-positioned to respond to the evolution of training content for years to come. This will, in turn, better prepare law enforcement officers in Nebraska to respond to the needs of their respective communities. I thank you for your time and I'd be glad to answer any questions you would have.

STINNER: Any questions? Senator Hilkemann.

DON ARP: Yes, sir.

HILKEMANN: You mentioned you want to restore to the prepandemic. What percentage of officers have been lost?

DON ARP: I have to get-- look to get a specific number, but we're-- Nebraska is at least 100 officers, if not more, short, probably more. We had--

HILKEMANN: You're talking about, you're talking about the-- at the state, local, and county levels?

DON ARP: Yes, sir, all levels of law enforcement. Nebraska, before the pandemic, had kind of a running deficit and it, and it was because of hiring issues, just attracting people. The pandemic did not do us any favors. And what's happened is, you know, we've lost officers because-- to COVID. You know, we've, we've lost officers that, that died because of COVID, couldn't return to the job because of COVID, or, or left out of, of fear of, of getting the, the virus and contact, in addition to, to other causes. So that exacerbated, you know, fewer officers. Well, cases have gone up, so caseloads have increased per officer and then the pandemic just, just didn't help. And, you know, we're getting a lot more of those more complicated, violent crimes because of the, the nature of habitation of the pandemic.

HILKEMANN: Thank you.

STINNER: The numbers on this in the various categories, where were they derived from? Was it an architect, engineer or what authoritative source?

DON ARP: So there's a lot of actually just internet research on projects going on around the United States comparing it to, to similar benchmarks. I knew that the League of Municipalities has engaged an

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outside firm to validate and explore our numbers and I believe they're going to testify later in this hearing about the, the accuracy and validity of those numbers, but--

STINNER: I always like to tie back to some--

DON ARP: Absolutely.

STINNER: --estimate that says this is engineers.

DON ARP: We are, we are not the only ones trying to build a training center right now for law enforcement across United States and there's--

STINNER: OK.

DON ARP: --there's several groups doing it, several agencies doing it, and a lot of knowledge out there about, about facilities.

STINNER: You had a lot of good information in your speech, if you could get a copy to me of the speech, so we could document some of those--

DON ARP: Yes, sir.

STINNER: --ratios and things that you had in your speech, so--

DON ARP: Absolutely.

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. What, what is the current wait time if you wanted to get into the training facility today? And thank you for being here, by the way.

DON ARP: Absolutely. So for the first time, the-- we've had two classes where we've had an overage. So usually what we're-- the Police Standards Advisory Council, which oversees the training center, has a student limit of 50 students per basic. So just for everybody's knowledge, we do three basics a year, 16 weeks a year, so we teach 48 of 52 weeks a year, 50 students per basic. The-- about two basics ago, we had an overage of six students that we had to move to the next one. This one, we had to-- I think we had an overage of four or five that we have to move to the next one. So there's about a 16- to 17-week wait to, to get in. You'll hear-- you know, there's a little bit of

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confusion sometimes where they talk about like there's a certain-- there's a waitlist and the waitlist is a certain quality. Those are agencies holding spots as they're hiring, so they may or may not hire for those positions. Those usually aren't names. Once there's a name, then they're put, put on the admissions list for that, that next basic. So right now, we're, we're about a basic off from being able to get everybody in, everybody in.

DORN: Thank you, thank you for that clarification.

STINNER: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Arp. The question I have is are you going to be able to train more people? Is a class going to be a larger class each time then?

DON ARP: These, these changes would allow us to either have a larger class, have-- you know, maybe go to, to 55 or 60 students per class, but it also provides us with the ability to do a fourth basic that would overlap with either the-- probably the second or third or first and second, depending on, on how we scheduled it. Our real constriction at the training center to, to get more people through is space. We, we only have so many dorm rooms. And as some of you may know or not know, we're colocated with the Nebraska State Patrol. So they have a dorm, then we have a dorm for our basic students. And that's even cut into the dorm space availability for what we call continuing ed. So those would be already certified officers that come back for specialty training: firearms instructor, defensive tactics instructor, you know, investigatory training. So it, it's really-- it's coming down to a space game to be able to move more people through. And so if we increase space, we can add more people in.

CLEMENTS: All right, that helps.

STINNER: Additional questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So, so how many rooms do you have now total?

DON ARP: Let me check. I actually have the director of the training come in.

BRENDA URBANEK: We can house 200 people at one time.

DON ARP: We can house 200 people.

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ERDMAN: That your-- you're asking to expand it by another 60?

DON ARP: Another 50.

ERDMAN: 50.

DON ARP: Um-hum. And that would allow us to do-- if you think about Patrol, the Patrol has how many of their own?

BRENDA URBANEK: They have 25 dorm rooms.

DON ARP: So the Patrol has 25 of their own, then we have 50 for our basic. If we had another 50, that would, you know, account for the possibility of doing another basic. And then we do have intermittent continuing ed that comes in and those classes are varying lengths, depending on the subject. So it would give us overflow space to be able to, to handle more of those intermittent-scheduled continuing ed and have some dorm flexibility. The other thing too to keep in mind, and this happened during the floods especially, is our dorm rooms were leveraged as housing for first responders. We used quite a number of rooms to house state troopers that were responding to, to floods and equipment. So having some excess capacity in the little, little bit of bench strength there allows us to be flexible in response to events that happen both around the Grand Island area and in other parts of Nebraska.

ERDMAN: So can I conclude from what you said that your dorm capacity is not nearly as limiting as your training capacity, would that be true?

DON ARP: I would say there-- I would say they're concurrent. I would-- I think with-- you know, we need a growth in places to put people to be able to train across the board, both basic and continuing ed.

ERDMAN: Are there times you're full capacity in the room?

DON ARP: Not since-- you know, not during COVID, but there have been times in the past where we're, we're a packed house. If you think about having a, a State Patrol camp, their instructor's there, our-- a full basic plus one or two continuing ed, especially a large continuing ed, the place can fill up pretty quick.

ERDMAN: So how much more land are you buying with \$2 million?

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DON ARP: Would depend on what land we can get available. Estimates are we'd probably need about another 100 to 120 acres somewhere near the training center, you know, around the Grand Island area just for operational continuity. But it would, it would depend on what we can, what we can find to, to fit with the, the building needs are because different types of, of ground clearly would be suited for, for different things. So we wouldn't want to say build our driving track on sandy ground.

ERDMAN: All right, thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? I have a couple questions.

DON ARP: Sure.

STINNER: One of them is peculiar because we appropriated dollars for salary increases for the employees at the training center.

DON ARP: Correct.

STINNER: And I hear back that they didn't get salary increases.

DON ARP: That is correct.

STINNER: And tell me why.

DON ARP: So one, we're, we're very appreciative of the approval of the Legislature of getting that money appropriated. What happened was, of all things in government, a technical snag. So currently, personnel is in the process of working out the glitch to be able to contractually release those funds to the training center instructors.

STINNER: I'll follow up with you later on the glitches.

DON ARP: OK.

STINNER: We did pass LB-- and help me what it was that increased training for law enforcement. What was-- gosh, I can't remember.

DON ARP: LB51?

STINNER: LB51, yes.

DON ARP: Um-hum.

STINNER: Has that put more pressure on training center and--

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DON ARP: Definitely put a pressure on agencies wanting more continuing ed from us.

STINNER: OK.

DON ARP: You know, we were-- kind of going back as a little bit of a history lesson, as pressure got to be where our, our basic classes started to, to fill up and we started to have, you know, space issues, we kind of started focusing more on providing basic than continuing ed. However, the escalated continuing ed requirements in LB51 have made a lot of agencies reach out to the training center as a source. Now the, the Legislature did appropriate and approving our budget, you know, access to online training resources, which has been greatly helpful for the agencies that have the, the technological structure and backbone to be able to, to take advantage of those. And as we heard, you know, comments on broadband, not an accessible resource in every part of the state. Other agencies have very much asked for more continuing ed to offset that increase because what they want to do is really, you know-- and it's a credit to them. They really want to take advantage of that increased hours and make it useful for their departments. So they're seeking, you know, new, new content, things about de-escalation, you know, working with special populations, everything from, you know, intervention training to, to public relations, things that, you know, we want to see. So we, we are getting that demand. And, you know, if we were to offer-- we might be able to offer a class or two with the current setup, but with more space, we could, we could host a lot, a lot more of that and meet those needs. But yes, it's, it's definitely having agencies [INAUDIBLE]. And, and then later on, there's a couple of agency heads that are coming and I think testify to that need.

STINNER: OK. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

DON ARP: Thank you.

STINNER: That concludes our invited testimony. We will now start with item number one under public health emergency response, healthcare facility capacity expansion and I-- we will entertain proponents. Afternoon.

ANN SCHUMACHER: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ann Schumacher, A-n-n S-c-h-u-m-a-c-h-e-r, and I'm the president of CHI Health Immanuel Medical Center. CHI Health is a regional health system which consists

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of 28 hospitals, 2 standalone behavioral health centers, and more than 150 employed physician practices in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today regarding support of LB1014 on behalf of CHI Health and we thank Governor Ricketts for including \$40 million in ARPA recommendations to go toward capital construction grants to build mental healthcare and education capacity in Nebraska. CHI Health is the region's leader in providing children's mental health services, with over 133 years of caring for children in Nebraska. As you'll hear more this afternoon, COVID-19 has significantly impacted Nebraska's children and families. The statistics paint a startling image of the challenges our state is facing and why the investment in mental health is critical to some of our most vulnerable and youngest patients. In 2020, more than 44,000 children in Nebraska were diagnosed with a mental illness. Over the past 12 months, 16 percent of Nebraska high school students seriously considered suicide and the suicide rate among youth aged 10 to 19 in Douglas and Sarpy Counties doubled from November 2019 to November 2020. The majority of 5 to 18-year-olds in mental health crisis in Region 6 are treated at CHI Health Immanuel. Currently, access to mental health and behavioral health treatment is through our hospital emergency department, where patients suffering from automobile accidents, heart attacks, gunshot wounds, and other traumatic experiences also seek care. Our current hospital inpatient capacity of 18 beds is significantly below the demonstrated need. CHI Health is fortunate to be partnering with a group of private-sector philanthropists led by Ken Stinson, chairman emeritus of Kiewit, to fundraise a significant portion of the cost for this project. The project is called Lasting Hope Center for Children and Families and it will build a new mental health facility for youth aged 5 through 18. It will include emergency assessment and triage center, crisis stabilization, inpatient beds, partial hospitalization treatment, and outpatient consult offices. A comprehensive demand study is being finalized to determine the size and scope, but a preliminary cost estimate suggests the total cost will range between \$40 million to \$50 million and include an additional 20-- 35 to 40 beds. Most of the funding for this project will come from private philanthropic donations, but our project would request \$10 million of the proposed \$40 million from the American Rescue Plan Act funds included in LB1014 as introduced. We are confident this amount of public investment will leverage the remaining amount needed to be raised privately. The project schedule is to be fine-tuned, but we're confident with your help, it will be completed before the end of calendar year 2024. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and for your service

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to the state of Nebraska. While I do not envy the difficult decisions you will be making over the coming weeks, I want to reiterate our commitment to addressing mental health and hope you will support the Governor's recommendation for \$40 million for expanding capacity as proposed in LB1014. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you for being here. How many employees have you lost because of the vaccine, vaccine mandate?

ANN SCHUMACHER: Really, very few, very few.

ERDMAN: 5 percent?

ANN SCHUMACHER: Less. I don't have that number, but I could get you exact number, Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: A lot of the medical facilities are short of help because of that. And so you expand and build 35 or 40 more beds. Are you confident that you can find the sufficient help to supply those, those beds with service?

ANN SCHUMACHER: Simultaneously, we have a staffing analysis happening. We are bringing together all of the various mental health projects that are looking to expand and the staffing needs of that. We created a gap analysis and are currently working side by side with educators around developing the workforce for that [INAUDIBLE].

ERDMAN: Do you have an opinion on what are some of these mental health issues of these young people is because they were, they were out of school, they weren't in touch with their, with their peers, the social distancing, all those things that happened with COVID? How much of that play into the mental health issues that we're facing today?

ANN SCHUMACHER: You know, I think social isolation, isolation is a key impact to children's mental health. As we know, children are very social and that's a key part of their development and needs, so certainly that's an impact. I'm not necessarily an expert on all of the things that are impacting our children's mental health, but we have secured expertise from Harvard, which is one of the leading child psychiatry programs in the country, and they're advising us on this project so that we're solving for the needs of our children today.

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ERDMAN: Would you say that this issue has become more prevalent since COVID-19 began?

ANN SCHUMACHER: We have seen increasing numbers of children needing mental health services for some time and--

ERDMAN: Significant numbers?

ANN SCHUMACHER: It's been on the rise for the past many years and-- but certainly, yes, COVID is seeing a significant increase in children and adult mental health I will say.

ERDMAN: OK.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

ANN SCHUMACHER: Thank you.

CHANDA CHACON: Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Chanda Chacon, C-h-a-n-d-a C-h-a-c-o-n, and I'm the president and CEO of Children's Hospital and Medical Center. Children's is a safety net provider for children throughout the state of Nebraska, reaching over 138,000 unique patients every year, ranging from the common cold to very complex medical conditions and it's up to us to think ahead for the healthcare needs of every child in the state. With Children's mission to improve the life of every child at the root of everything that we do, I am here today to confirm our commitment to being a part of the solution for the growing mental health crisis for children in Nebraska. While mental health is a part of our current care model, we, with many stakeholders, like you've just heard, recognize significant gaps to optimum access for care. Emerging data illustrates that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly negative impact on the mental healthcare for children and adolescents. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, risk of suicide among kids and adolescents have increased over the course of the pandemic, lead-- and the leading the U.S. Surgeon General to issue a mentalhealth use advisor-- youth advisory, stating that it would be a tragedy if we beat back one public health crisis, only to now allow another one to grow in its place. Prior to COVID-19, one in five children experienced a mental health condition. Today, data suggests the number to be between one in four. According to the Children's Hospital Association, from April 2019 to October of 2020, children's hospitals across the U.S. have seen a 24 percent increase in the number of mental health emergency room visits for children 5 to 11 and

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for teens 12 to 17, a 31 percent increase. In the first half of 2021 alone, children's hospitals reported cases of self-injury and suicide in children ages 5 to 17 at a 45 percent higher rate than at the same time period in 2019. The trends in children's mental health were sobering leading up to the pandemic and now we must think bigger in how we solve this challenge. Children's proposes the development of an innovative urgent care health model to, to support the needs of children before they reach their crisis stage. This is currently a missing step on the mental health continuum of care for children. Coupled with our existing initiatives to promote early detection of mental health issues, Children's aims to reach further in an urgent health and mental health urgent care set in Douglas County and a second set in more western Nebraska to promote access to mental healthcare across the state. This is an opportunity to invest one-time funding toward a model of care that currently does not exist, but will be sustainable for years to come and we're committed to this project. No one entity can be responsible for solving the mental healthcare needs of children across the state. We all share in the work. There's a significant amount of work that's already happened through partnerships and collaborations between our local and statewide partners. I'm grateful for the collaborative efforts of my fellow providers as we have begun this journey together already. I'm also thankful for the insight of many of the leaders on this committee to take action to allow us to move faster on implementing this care model to impact our children today and in the future. I want to specifically thank Chairman Stinner and Governor Pete Ricketts for recognizing the crisis that our youth face today. We're seeing these patients every day in all of our care settings at Children's and without earlier intervention and adequate access to mental health, we are not doing our job to protect the most vulnerable of our population. I want to thank you for the opportunity to spark a change in our environment. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

CHANDA CHACON: Thank you.

STINNER: Good afternoon. Good to see you.

RHONDA HAWKS: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Rhonda Hawks, R-h-o-n-d-a H-a-w-k-s, and I'm here to testify in support of LB1014 to increase mental health services to the citizens of Nebraska. I have also

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included a letter of partnership and support from Carol Boye, president and CEO of Community Alliance. To begin, I want to extend our gratitude to Governor Ricketts for including a \$40 million one-time capital investment for projects that address Nebraskans' mental health in LB1014. My husband, Howard and I are partnering with Community Alliance, an agency with 40 years of experience providing services to those with serious mental illness. It will be the operator of the new center. The Community Alliance project will be expanded access to outpatient mental healthcare, including telehealth, primary healthcare, employment, stability, recovery, support, and education, as well as suicide prevention. Total project costs are estimated to be around \$60 million. The project will use \$10 million of the \$40 million ARPA funding. Howard and I are committed to raising \$50 million privately. For the private sector to invest \$50 million in this project, the public sector investment of \$10 million is key. A site and building have been purchased, so this is truly a one-time, shovel-ready capital project. The ongoing reliance of short-term hospital stays result in limited aftercare services, often referred to as stage 4 thinking as in cancer care. Don't let it get to stage 4, i.e., people are forced to wait until the situation is so acute as to require an emergency-level response. The Community Alliance project emphasizes sustained recovery, leading to decreased police engagement, decreased incarceration, decreased chronic homelessness, decreased use of hospital emergency rooms, and significant savings to Nebraska taxpayers. Our family and likely your family has been impacted by mental health issues. We lost a grandson at age 23 and my father at age 49 from mental health issues. This is personal and it is very important to all of us. I'm honored to be here this afternoon and I ask this committee to include Governor Ricketts' \$40 million recommendation in your final ARPA proposal. Thank you for your service. We know it's not easy. I would be happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. I just have a general comment.

RHONDA HAWKS: Sure.

KOLTERMAN: I've had the privilege to work with quite a few people in the Omaha area. When it comes to philanthropy, nobody does it better than Omaha.

RHONDA HAWKS: Aw, thank you.

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KOLTERMAN: And for you and your husband to raise \$50 million for this project is just astonishing.

RHONDA HAWKS: Thank you, Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: So thank you very much and hopefully we can move this forward.

RHONDA HAWKS: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator Hilkemann.

RHONDA HAWKS: Hi.

HILKEMANN: Hi. It's good to see you here again today.

RHONDA HAWKS: Thank you.

HILKEMANN: I just cannot thank you and Howard enough for what you have done in that-- for our University of Nebraska and now the Community Alliance. Thank you and we will see everything we can do to help you out with that project and thank you for your commitment to that.

RHONDA HAWKS: Thank you, Senator Hilkemann. Thank you.

STINNER: And I echo those sentiments, thank you for coming.

RHONDA HAWKS: Thank you.

STINNER: You may begin.

BARB VOLLMER: Do you want me to-- proceed, OK. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner who just walked out--

HILKEMANN: He'll be back.

BARB VOLLMER: --and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Barb Vollmer, B-a-r-b V-o-l-l-m-e-r, and I'm the executive vice president of youth care at Boys Town. I'm here today to testify in support of LB1014 and I want to thank Senator Hilgers and the Governor for introducing this bill. This bill requests funds to support capital construction of a new state-of-the-art education center on Boys Town's campus that is tailored to fit the unique needs of the youth we serve. The project will advance the critical academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs that Nebraska students are facing, particularly now in the wake of the COVID pandemic. Boys Town provides education

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services to hundreds of children each year. Most of our students come from underprivileged circumstances. Many have experienced failure, not because they're not capable, but because of the multitude of disadvantaged conditions they find themselves in. Improvements to the education center give Boys Town greater advantage for filling those educational gaps and addressing not just the academic needs, but the behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students as well. This new facility provides a foundation for the kind of instructional and behavioral support students need to help them meet state academic standards, as well as help them to become good and productive citizens. The education center also serves as a research and development hub for evidence-based education and training services that Boys Town delivers across the state of Nebraska and nationally. The pandemic has taught us that learning today and into the future must look different than the classrooms and chalk boards of our past. Learning environments must be equipped to ensure high-speed internet access and digital connectivity. We need learning environments that enable the use of innovative teaching strategies that engage students and inspire kids to want to learn. Our students need basic instruction in subjects like math, reading, and science, but they also need workforce-readiness skills in areas like construction, mechanics, and nursing that ready them for successful futures and the education center can make all of that a reality for them. As we move forward and begin to recover from the life-altering impacts of this pandemic, we must think about how we can best prepare our youth as they become young adults. We believe an investment in Nebraska students is one that will pay dividends for years to come because they are our future. I provided two documents, our completed ARPA eligibility checklist and a fact sheet for the proposed project. And with that, we ask your favorable consideration of LB1014. Thank you for your time and attention.

HILKEMANN: Thank you. Are there questions?

CLEMENTS: Yes.

HILKEMANN: Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILKEMANN: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Ms. Vollmer. Did you have a dollar amount that you're wanting to request?

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BARB VOLLMER: \$10 million.

CLEMENTS: OK, I didn't see that. And does this relate to the mental health aspect of this allocation?

BARB VOLLMER: It does.

CLEMENTS: And how does that--

BARB VOLLMER: So, yes, and, and certainly, you know, the academic success of kids is also connected to the mental health success of, of children. And our Boys Town educational model certainly integrates that all together, the-- both the social, emotional learning as well as the academic learning kind of all into that one package, so.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILKEMANN: Additional questions? Just a personal comment.

BARB VOLLMER: Yes.

HILKEMANN: I always have appreciated Boys Town, but having had the opportunity to represent the Boys Town area for the last eight years, what a gift that you are for our state and for our nation. Thank you very much.

BARB VOLLMER: Thank you.

HILKEMANN: I'll leave you with that. Any additional-- thank you. Additional proponents? Is there anyone in the, in the-- opponents to the, to this recommendation from the Governor? Anyone in what they call the neutral position regarding this? You are just in time, Mr. Chairman.

STINNER: Well, we'll move on to number two is public health response/Nebraska calling promotion. Good afternoon.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the highly esteemed Appropriations Committee. I am Jeremy Nordquist, J-e-r-e-m-y N-o-r-d-q-u-i-s-t, and I'm the president of the Nebraska Hospital Association here to testify in support of LB1014. Hospitals and healthcare heroes-- the healthcare heroes that they employ have been on the front lines battling COVID-19 for nearly two years and the COVID pandemic has placed an incredible physical, mental, and emotional burden on them. Today, our state has an opportunity to make

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key investments in Nebraska's healthcare system to resoundingly defeat COVID, rebuild our healthcare workforce, and come out of the pandemic with a stronger healthcare system that is better equipped to meet the physical and behavioral health needs of all Nebraskans. The health of our communities and the future of Nebraska depends on the future of our healthcare workforce. The Nebraska Hospital Association is pleased with the starting point presented by Governor Ricketts. We'd like to thank the Governor for prioritizing healthcare capacity, developing Nebraska's workforce, and addressing the economic and educational impacts of the pandemic. We are specifically pleased to see funding for loan repayment, increases in mental health beds and healthcare facility capacity, as you've just heard, and prioritizing our shovel-ready projects along with the rural health complex. The funding for the community college development matches with LB1091 from Senator Dorn that provides scholarships for associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates in nursing profession. The Governor's proposed funding for public health response to COVID is absolutely critical for protecting hospital capacity. This should be expanded to support premium pay for our frontline nursing heroes who stayed with our hospitals during the pandemic, as proposed in Senator McDonnell's LB1055. Nebraska's hospitals also request Rescue Act funding for LB1044 from Senator Hilke, which creates innovative-- innovation grants for the delivery of healthcare in our hospitals, and LB1085 from Senator Pansing Brooks to expand career and technical education-- educational programs for students. Finally, I'd like to thank Mr. Chairman and the members of this committee for your commitment to healthcare in our state. Our healthcare heroes, even though they're very, very busy, are closely watching the work that you do here and the actions that you take to support them during this time of crisis will be very, very meaningful. Thank you and we appreciate, we appreciate your support of the Governor's proposals and the additional bills I mentioned. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you very much. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you for coming today--

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Yeah.

ERDMAN: --Mr. Nordquist. I appreciate that. I read an article last week or so that said we're down about 15 percent on beds available in the state of Nebraska because of workforce shortages.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: That's-- yeah.

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ERDMAN: So how many of those people are-- have left our workforce and the health department because of vaccine mandate?

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Well, I, I think so far, it's been relatively minimal. The, the big systems that-- in, in-- largely in Omaha and Lincoln have moved forward with their own mandate before CMS had-- saw relatively small numbers. They-- I think most of them got close to 95-plus or even more than that percent vaccinated on their own, just engaging with their staff, talking about the vaccine. And then the remainder, there are legitimate medical and religious exemptions that they all gave consideration to. So that brought the number down to relatively small numbers that-- there. They-- there was an article probably a month or two ago in the World-Herald that mentioned the specific numbers for each system and I-- we can get that to you. For the other hospitals in Nebraska, with the new-- with the CMS mandate on the way to be implemented and starting in February and March, there's, there's some concern from those, those hospitals and, and they're doing similar steps that the big systems did, taking time to explain the, the vaccine, bringing in medical experts that talk about the value of the vaccine and the safety around the vaccine. So they're going to do that work over the next month and, and then also consider any medical or religious exemptions that are allowed under law. It remains, it remains to be seen the impact on the hospitals out in, in rural Nebraska,.

ERDMAN: My hospital, my county hospital, is in very much danger of--

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Um-hum.

ERDMAN: --being very, very short.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Yeah.

ERDMAN: Majority of the people who have not been vaccinated are the doctors.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Um-hum.

ERDMAN: And without doctors, you don't have a hospital and my hospital administrator happens to be my neighbor and her and I have conversations quite often about this. They're very troubled by this and I think it's going to be difficult for you to find replacement people to fill those in-- fill those places so that we increase those bed capacity like we have before.

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JEREMY NORDQUIST: Right.

ERDMAN: This is very serious.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Yes, some of the, the vaccine numbers that we've heard from those hospitals, I mean, they're, they're only-- I mean, the community, maybe 40, 50 percent vaccinated and the hospital is only 60 or 70 percent vaccinated. So they, they are going to do some, some work, some education with them, and hopefully improve it, but there will be challenges.

ERDMAN: They're not taking the shot.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Um-hum.

ERDMAN: Those people aren't taking the shot. I don't care what you do to--

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JEREMY NORDQUIST: Appreciate your time, thank you.

STINNER: You bet. If you want to tag in, I'll, I'll let you tag in. Additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll go to number three, replace aging rural ambulances. Good afternoon.

MARLENE BOMAR: Good afternoon, Senator-- Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marlene Bomar, M-a-r-l-e-n-e B-o-m-a-r. I am a board member for the Nebraska Emergency Medical Service Association and a past president of the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association. I am an active member of the Battle Creek Volunteer Fire and Rescue and have served on the Madison Volunteer Fire and Rescue. I have been a volunteer firefighter for 25 years and an EMT for eight years. The Nebraska Emergency Medical Service Association, NEMSA, is a statewide association of emergency service providers. NEMSA is a strong supporter of the Governor's proposal to allocate \$35 million in ARPA funding to assist rural communities to replace aging ambulances. As the Governor's recommendation noted, many ambulance in-- ambulances in rural areas have reached the end of their useful life and are in significant need to be replaced. The funding will ensure that essential equipment is provided in rural communities to support necessary public health services. Using this historical infusion of dollars to support emergency medical services, which traditionally do

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not receive state funding, will help to create a foundation for more effective response to future public health emergencies. EMS professionals provide essential frontline healthcare services in local communities. The ongoing pandemic poses a serious threat to the health and safety of EMS personnel. This is on top of the well-known problem where less and less, where less and less individuals are willing to serve in these crucial EMS roles. Modern ambulances, especially those equipped with power cots that can save the backs of EMT and paramedics, are actually an important tool in retaining volunteers. Ambulances and EMS equipment is very costly, but critical to carrying out our lifesaving work. A new ambulance can cost anywhere from \$150,000 to \$300,000 with-- there is about 100-- 342 of the emergency services departments across the state, many of them in rural areas served by volunteers and receiving little to no public support. This one-time infusion of support is critical to bolstering the state's public health infrastructure. Thank you for your consideration.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So if, if these average from \$150,000 to \$300,000, that's not a whole lot of hospital-- whole lot of ambulance or as far as I need goes. How will you determine who gets the ambulance and who doesn't?

MARLENE BOMAR: I'm not exactly for sure how that will go. Michelle, would you have any idea or-- we'll just have-- I can figure-- we can get that information--

ERDMAN: OK, that would be good.

MARLENE BOMAR: --and get it to you.

ERDMAN: That would be good to know. All right, thank you.

MARLENE BOMAR: I just know there are a lot of them that don't-- that need help.

ERDMAN: I understand.

MARLENE BOMAR: Yeah.

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Chairman Stinner, and thank you for being here. And I-- a little bit referring to Senator Erdman's question. My local

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town, Adams, they're-- we have been pricing ambulances, but you can't price one for under \$300,000, not in today's economy and stuff. So I just wanted to update that number there a little bit. Quick math on me, it would be 105, but I don't-- I'm not saying what's going to happen on the bill. Thank you.

MARLENE BOMAR: Yeah, I did say-- I had 342. I think it's 420-- or about 427, so.

STINNER: 427 is for--

MARLENE BOMAR: Of the emergency services departments.

STINNER: OK, that's departments and each department has a-- one ambulance or several?

MARLENE BOMAR: Some have one and some have two and some of them are just rescues also.

STINNER: I just did the math. We were talking about it's 100-- at \$300,000 for the amount that we have is 116 is-- would-- have you done a survey and have an idea of how many are really out there that really need replacement?

MARLENE BOMAR: I, I have-- we do not have that if I-- if they have.

STINNER: OK, very good.

DORN: One--

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: --quick comment and I don't know what-- where the rules are at or what the rules are at. Thank you for that. But most ambulances, you're not allowed anymore to have after eight years and I don't understand all the guidelines. When we went through our process looking for an ambulance at Adams, once they're eight years old, you get no value on a trade-in. I will say that and there is something in the-- some of these guys are shaking their head. There's something in-- some kind of state requirement that after eight years, they are considered past their useful life, but I don't know all the details. Thank you.

STINNER: Especially when you're driving them.

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MARLENE BOMAR: Yeah.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

MARLENE BOMAR: Thank you so much.

JERRY STILMOCK: Mr. Chair, members of the committee, my name is Jerry Stilmock--

STINNER: Good afternoon.

JERRY STILMOCK: --J-e-r-r-y S-t-i-l-m-o-c-k, testifying on behalf of my clients, the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association and the Nebraska Fire Chiefs Association in support of the measure contained within LB1014. We thank the Governor for including this very important item of \$35 million. Four-hundred twenty-seven licensed agencies provide EMS throughout the state. That is approximately-- of those, approximately 75 percent are all volunteer services, about 320. The, the specific reference in the, in the, in the bill on page 9, line 16 through 26 provides the Agency 25, Health and Human Services, with program funding for Program 514. A tidbit to pass along, please. After the bill was introduced, there was also the U.S. Department of Treasury came out and provided guidance in its final interim study or final interim rule at page 61 specifically identifying that ambulance were a-- an item, a capital asset that could be purchased using the ARPA funds. The how do volunteer rescue-- how do volunteer fire departments typically provide ambulances to their volunteers is through fundraisers. It's through pancake feeds, it's through bequests, it's through donations, it's through trust funds or estates when somebody passes. You know, I have yet to hear of a situation where a city or village had a utility department or street department that that street department went out and did fundraisers to raise funds for a vehicle. And if, if EMS is not an essential service in Nebraska, I tell you it is, certainly it is. This money is well spent. Through COVID, we had several calls that I received and participated in where volunteers were suggested by their employer because COVID was running so rampant. You shall not volunteer on the service of which you serve in the community because we need you at employment. One other item I'd like to share with you all as we advocate for support of the Governor's recommendation to you is please don't consider it a local matter. Please consider what happens and who responds to emergency calls at Mahoney State Park, at Platte River State Park, at Lake, Lake McConaughy, at Lewis and Clark Lake. All of those, I submit to you, are-- emergency responses are by volunteers that, that serve

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Nebraskans. It's not just in the community. It might even be a ride-- a bike ride around the lakes at Valley and Waterloo. If somebody would need emergency care, that's volunteers. The, the item that, that you will consider later with the pond perhaps in Sarpy County, it's going to be served by Louisville. It would be served by Louisville, by Ashland and those communities need your help. Thank you, Senators. I appreciate your consideration.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, I think they've referred to it as a lake not a pond.

JERRY STILMOCK: I was trying to-- right, add a little levity, sir.

STINNER: All right.

JERRY STILMOCK: Thank you kindly. Good day.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll now move to number four on our program, child welfare case counts and provider rates. We had a false alarm there. I thought he was coming to testify. Anyone proponents for number four, child welfare case counts and provider rates? Any opponents? Seeing none, anybody in the neutral capacity? We do have one. Welcome.

RYAN STANTON: Thanks. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ryan Stanton, R-y-a-n S-t-a-n-t-o-n, and I'm the CEO of Compass in Kearney. I represent the Nebraska Alliance of Family and Child Service Providers. We're an association of child welfare providers who individually contract with DHHS to provide child welfare services to thousands of families in over 60 Nebraska counties outside of the eastern service area. I'm here to reiterate what our organization has communicated in testimony to this committee in each of the last five years. We need your help. I'm here to testify in a neutral capacity. Before I go any further, I want to say thank you to the Governor for responding to our request for an increase to the family support and travel rates. The temporary rate increases he announced earlier this month is one small step towards stabilizing a fragile child welfare system. I also want to thank Senator Wishart for introducing LB1164. This too is an important step to rightsizing child welfare. However, while these are steps in the right direction, neither of these individual efforts are enough to fix what's wrong in our child welfare system. To put it simply, the provider community outside of Douglas and Sarpy County is not able to

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currently serve all the families who need services. We turn away referrals every day because the current rates do not permit us to hire staff who are willing to go into the homes with drug abuse, domestic violence, and unsanitary conditions. Where there-- where those are the norm, their safety is often at risk. Meanwhile, the number of families needing services has-- have increased and they're staying in the system longer. And because of the pandemic, many of the cases that we're seeing are more challenging than ever. We can't afford to travel to more rural, rural areas of the state. We all lose money on the reimbursement rate for travel time and distance. We can't afford to take steps to reduce an average monthly turnover that recently has been in the double digits. As you know, significant turnover among family support workers can directly impact the ability of a family to function independently of a child welfare system and often results in families staying in the system longer than they otherwise would have. We also can't afford to compete with other entities for employees. We're only able to pay our employees \$14 to \$16 an hour. You can see why a job in retail or food service quickly becomes appealing. Even the state just gave their family support workers a 20 percent raise, all while providers are forced to pick and choose which families to help. Those we can't help presumably go on a waiting list or perhaps are being served by an overworked or overwhelmed DHHS caseworker. Due to nine years without a rate increase and over 20 changes to our contract that resulted in both a reduction in revenue and increased cost, we have a shaky foundation at best to operate in the midst of a pandemic. The vulnerable families in your district cannot wait another nine years to make the system better. They're counting on you to help now. In addition to passing LB1164, we need a one-time direct stabilization payment to child welfare providers for 20 percent of the initial contracted amount between the provider and DHHS for the contract that began on July 1. We don't want to continue to choose which families we serve based on their geographic location and our capacity to meet their needs. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. I listened closely to your testimony and you said you're in the neutral capacity.

RYAN STANTON: Yeah.

ERDMAN: And you said you support the Governor's bill, but it doesn't go far enough. Is that what you're telling us?

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RYAN STANTON: Yeah. Yep, that's what I'm saying.

ERDMAN: So why didn't you come in opposition?

RYAN STANTON: I didn't come in opposition, neutral.

ERDMAN: I said why didn't you?

RYAN STANTON: Oh, that's a good question.

ERDMAN: Because you're, you're not at all happy with the amount you're going to get.

RYAN STANTON: Sure.

ERDMAN: So neutral says, OK, go ahead and pass a bill, we don't care. That's not what you said.

RYAN STANTON: Got it.

ERDMAN: You said we need more funds because we're short.

RYAN STANTON: Yeah, that's true.

ERDMAN: You would be far better served coming in and opposition, saying, hey, you're shorting us. We need more money.

RYAN STANTON: Yeah, yeah. That's true.

ERDMAN: Does that make any sense?

RYAN STANTON: Yeah, that's--

ERDMAN: OK, thank you.

RYAN STANTON: Thanks.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

RYAN STANTON: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional testifiers in the neutral position? Seeing none, we'll move on to number five, Capitol HVAC replacement. Is there anybody as a proponent? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll move on to YRTC, that's number six, facility improvements. Any proponents? Seeing none,

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any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? See how easy this is? We're just rolling right through. Number seven, HHS IT utilization increases. Proponents? Any proponents? Seeing none, anyone that is an opponent? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes number seven, HHS. We'll now open to number eight, rural health complex. Proponents? Nobody wants a med center in Kearney, all right. Any opponents? Anyone in a neutral capacity? Well, that concludes that section of it, although we will open it up to the other, which is anyone in the public that believes they want to make-- and hopefully there-- hopefully you don't also have a request for a bill, but you have other ideas as it relates to ARPA funding and use of ARPA funding as it relates to public health emergency response. Good afternoon.

HOWARD LIU: Good afternoon, Chairman. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. I'm Dr. Howard Liu, H-o-w-a-r-d L-i-u, and I'm testifying today on behalf of Nebraska Medicine, where I serve as the chair of the department of psychiatry and a practicing adult, child, and adolescent psychiatrist. I want to begin my comments by thanking the Governor for recognizing the importance of investing in our state's behavioral health infrastructure, specifically children's mental health and education capacity through the healthcare facility capacity expansion investment. I would like to respectfully request this Appropriations Committee consider making additional investment in our state's behavioral infrastructure to include an innovative treatment model for adult patients with both acute medical and mental health conditions. In other words, a place for adult patients who are too medically ill for psychiatric facilities and too psychiatrically ill for medical facilities. This proposal was included in the recommendations of the Nebraska healthcare provider working group presented to this committee at October ARPA hearing. On a typical day, 10 to 20 patients with serious psychiatric problems are hospitalized at Nebraska Medicine for medical issues like delirium, heart disease, COVID-related complications, etcetera. Complex patients requiring both acute medical and psychiatric care are growing both in number and in acuity, with a 21 percent increase in admissions in the last year. To address this need, Nebraska Medicine is proposing the development of a medical psychiatry unit, or MPU, to bring together expertise in treating both acute medical and psychiatric problems. Nebraska Medicine's medical psychiatry unit will provide safe, compassionate, and state-of-the-art care for adult patients with both acute medical and psychiatric needs. This is a proven model which has a 20-year track record at leading

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institutions and we believe the time is right to bring it to the state of Nebraska. The medical psychiatry unit will allow for more hospital bed capacity, improved patient experience, and enhance staff safety. Assaults against healthcare workers by inpatients with psychiatric illness in medical surgical units has increased by 52 percent at Nebraska Medicine of last year alone. This trend is reflected statewide and nationally. This, in addition to the stress of the pandemic, has placed enormous strain on our bedside nurses and support staff. As the former director of BHECN, the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska, I know that a team of highly trained staff is critical for the safe and successful operation of the MPU and this MPU will serve as an ideal training site for nurses, psychologists, social workers, physicians, and other professionals learning to care for patients with medical and psychiatric complex conditions. And this project will help to create a fellowship program that will recruit, train, and retain the workforce we need in every community. As the pandemic has exacerbated both mental and physical health needs, we are requesting an additional \$12 million to support this public health response in the area of behavioral health infrastructure capacity. I have included proposed draft language and supplemental supporting materials for this project with my testimony. Thank you for your time and happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your time and--

HOWARD LIU: Thank you.

STINNER: --your request.

HOWARD LIU: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional folks that want to speak in the other category? Come-- please come up. Good afternoon.

LAUREL SARISCSANY: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Laurel Sariscsany. That's spelled L-a-u-r-e-l S-a-r-i-s-c-s-a-n-y and I'm a policy analyst at OpenSky Policy Institute. We have comments on multiple categories of ARPA fund use, but out of respect for your time, we have condensed our comments into one testimony. We are here in the neutral capacity to LB1014 because while we support, support ARPA funds being used for public health and premium pay, we would like to see more funds going towards the law's stated purpose of addressing long-standing health and

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economic disparities which were amplified by the pandemic, especially in disparate-- disproportionately impacted communities. We also have concerns that some projects will require General Funds in future years and other projects will open Nebraska up to the risk of having funds clawed back by the federal government. ARPA funds are, as stated, designed to support people struggling in the pandemic economy and to begin address long-standing structural inequalities the pandemic further exposed. However, the Governor's bill only allocates 12 percent of funds directly to people through programs such as premium pay for essential workers and an additional 19 percent of funds towards people-oriented projects, such as through improved hospital capacity and workforce housing. These projects address the health and economic, economic disparities for which the funds were intended. While the federal government gave states broad latitude in deciding how to use ARPA funds, nearly 70 percent of these dollars go towards projects that are not going towards the intended use of addressing health and economic disparities amplified by the pandemic. There are other funds available that could free up ARPA dollars to address health and economic disparities. For example, more than a quarter of the ARPA funds are allocated to water and sewer infrastructure even though Nebraska is expected to receive \$358 million for water projects under the infrastructure bill. This and other funds Nebraska will receive under the infrastructure bill are listed in the handout have provided. In addition to funds available under the infrastructure bill, there is also \$128.7 million in capital project funds that haven't been allocated. We are also concerned that the potential-- for the potential that ARPA dollars will be used to kick-start programs that need General Funds in the future. For example, the proposal includes funding for family-directed education recovery accounts for low-income families, a pilot project extended through fiscal year '26 and that will need support if extended from the state. We are additionally concerned that these accounts do not meet this committee's eligibility requirements outlined in the checklist. While tutoring addresses the harm of learning loss among low-income families, private school tuition does not. Temporary increases in provider rates additionally raised concerns about utilizing one-time funds that will likely need to be, that will likely need to be an ongoing expense, thereby making the General Fund look more flush than it actually is and making it harder to sustain our obligations when ARPA funds dry up. Finally, there are several projects included in the Governor's bill, such as the Perkins County Canal project and STAR WARS that may be considered controversial. Just like you, we are concerned that they may get wrapped up in litigation, leaving the

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state unable to "oblicate" funds when the funds need to be spent. This could open up Nebraska to the risk of having funds clawed back by the federal government. We therefore testify in the neutral position for LB1014 and would encourage the committee not to advance it as written. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

LAUREL SARISCSANY: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional testimony in the other category for public health emergency response? So now we'll move on to the second category, negative economic impacts. Number 10 on our program is shovel-ready capital projects. Good afternoon.

COLLEEN PETERSON: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Colleen Peterson, C-o-l-l-e-e-n, Peterson, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n, and I am here to testify as a proponent for the bill and the appropriations. Thank you for all that you do for the people of Nebraska. I am the campaign coordinator for the Restore the Glory field house construction project and I'm here to speak to you today regarding the application that we submitted by the Holy Name Men's Club Restore the Glory project. We requested shovel-ready act funds. Our project applied for \$1.5 million to continue and complete the renovation and restoration of a historic Holy Name alumni field house. The history of the field house began when it was erected in 1950 as the largest and most modern sports facility in the state of Nebraska. Some of you may remember or be from one of those towns that played us in state tournaments some time ago. The importance of maintaining this hub in this neighborhood is critical. The Restore the Glory construction project was on track to meet goal in mid-2020, but the mitigations due to the pandemic slowed the financial support and brought the construction project to a temporary standstill. In reviewing the shovel-ready act, the field house project meets all of the criteria. We were 23rd application in the order of filing and we were told that this is exactly the type of project that the state was looking to help with funding. Due to all the health concerns during the pandemic, donors did not want to meet much on one-on-one basis and the foundations indicated that their primary focus was on humanitarian needs, as they should have been at the time. The best neighborhood data clearly shows that the people living in this area of Omaha are experiencing the most severe impact due to COVID-19. Job loss will be significant. The renovation of this sports complex includes a gymnasium and a soccer field and will provide the opportunity for

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multiple sports activities to happen simultaneously, two basketball games, two volleyball games, one of each, and a soccer field on the east side. There will also be accommodations made for enrichment activities for disadvantaged youth. So all of the data you heard about the kids in the mental health, we're another place where they can stay safe. The data also shows from the after school alliance that for every dollar we spend on these kids, \$3 is saved by reducing crime and juvenile delinquency, as well as impacting long-term earning potential. This grant will allow this nonprofit to complete the construction renovation work for a multiple sports venue. The facilities will host sports events, clinics, and education opportunities for the very population that's being most affected by the pandemic. The use for sports activities every day, and I want you to look at that picture of that room. Our children are using it even in the condition that it's in. '21-22 teams will use that field house over 60 times between December 4 and February 26, even in the condition it's in. The Holy Name athletic director receives requests to use the field house, including youth and bask-- adult basketball, volleyball leagues, indoor soccer leagues, and other neighborhood community organ-- organizations that either do not have or do not rent out their gymnasiums. A little trivia: Frank Solich's first job was a coach at Holy Name under legendary Bob Gates.

STINNER: Colleen, we're-- could you conclude, please?

COLLEEN PETERSON: Thank you and I'm happy to take any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions? Hopefully this is located in south Omaha.

DORN: Oh, that-- that would--

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

McDONNELL: It's not. [LAUGH] Great project, but-- but not south Omaha.

DORN: Maybe-- maybe Senator McDonnell could tell us, where exactly is this location?

McDONNELL: It's north Omaha.

DORN: North Omaha. Thank you.

STINNER: Well, there you go, another census tract is--

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MIKE HANSEN: Good afternoon--

STINNER: Good afternoon.

MIKE HANSEN: --Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriation Committee. My name is Mike Hansen. I'm the president and CEO of Columbus Community Hospital in Columbus, Nebraska. And that's M-i-k-e H-a-n-s-e-n. And I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to talk about our field house project and specifically thank Senator McDonnell for his work to bring forward the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act, LB566, last year. We fully support the Governor's recommendation to increase the available funding for shovel-ready projects using funds obtained through ARPA. More is clearly needed, and Columbus is a key example of a truly shovel-ready project that was delayed because of the COVID pandemic. In fact, had not the pandemic occurred, that project would have been completed today. Columbus Community Hospital is a mid-size community hospital owned and operated in Columbus, Nebraska. We have 52 physicians on our active medical staff, another 110 that are visiting physicians coming primarily from Omaha and Lincoln. We have over 900 employees, 250 volunteers. Our primary service area is Platte County. Our secondary service area is Colfax, Butler, Polk, Nance and Boone Counties. We did our due diligence in late 2018 and 2019, visiting field houses all across the Midwest and took the best from all of those to develop our concept. We received board approval in December of 2019. We are adding a competitive sports asset to enhance our existing wellness facilities. It's a great economic impact to our employers in our community. From a workforce development perspective, it gives us the ability to attract and retain physicians, nurses, and other professionals in our healthcare organization. The project will be approximately 240,000 square feet, state-of-the-art facility. The fieldhouse will include a full-size football field and soccer field, new basketball courts, new volleyball courts, two new tennis courts, golf simulators, e-sports, batting cages, pitching cages, multiple areas for different age kids and activities appropriate for those ages. It will also have an indoor elevated walking track on the second level which will be a quarter mile, so four times around for a mile. The project is estimated at a cost of \$52 million. We have secured private funds of \$15 million and those are ready for use. The project is supported by our Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce as one of the top projects for economic and workforce development in the next five years. Obviously, in 2020, on February 27, we went into incident command for the COVID 19 pandemic and the project was suspended in May of 2020. Hospitals, physicians, nurses and other frontline healthcare

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professionals played an integral part to the global response, often exposing themselves to significant personal risk, which has required the full attention of our healthcare professionals. This was the right thing to do by shelving the project, and as I said, the project would be completed today had it not been for COVID. The-- we got a project cost escalation because of the delay. It's going to cost another \$10-12 million since May of 2020. We're asking that we revise the statute to remove the first-come, first-serve application process and replace it with a targeted allocation methodology and use ARPA funds to fully fund all qualifying projects, particularly those submitted by healthcare organizations. Thank you much for your time.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you. Afternoon.

JOEL PEDERSEN: Good afternoon. Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Joel Pedersen. J-o-e-l P-e-d-e-r-s-e-n. I am here in support of LB1014 as I represent Lincoln Youth Complex, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that applied for funding under last year's LB566, the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Our shovel-ready project is an eight-field youth baseball and softball complex-- complex. It's developed to become a recognized destination locally, regionally, maybe even nationally. It's got high-quality amenities in a family-friendly environment for Nebraska's softball-- youth softball and baseball players, and hopefully visitors from out of state. An earlier version of the project was-- is-- was within weeks of announcement. Our groundbreaking was paused for COVID 19. Now the project is poised to restore lost momentum, growth, and revenue for the travel and tourism industry in the state of Nebraska. We all know how COVID 19 scaled back operations for most travel and tourism attractions, resulting in tens of millions of dollars of lost revenue for the state's third-largest industry. During the early stages of the pandemic, the Nebraska Tourism Commission reported up to 60 percent reduction in occupancy rates at hotels, along with limited access at restaurants and bars. This project will impact those areas specifically. Our skilled and experienced project team is ready to develop the complex. It will help fuel a comeback for travel and tourism in the region and hopefully in the broader area. It's a plus for the state's travel and tourism industry and our project's economic impact is substantial. We've done an economic impact survey at this point, and our commissioned study shows the project generates about \$140.5 million in net new direct spending, so your \$10 million that we're asking for, it could generate up to \$140 million in new direct spending, \$255.9 million and total output, and it will support approximately 80 full-time and part-time jobs through the life of the

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project, and that alone will generate \$98.3 million in personal earnings. More importantly, the project goal is to make a human impact on Nebraska's youth and their families, with a keen focus on underserved, disadvantaged, and especially physically and mentally challenged young people. That's part of this project. We are planning groundbreaking in late spring and beginning play in the fall of 2023 or the spring of 2024. In short, we are here because Nebraska LB566 funding is critical to the project. We can't proceed without it. In summary, this project aids directly in the recovery of the travel and tourism industry, keeping youth and sports revenue in our state at a very fine looking facility. I've got some color pictures in what I handed out. Just as important, it creates an opportunity for youth across the state of Nebraska to play their best in a facility in Nebraska. And all of this is delivered by a true public-private partnership. The city of Lincoln and Lancaster County are on board. They support the project with a site near Haymarket Park, something I had something to do with, and both are providing additional sources of funds. Most critically, and a nod to Senator McDonnell again, the private sector has already pledged the matching funds, \$10 million. Be happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Pedersen. The \$10 million you're asking for is a part of-- what's the total project would be?

JOEL PEDERSEN: So it will be in excess of \$30 million, so part of the private fundraising we are leveraging and finding out there's a lot of interest in this, not in kind of the base project, but adding amenities, especially on those disadvantaged youth and focusing on that. So we don't have a final number as of yet. We're looking to get site access approved in March of this year, but it will be in excess of \$30 million.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So then the last testifier was asking to increase the amount because it didn't fit into the funding mechanism for LB566. Will this request you're making fit into the requirements that are currently in place on LB566?

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JOEL PEDERSEN: So I'm safe to say, I respect that's not my decision and I-- I'm here because we know there was an appropriation with LB566. But we're also supportive generally of nonprofits and the shovel-ready, the entire concept, so more is better and that's why we're here today.

ERDMAN: There were limits placed in LB566 on how much each project could get, depending on what they cost, right?

JOEL PEDERSEN: Correct.

ERDMAN: Are you familiar with that?

JOEL PEDERSEN: I am.

ERDMAN: Does this fit in with that?

JOEL PEDERSEN: It does not.

ERDMAN: You need to have increase as well?

JOEL PEDERSEN: Sure.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions?

CLEMENTS: One more.

STINNER: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: What's the name of the organization to be the-- what nonprofit is running--

JOEL PEDERSEN: So Lincoln Youth Complex is the entity. It's a nonprofit 501(c)(3).

CLEMENTS: Is it operating now?

JOEL PEDERSEN: It is.

CLEMENTS: In a different location?

JOEL PEDERSEN: It's in Lincoln, but yes.

CLEMENTS: You have a facility now?

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JOEL PEDERSEN: No, no. It was created for this project.

CLEMENTS: Oh, a new organization.

JOEL PEDERSEN: Correct.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JOEL PEDERSEN: All right.

STINNER: Afternoon.

TOM TYE: Good afternoon, Senator and members of the Appropriation Committee. My name is Tom Tye, spelled T-o-m T-y-e. I serve on the board of directors of the Yanney Heritage Park Foundation, located in Kearney. For the past 25 years, the Yanney Heritage Park Foundation, through a public-private partnership with the city of Kearney, has developed an 80-acre city park which now has an 85-foot observation tower, outdoor amphitheater, 13-acre fishing lake, playground, splash pads, hike/bike trails, Kearney's senior activities center, and the access point for Kearney's whitewater trail for kayakers. We have thousands of visitors each year, not merely Kearney citizens but Nebraskans from all over the state, as well as out-of-state guests. The park has achieved a five-star rating from TripAdvisor website. I'm honored to be here today to speak as a proponent of the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act, included in Section 31 of LB1014. The particular project I would share with you today is The Gardens at Yanney Park. The Gardens are a 12-acre portion of the park consisting of seven uniquely designed and themed botanical gardens, a large lawn space and a 9,000-square-foot pavilion which oversees the gardens. The gardens will have multiple works of art by world-renowned Nebraska artists, such as Jun Kaneko, Matthew Placzek, and Therman Statom. In close partnership not only with the city of Kearney and Buffalo County, we have working relationships with the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Central Community College, Kearney High School, and Kearney Public Schools for the numerous-- numerous educational opportunities that will be available at The Gardens in horticulture, botany, as well as the arts. Yanney Park sits in very close proximity to Kearney's thriving hotel and convention center. In fact, our newest convention center, which will be opening this month, the city of Kearney has already extended streets and infrastructure which will directly connect those facilities to Yanney Park. Yanney Park, with

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its unique and diverse amenities, is already a destination point for visitors and tourists. The Gardens addition will-- est-- is estimated to have an additional economic impact of over \$1.36 million a year in tourism revenue, rental income, sales tax revenues, and payroll. As you might recall, Kearney kind of got hit with a double whammy. In the summer of 2019, we had a severe flooding episode that flooded most of our convention motels and restaurant district. That impacted the initial, you know, design and launch of this particular project, and then COVID hit in 2020, so it was kind of a double whammy. The Yanney Park has a southern border, which is actually the north channel of the Platte River, so about a third of the park experienced the flood-- flooding in 2019. And then 2020 came and the pandemic significantly impacted our fundraising efforts. We had to cancel our annual Heritage Day events, our golf tournament, fundraising dinners and the like, because of the health restrictions. Since then, we've reinvigorated our fundraising efforts. We appreciate the opportunity to apply for the LB566 funding in order to complete this project. Yanney Park is a gem in central Nebraska, not only for Kearney but the residents and the tourists that come to Kearney, and we appreciate your support.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So where will this be located compared to where Yanney Park is now?

TOM TYE: It's within Yanney Park.

ERDMAN: It's within Yanney Park?

TOM TYE: Yanney Park is 80 acres in total, and this is a 12-acre portion in the northwest quadrant of Yanney Park.

ERDMAN: OK. How much is this project going to cost?

TOM TYE: About \$8.3 million total.

ERDMAN: OK, would you fit into the requirements LB566 the way it is now?

TOM TYE: I believe we do.

ERDMAN: You mentioned the north channel of the Platte River.

TOM TYE: Yes, sir.

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ERDMAN: Is there a south channel there?

TOM TYE: Not that affects Yanney Park.

ERDMAN: But, I mean, the two rivers merge by North Platte, South and North Platte, and they become the Platte River.

TOM TYE: Correct.

ERDMAN: So is it the North Platte River or is it the Platte River?

TOM TYE: It's the North Platte River.

ERDMAN: It is?

TOM TYE: Yeah. In Kearney we refer to it as Turkey Creek.

ERDMAN: So is there two channels at Kearney or just one?

TOM TYE: There's just one is the one I'm referring to.

ERDMAN: OK, because you said--

TOM TYE: It merge-- it merges with the NPPD irrigation canal right at the confluence of the park and then carries further east and eventually dumps into the main channel of the river around Bassway Strip in Minden.

ERDMAN: OK. Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

TOM TYE: Thank you, sir.

KATIE WEITZ: Hi.

STINNER: Hi.

KATIE WEITZ: Good afternoon. My name is Katie Weitz, W-e-i-t-z, K-a-t-i-e-- sorry, forgot that part--and I'm here in support of the Governor's shovel-ready project budget. And there are so many amazing projects here, and I've got to hear so many great things. I hope that you're able to extend the funding to all the eligible projects. I today am representing the Yates Fund, which is working to remodel and renovate historic Omaha Public School building for the coalition of a group of nonprofits predominantly serving refugees and new Americans,

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but also the neighborhood at-large. The location of this building at 32nd and Davenport is center. It serves both north and south Omaha right on a public transit line, and it's in the most racially and eth-- ethnically diverse census tracts in all of Nebraska, four of them that come together. The Yates Building has historically been for-- a place for refugee education, English language learning. Creighton has done a lot of citizenship work there and sewing, as well as Omaha Public Schools. We hope to expand those services and work by sort of not-- make like a one-stop shop for new Americans, not just to survive but to also thrive. So I want to tell you about all the heartwarming parts of the project that goes on inside, but since this is about negative economic impact, what I need to tell you about is how COVID has messed up our plans. So COVID interfered with our procurement of the building and the bids. We got bids. They were no longer relevant by the time we were able to start. Everything got increased by over 15 percent. The delays to our construction costs have continued to increase. However, every detail of this project is really thought out to serve the most economically impacted communities. The new Americans and refugees who own businesses, they're our first priority when hiring. So we have small and emerging businesses and neighbors as the second two tiers, but we have an unprecedented number of small and emerging businesses completing this project. We have 70 to 80 percent. These are small, small, small businesses that really, really need the support. But also, because the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce is our property owner's rep, they're the ones making sure that they're securing these small and emerging businesses and giving them the education they need. Oh, and the reason that we really need this money is because we need to keep this project moving. So we've already delayed these nine nonprofits moving into the building more than once. We now are hoping a new move-in date of July. We applied last summer. We're so thankful, Mike McDonnell, Senator McDonnell, for bringing this up. And there's so many refugees in Omaha right now that need to be served. We have settled-- we've resettled almost a thousand Afghan parolees, for example, in just the last few months. They all need a place to go to create community. There's Refugee Women Rising, Families in Action, Intercultural Senior Center. Metro is going to be there anchoring with all kinds of classes. Great Plains Theater Commons is going to tell stories. We've got a stage and a gymnasium. Please, do you have any questions? Please have questions.

STINNER: Additional questions? Senator McDonnell.

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McDONNELL: Is there anything you wanted to finish with? Because I know you went rapid fire there, but thank you for being here. If you want to try to conclude in a slower manner, go ahead.

KATIE WEITZ: Thank you. I apologize. I just wanted to say that, because this is a community-driven effort, it's really the-- the priorities and the principles of employment, education and community are truly in every decision, so our insurance agent, our-- our cleaning, our suppliers, everything we're trying to do with small and emerging businesses. And so even as this project gets completed, we'll continue with those priorities because it is the community that these folks live in. Sixty percent in the four districts is white, but then it's like 10 percent African-American and 10 percent Latino and 10 percent Asian Pacific Islander and then 10 percent other if you like combine all four census tracts. So we're going to employ the neighbors, we're going to take care of our community, and we're going to provide a place where people not only come to get their legal immigration information and their driver's-- figure out driver simulation for licenses, but also where they can tell their stories and play their hobbies, share food together, build community together. It's amazing.

STINNER: Thank you. I do want to say this. This is not the committee that approves each individual project. We are allocating dollars based on recommended amounts, and I think Senator McDonnell has done good survey work, but it's going to be the Department of, I believe, Economic Development that looks at all these applications. Now we may have some-- some additional language as to how-- how those funds are disbursed geographically throughout the state. We may have limits, either higher or lower or same. I don't know the answer to that. So that's maybe some of the input that we could have, but we don't make the decision on this stuff. So--

KATIE WEITZ: Well, Senator Stinner, I just thank you.

STINNER: But we get a-- we're getting a good idea of what the needs are, so thank you.

KATIE WEITZ: It's the most economically disadvantaged group--

STINNER: OK.

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KATIE WEITZ: --new Americans, the neighbors. Oh, sorry. Any-- and if anybody wants to tour, more questions, if anybody wants to come see what's happening, all right.

ASHLEY OLSON: Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ashley Olson, A-s-h-l-e-y O-l-s-o-n, and I'm the executive director of the Willa Cather Foundation. We oversee the nation's largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an American author and an award-winning museum, gallery, and performing arts center in Red Cloud. Prior to the pandemic, our organization welcomed visitors from an average of 40 states and 5 countries annually. I'm here today as a proponent for the shovel-ready capital projects which, as you know now, are included as a line item in the Governor's budget book under Negative Economic Impacts. The project I would like to share with you is the redevelopment of the Potter Block, a historic building in the heart of our downtown that has been vacant and decaying for over 20 years. When renovated, the building will connect one of our existing downtown historic sites, providing event and meeting space, catering facilities, and guest rooms for overnight stays. The project will allow us to accommodate more guests for longer visits, giving them ample time to experience the museum, tours of historic sites, programs at our Opera House, and recreation opportunities at the Cather Prairie. Our project has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. While design development was complete in late 2019, fundraising stalled almost entirely in early 2020. Construction costs have also increased significantly, which will require fundraising beyond our initial goal. Fortunately, our match for the shovel-ready program is fully secured through charitable gifts raised last year. However, the first-come, first-serve nature of the shovel-ready grant program, if funded at the level currently proposed, would not be enough to fund our grant if all applicants in front of us receive funding. While we submitted our request in the first 48 hours of the application going live, there are over \$250 million in applications ahead of us. This project will inject \$6.5 million into our local downtown and create five to ten new jobs. In the first ten years of operation, the facility is projected to generate \$6.7 million in gross revenue and \$800,000 in tax revenue. Furthermore, the project will also support the hospitality, restaurant, and art space industries and our local community, which have been hard hit by COVID-19. Thank you for your consideration of allocating resources to fully fund all eligible shovel-ready projects.

STINNER: Thank you very much. Questions? Senator Clements.

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CLEMENTS: Thank you. What was your request for the shovel-ready grant?

ASHLEY OLSON: Our request was for \$3 million.

CLEMENTS: And your project is \$6.5 (million)?

ASHLEY OLSON: Yes.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: OK, any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

ASHLEY OLSON: Thank you.

STINNER: And we all love Willa Cather, so.

ASHLEY OLSON: Well, thank you. Come for a tour anytime.

STINNER: Absolutely. Afternoon.

JAMES HANNA: Chairman-- Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of LB1014. My name is James Hanna, J-a-m-e-s H-a-n-n-a. I'm the vice president of the board of directors of the Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art, which is located in David City, Nebraska. It's the only art museum in the United States that is exclusively devoted to art that's related to agriculture, the land, and rural life. Since its inception in 2007, it has attracted visitors from all 50 states and at least 9 other countries. We also provide free art classes and take-home art projects for area public and parochial school children, 4-H clubs, and we do art workshops for adults. Our organization submitted an application for matching funds under LB566, the shovel-ready capital projects bill. Our museum has greatly outgrown its 2,000-square-foot home in a downtown storefront. That limits the amount of our collection that can be displayed at any time and had overflowed our storage space for a collection that's growing, thanks to many generous donors that support our-- and appreciate our mission. We have obtained clear title to a historic downtown building with about 21,000 square feet of space on two floors that will become our new-- new-- new-- new museum home. In March of 2020, thanks to COVID, everything came to a halt. Health regulations required the museum to close for several months. Our capital campaign, all marketing efforts, and fundraising events were suspended. Board and volunteer committee stopped meeting. All arts programming was canceled and all work on the expansion project ceased, but financial obligations continued. When

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our guests can no longer stop by and our longtime donors push the pause button on their donations due to their own financial uncertainty, places like us suffer. The larger building will have a dedicated classroom space and space for meetings, performances, and other events that will be available to the public. This \$7.9 million project to preserve a historic structure, support a project to beautify downtown David City, and increase tourism in the region, which will provide substantial economic benefits to the area and state during and after construction. Any questions?

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JIM KUHN: Good afternoon.

STINNER: Afternoon.

JIM KUHN: My name is Jim, Jim D. Kuhn. Thank you, Senator Stinner and the members of the Appropriations Committee, for allowing me here today.

STINNER: OK, could--

JIM KUHN: I appreciate all your service, I really do.

STINNER: Could you spell your name, please?

JIM KUHN: My name is Jim Kuhn, J-i-m K-u-h-n. I'm a United States Navy Vietnam veteran, and I'm president of the Nebraska City Veterans Memorial Building in Nebraska City.

STINNER: If you haven't been there, you need to come and look at it.

JIM KUHN: I was also the Governor's pick this last year for Volunteer of the Year, so I'm really into this building. Our project-- our nonprofit organization formed about six years ago to bring this iconic building back to-- after it fell into disrepair. It was built in 1928 and was dedicated to all the veterans in 1929, and it cost \$75,000 to build, if you can believe that. It's a three-story building, 16,000 square feet. It continued in the community center until 2006, and then it fell in bad repair. Since 2006-- 2016, we started to-- we spent countless volunteer hours restoring all the ma-- and all the major report-- repairs have been paid by grants, both from veterans and citizens in Nebraska City, sometimes \$10 at a time, sometimes \$50 at a time, and there's been over 400 of those donations just in the last couple years. I'm here today as a proponent of the shovel-ready

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capital project. The work we have completed places our project well into the category. With funding to complete the remaining phase of the project, we are poised to make tremendous impact on all of our rural community, if not for the negative income-- economic impact, we would have been much farther in our quest for this completion of this far-reaching, multifaceted public community center. It used to be a community center and we're bringing it back to that. Like I say, we've been working on this since 2016. We would have been a lot farther along had it not been for COVID. Our mission is to see this magnificent building coming back to life as not only a place of honor for all veterans, but to be a versatile theater, teaching and business venue for a diverse audience of young and old to gather and to learn. Once complete, this building will have a new, fully functioning kitchen, stage, economical enough for smaller arts organizations or for food business start-ups. Once funded, we will be able to have cooking classes, kitchen rental facilities, or partnerships with senior meals providers. We can host plays, musicals, dinner theaters, concerts and dance recitals. We have established an endowment to make sure this building can sustain itself for years to come and be a fixture in downtown Nebraska City. The wide variety of offerings will enable us to draw audiences not only from local towns, but potentially from neighboring states like Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, and-- and Missouri, bolstering our tourism industry and pumping more money into our local economy. Since we started our journey on this building, our projects were significantly slowed due to COVID-19. We were unable to be-- to have gala fundraisers and other in-person fundraising. Not only were there missed events, but also the supply chain impacted us in ways we were not expecting: a lost elevator car and having to rebuild multiple projects due to 18- to 24-month delays, all resulting in greatly increased project cost and time and money. We pushed ahead as best we could. When this project gets funded, it will be a tremendous boost to rural Nebraska City and our downtown businesses, restaurants, gas stations and shops. And I thank you so much for your service, and I thank you for your time today. Any questions?

STINNER: Questions? Senator Clements.

JIM KUHN: Yes, sir.

CLEMENTS: Do you have an estimate of your cost to complete?

JIM KUHN: Five million dollars.

CLEMENTS: All right.

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JIM KUHN: We've already got \$2 (million) from our donations and our grants and different things that we've done over the-- since 2016. We've already got probably \$2.4 million in it ourselves.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JIM KUHN: You're welcome. Thank you.

STINNER: Afternoon.

JEFF WEAK: Good afternoon, Senator Stinner, my name is Jeff Weak, J-e-f-f W-e-a-k. My business is youth sports tourism and I am-- I would like to say hello to the members of the Appropriations Committee. Thanks for having us testify. I'm here to support the funding Governor Ricketts has recommended for the shovel-ready projects in this year's budget. I don't think it's enough funding based on the enormous need, but it's a good start. LB566 was an ambitious bill and we should applaud Senator McDonnell and the Unicameral for passing it. I think it was brave. I know that sounds weird, but I think it was brave. During the debate on the floor, funding amounts were thrown around and not-for-profits started to get excited. Then the applications started to flow in, 125 applications worth about \$325 million. I'm sure DED got those applications and said, what the heck is going on here? And it was about fu-- LB566 is really about hope for the future and investment in our not-for-profits and our state. So when the Governor's budget came out a couple of weeks ago, I'll be honest, I was a bit disappointed. But he has a hard job, as you do. What's the right amount? What projects meet the final rule guidelines? I mean, it's a \$3 million-- million-page document that we have to go through to figure this out. But if the state has to pay the money back, what if? Then I remembered a moment in the State of the State Address. You remember. The Governor said \$1.5 billion in the State Cash Reserve Fund by the end of 2023, the rainy-day fund. In my humble opinion, it was raining before the pandemic for these not-for-profits, especially those with capital projects, and it still is. One such capital project delayed and hindered by the pandemic is the MD West Sports Complex in Valley, Nebraska. In 2018, Elkhorn Athletic Association embarked on a capital project to build an outdoor youth sports complex to serve local users of all skill levels and attract regional and national sports tournaments commonly held in like Kansas City, Des Moines, Sioux Falls. Unfortunately, EAA's capital campaign was negatively impacted by COVID. In March of 2020, their

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fundraising for the outdoor complex capital project was paused due to these immediate needs of the global pandemic. Fundraising resumed in 2020 and EAA applied for \$10 million of shovel-ready grant July 1, 2021. If this project were awarded the grant requested and then developed, it would transform a part of rural western Douglas County and serve families from all across Nebraska and the region. So please do what it takes to support projects like the MD West ONE Sports Complex and so many others that need this help. I don't care if it's ARPA, Capital Reserve Fund, or some combination of both. Make the investment in hope, raise the recommended budget by the Governor, and fund all the shovel-ready projects that qualify. Thank you. Any questions?

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JEFF WEAK: Thank you.

BRUCE O'NEEL: Bruce O'Neel, executive director, Elkhorn Athletic Association, Bruce, B-r-u-c-e O-'-N-e-e-l, Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriation Committee, on behalf of the Nebraska families, businesses, and aspiring young athletes in our region, the Elkhorn Athletic Association, a 501(c)(3), that has roots into the community that is five decades old, would like to strongly encourage the Appropriations Committee to approve and, where possible, increase the funding in the Governor's budget for the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act, LB566. While we greatly appreciate LB566 being passed, and the act provides an opportunity to invest in Nebraska's economy and be a leading catalyst for economic growth, we believe funding as many of the Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act projects that meets the final rule and guidelines is important. The guidelines talk about supporting businesses, attraction, business districts negatively impacted by the pandemic, as well as aid for planned expansion of-- of growth and tourism, travel and hospitality facilities delayed due to the pandemic. As you have previously heard in prior testimony from me prior to the end of last year, we suspended our funding-- fundraising in 2020 as a result of that. The demand is clearly there for LB566. As you have heard already with youth sports requests, over 125 entities have applied for the request, totaling \$335 million, including Elkhorn Athletic Association, which is number 36 on the list. We've requested \$10 million of a \$52 million project, of which we've raised \$12.5 (million) since we restarted the project, from a fundraising perspective, in November of this past year. Of that, we have procured the ground, which is in Valley, Nebraska. This multi-use sports

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complex serving Nebraska's youth will be the largest sports complex in the state of Nebraska. It will be 142 acres. It's larger than Magic Kingdom in Disney World and will attract over a million visitors when completed, which will make us second only to the Henry Doorly Zoo in Douglas County. This complex will be a venue for adaptive sports, as highlighted by the complex being-- focusing on the middle of this venue an adaptive sports venue, which is sponsored by Boys Town Pediatrics, regional recreational location-- recreational programs and competitive sports teams. It will routinely be a regional destination for families within a 500-mile radius of the state of Nebraska, as well as potentially some national events we've had conversations with already. Please consider using ARPA funding and/or capital reserves to continue to invest in the Shovel-Ready Act. I will leave you with an incredible opportunity to make an impact on our home state, a quote from Tony Dungy. NFL Hall of Famer, that simply says: It's about the journey, mine and yours, the lives we can touch, the legacies we can leave, and the world we can change for the better, end quote. Our opportunity is now to invest in Nebraska and to help drive economic growth and inspire the youth around our region. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So how much is this whole complex? going to cost?

BRUCE O'NEEL: Fifty-two million dollars through four phase-- through two phases being done in a seven-year period? We've raised \$12.5 (million).

ERDMAN: You know, all the projects we've heard today, every one of them is going to attract a million people or whatever else.

BRUCE O'NEEL: Yep.

ERDMAN: There's like 12 of them we heard of, so there's going to be like 10 times the population of Nebraska come every summer.

BRUCE O'NEEL: Well, the good news is--

ERDMAN: What are we going to do with all these people?

BRUCE O'NEEL: Yeah, so, well, what I will tell you, quite frankly, is, you know, the number we've projected in our pro forma is \$35 million, \$35-50 million in economic growth for the state. We've heard some bigger numbers, but I can only speak to our pro forma and what it's

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intended to do. I will tell you, given the size of this complex with 16 baseball/softball fields, 6 soft-- soccer fields, it has the capacity to hold major-- major regional and national events, which is unlike anything else that we have in the state.

ERDMAN: But you've been here and you've heard all these other projects want to do?

BRUCE O'NEEL: I have. I'm excited for them.

ERDMAN: If we do all of these--

BRUCE O'NEEL: Yeah, I think--

ERDMAN: Where are all these people going to come from?

BRUCE O'NEEL: So let me-- let me give you an example. Des Moines, as an example, has six of these complexes within a 50-mile radius, and they are full for 35 weeks of the year. In Oma--

ERDMAN: How many people does Iowa have?

BRUCE O'NEEL: Well, I don't know how many people are in Iowa, but I will tell you--

ERDMAN: About 4 million.

BRUCE O'NEEL: I will tell you, Des Moines brings in a lot of them.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

BRUCE O'NEEL: And-- and I would say that Omaha, for what it has from an attraction perspective, has a lot more to offer from an attraction perspective.

STINNER: Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thank you. Thanks for being here. Thanks for your work. So when you did your comparability around the-- the-- the Midwest--

BRUCE O'NEEL: Yep.

McDONNELL: --looking at, you mentioned, Kansas City, Missouri, the idea of what's going on in Iowa, can you elaborate a little bit more on that based on the events and the number of people they're bringing in?

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BRUCE O'NEEL: Yeah, so we-- we looked at places like Bettendorf, Iowa; we looked at Des Moines; we looked at-- we looked at Kansas City. And again, they will tell you, pretty much in any given weekend, they bring in anywhere from 10,000-20,000 folks a year. So you can multiply and do the math over that 35-week season. So what we've done is basically we looked at a 35-week season saying that, given our pro forma that shows the scheduling of the complex for all the various clubs, that we can get to about 10,000 folks a weekend for sure, and that includes attracting some other hotels and things like that would want to build around the complex with us in Valley, Nebraska.

STINNER: Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: So let's say your projections are half right. That's going to be very successful.

BRUCE O'NEEL: It is. It's based on an 83 percent occupancy model, so it's an even-- not even at 100 percent occupancy.

McDONNELL: Thanks for being here.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. Afternoon.

JIM KUESTER: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner, members of the committee. My name is Jim Kuester; it's J-i-m K-u-e-s-t-e-r-- excuse me-- and I'm the city administrator of the city-- city of Valley, Nebraska. I'm here today representing the city of Valley in support of the Elkhorn Athletic Association MD West ONE Sports Complex. We've been in discussions with the EAA over the past several years regarding this facility and are very excited about the benefits it will potentially bring to Nebraska. Many of you know Valley is currently the fastest-growing city in the state, according to the 2020 Census. Much of that growth is residential development. We are now in a space that the commercial development needs to expand to meet the needs of our ever-growing population. The MD West ONE Sports Complex has the-- has the potential to be a large driver in the economic development of not only Valley but of Nebraska. The EAA has provided the city the projected numbers of visitors this facility could bring in annually, and it is substantial, which obviously you just heard from Mr. O'Neel. This will likely entice many business owners to set up shop in and around Valley, which will directly impact Valley in a-- in a variety of ways, including expanding the options for our constituents to shop local. We would like our residents and visitors to Valley to have more local options for restaurants, shopping, hotels, etcetera. The second

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is to provide our city's residents with more diverse work opportunities. Much of the Valley job market consists of either industrial jobs or trade jobs or our residents are commuting into surrounding communities for employment. The pros of this development, however, are not just limited to the residents of Valley. Many of us understand the positive impact youth sports has on the development of our children. This facility gives the kids of surrounding rural communities a more robust opportunity to participate in athletics, both due to the size and offerings of the facility, but also due to its location. The complex will be located off a major Nebraska Highway that connects to many smaller communities throughout Nebraska. There's been a lot of local excitement about the prospect of families being able to participate in sports at a facility such as this without needing to drive out of state or through a major city to get to it, although there is still access, obviously, for the major cities. The project has some far-reaching implications. It has the potential to positively impact our youth, our surrounding rural communities, economic growth for the state of Nebraska and economic growth for the city of Valley. The success of a project of this size and scope is contingent upon all of us to assist in whichever way we can. Thank you for all of your hard work, and thank you for allowing me to speak at this hearing.

STINNER: And thank you for staying inside three minutes. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JIM KUESTER: Thank you.

STINNER: How many more do we have on the shovel-ready? I want to repeat this. We're not the governing body for the shovel-ready, OK? So there's a whole lot of other folks that want to testify on some other areas, so whatever. I'll sit here till midnight.

DOUG FRIEDLI: Thank you, Senator--

STINNER: Thank you.

DOUG FRIEDLI: --Stinner, members of the committee. I'll keep it short. Lots of my comments were already mentioned with the other proponents. I am a proponent of the shovel-ready capital projects. My name is Doug Friedli, D-o-u-g F-r-i-e-d-l-i. I'm a retired banker volunteering on the 20-member committee of the Nebraska City Sports Complex Committee. We applied for \$1.2 million of a \$7.6 million project. There's a critical need for a sports complex in Nebraska City. There's a lack of

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playing and practice fields for the 800 youth players on 70 different teams, soccer, T-ball, softball, baseball, flag football. Plus, Nebraska City has never had enough fields to host a large tournament, which bring an average of 3.5 people for each player. Tournaments would generate revenue, reducing the costs for the players, many of whom-- for whom English is a second language, and increasing revenues for small businesses who sell food, fuel, more lodging taxes, new revenue for nonprofits, and more sales tax for the city and state of Nebraska. After 25 years of searching, the committee finally found a 29-acre site next to the city limits. The-- the committee has successfully raised the \$600,000 in private donations to purchase the property, which was then deeded to the Nebraska City, which will maintain the fields once they are developed. However, of course, fundraising has been hampered, not only because of COVID but also the double whammy of the flood of 2019, in which the roads into Nebraska City were closed. And of course, a lot of charitable donations of individuals and foundations went to human services rather than capital projects. Therefore, this project is shovel-ready. The engineering plan cost estimates are already done. We recently had a pledge of \$500,000. And as soon as that can be matched, we're ready to start moving dirt, planting seed, and the field should be play-- the soccer field should be played on then by next fall. The other phases will be a multi-year facil-- plan. In conclusion, this will be transformable to Nebraska City. It'll benefit our entire community, households, small businesses, nonprofits, industries, the city and the county, Otoe County, for many years to come. Thank you for your consideration--

STINNER: Thank you.

DOUG FRIEDLI: --of this request and thank you for your support of LB1014.

STINNER: Thank you for your time. Questions? Seeing none, thank you. We're going to do shovel-ready for about another 20 minutes, and then we're going to delay it for a while until we can work through some of these other areas. I've got, after this, community college, workforce development, workforce housing, low income, so on and so forth. We'll come back. I'll stay as long as you all want to stay, but I want to get some of these other folks that I know a lot of them have traveled in. So try to keep your comments as quick as you can. I think you've found out that the committee is interested in numbers, how much you need and what's it for, so try to be concise. Thank you.

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CAROLE PATRICK: With that in mind, thank you.

STINNER: Yes.

CAROLE PATRICK: My name is Carole Patrick, C-a-r-o-l-e P-a-t-r-i-c-k. I'm here representing Easterseals Nebraska and Visiting Nurse Association. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify. Easterseals Nebraska provides support that allows disabled individuals in our state to actively live, learn, work and play. The Easterseals organization has been here for 100 years and we've provided specialized camp, recreation, and education for 55 years in the state of Nebraska. The demand for these services has dramatically increased while the facilities at our disposal have depreciated, leading us to turn people away for lack of space and for safety concerns. We signed an agreement in 2021 to purchase 65 acres of land that is part of the former Dana College campus in Blair, Nebraska, which has sat dormant for ten years. We're raising the funds to build barrier-free facilities designed for those with disability, and those facilities will focus on camp, recreation, life skills and employment. The cost of the camp is over-- right around \$45 million. Easterseals applied for LB566 shovel-ready recovery and investment funding of \$1.6 million. We're asking for additional consideration of any other ARPA money. We are also submitting CDBG applications through City of Blair, as the city and Washington County are all very supportive, and there will be economic development brought to the county and to the city through this project. Before COVID, people with disabilities were already at a disadvantage, and the pandemic has only exacerbated the issues of healthcare, education and employment discrimination, financial insecurity and societal stigmas. During COVID, the disabled have been three times more likely to be denied healthcare because hospitals have shut down and because facilities lack staff to accept admissions of those with special needs. Ninety-three percent of children with disabilities are not achieving their educational milestones, with many of them unable to engage in virtual learning. People with disabilities in the workforce are more likely to be unemployed, and only 54 percent of people with disabilities are internet users and, therefore, are impacted by the digital divide. Social isolation is especially prevalent with those who are disabled as they have a higher risk for COVID. So for these reasons and more, we appreciate your consideration and the opportunity to share with you today.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

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VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: I decided that western Nebraska needs to be represented. I will try to keep this very short.

STINNER: How far west are you now?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Well, Gering, Nebraska.

STINNER: You are.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: So, OK. So--

STINNER: Good to see you. Thank you.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: But-- but--

_____ : [INAUDIBLE]

STINNER: It is.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Good afternoon, Senator Stinner-- Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill and the shovel-ready projects. My name is Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, and I represent the Legacy of the Plains and [INAUDIBLE]. Oh, sorry. V-i-c-k-i-e S-a-k-u-r-a-d-a S-c-h-a-e-p-l-e-r. I just used up my three minutes. But anyway, we represent the Legacy of the Plains and the Japanese Hall and History Project, where we have preserved a Japanese hall located in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, for 90 years as a Japanese hall. We have moved it to the Legacy of the Plains Museum, where we will be able to preserve a unique immigrant story not often heard about or known in Nebraska. No other place in Nebraska tells the early Japanese immigrant history that started in the early 1900s. They were impacted by racial prejudice that prevented naturalization of Asian immigrants, interracial marriage, ownership of land, yet found support that changed laws. There were many that chose the right path and brought Japanese Americans out of internment camps during World War II, with the opportunities to attend college, earn a decent living, and work throughout Nebraska. Though there were incidences of racial prejudice, there were also many that showed their support. These stories cry out for preservation. The capital campaign project we applied for is an addition to our Japanese Hall when the State Fire Marshal determined that we must have a fully functional second exit from our basement to allow visitors and meetings. COVID-19 had a significant impact when the museum closed, and we were unable to host many of our fundraising events. Japanese Hall itself is separate from the museum and we do our

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own fundraising, per our agreement with the main museum. With the uncertainty of the COVID situation and concerns tapping the same resources as our main museum, our fundraising saw a 62 percent decrease and we tried not to tap any resources that were needed by our main museum. The funding of this capital campaign will make this possible and providing opportunities for contractors, unique tourism, increased revenues, attendance at our meeting. It will attract visitors interested in the historical impact to a diverse group, to Japanese, to Japanese Americans, and those interested in Nebraska's strong partnership with Japan, both economically and culturally, and bring tourism dollars to our community and to the many restaurants, motels and more. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

STINNER: Thank you for doing this fundraiser. Any questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you. Thank you for coming. I appreciate that.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Thank you.

ERDMAN: Are you related to Nick Sakurada?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: I am, my uncle.

ERDMAN: OK.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: So--

ERDMAN: Nick was my field man when I raised sugar beets--

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Oh, OK.

ERDMAN: --great guy. So how much-- how much are you asking for?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: We've asked for \$209,000.

ERDMAN: OK. And so your hall used to be on Railway Avenue?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Yes, close to--

ERDMAN: And you've now moved to the Legacy of the Plains.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: We moved it to the Legacy of the Plains Museum and we raised almost \$750,000 on our own, and then this was an addition that was a surprise to us. And without the ability to use

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that basement, we lose half our story because many events took place there.

ERDMAN: So which side of the Legacy of the Plains are you located?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: We are-- when you enter the main Legacy of the Plains, we have-- our building is right there with a parking lot to--

ERDMAN: OK, I've seen-- I've seen that building.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: --to the East.

ERDMAN: You surely didn't drive down today, right?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: No, I didn't.

ERDMAN: Thanks for coming.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: OK.

ERDMAN: How far is it?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Well, it's probably six-and-a-half hours. I actually live in Kearney.

ERDMAN: You-- you drive pretty fast.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: But this project is my-- my dream, my dream come true.

ERDMAN: Well, I appreciate you coming.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: OK, thank you.

STINNER: Senator Hilkemann.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Oh.

HILKEMANN: I have to just make a comment. One of the things that-- that through-- I've just learned something today about this whole thing of-- of this-- of this project that you've got going on in Scottsbluff and I've-- one of the things over the eight years of being in this Legislature to learn just another piece of the history of Nebraska is wonderful. I'm glad that you're carrying through on that.

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I hope you have a story in that about Ben Kuroki, who became a hero of mine.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Oh, of course, one of our heroes--

HILKEMANN: Yes.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: --so thank you very much.

HILKEMANN: Mine too.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions?

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Thank you.

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you and drive careful.

VICKIE SAKURADA SCHAEPLER: Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for this project. And anybody that wants to come to Scotts-- actually, don't come to Scottsbluff. Come to Gering [INAUDIBLE] Thank you.

TOM BROWN: Good afternoon, Senator, and thank you to the Appropriations Committee for taking the time. My name is Tom Brown, T-o-m B-r-o-w-n-- nice, easy one for a change.

STINNER: [LAUGH] OK.

TOM BROWN: I'm here representing the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation. We are in the process of building a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sarpy County, in Papillion. It's a \$5.5 million project, of which we have raised approximately \$2.8 million already. And the-- the amount that we are asking for under LB566 is \$2 million. Oh, OK. Let's see, the-- since the pandemic, fundraising has totally dried up, and that's not just for memorials. It's dried up for all types of projects, unfortunately, and that's why this program is just so, so very important. We would like to break ground on March 29, which is National Vietnam Veterans Day, and we are counting on doing the construction with the help of funds and completing the project by Vietnam Veterans Day of 2023. Unfortunately, Vietnam veterans are an aging group. The average age of a Vietnam veteran is 72. Unfortunately, I have already passed that number. I'm 76, so we need

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to get this project completed and done, honest. [LAUGHTER] I would really, really like to see this project completed. When this project is completed and I am there at the opening, it is going to become a destination in the state of Nebraska, and we hope to draw an excessive amount of people there. We have programs set up with QR codes on the Obelisk. We have a memorial set up to recognize the 396 Nebraska veterans that died in Vietnam, and so that their families can come and visit a memorial dedicated not only to the ones that have passed away, but to the current Vietnam veterans, and to also recognize, and their own family members that aren't on the wall from being killed in Vietnam, but have just died from things like Agent Orange and things like that. And I want to thank you very much for listening--

STINNER: Thank you. Thank you for doing what you're doing.

TOM BROWN: --and hopefully we'll have a favorable opinion. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for doing what you're doing. Questions? Senator Erdman.

TOM BROWN: Oh, I'm sorry.

ERDMAN: I just have a comment. Thank you for your service. I appreciate it.

TOM BROWN: Thank you. I appreciate the support. Two years in Vietnam with the Marine Corps was an education and a half, so.

STINNER: Any additional questions?

TOM BROWN: Any other questions?

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you.

TOM BROWN: Thank you, sir.

STINNER: Thank you for coming.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Good afternoon. I have another sports project for you. My name is Antonio Espejo, A-n-t-o-n-i-o, Espejo, E-s-p-e-j-o. I am a veteran, a marine veteran. That's why I let him go before me. I'm also a veteran of the Omaha Police Department for 21 years. I could have been a fireman, but I know how to read and write, so. [LAUGHTER] I'm teasing. I'm teasing. We-- we both-- we both went to girls Catholic so we can-- we can--

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McDONNELL: [INAUDIBLE]

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Would-- does that count, my three minutes? Oh, crap. So I mean, basically, I'll just keep it short and sweet. I know a lot of people here need-- are very passionate about what they want to get accomplished, and we're all obviously trying to get the herd in the right-- move in-- the herd in the exact same direction. What I'll touch on is basically what we do differently in Omaha and what I do in the organization that I started as a volunteer for 13 of my 21 years. Sixteen of my 21 years as a policeman, I was in the gang unit and I knew that we weren't going to arrest ourselves out of this problem, especially being from south Omaha, so I have a project and I'm from south Omaha. And I remember growing up, and I'm sure Mike remembers growing up, being able to walk down the street, go play basketball, come back home and not have any problems with anybody or anybody asking what hood you're from or things like that. When I returned from the Marine Corps, my neighborhood had totally changed: graffiti, homicides, shootings, just all kinds of crazy stuff. And I wanted to change that, and that's why I became a policeman. And I believe after 21 years, I have changed that. Our-- the way we kind of gauge our-- our gang problem in south Omaha is through gang graffiti, and gang graffiti is down 93 percent, so that's telling you that we're making a difference, we're absolutely making a difference, and this-- I'm going to tell you how. We do-- I-- I started an organization called Police Athletics for-- Police Athletics-- it's PACE, which is Police Athletics for Community Engagement. And basically it's a no-cost sports for inner-city kids in north, south Omaha, basically the entire metro. We do free transportation. We do free soccer. We do free flag football, free baseball. Everything is absolutely at no cost. In fact, I started a nonprofit CrossFit, which is strength and conditioning, for kids that maybe aren't athletic but certainly could be if they were, you know-- or at a minimum, like everybody's talked about, the different health problems that we have now. But most-- more importantly, we are not trying to make All American athletes. What we're trying to make is all-American citizens to replace each and every one of us, to, you know, to push for those different museum-- museums and those different things and really get these kids engaged and proud to be Nebraskans as much as I am. So our building is-- proposes a \$25 million world-class indoor soccer facility. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, I had 6,000 kids in my programming, 6,000 kids in my programming at no cost and free transportation. And, you know, what we ask from these kids is basically their skin in the game, is to show up for practice, show up from games and give 110 percent. And

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what we try to do is we try to find those teams from the same-- find coaches that are police officers from the same neighborhood that those kids are from. So basically-- my three minutes is up. Basically what they tell us at the-- at the-- at the academy is, you go home no matter what happens, right, gentlemen? No matter what happens, you go home. So what's going to increase your chances of going home is your relationship with that community that you serve, and these kids can see our police officer from a different perspective, and-- and that's what we've been able to do in south Omaha. So I've been tasked with finding a percentage of this-- of the \$25 million from the state, from the city, from the-- from the county, and then that-- a private-- private foundations will assist us with getting the rest of the money, because right now we go-- we go year to year. I have to hustle, you know, close to half a million, almost \$800,000 a year to keep our programming going. And this indoor facility, like they testified to, can make money, but the money that we would make would actually go back into our programming to provide free programming for all these kids.

STINNER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Phew, got it.

STINNER: And you're from south Omaha, so Tony likes you a lot, so--

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Absolutely.

HILKEMANN: Just kidding.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Absolutely. Any questions?

STINNER: Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thanks, Tony. Thanks for your service-- I've known you a long time-- and your-- your passion for not only serving the-- the community as a police officer, but serving those kids. Can you tell us a little bit of the-- the impact you're making with the kids? You're talking about that when you hit the 6,000. How many kids aren't getting the help they-- getting the opportunity based on finances, do you think?

ANTONIO ESPEJO: How many kids, like potential-wise we could be?

McDONNELL: Potential-wise, your potential.

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ANTONIO ESPEJO: Potential-wise, I mean-- I mean, I think we might-- You know, OPS has 53,000 kids in their programming. So that's where, you know, a lot of funders come to me and say, sell, how are you going to plan for next year? Well, I have a free program with free transportation. It's kind of hard you know, to guess. I guess we're basing it off that-- that-- that 53,000. How many kids can we accommodate? I mean-- I mean, we try to make just-- what this facility is going to do is going to be basically take any and every kid that wants to participate in any of our sports and provide some kind of sports activity, in other words, keeping them off the TV, keep them off, you know, the video games and all that stuff like that, but keeping them out of-- you know, giving them a positive alternative-- alternative to a negative lifestyle 365 days a year. I mean, the-- in our planning, which I can get some more information for, but we're gonna be open seven days a week. We're gonna be open seven days a week for these kids, so, I mean, the potential is-- geez, I don't know, 10--

McDONNELL: And as you mentioned--

ANTONIO ESPEJO: --8,000, 10,000. I'd like to be at 10,000 kids.

McDONNELL: As you mentioned earlier, when you and I were growing up in south Omaha the opportunities with sports developed, you know, character, but the idea of keep us out of trouble.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Oh, it-- it-- it's the values that you learn from athletics, right? Consistency, perseverance, you know, where did you learn perseverance from, right? It's from your families, and a lot of these kids don't have that, that foundation that, you know, a lot of people have talked about, and-- and certainly the other difference is, don't have that-- that relationship with police officers. It-- it just absolutely makes sense and--

McDONNELL: Thanks for your service.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Thank you. Thank you. I should have been a fireman, see?

STINNER: Thank you for your enthusiasm. Thank you. I'm going to-- I'm going to cut him off.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: [LAUGH] You can't.

STINNER: Go ahead, Senator Vargas.

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VARGAS: Can you talk about the recidivism rates and what you've been able to do to reduce those?

ANTONIO ESPEJO: So basically, I mean-- I guess I'm not a policeman right now-- anymore, so I can talk to this. When I started in the gang unit in 2005, there was anywhere from 10 to 15 different Latino-- just Latino gangs in south Omaha, and now it's anywhere from two to three. I mean, that's how-- that's how big of a reduction, and that's what we measure it, with gang graffiti. And-- and-- and the important part here is, you know, I'll give you a perfect example. I mean, in the past, I'd see kids that maybe had just gotten out of jail, but we're always there, they come back, they want to get to one of our programs and turn their life around, but-- but, you know, what I'm seeing now is I'm seeing kids coming back outside of the office. There's some-- they were doing some work on-- some engineering work on some-- on some roads there right by the office. And I saw one of the kids and he's like, hey, Tony. And we're talking 31,000 kids have been through our program. I'm like, hey, how are you? He goes, good. And I remember his face. He's now an engineer. I mean, those are the kind of stories that-- that-- that just keep happening to me all the time. When I started this originally in 2005, my kids were, you know, 12, 13 years old. Now they're 28, 29 years old and they're-- they're taking the place of a lot of police officers that, you know, that they had a positive interaction with. And that's what we want and that's how we're going to change things and save money, right? Does that answer your question?

VARGAS: Yes.

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Good.

STINNER: Thank you. Thank you for your enthusiasm--

ANTONIO ESPEJO: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

STINNER: --and thank you for what you're doing. I'm going to take one more shovel-ready folk-- folks, and hopefully west of Kearney or something along that line.

McDONNELL: Can you ask how many shovel-ready are left?

STINNER: Hmm?

McDONNELL: Ask how many shovel-ready are left?

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STINNER: I-- how many shovel-readies are left?

McDONNELL: Four, five, six.

STEPHAN GROT: I'll go very quickly.

_____ : Seven.

STINNER: OK.

STEPHAN GROT: Afternoon--

STINNER: Go ahead.

STEPHAN GROT: --Senator Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Stephan Grot; that's S-t-e-p-h-a-n G-r-o-t. I'm the executive director of Kaneko, which is a museum that focuses on the vital importance of creative-- creativity and creative thinking and how it benefits our community. Kaneko's project with all of this is the collection building to house the-- and exhibit Jun Kaneko's permanent collection of seminal works from his lifetime. By all measures, Jun Kaneko is one of the most prolific and successful artists alive today. His collection that he has donated to us is in addition to many other great gifts. Jun and his wife Ree have given us over \$58 million in land, artwork, and funding back to this community. This permanent collection, which will be exhibited in this project, will be over 2,000 pieces of artwork of all sizes, including the largest ceramic artwork pieces that have ever been made in history. The permanent collection has an estimated value of about \$50 million, and the project cost for this building is \$31 million. We have applied for \$10 (million), and we have projected that this will bring approximately \$20 million year over year and economic impact. This will be a place for inspiration for Nebraska, for the country, and this will be an international audience that will come to us and this will demonstrate the caliber of work by people of Nebraska. Any questions?

STINNER: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Thank you for being very quick.

STEPHAN GROT: Thank you all. Appreciate it. Have a good day.

STINNER: Apparently, we got how many-- how many hands, again?

McDONNELL: Seven.

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STINNER: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. OK, if we could be brief, that would be great. We've got plenty of folks that are sitting here with--

DANA REEVES: Thank you. Good afternoon--

STINNER: Thank you.

DANA REEVES: --Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. You'll see my scratch on here. I tried to cut some things out to make it shorter for you.

STINNER: I appreciate it.

DANA REEVES: I'm Dana Reeves, D-a-n-a R-e-e-v-e-s, and I'm the executive director of The Digg Site Productions. Our 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization provides Nebraska youth with hands-on film industry experience through tuition-free camps and workshops while expanding film opportunities and building creative communities in Nebraska. I'm here today as a proponent of the Governor's shovel-ready capital projects and would like to tell you just a little bit about our project, the renovation and restoration of the Empress Theater in downtown Fremont. The building has a storied history. Built in 1914 and opened in 1915, it has been a theater several times, some other things several times, and it has stood virtually empty and not functioning as a theater for a couple of decades now. Once renovated, the Empress will feature a wide range of films, including movies filmed here in Nebraska, done by Nebraska filmmakers and featuring Nebraska actors and crew, along with first releases, classics, documentaries and more. But it will be much more than a theater. It will be home base for our tuition-free film workshops and camps, and will include an in-house editing studio providing studio-- students additional opportunities to learn video and film editing skills, while also offering filmmakers a valuable resource to use while working on their Nebraska-based projects. The Empress will also serve as our nonprofit's headquarters, making our resources more readily accessible to residents, visitors and community partners. Further, it will stand as a unique, creative space that will allow us to expand our educational offerings and pursue the possibilities that are growing out of Fremont's already collaborative creative community. Restoring the Empress will further beautify and enhance our main streets, make Fremont's historic downtown area more vibrant, bring the community closer together, and keep the rich, unique history of Fremont, the region, and the state of Nebraska alive. We have been heavily impacted

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by COVID. Our organization is comprised of 100 percent volunteers with zero paid staff, and our film camps are run by film professionals who are paid as contractors for those programs. We had figured paid staff positions and additional programming into our 2020 operating budget and that had to stop. In addition, we learned that our normal funding sources had put their funds on hold in response to the pandemic. We asked for a \$1 million grant through the LB566. We have raised nearly half a million dollars already on our own, and we will remain-- raise the rest of the money through private donations and additional grant applications. Our total budget is \$2.2 million. Thank you for your time today and thank you for supporting the Governor's bill.

HILKEMANN: Thank you very much for being here. Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you.

DANA REEVES: Thank you.

JENNIFER MURRISH: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Murrish, J-e-n-n-i-f-e-r M-u-r-r-i-s-h. I am the executive director of the Buffalo County Historical Society and the Trails and Rails Museum in Kearney. We are a very small museum with only two year-round employees and over 11 buildings and structures on the property. I am here today in support of the shovel-ready capital projects that are under the Governor's Negative Impact Economic Budget. The expansion of the Family History Center was stalled out due to COVID. This phase will allow BCHS to meet the needs of providing a better, more suitable space for educating the general public about Buffalo County's vast history with rotating displays, youth programming, educational presentations and events. BCHS has a goal of \$760,000 for phase two. The \$174,000 funding request will help us reach our goal and finalize this historic campaign to construct phase two. Your funds will allow BCHS to expand their building to open a large, flexible space that will have multiple uses for the general public. Phase two will increase the museum's attendance, membership, and the public's awareness of our mission. The economic impact will generate tourism dollars. During this capital campaign, we faced many trials. Phase one of the Family History Center opened in July of 2017. In 2018, our main road was closed due to construction during our busy season, and then the flood hit in 2019, followed by COVID in 2020 and 2021. Therefore, we do not have a good baseline for comparison and our financial numbers look skewed. With a very creative line of credit from a local bank, BCHS was able to expand and only a few finishing touches remain to complete phase two. We have already had numerous requests to host anniversary parties, meetings, graduations, wedding receptions, and

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educational programming. Thank you for your time and your support of all of the nonprofit cultural organizations.

HILKEMANN: Thank you for being here. Are there questions? Thank you very much.

JENNIFER MURRISH: Thank you.

MORRIE ENDERS: Good afternoon. Thank you for your time. My name is Morrie Enders, M-o-r-r-i-e E-n-d-e-r-s. I'm the executive director of the Lincoln Community Playhouse here in Lincoln, a nonprofit theater that has been transforming lives and positively changing our community for 76 years. I am speaking in favor of the shovel-ready capital projects. For the Playhouse, we're seeking funding for an HVAC system replacement. Our rooftop units are eight years past their life expectancy. But beyond that, I would like to show support for all of the arts organizations that are applying for the shovel-ready capital projects. In 2019, a United Kingdom study proved that when people watch a theater production, their hearts synchronize. The audience's hearts literally begin beating together. After our period of isolation that we've had with COVID, I think we all understand that social interaction is a primal need for human beings. When you support funding the capital shovel-ready projects of the Playhouse and other arts organizations, your investment in brick and mortar and HVAC is really supporting bringing our communities back together, heartbeat by heartbeat. Thank you for your time.

HILKEMANN: Thank you very much. Are there questions for Mr. Enders? Seeing none, thank you.

MORRIE ENDERS: Thank you.

CHRIS FOSTER: Good afternoon. My name is Chris Foster, C-h-r-i-s F-o-s-t-e-r, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Yates Illuminates project that Katie Weitz had talked about. And I'm also from Gifford Park neighborhood, which is just west of downtown Omaha. And as Katie mentioned, it's a real melting pot, the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the-- in the state. And I really wanted to supplement what Katie had said. I'm passing around a couple of our recent newsletters that kind of give you a flavor of what the neighborhood Gifford Park in midtown is all about. And the biggest thing that-- that we're looking for is-- this is the most exciting project in my 35 years in Gifford Park of-- of going shoulder to shoulder with lots of other great volunteers. And th-- and really what we're doing is we're

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helping individuals and families help themselves with-- with a total educational community center. And I'll just finish up by letting you know what-- just a sampling of what some of the programs that are going to be in-- in the-- in the building, which we're planning to open July 1: visual and performing arts; immigrant and refugee, new American programs; STEM; STEAM learning, robotics, senior programs, financial literacy, gardening classes, meeting spaces for anybody, kitchen facilities, shared workspaces for non-profits and community groups, and-- and it'll be all-accessible and affordable for everybody, so just gives a lot of hope in-- in-- in these times. Thank you.

HILKEMANN: Are there any questions of Mr. Foster? Seeing none, thank you for coming.

ADRIAN PETRESCU: Good afternoon. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Dr. Adrian . I'm a professor of [INAUDIBLE].

HILKEMANN: Could you-- could you spell your name for us?

ADRIAN PETRESCU: Yes. A-d-r-i-a-n P-e-t-r-e-s-c-u.

HILKEMANN: Thank you.

ADRIAN PETRESCU: I'm a professor of public policy and economics and business and law. I wasn't born in Nebraska, but I got here as far as that-- as-- as fast as I possibly could. Getting here 11 years ago, over time, of course, I live in Gifford Park neighborhood. And over time, we learned the great things that Gifford Park does for youth and you couldn't but-- but volunteer right away. So a couple of years ago, we managed to meet Katie Weitz and, therefore, I'm here in support of the Yates Illuminates project. And I really, really have to apologize. I do not know my name-- or my way around this committee or any other such committee. I teach public policy. And so at public policy, I get a budget and I tell my students to improve it, right? So here, I don't want to take your role, Chairman's Stinner, but if I could, I would file this in-- in that green thing. It says I'm a proponent of Number 10-- I'm sorry, a proponent of Number 9, Other, adds \$10 million; a proponent of Number 10, Shovel-Ready, add \$10 million; neutral on Number 13, Low-Income, adds \$10 million; neutral on Number 14, Site and Building Development, adds \$10 million; and get \$40 million from somewhere. I'm sorry, I've been teaching police officers and retired police officers for my entire 24-year career. Just subtract \$40 million from 15 and find good instructors who would actually teach in

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other rooms, right? Because \$17-- \$7 million is fine for training. I was the founder of the little Science & Arts in Parks project that you saw all the kids smiling in the attachment to Katie Weitz's testimony. What I ask you kindly to do is to make Yates Nebraska on its way to become Yates U.S.A. So if you manage to give this extra \$40 million to these other things, you know, we can make new Yateses distributed across the entire state of Nebraska because it is a great pilot as it-- as it works right now. You know, 35 percent of the students in Omaha Public Schools-- I'm sorry Tony Vargas is not here to-- to back me up-- are English learners like I am. So when I-- when I had a-- and I have a 12-- a 23-year-old college graduate scientist. When she was 12, she came to me and said, Daddy, my English is better than yours. I thought to myself I would tell her, when you grow up, I will send you the bill. [LAUGHTER] But that's not what I said. I said, well done, honey, keep up the great work. You know, 35 percent of English learner parents need this here, and we need to spread the word in the state and in the whole nation. Appreciate your help.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions?

ADRIAN PETRESCU: Oh, I'm sorry.

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you.

ADRIAN PETRESCU: Thank you.

J. SHANNON: I was attempting to wait my turn. I would think I was one of the last people in the room. My name is J. Shannon, the initial "J." Last name is S-h-a-n-n-o-n. And I am here to speak neutral on the shov-- shovel-ready capital projects. [INAUDIBLE] I chose neutral specifically because I do feel like there are projects that are involved with this that should be and can be and can impact our community greatly, but I do feel like there were projects that were-- are not involved in the shovel-ready project list, and I feel like I need to say that the process that was implemented to get these projects here happened, but I don't feel like the-- the information was disseminated equally. I do feel like that there were pockets of projects that may or may not be favorable to the majority that were left off. There were things that were done that from cert-- in certain areas in our community that would be deemed divisive instead of inclusive or unifying, and in that we let some things slip through the crack. So instead of saying we oppose what our Governor is saying, we're asking that there would be at least some-- some closer looks to what has already been listed, some closer looks to the projects that

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are there, and to see if there are other projects that should be included. Most specifically, the Malcolm X historical birth site project that has been on line items for probably 20 years. There has been shovel-ready documents since 2012 that were known from your predecessors and probably some of you. You've heard conversations about, what shall we do with the Malcolm X birth site? What is it-- what it does for Omaha is it gives us the opportunity to-- to dispel a shallow conclusion that Omaha is not diverse, that Omaha is not exactly what it is. It's made up of people that look like me, people that look like you, and people that look like the tapestry that is behind me that represent different portions of our-- our city, our state, and our country that need to be represented equally. We have erected statues for lesser men. We have done things to represent their legacy for lesser men. But what greater story of the humanitarian Malcolm X should be told than where he started? And then from that point forward, we can tell a story about what we feel like he represents in the great state of Nebraska, in the city of Omaha, as the greatest turnaround story in American history, someone that went from one thing to another thing that intrigued us to think by passionately expressing what he felt like was unfair. We all do that in a plethora of ways. I'm asking you to consider we may have left one off. And if that is the possibility, if that is the case, consider the Malcolm X Foundation birth site. The documents have been around for years. We're asking to expand it and make it the greatest international possibility for tourism in the state of Nebraska, international tourism. If there's one thing about going from one end of the state to the other in the state, saying tourism's a thing. Thank you so much.

STINNER: Thank you. Any questions?

J. SHANNON: Oh, I didn't think there would be.

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you very much.

J. SHANNON: Thank you.

KENDRA RONNAU: It's shorter than the last.

STINNER: Good evening.

KENDRA RONNAU: I know. Good evening. Thank you. Sorry, everybody. Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Kendra Ronnau, K-e-n-d-r-a R-o-n-n-a-u. I'm the president of the

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Lancaster County Ag Society, which is-- manages the Lancaster County Center Event [SIC] Fairgrounds and-- better known as LEC Fairgrounds. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We understand there's many worthy causes which Governor Ricketts and you folks must weigh in on distributing Nebraska's share of ARPA dollars. I'm here today not to distract-- to-- to detract from the Governor's priorities, but to propose that we should also get a small piece of the pie. Nebraska's ag societies are public entities created by a vote of the people over 150 years ago to foster ag education and ag business. In Lancaster County, we are entering our 21st year of delivering on this unique-- unique ag mission of a year-round at LEC Fairgrounds. As keepers of Nebraska's unique-- unique ag culture, we strive to engage our youth, our community, our out-of-state visitors-- visitors in the future of our state agriculture industry. In addition to our extensive local activities, LEC Fairgrounds is Lincoln's number-one and one of the state's top three attractions for out-of-state visitors, delivering \$60-70 million in economic-- economic impact annually. Like many in tourism industry, we were hit by COVID very hard. We lost \$6 million in revenue due to event cancellations. Because of statutory restrictions, we have limited means in generating additional revenue independently. And despite qualifying under federal guidelines, we are deemed ineligible for local ARPA dollars under their more restrictive criteria. Today, we petition you to include the attached request among those already included in LB1014 to help-- or help us craft grant programs with the State Department so our request can be deemed eligible and prioritized without need for match. In recognition of Ag Society's unique status, we're nonprofit, we're state chartered, we're regulated entities that are ag dedicated and tourism focused. I wanted to highlight some of the key information in the ARPA proposal that we submitted to the Governor's Office, included with our written testimony today. On page 8, in Exhibit C in your packets, there's a chart that itemizes \$7 million for critical upgrades. Also introduced is LB720-- LB1227, an additional \$13 million in competitive upgrades. These are required to ensure the LEC Fairgrounds continue to operate at its current level. On page 7 is a great example of the type of national and international events we can attract to our capital city. In July, we broke all past attendance records when we hosted the National High School Final Rodeo. An upcoming UNL study estimates at more than \$17 million of out-of-state visitor economic impact from that event alone. The rodeo is scheduled to return in Lincoln in '26 and '27. However, just this weekend we learned a minimum of \$5 million of our planned improvements, beyond what is included in LB1277, will be required to secure that the rodeo will even return. We are counting

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on you to help us bounce back from COVID with this important ARPA funding. It will take a State-of-Nebraska level of support to keep eastern Nebraska's event center fairgrounds at a nationally competitive level compared to the other national event fair-- fairgrounds who have already announced state support of improvements in Oklahoma, Wyoming, Kansas City even before the ARPA funds. Thank you for the opportunity to present our story of the Lancaster County Ag Society, Fairgrounds. We are proud to serve in so many ways. If you've got any questions, I would entertain those at this time. Yes, Senator McDonnell.

STINNER: Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Tell me, OK, a little bit about your-- you've got a ten-year plan. Tell me your-- your-- your-- roughly your-- where you're going from here. You're talking about the National Rodeo and how successful. Tell me what other events you're looking at and how you're-- you're planning on growing.

KENDRA RONNAU: Absolutely. One of the ways, as I sat here today and listened to folks that are-- that are wanting great things, we are proven, folks. We-- we are proven. So we hosted the National High School Finals Rodeo. We have a growth problem. People want to come to us, but we're stuck. We need funding. Already on our books we have the-- the Family Motor Coach group is coming this summer. We've got Streamline group is wanting to come. We have other rodeos. We have quarter horse shows in the top five. We have-- we have a plethora of events that want to come to us that are-- that are national, they're international, and they are bringing outside money. We are proven that we can do this. We're centrally located, all the reasons that you folks know. We're-- we're safe. We, again, are proven. We know we can do it. Our ten-year growth, we would love to be able to finish out phase three. The-- the center was always scheduled to have three phases. We're down to one more, one more pavilion and a-- and a coliseum. Right now, though, last-- this last weekend, my staff went to talk with the rodeo folks. The rodeo is concerned. They-- they-- we have to make some changes in order for them to want to come back. We ran a great event, but some of our-- our-- our driveways are too narrow. It took us too long to get too many big rigs in. We need more rock, we need more paving, basic things that we need in order to have these huge groups. We're up. We're running. It's-- it's the best use of taxpayer dollars to put a little bit more in it to get a lot back. So \$17 million, you guys, in one time, and we blew it off-- we blew-- blew them off the charts. Other questions?

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STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you for coming. So in your comments just recently, you made a comment about the best use of taxpayer dollars. So you get funding from the county?

KENDRA RONNAU: We get a little, very small amount. We-- we get-- I should've looked at the amount-- the amount. It's a very small-- it's less than \$300,000. We get a certain amount to put on the county fair, which, by the way, we're-- we're the largest county fair, and we get a small amount to-- to keep up with \$27 million worth of buildings, which doesn't even come close.

ERDMAN: So where does the majority of funding come from then?

KENDRA RONNAU: We work really hard. We try-- we try to break even. Bless the county's-- the county's heart. They have helped us where they could with lodging funds. They're very-- their hands are very tied on what they can help us with. We've worked with our city. You folks asked us to sit down with our city. We've done that. We've not gotten anywhere with that. So the city has not put anything in; state hasn't at this point, so--

ERDMAN: OK.

KENDRA RONNAU: Yeah.

ERDMAN: Do you realize that Lancaster County, Lincoln, wasn't the first place to have the National High School Rodeo?

KENDRA RONNAU: I did know that. Yes, sir. I did.

ERDMAN: Harrison had it in 1954.

KENDRA RONNAU: I did know that.

ERDMAN: OK.

KENDRA RONNAU: I did that-- I did know that. It's a wonderful group of people. As I sit back and listen to mental health, I listen to kids getting in trouble, you know, that was a group of kids-- bless, number one, the association; bless the parents for hauling them around. If you keep kids busy, if you give them something good to do, it helps. I'm not going to say there is not mental illness, but it helps, you guys. So many kids just need-- and that is our Ag Society's mission,

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is to give back to our kids. We are an ag state. We need to be proud of it. We need to give back to all-- all ethnicities of-- of children, so-- and adults, and I think we do a good job at doing that. Other questions?

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

KENDRA RONNAU: I commend you all for sitting here and thank you so very much from the bottom of my heart.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we can now move to the next, Number 11: Community College Workforce Development. Good afternoon.

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: All right, good afternoon.

STINNER: Or good evening, I'm sorry.

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: Good afternoon, Chairperson-- Chairperson Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Courtney Wittstruck, C-o-u-r-t-n-e-y W-i-t-t-s-t-r-u-c-k. The beginning of this year, I took over for former-State Senator and Speaker Greg Adams as executive director of the Nebraska Community College Association. I'm excited to represent the NCCA, and I'm here today to respectfully ask your support of the Governor's proposed appropriation for \$90 million to Nebraska's community colleges, included in LB1014. I've been in this position for all of 25 days, but for the previous 20 years I've been in manufacturing. Most recently, I was a plant manager of the Goodyear factory in Lincoln, which is now owned by Continental Tire and Rubber. I also worked at Eaton in Kearney, and as well as Mercedes Benz in South Carolina and German automotive supplier Robert Bosch Corporation in South Carolina and in Germany. I've spent my entire adult life in factories, and I can tell you firsthand that community college graduates and trainees are the lifeblood of manufacturing and, actually, as our entire commo-- as our entire economy. They really serve as the foundation. The electricians, the maintenance technicians, semi-truck drivers, healthcare providers, etcetera, who pass through our doors keep our citizens healthy, our businesses running, and our supply chain moving. By appropriating \$90 million in this bill, Governor Ricketts has recognized the leading role that our community colleges must play in driving Nebraska's recovery from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The community college projects that this money will fund fit squarely within the requirements of the ARPA Act. Not only will community colleges lead

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the way in the state's macro recovery from COVID-19, however, we'll also do so at a micro level. Our colleges serve a very diverse student population, including many low-income and minority students, groups that have been most disproportionately negatively affected by the pandemic. Open access and low tuition cost allow us to upskill and reskill many Nebraskans who otherwise might not be able to pursue a post-secondary education, certification or training program. In addition, many of our community colleges are located within quality-- within qualified census tract areas. In a moment, Ryan Purdy, president of Mid-Plains Community College, will provide more details, but please keep in mind these projects will dramatically increase the speed at which our state recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. And that's all of Nebraska, north to south, east to west, south Omaha, west of North Platte, everywhere. In summary, we respectfully ask this committee to help us help Nebraska by supporting \$90 million for the community colleges in this bill. Thank you very much for your time. I'll take any questions if you have any.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you for being here. So \$90 million, that's nearly as much as you get today from state funding. Is that correct?

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: I don't have all the details. The person after me will.

ERDMAN: OK.

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: But--

ERDMAN: So there are, what, six community colleges?

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: Correct. And it will be divided equally, according to the Governor's proposal.

ERDMAN: So will you reduce the tuition?

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: No. These are four projects that are related specifically to recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

ERDMAN: Such as?

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: Such as our EMS training, truck-driving programs. Right now, we all know the supply chain issues. We can't get truck

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drivers. Also, skilled trades, we know that we have construction issues, we can't get things built. In fact, many of the projects that we heard earlier today, I don't know that they could happen without our trainees and without our students.

ERDMAN: Do you have truck-driving programs now?

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: We have some, but not enough. I know several programs have waiting lists, but I know my president can provide more details on that when he comes up next.

ERDMAN: OK, thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Courtney, thank you for coming. We've known each other now for 15 days, maybe. As you know, I was going to bring a bill with actually a lot more money than this, but I was happy to see that the Governor did make his recommendation at \$90 million. Being a graduate of one of these nine institutions in the state of Nebraska and seeing, as an example, at Southeast Community College some of the money's going to go actually into a program that I'm-- I'm a graduate of, building construction technology, so we're going to create people that will actually come and work on your furnace and air conditioner and build your homes, do your additions. And we're going to do things like agriculture. I mean, the demand--

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: If you-- if your pivot goes down, you need somebody to repair it.

KOLTERMAN: The demand is there. So I'd like to thank you and the community colleges for doing what you do. These are things that have been put on hold for quite some time. COVID exasp-- exasperated [SIC] the problem, and I appreciate that. So thank you for coming.

COURTNEY WITTSTRUCK: Thank you, sir.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

RYAN PURDY: Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner--

STINNER: Good afternoon.

RYAN PURDY: --and members of the--

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STINNER: I guess it's kind of evening, but that's-- yeah.

RYAN PURDY: OK. Good evening, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriation Committee. My name is Ryan Purdy, R-y-a-n P-u-r-d-y. I'm the president of Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte, McCook, and the surrounding 18 counties. I'm here today representing Nebraska's community colleges and ask for your support of the Governor's recommendation of the \$90 million for community colleges within LB1014. My testimony is also in the packet that Courtney just gave you, so you have a copy of it. The language found at the top of page 28 in the midbiennium budget adjustments book passed out by the Governor after his State of the State reads: The state currently rate-- has a 1.8 percent unemployment rate and needs highly skilled workers, particularly in healthcare, agricultural, HVAC, CDL and construction industries. This funding will provide for acquisition, construction and upgrades of several educational institutions across the state to upskill and reskill the population, especially in low-income, underserved and disproportionately impacted communities. The community colleges will utilize the funding to expand facilities and equipment to provide an education in these high-demand fields. This language not only identifies the mission of community colleges, but also validates that our projects align with the intentions of the ARPA funds and our Governor's priorities for economic stability. Under the U.S. Department of Treasury's interim financ-- final rule regulations, infrastructure projects that directly address economic recovery from the pandemic are eligible and consistent with the intent of ARPA funds. Each of the proposed projects will allow the community colleges to address the ongoing and future negative impacts of the pandemic across Nebraska, including both rural and urban parts of the state. The proposed projects involve the construction, expansion or renovation of permanent training facilities in high-demand industries, leading to essential careers in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, agriculture, and other high-demand sectors. Nebraska's community colleges serve a diverse student population, including first-generation students, returning adults, low-income students, traditional students, refugees, minorities, and many other-- many other underserved populations. Several studies have shown that these populations have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand and improve relevant and necessary workforce training in urban and rural Nebraska. Nebraska's community colleges do not have the ability to request state funding for capital projects and currently lack the capacity to address the extensive retraining and upskilling needs of

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the state without this funding. The proposed request would allow the community colleges to move forward on these critical training centers and facility improvements. Currently, the only funding community colleges receive for capital projects, infrastructure improvements and facility renovations are received through the limited two-cent capital levy and fundraising efforts from our philanthropic supporters. Nebraska's community colleges are uniquely positioned to address the negative impacts-- economic impacts of the pandemic through reskilling and upskilling of individuals that have been negatively affected. We have campuses spread out across the state, from Falls City to Alliance and McCook to South Sioux City and many places in between. We want to be part of the long-term solution with this one-time investment. This investment will provide expanded opportunities to retrain and attract individuals educated for our unprecedented workforce demands. It will provide a positive impact for years to come as a result of a larger and better trained workforce. As part of your handout is a list of the projects being considered for uses of these funds. I appreciate your support for the-- of the role of Nebraska's community colleges, the support of the Governor's proposal. It is the role of community colleges to provide an educated workforce in the areas that we serve. This funding is crucial to our ability to meet the training needs for the residents of our respective areas. Thank you, and I'll entertaining questions and try to answer them to the best of my ability. There are several presidents behind me, so if they're specific to their college, they might have to assist.

STINNER: Questions? Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: Following up on what-- I'm sure you heard his--

RYAN PURDY: Yeah.

HILKEMANN: --the questions Senator Erdman--

RYAN PURDY: Right.

HILKEMANN: So what I'm hear-- I listen to your testimony. What you want to-- it would seem to me like it-- with-- with the COVID, if we did not have as many people trained, the more-- the more important situation would be to get more people trained now be-- to-- to-- to fill that need. And if I hear you, this is going to be used for facilities and not, as Senator Erdman suggested, that we actually provide scholarships or we lower the fees so that we can get more people being trained at the present time. Do you have a facility

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short-- you-- you have not enough facilities to train the people? Is that it?

RYAN PURDY: In some cases, yes. So to answer his question on some of the tuition dollars, we have the CARES funds that were required to go back to help some of the students. There are several other scholarship bills that have passed in the last year or two for some of these-- these trades. We have some local foundations that are also helping with some of those costs. But our trades, for the most part, are full. They're-- they're as full as they have been-- I've been at Mid-Plains for 20 years, I've been the president for the last 10, and our trades are at capacity, all of them, within one or two, and we've never had that problem before. So a lot of these projects-- actually, all these projects are going to be for the trades.

HILKEMANN: So you've got all the-- you-- you've got as many students as you can--

RYAN PURDY: My North Platte north campus, where we have-- all of our heavy technical trades, are all full, auto body diesel mechanics, welding--

HILKEMANN: Good--

RYAN PURDY: --auto-- automotive, HVAC--

HILKEMANN: Good problem to have.

RYAN PURDY: --building, construction, elect-- electrical-- absolutely.

STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Yeah, I have a question. You indicated that some of the other presidents-- are they all going to testify?

RYAN PURDY: No.

KOLTERMAN: Is there anybody here from Western Nebraska Community College?

RYAN PURDY: There sure is. John Marrin is behind me.

KOLTERMAN: I would-- I'd like to ask him some questions if the--

RYAN PURDY: Sure.

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KOLTERMAN: --if the opportunity arises. But I'm--

RYAN PURDY: Do you want him to stand--

KOLTERMAN: No.

RYAN PURDY: --or to take my place?

KOLTERMAN: No, I-- I'll wait till--

RYAN PURDY: OK.

KOLTERMAN: --you're done.

RYAN PURDY: Yeah, I think everybody but-- but Metro, I believe, is in the audience.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So what is your annual budget in your-- at your college?

RYAN PURDY: Mid-Plains Community College annual budget general fund is about \$27 million; at our capital fund, the two-cent levy and we're right about \$30-31 million.

ERDMAN: And this is going to be \$15 million?

RYAN PURDY: Fifteen million, so our capital fund raises-- at two cents, we'll bring in about \$4 million.

ERDMAN: Did you get any CARES money?

RYAN PURDY: We did. Yes.

ERDMAN: How much of that did you get?

RYAN PURDY: Between \$6 and \$7 million, of which about 60 percent went back directly to students, had to, required.

ERDMAN: In the form of reduced tuition?

RYAN PURDY: It was-- it was aid to students, so it was actually sent back to them through the student accounts process.

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ERDMAN: OK, so in your location, in your college, what are you going to spend the \$15 million on?

RYAN PURDY: So we have a few projects. Right now, we're in the process of getting another one that was delayed, but we are expanding our health and science center; it was built ten years ago. Our plan is to increase our number of nurses and in both LPN and ADN. The-- the challenge that we have in my 18-county service area, the clinical requirements for an ADN nurse, they need experience at a-- at a regional medical center. We have Great Plains Health in North Platte. The rest are critical access hospital, so some of that will be simulation. So we have the health and science center addition that we planned. It's about a million dollars higher than we anticipated it would be. And so some of that would be-- for that, we've raised about \$2.5 million for that project. We were donated a facility in McCook about seven years ago that has sat idle and we've been-- we've been putting that back together for about the last year for fire science, EMS, paramedic, CNA, LPN, all of these. We have some flex space opportunities in there to do some plumbing, some light HVAC, and-- and electrical training that we can do in that facility as well. So those are two-- but the biggest ones, we have electrical technology. We had an electrical automation controls program three years ago to-- to an electrical technology facility that was a transformed autobody facility about 30 years ago. It was at capacity before we added the second program, so we also need to-- to build a facility to accommodate both of those programs that are running simultaneously. So those are three of the projects that we would focus on.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, if--

RYAN PURDY: John Marrin?

STINNER: Yeah, if John could come up.

JOHN MARRIN: Yeah.

RYAN PURDY: I'll get out of your way. Thank you.

STINNER: John, if you could say your name and spell it for the--

JOHN MARRIN: Yes, Senator Stinner. It's John Marrin, J-o-h-n M-a-r-r-i-n.

STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

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KOLTERMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thanks for tolerating my questions. I appreciate you being here and you came all the way from out west, but I'm intrigued by the flier that you have included in this packet about Western Nebraska Community College. What intrigued me the most is the fact that your money that you're asking for here will be put into pretty much, it looks to me, like a healthcare education center for excellence. But what really intrigued me about this is, this is in partnership with Chadron State College, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, as well as Western Nebraska Community College. How did you get all three of those institutions to work together to accomplish this, and what can you do differently than if we set up this-- or in addition to if we set up this institution in Kearney that will handle western Nebraska? Would you expand on that a little for me?

JOHN MARRIN: Sure. Well, first of all, you know, and I think the program in Kearney is great, but you have to go to-- four hours to get to Scotts Bluff. So it isn't just west. I mean, west is quite a ways west yet. So we have worked with Chadron State, Randy Rhine, the president there, for two years. John Harms, who was one of your colleagues here and our president for a number of years at Western Nebraska, has always felt that we need to partner in the-- the less populated areas of-- of the state. There are some efficiencies that can be gained from that. We are looking at opportunities of shared faculty. If we have low-enrollment courses, we want to combine them and work together so that they're no longer low enrolled. And we're-- we have a program called Panhandle Advantage right now that we're working in business administration, early elementary education, which is, you know-- or elementary educators are desperately needed in western Nebraska. So that was the beginning of a discussion about partnerships. We've also worked with Dr. Gold at UNMC, and Senator Stinner actually is the one that introduced me to him. We-- we right now have a building on campus-- it's the Harms Center, named after John Harms-- that at one time was an advanced technology center. My history is I worked at the college for 22 years, went on, work-- worked elsewhere. At the time I was there, I was in the business and industry training side, and we set that building up as a building that we could improve technology in the area, improve training for end users. It's morphed into something that we're doing all of our allied health in there, and we actually are renting space with-- to UNMC for their nursing program, which is, you know, wonderful for western Nebraska, but we just literally run out of room. There's a need for more nurses from both the ADN, from us, as well as the BSN side from

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UNMC. We all, as colleges, know that we need to be working together to bring in students; we need to be working together to help find financing for them. So long story short, the building that we're looking at and purchasing, and of course there are a lot of hurdles to get there, but the concept and the vision is we work with UNMC. We would be doing shared clinical sites. We would be doing shared clinical simulations in the building. It would free up our Harms Center to actually do the advanced technology training that we need to be doing and should be doing. It would move the allied health nursing into a building that would be world-class. UNMC has some incredible technology that they could bring that we could be using as a shared partnership. Chadron State would like to be part of that as far as science labs. We have programs that we can certainly work together on articulation agreements to move students to Chadron State or UNMC. So, yeah, that's-- that's how we've-- we put it together. The other piece of our fact sheet is we also have-- as far as our welding program, we need to expand that. We somehow over the years have lost our construction program. We have no longer been doing that for a number of years. We have to bring those back. We have to have a construction program that includes electrical, you know, the simple framing, plumbing, those sort of things. We've somehow lost sight that-- that we need to be doing that, and these funds would just be an incredible opportunity for Western Nebraska, and I know the other colleges, to actually put some programs together and have space to do them that we currently don't have.

KOLTERMAN: So does the \$15 million that you would get out of this, will that all go towards this one project?

JOHN MARRIN: No, that's a great question. I think that what we need to do is take a look at what our foundation can help us with and what else we can do. The price of the initial doing this, yeah, it would take the entire \$15 million, yes. But we need to do the other work, too, so we do--

KOLTERMAN: I appreciate that, but when-- when it was brought to me as-- it was \$25 million for each institution.

JOHN MARRIN: Right.

KOLTERMAN: And I appreciate that. But the reality is, there's only so many dollars to go around, so.

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JOHN MARRIN: There-- there is and we would have to make a choice. But, you know, I mean, my gosh, the need for healthcare and behavioral healthcare in western Nebraska, as Senator Stinner has-- has promoted, we have got to be doing that, as well, and that would be the addition to our allied health is in behavioral health--

KOLTERMAN: All right.

JOHN MARRIN: --in behavioral techs.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you for coming.

JOHN MARRIN: Yes.

KOLTERMAN: I appreciate it.

JOHN MARRIN: Thank you.

KOLTERMAN: Thanks for humoring me, Senator Stinner.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Stinner. John, thanks for coming. I see--

JOHN MARRIN: Thank you.

ERDMAN: --in the news your contract was extended for two more years.

JOHN MARRIN: Well, yeah, a year and a half.

ERDMAN: Year and a half?

JOHN MARRIN: Yes.

ERDMAN: That's good. OK.

ERDMAN: Well, thank you. Thank you.

ERDMAN: Appreciate that. So what is-- what is the cash reserve of Western now?

JOHN MARRIN: You know, I-- right offhand.

ERDMAN: Several years ago it was like \$19 million.

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JOHN MARRIN: Was it really? I don't believe it's that high at this point, but I can let you know I can let the committee know.

ERDMAN: So the building you're talking about buying, is that the building next to the Harms Center?

JOHN MARRIN: It is the SWBC building, yes.

ERDMAN: Nobody in there?

JOHN MARRIN: Pardon me?

ERDMAN: There's no one in that building?

JOHN MARRIN: You know, there is a small portion of at least, but no, there's nobody in there right now.

ERDMAN: OK, all right. That's a nice building.

JOHN MARRIN: It's a beautiful building, yes.

ERDMAN: Thank you for coming all the way from Scottsbluff.

JOHN MARRIN: Thank you, Senator Erdman.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Just for the committee, we actually have a partnership with the hospital, too, to provide some of the resources. This, I think, is still going to be one floor for the hospital, one floor for WNCC, and one floor for--

JOHN MARRIN: Right. We're looking at about 60,000 square feet per. And one of the floors actually has a commercial kitchen, which would allow us to work with Scottsbluff High School and bring culinary arts back in as well. So we truly are looking at spending every cent, as the other colleges are, on training. That is what it's for and the buildings and equipment to do so.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. Thank you for coming in.

JOHN MARRIN: Thank you, Senator Stinner.

STINNER: I can attest to the fact that it's a long way away so thank you.

JOHN MARRIN: It is. Thank you.

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STINNER: Good evening.

TODD SMITH: Good evening. Thank you, Chairman Stinner and committee members. My name is Todd Smith. I'm the CEO of a nonprofit, Nebraska-based nonprofit by the name of Symphony Workforce. We have a proprietary mobile gamified platform that solves a lot of the issues that you've heard today. It's almost a little bewildering. We always do tend to be the person in the room that tips over the punch bowl because I can't help, but to be honest. To build brick and mortar without having people, you've talked to workforce today quite a few times. Building empty building without having kids to go with it to do the work doesn't work. You've talked about, Senator, hey, by the way, how are we going to handle creating a solution that impacts urban kids the same way? Several of you talked about how do we get to rural kids? All of you at one point in time have said, we keep coming back to these same kind of committee meetings with the same solutions to different and bigger problems. If Nebraska is going to move forward and get past COVID and get past this workforce crisis, we're going to have to aim at a large swath of young people to move forward that covers a spectrum: all the colors in the Crayon box, socioeconomic and no matter if they're in Chadron, which is one of our greatest partners, or they're at OPS, which is another good partner of ours. We aim to look at over the next year, we're a national company. We are in 41 states that use our workforce platform, right? And so I don't know if you have kids or grandkids, you all look fairly young, right? Every one of your kids or grandkids has one of these and they have it close to them, right? I have a 15-year-old daughter, and I'd have to pry this out of her cold hand if I want to take it from her. Here's what I do know. We have in this state, we have 153,000 young people K-12 that are free and reduced lunch. We have another 35,000 that are in the juvenile justice system. Pull those together, you have roughly around 188,000 young people that are on the precipice of either we can take them and be really dynamic with them in a new way that is not brick and mortar based and bring them into through their choices, the workforce. Or we can continue to do things we've always done the same way and then having this same conversation 10 years from now. This is how it works. We have partners, whether they are Hawkins Construction, whether they are CNH, whether they're Goodwill, whether they're Chick-Fil-A, they come to us and they say, hey, we need to get to young people. We need to get to them early because if we try to wait until they go to community college or four-year college, it's too late. They've left Nebraska. We need to get to them in middle school and high school where they choose us. And so we've all seen the show

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Shark Tank. They come to us and we make them come to us with real problems, authentic problems. They take said problem, they put it on our platform, and kids come from all over the state to solve it, just like they're gaming on their phone, like they're at TikTok or Snapchat. And they get friends. They get three friends, form a team of four, and they try to solve it over seven days, seven days. It's not a large commitment. They can do that. That's their nature. And at the end of it, they compete for cash prizes, paid apprenticeships, paid virtual internships, jobs, scholarships because the payer at the end of the day is the state or it is industry, the economic wheel moving at the state level or the economic wheel moving at the industry level. It's not for the student to pay. It's not for schools to pay. But if we don't fix it, and I know I could stop, if we don't fix it at the middle school and at the high school level, upstream won't matter because the problem won't change.

STINNER: Thank you. Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thanks for being here.

TODD SMITH: Absolutely.

McDONNELL: You and I have had a number of discussions about this and can you tell us a little bit about during that seven days when they're working on that problem solving, they're competing for a cash prize.

TODD SMITH: Absolutely.

McDONNELL: Tell us a little bit of what you find out about the students,--

TODD SMITH: Absolutely.

McDONNELL: --about their skill level and their interest.

TODD SMITH: So the great thing is that when they come to our platform on their phone, there's several problems there, right, so from different industries. And so that old question that you can go ask any young person, my partner who's in the back of the room likes to say, if you go to a class of third graders and you say, hey, what do you want to be? Hands go through the roof, right? You go to a class of sophomores in high school and say, hey, what do you want to be? Not a hand goes up. So they're done with the question of what do you want to be when you grow up. But they will say, if I say here are five problems, which one do you want to solve? And once they pick one, they

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take that challenge through a series of eight questions and the last question, the ninth question is create a pitch just like Shark Tank. Create a pitch and you're pitching it to C-suite at HDR. Now over that time period while they're solving said problem, at any time I could say, Senator, I need you to come to my school at Bellevue West and talk to four kids in the middle of your busy day and talk to them about this one question. Or we can use technology and now in the middle of your normal day, your phone buzzes like it's a Facebook notification about your grandkid. And you tap on it and it opens up and it says, hey, your team from Find the Why! is asking a question. So one of those eight questions or roadmap questions it pops up. What do you think about this? Their answers, five sentences. And from the middle of your day, they get to tap into every bit of knowledge that you have without interrupting your day. So your message back is, hey, nice start. Think about this. And by the way, your grammar is horrible, [INAUDIBLE]. And because they're Google babies, they're Google babies, they think of you as an expert. That's dynamic information back, and our data shows that not only change that one answer, they change the one above, the one below. And you've given everything that you have in an instant without making your day change. And it is-- it is again and again ten thousands of kids, but we want to focus on Nebraska. We want to turn it back in and say over-- from 2022 we want to impact 50,000 of those kids on up. And we impact Regent scholars. We impact kids out of Project Reset that just came out of jail, just got done with gangs. We put them in competitions and they've placed fourth nationally. They're at Creighton getting funding, have their ideas pushed forward. No one would have known those kids were that talented. Or the kid who's a Regent scholar who now has five apprenticeship opportunities because of our platform, and he was a poor white kid that no one talks about out of a single-parent household and he's a rock star. We're in the state of Nebraska, folks. When I mentioned 108 or 153 kids that were free and reduced lunch kids, if I asked you all to tell me how many of those kids, break them down by color in the Crayon box, it would throw you off by 100,000 of those kids are white kids; only 50,000 are kids of color. So if we create a solution, it can't be a them solution or a them solution. It has to be an us solution and that takes technology. We have to look at new ways to get the kids so they choose where to go and how to get there, no matter their background, because they're all gifted. God gave us all a gift and we got to wait. We've got to find a way to sand it, cut it, make it right. But every kid has to be able to fail forward and that's what we give them, but we give it to them in their language, not yours. Not a newspaper on a Sunday morning. They're not

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cooking a turkey for 15 hours. That's not done. They want it right here next to TikTok, right next to Snapchat and they want it in their language: thumbs, thumbs, right? So that's just hopefully [INAUDIBLE]

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

TODD SMITH: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents under the community college workforce development? Good evening.

BRUCE RIEKER: Good evening. Senator Stinner, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Bruce Rieker and I'm the vice president for Nebraska Farm Bureau. But I'm going to title this my seven by seven testimony. I'm going to do it in less than three minutes. I asked Senator-- Senator Stinner if I could do this. So I'm testifying on behalf of seven ag organizations: the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Corn Growers, the State Dairy Association, Pork Producers, Soybean Association, and the Wheat Growers. And there are seven of the categories that you'll be considering tonight. With that, as far as support or opposition, there are seven of them we want to be on the record of supporting. That is this one, the community college workforce development. We also support the workforce housing, the site and building development, meat processing plant grants, small and medium meat processors, the drinking water projects, and then there is an inclusion for a study for a dairy processing center included in the Governor's proposal. And we want to be, like I said, on record telling you that we support that and letting our partners know that we support them in these endeavors.

STINNER: Very good. Thank you. Questions?

ERDMAN: He needs to spell his name.

BRUCE RIEKER: Oh, well, Bruce Rieker, R-i-e or B-r-u-c-e R-i-e-k-e-r.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

BRUCE RIEKER: You're welcome.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we will move to item number 12, workforce housing. Senator Williams, good evening. Getting up to your bedtime, isn't it?

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WILLIAMS: It's-- it's almost. It's close. Thank you, Chairman Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee and you're putting in a great long day and appreciate all the work that you're doing. I'm here representing myself as a senator and that's M-i-- M-a-t-t W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, Senator Erdman. But I'm also here representing the Nebraska Realtors, the Nebraska Bankers, the State Chamber, and the Nebraska Hospital Association in full support of the Governor's proposal on workforce housing, where he has recommended \$25 million in fiscal year '21-22 and \$50 million in '22-23. And in each of those fiscal years, \$25 million of that is allocated to the rural projects under the Nebraska Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act. And in fiscal '22-23, \$25 million is allocated under the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act for the urban parts of our state. I think without a doubt, we've recognized that housing is a critical issue. The COVID situation has made a significant difference in workforce shortage and also in the rural workforce shortage area. It's estimated that there are 50,000 jobs available in our state and only about 20,000 people seeking those jobs. The threshold question that I think all of us have to answer, in particular your group, is does COVID-19 public health emergency had a negative impact on this area of workforce housing? I would say it certainly has. We've seen increased building costs of construction. We've seen slowed down construction due to supply issues. We have fewer contractors, fewer subcontractors, and each contractor is still trying to find more workers. We also have had a situation where we've had early retirements, in particular in the education field and the medical field. Those early retirees because of COVID are retired, but they're still living in the house. And to fill their job, we've got to have another house on the market. We have a situation and you will remember in 2017 where we passed LB518, which has been incredibly successful. The statistics on that are-- are phenomenal. The state invested \$7 million. That \$7 million has now turned into in excess of \$110 million of brick and mortar across the rural parts of our state. It has created over 800 housing units, and it still continues to grow because of the revolving nature of it. I've introduced LB1069, LB1070 and LB1071 this year, which will give us the flexibility to use the Governor's proposal in a couple of ways. One of the fundamental questions that we will have to deal with and answer is the revolving aspect of the LB518 program, as we have used it so far. Will that work for ARPA funds since they have to be fully spent by the end of 2026? I have introduced one of the bills that addresses that so that that money could be used directly for infrastructure development, streets, water, sewer, all those kind of things. So I think it is clear that this is an issue. It's a major

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problem. We have a proven solution with the Rural Workforce Housing Grant program. It has been oversubscribed on the two times we did it in 2017, we did it again in 2020 with \$10 million oversubscribed every time and we can do better. And I think this is certainly a way to do it. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: It's been a long day.

STINNER: It has.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: Chairperson Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Erin Feichtinger, E-r-i-n F-e-i-c-h-t-i-n-g-e-r. I never think that should count against my time with a last name like that. And I am the director of advocacy and policy at Together, a social service organization based in Omaha that provides several housing support programs to the community. I'm here today in support of any proposal to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing to Nebraskans. And I also wanted to use this opportunity to alert you to the availability of federal funds that we are leaving on the table, funds that would ensure that working Nebraskans do not lose the homes they already have, and which our failure to accept could impact our avail-- our ability to develop workforce housing, particularly in rural areas. The U.S. Treasury currently has \$120,515,161.80 set aside for Nebraskans in need of help paying their rent and for their utilities. These funds are for the second round of emergency rental assistance provided by the federal government. Nebraska is currently one of two states who have not applied for this funding, which has proved a critical lifeline for Nebraskans trying to keep a roof over their heads over the last year. In your packet, you'll find a breakdown of the first round of ERA funds distributed by the state, by county, and by legislative districts. Treasury extended the application deadline for these funds from September 2021 to March 31, 2022. These funds can be used for emergency rental and utility assistance needs, which made up 75 percent of statewide calls to 211 last year. Additionally, 10 percent of these total funds can be used for housing stabilization services, which includes funding for housing support staff, legal services, and other uses which help Nebraskans keep a roof over their heads and the heat on and which might reduce

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some of your other ARPA requests if we took this money. The second round of funding has a spend-down date of September 30, 2025, meaning this is three years' worth of help to all Nebraskans. Furthermore, if Nebraska does not apply for these funds, Treasury will just reallocate them to emergency rental assistance programs in other states. I have also included in your packet an overview of the state program as it exists currently taken from Nebraska's website, as well as eligibility requirements and eligible uses. You will see from this information that this is not just free money going to people who are choosing not to pay their rent. In fact, these funds are distributed directly to landlords to help cover their costs, up to 15 months of rent up to \$20,000. Any difficulty in the process of applying has been our own, and any existing issues are fixable, but we can't fix them if we do not apply for the funds. Community members and organizations like mine so-- have so far been unsuccessful in trying to get the state to apply for this money. So I'm here to leave it now with you. I can't overstate how valuable this emergency assistance has been and will continue to be. All we need to do is choose to take it. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: I know I'd asked the question earlier about the-- just want to make sure I get the fund right-- the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Do you know us not applying how that might impact our ability to develop workforce housing, given that this is one of the subject matters of this?

ERIN FEICHTINGER: Yeah. And thanks for keeping me relevant. Yeah, for rural workforce housing, I know that the-- the way that the Rural Workforce Housing bill is-- or act works is it actually allows for rental properties as well. And if you're a developer going to look at a community, they're going to do a market study. And the main thing they're looking at is vacancy rates and rent receipts. Not taking this money is going to negatively impact both of those-- both those aspects of the market. And if we are the only state in the country, besides Arkansas, leaving this money on the table, our hard-to-develop communities will look even less attractive compared to communities that have accepted these funds and can guarantee 15 months of income on these properties. So like development finance, right, is all about attracting capital and we'll be at a competitive disadvantage on the investor's paper for declining these funds possibly. That's just one aspect that's been brought up to me about our inability to apply so far.

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VARGAS: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: You said we haven't applied for the funds. In your opinion, who's dropping the ball?

ERIN FEICHTINGER: That's a really good question. So right now, the statewide Emergency Rental Assistance program is administered by NIFA. It's a little confusing because it's also been developed and is overseen by Deloitte, who the state hired to administer, I don't know, all the federal funds that we've gotten so far. At other various points, DED has been involved, NEMA has been involved; and I think those would be the-- the state agencies that have so far been involved in the statewide Emergency Rental Assistance program.

DORN: Well--

ERIN FEICHTINGER: But-- but NIFA told me, I shouldn't-- actually, I'm sorry. But my understanding is that it is the, ultimately the Governor's decision whether or not we apply for these funds.

DORN: Hopefully, some of their people are here and that they're listening. Thank you.

STINNER: Any add-- Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One question. Do you know if there's any senator who has brought a bill regarding this?

ERIN FEICHTINGER: I think there might be one or two bills that I have seen that we could use for this. But again, the deadline is March 31, 2022. So like I said at the end of my testimony, at this point, I'm kind of leaving it with you all. This is money that we could use to help people when we're talking especially about negative economic impacts. And you know, I looked at the numbers this morning and--

CLEMENTS: But you don't know of any bill particularly.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: Oh, no, I'm sorry. Yeah.

CLEMENTS: OK, thank you.

STINNER: Let me ask this. Is there a maintenance of effort that we have to match it somehow with state funds?

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ERIN FEICHTINGER: No.

STINNER: This is purely--

ERIN FEICHTINGER: We would-- yeah. And it provides also, the ERA funds also provide money. Part of it can be used for the administration of funds in building these programs. We can also use them for outreach, those funds.

STINNER: OK.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: So it's basically a package delivered to us.

STINNER: And this is different than rental assistance or is this the same program? Because I just thought that it was HHS that was responsible for--

ERIN FEICHTINGER: No, this is--

STINNER: --rental assistance.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: No, this is specific money set aside from the federal government for the Emergency Rental Assistance programs across the country. And in our state, it's being administered by NIFA.

STINNER: I see. OK, very good. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

ERIN FEICHTINGER: Have a good evening.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, number-- we'll move to number 13 on our schedule, low-income education assistance program.

JEREMY EKELER: All right. I feel like I should order you guys--

STINNER: Good evening.

JEREMY EKELER: --good evening-- some pizza or something here, but we'll get this going. My name is Jeremy Ekeler. It's spelled J-e-r-e-m-y E-k-e-l-e-r. Chairman Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee, I'm here today to support LB1014's family directed education recovery accounts. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education has far-reaching negative ramifications as we've-- as we've heard. In particular on education, as one of-- one article states: The damage to individuals is consequential, but the

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consequences could go deeper. McKinsey and Company has found that the pandemic has left students on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading by the end of the '21 school year. As the data estimates, unless steps are taken to address unfinished learning, today's students may earn \$49,000 to \$61,000 less over their lifetime, and the impact on the U.S. economy could amount to \$128 billion to \$188 billion annually as these-- as these folks enter the workforce. Sadly, these learning loss impacts, not to mention the mental health impacts and the economic fallout that will follow, will be experienced by-- by-- most by low-income black and Hispanic students who are already pre-pandemic were experiencing these disparities. These-- these same low-income black and Hispanic families that have been most impacted by learning losses are also the same families that the Urban Institute reported additional significant economic hardship and financial instability throughout the pandemic. Such circumstances have made it all the more difficult for these families to pursue supplemental and alternative educational opportunities at the same higher rates of families who do have the financial means. Ultimately, the families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic experience increased educational costs at a time when financial circumstances were already constrained, if not worse. It is in this context that we urge the Appropriation Committee to adopt the Governor's family-directed education recovery accounts. The education recovery accounts will, in a targeted and efficient fashion, get assistance into the hands of low-income families whose children have been hit hardest during this pandemic, as envisioned by ARPA's final rule. These funds are available to all students, public, nonpublic and home school, because we know COVID did not discriminate against anybody. The funds are also designated for strict uses such as tutoring, tuition, curriculum, or other educational services to ensure that learning losses will be addressed. This temporary pilot program will also require student performance data collection to better understand its positive impacts on students. I spent 18 years in schools as an educator. I learned that kids get one shot at their formative K-12 education. COVID-19 has significantly-- significantly ruptured and dramatically affected this one shot for far too many kids. But with these education recovery accounts, Nebraska can utilize a critical tool for putting our state's most impacted children back on course for a bright future. Thank you for your consideration, and I'm open to questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator McDonnell.

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McDONNELL: Thank you for being here. So I'm a parent and my child's falling behind in math. I can hire a math tutor.

JEREMY EKELER: That's right.

McDONNELL: My child's fall farther behind in the school he's at. I can switch schools?

JEREMY EKELER: You could under this program, that's right, as long as you meet the eligibility of the free and reduced standard as a family.

McDONNELL: What can't I use the money for?

JEREMY EKELER: What can you not?

McDONNELL: Yeah, can I-- can I not use it for--

JEREMY EKELER: Sure. I think the only--

McDONNELL: --educationwise?

JEREMY EKELER: I think the only stipulation the Governor had in here in terms of, you know, not allowing because he had kind of some open language about other educational purposes, he did exempt technology and devices. And the reason for that, I sort of worked with the schools as we've gone through GEER, ESSER, EANS. His first round of GEER was 100 percent committed to technology and devices. So I think the mindset there, I can't speak for him, but I think the mindset there is that we've provided devices. That's the one thing that's not in this-- in this package.

McDONNELL: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ekeler.

JEREMY EKELER: Sure.

CLEMENTS: Heard a comment earlier today of someone commenting that private school students shouldn't receive a \$2,000 award.

JEREMY EKELER: Uh-huh.

CLEMENTS: Is that part of your program and how would you justify that?

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JEREMY EKELER: So tuition is one of the allowable uses, and I disagree with the argument that it shouldn't be a use. I'll kind of talk about why that is. First of all, this money doesn't go to our schools. It goes to a parent who makes a decision. Parents know what's best for their child. If-- if they want to use that money for a nonpublic education, I think we should honor that, especially at a time when we're trying to find the right fit for students. I will give you the perspective. We have 110 Catholic schools in Nebraska. We have a net loss of students about 1,400, over 1,400, almost 1,500 kids we've lost in our schools since COVID started. The impact has been most dramatic at our schools that serve the lowest need. We have schools losing between 13 and 20 percent of our students. So if we have students-- schools that serve a large portion of low-income students, they're the ones that are hurt the most. That means, you know, 1,400 students who want to be in our schools who felt like that was the best place for them, that was the place they were comfortable, they're not able to do that right now. And we're talking about families who are in the most tenuous situations. We all know every time a kid transitions, it's going to hurt them as a learner. We would like to retain our students. We'd like to provide the education we already are. We'd like to allow these families to recover, that's the name of the plan, and get back on their feet.

CLEMENTS: And have you found a-- I guess students falling behind in the Catholic schools as well?

JEREMY EKELER: Everybody, public schools, home schools, nonpublic schools, everybody's working hard right now. Kids-- are kids falling behind? Kids are falling behind across the board. I will say in Catholic schools, the data I have back, our ACT scores, for instance, have held steady across the board, in particular for minority populations. We're very proud of that. I think all teachers in the state should be very proud of the work they're putting in for kids right now, though.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: So it's a-- it's a pilot program.

JEREMY EKELER: Correct.

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McDONNELL: And when we talked about what the parent can choose to spend it on and what they can't educationally speaking, what's the timeframe to spend the money?

JEREMY EKELER: So the program is developed to-- to run for the 2022-23, '23-24, '24-25 school years, so it would end in year 2025. So that-- that fall or, I'm sorry, that spring, May of 2025 when school wraps up the program would be sunset or be over.

McDONNELL: Thank you.

STINNER: Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: So if I hear you correctly, this is-- this is basically a voucher system.

JEREMY EKELER: No.

HILKEMANN: You said it went, the money goes to the parent, not to the school.

JEREMY EKELER: Correct. So each parent would have an account that they could use for any education, sir. Vouchers typically are defined as money given to a child by the state to use for tuition. This program puts money into account first for a family to pick from a wide menu of options. If they chose to pay tuition, \$2,000 with it, could you call it a voucher? Yeah, that may be they chose that, but it's-- it's assistance to go to a nonpublic school. But the program itself is not a voucher program.

HILKEMANN: OK, so then--

JEREMY EKELER: It's like, sorry, go ahead.

HILKEMANN: [INAUDIBLE]

JEREMY EKELER: No, I think you've got to--

HILKEMANN: So what about-- what about the kids in public school [INAUDIBLE]? You're saying that the parent could then choose to hire a tutor, is that right?

JEREMY EKELER: Sure. So a student, well, the vast majority of our students in the state are public school students. I think the gentleman earlier said there's 150,000 students on free and reduced

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lunch programs or in the free and reduced-- free and reduced lunch program in our public schools. This program would probably benefit those families the most. So, yes, they could use it for tutoring, online courses, yeah, the whole wide array of uses, so 100 percent open to public school students.

HILKEMANN: So would these parents have to apply to some, what's the name-- whatever the name of this particular fund is that he's setting up?

JEREMY EKELER: That's right. So the language of the bill the Governor has put in place essentially says that the money will go to the Nebraska Department of Education, who shall contract with a third party, essentially, an outside resource who would then take applications from families based first and foremost upon proving learning loss. That family would then use the money as they see fit for their child, which is, you know, something we advocate as a Catholic Conference all the time to empower parents as the first educator of their child. So especially during COVID and learning loss and all the struggles we're seeing, I think it's-- I just think it's really important for families to have that power.

HILKEMANN: Would we have-- do these parents have to-- it is only for low, more low-income?

JEREMY EKELER: That's right. So ARPA stipulates that families at or below 185 percent of poverty can be assumed to be disproportionately impacted by COVID, and that they-- and it specifically mentions that educational programs and services should be provided or can be provided. There are evidence-based tutoring. As evidence-based, Catholic schools have a rich history, a long history they're evidence-based. Everything in this program is evidence-based and within the bounds of ARPA, yes, sir.

HILKEMANN: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: I know you didn't, well, I don't know if you played any role in drafting the bill. But can you talk about the-- the structure of what you just mentioned about the Department of Education?

JEREMY EKELER: Yeah.

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VARGAS: For most of our ARPA bills, they're either being directly given to a nonprofit or an entity or a department or agency is charged with accountability and oversight. But this is having basically the Department Education subcontract the accountability?

JEREMY EKELER: That's how it reads to me. Yeah, I didn't write that, you know, I guess you're sort of insinuating that I wrote that in.

VARGAS: No, no, I'm not insinuating.

JEREMY EKELER: I didn't write that in.

VARGAS: I just didn't know--

JEREMY EKELER: Yeah.

VARGAS: --if you--

JEREMY EKELER: So I'll give you, can I just-- I'll give you my-- my experience with why this might have happened.

VARGAS: Yeah.

JEREMY EKELER: There's a program called the Emergency Assistance to Nonpublic Schools, which is a pool of money that went to nonpublic schools for COVID mitigation based on low income, based on poverty status. When the Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools came to Nebraska, when the program arrived, in conversation with the commissioner and the NDE, and I'm not speaking for them, but I'm saying this is what our conversations were, they realized pretty quickly they could not administer that program. They don't have the infrastructure. They didn't feel comfortable doing it. And the companies that they vetted could audit-- would run audits and work with the department. So the audit would happen between them and the department. It was super efficient and functional, and I'm assuming that's why that got in here.

VARGAS: OK. No, and I'll ask a follow-up more directly on that but thank you.

JEREMY EKELER: Sure.

STINNER: Any additional questions? I guess for me, I'm just-- more of a statement. I'm not going to say anything about the merits of the program, but the head scratcher is it's a pilot program. And it was

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something that we discussed one-time money for one-time, not starting new programs, those types of things.

JEREMY EKELER: Sure.

STINNER: So I guess I'm still going to scratch my head over it.

JEREMY EKELER: I found the language interesting, too. I will say I-- we want these families to get back on their feet and we want to empower every student in the state of Nebraska with a learning loss. So our focus is on help-- is on empowering parents and helping them engage in the educational process. So I appreciate the comment. All right.

TANYA SANTOS: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

TANYA SANTOS: I am Tanya Santos, T-a-n-y-a S-a-n-t-o-s. I am actually here in support. I have to read this title because it's a long title, of the family-directed educational recovery accounts for low-income families. And the reason why I come to you today is I am currently an administrator in a parochial school in Omaha, Nebraska. I am an adjunct professor at UNO, and I'm a doctoral student at UNL. And for the last 27 years, I have worked with low-income families across our state. This opportunity is so huge for our families that have the greatest need because what I see in classrooms every day across the state is there is a gap. The pandemic has led us to a gap and there was significant learning losses. For example, I was speaking with an ELL learner today this morning. He is even unable to identify his colors, and we are in first grade, January. I was speaking to a third grader at a public school actually where I was supervising practicum students not long ago, and this third grade student was unable to tell time, elapsed time on a clock. And I found myself wondering why? Why? Yes, we were not in school for some time, but what are we missing here? We were doing online learning. We were doing the best that we can. But some of those things you cannot teach online. You have to have a clock in front of you. You have to be able to teach minutes to the 5, to the 10 seconds. So while we did the best that we could during that time, we have a lot of recovery efforts that we need to make. And as Jeremy alluded to, our teachers are doing the best that they can, but that's not enough. We only have them in our school seven and a half hours each day. That doesn't count lunch and restroom breaks, doesn't count all of the actual instructional time. So how are

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we going to make up for five-- four to six months of lost learning? And this is our opportunity if we support this pilot program. Parents have the opportunity to use that money to hire a tutor outside of school, to enroll their children in programs that will get them more socially acclimated because students were not around people for a long time. They still need to learn some social skills. So I encourage you. I could talk to you for hours about what I see in classrooms, but I really encourage you to support this opportunity. It is a pilot program, so let us try it for a little bit. Look at the data, and let's let the data do the talking from there. I would also say, as a young lady that was born in the state of Nebraska, I grew up in low income. I was on free and reduced lunch. It was only two years ago that my own children did not-- that my own children did qualify for free and reduced lunch. Two years ago. So I was not far from they were, with four degrees, with multiple jobs. And so if I can do it and overcome it with my education, we need to invest that money so that our children can get further help in their education and overcome these deficits so that they have an opportunity to help our state, just like I have an opportunity to speak with you now today. So I thank you for your time and if you have any questions.

STINNER: Very good. Questions? Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thank you for being here. Thanks for your work.

TANYA SANTOS: Absolutely.

McDONNELL: If this program doesn't exist, where do parents go? Where do you-- where are you going to direct them? What's their options to help catch the kids up?

TANYA SANTOS: There's really not a lot of options that are free. So I can recommend that a parent take their child to Sylvan Learning Center. I can recommend that they take him to a variety of programs, but they all cost money. There is not a lot of options out there. And when we're talking about low-income families, there is not a lot of money for them to spend on a tutor. They're going to sacrifice paying their MUD bill, [INAUDIBLE] bill, or groceries to be able to get that opportunity for their children. I see it happen all the time.

McDONNELL: Thank you.

TANYA SANTOS: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? Thank you for coming.

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TANYA SANTOS: Thank you all. Thank you for your time.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents?

TIM ROYERS: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

TIM ROYERS: Senator Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Tim, T-i-m, Royers, R-o-y-e-r-s. I am the president of the Millard Education Association and I'm here today on behalf of the Nebraska State Education Association to speak in opposition to the family-directed education recovery accounts that are included as a negative economic impact component of LB1014. We do not believe this portion of the bill aligns with, Senator Stinner, something you've already mentioned. This is a pilot program and you've mentioned how you want ARPA funds to be used relative to pilot programs. There is a limited authority to mandate what happens with these funds in subsequent years, which means there are serious questions on the long-term viability of this program. Given the broad list of other needs that we have listened for hours on today, there are certainly other areas that could benefit from this funding and would not be subject to nearly as much speculation or uncertainty as this program. Now is the time to make sure our resources are going to proven solutions, expanding established infrastructure to make sure that we're truly meeting the needs of all Nebraskans. On the substance of this proposal, I have serious concerns about whether this funding will actually deliver the intended support for students. We know our priority right now is to make sure our kids get the additional support they need to address the added academic, social, emotional, and mental health concerns. The question that we need to ask ourselves today is this: How are we making sure that students are receiving additional support services on top of their regular schooling? Discounts on private school tuition, for example, in no way provides extra help. It just makes their regular schooling slightly cheaper for those who choose to attend private school. Instead, I would ask this committee to consider the greatest need at the moment, and that's having the adequate staff in place to provide the needed assessments, referrals, and interventions. I'm talking about having an adequate number of staff like school psychologists and speech language pathologists. And I think it's important for all of us to remember that our public school staff provide those services to all students in their areas, meaning they serve the private school students just like they serve our public school ones. Our folks are pushed to the limit right now

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and the number of referrals that those staff are dealing with are double or even triple what they would face in a normal year. Our psychologists are putting in way more hours to make sure the students receive the services they deserve. So if we want to make sure that the needs of all kids in our communities are being met, I ask this committee to consider allocating funds for that purpose. I would also encourage the committee to consider funding school-- funding support for the community partners that work with our schools because they provide another layer of-- layer of support for our kids. For working parents, especially for those in poverty, many organizations have set up before and after school support programs directly with our schools to cut down on transportation challenges and to build closer partnerships with teachers. Whether it's the Boys and Girls Club building directly onto a school site like Central Middle School in Millard or other organizations like my own church, St. Luke, across the street from Burke High School, providing an after school teen center at no cost to any family and actually paying Burke teachers to work beyond their contract to tutor those kids. These are proven ways to support our kids. Good intentions are not enough to build sound policy. This committee needs to allocate ARPA funds to proven solutions, and these directed accounts are not that. Please consider the much better alternatives I've highlighted today, and I appreciate your consideration.

STINNER: Question? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: So, Mr. Royers, several years ago, were you like the teacher of the year?

TIM ROYERS: I was in 2016.

ERDMAN: That's when I was on Education you came in.

TIM ROYERS: Yep.

ERDMAN: So in your opinion, public school is the answer for every child?

TIM ROYERS: No. That's why I said the piece that I would like you all to consider is working on hiring our school psychologists because even if they're a public school psychologist, they provide those assessment services to all kids within that geographic area, whether they're private school students or public school students.

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ERDMAN: So would you agree that there may be a rare chance that a student may do better in a private school than they do in a public school? Would you agree that could be possible?

TIM ROYERS: I think that question is not relevant to the criteria for the ARPA funding, which is about how do we help our kids--

ERDMAN: I'm not asking if it's relevant. I'm asking your opinion. Do you agree that a child could be better off in a private school than a public school, there's a chance it could happen?

TIM ROYERS: Sure.

ERDMAN: OK, so that's what they're asking to do. And our public schools have 100 schools in the state that are-- that need improvement, 100. All right? So public schools aren't the greatest thing that ever happened to slice-- and slice-- since sliced bread. OK. So saying that we're going to-- we're going to deny these kids an opportunity to do what they need to do, these parents need to decide what to do best for their kids. I tell you right now, public schools are not the answer for every child. And when they come in and make a presentation like this to me, whether it's a pilot program or not, it makes sense.

TIM ROYERS: Sure. I mean, respectfully, Senator, I-- nothing that I just said indicated that public schools are the only solution for kids. That's why I highlighted our public employees who serve all kids in an attendance area--

ERDMAN: And they all--

TIM ROYERS: --and I highlighted nonprofit and third party programs who partner at no cost to families with any kids who need those services.

ERDMAN: And all your comments were about public schools.

TIM ROYERS: Absolutely.

ERDMAN: Yeah.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

TIM ROYERS: Thank you, and I appreciate your time this evening, everyone.

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STINNER: Yes.

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Good evening, Senator Stinner,--

STINNER: Good evening.

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: --members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ann Hunter-Pirtle, A-n-n H-u-n-t-e-r-P-i-r-t-l-e. I'm the executive director of Stand for Schools, a nonprofit that works to advance public education in Nebraska. Stand for Schools opposes the family-directed education recovery accounts outlined in Section 8 of LB1014. Our state needs proven solutions to address pandemic-related learning loss that include the 9 out of 10 students who attend public schools in our state. That means that students need to be able to receive support services over and above their regular schooling, and discounts on private school tuition are not a strategy to address learning loss because they're not providing those additional learning supports. We believe those purposes for these accounts should not be included in the budget and that these funds should be invest in other services-- invested in other services. The Legislature has debated whether to subsidize private school tuition through scholarship tax credits at least four times in the last five years, and the concept has never advanced past General File. The Legislature's Education Committee has not had an opportunity to weigh the policy implications of this new program or to have education experts provide input. And it would be unusual, as you pointed out, Senator Stinner, for the Appropriations Committee to create a pilot program using this mechanism. The proposed program in Section 8 also exists as a stand-alone bill in LB1240, Senator Albrecht's companion bill, which will be heard in this committee. In short, we believe the ARPA budget is not the place to start this type of program. Instead of private tuition remission, we believe these funds could be used for after-school programming, childcare availability, summer school availability for all grade levels, retaining teachers and school counselors, and incentive pay for mental and behavioral health professionals. These options would also-- would all better support the goal of addressing learning loss than the simple tuition discounts proposed in Section 8 of LB1014. There are a few other bills that are going to be coming up in this committee in the next few weeks that we also would prefer to see used, you know, but would believe would be a better use of these funds. They include LB696, appropriate federal funds to the State Department of Education for school employee retention payments; LB1131, state intent to appropriate federal funds for bonus payments for teachers, childcare workers, and healthcare

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workers; and LB1217, appropriate federal funds to the Department of Administrative Services for incentive payments to eligible school employees. So for these reasons, we oppose Section 8 of LB1014 and ask that you not include this provision in the budget. Happy to take questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional opponents.

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: My name is Molly Davies, also known as Mary Frances Davies. I live in Omaha at 68105 in Senator McDonnell's arena, and I'm here today to speak in opposition to Section 8 of LB1014. I am a 21-year veteran educator of Catholic and private schools. I'd like to imagine for a second what private schools would be like if they could not deny enrollment and if they could not exclude or expel, and if they could require and compel all parents and guardians to have a contractual agreement to receive services. That is what public schools do, and we do it happily and with pride, and we wouldn't have it any other way. But it creates situations sometimes where we have a lot to deal with in a day's time. That is especially true in the moment. Allocating \$60 million of funding for students who have suffered as a result of the pandemic to a pilot program to benefit private education is a future further unfunding of the chronically underfunded schools that many are criticizing for not being quality. It makes no sense. Think tanks will argue that because the flexibility is there because we can, we should. But I'd like to present a vision that would be more inclusive. Proponents of using ARPA dollars to fund public education state that the lack of quality options available to their families is the reason to create the option to resource tuition for private schools this way. We've already listened to this this sessions, how it merited a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for the wealthy, and it failed. And now we're listening to why that money should come out of rescue funds. The state and the nation has never fully funded public education. Instead, teachers listen to senators complain about wild, out-of-control spending in public schools. But we're going to vote for new prisons for a system that has increased in costs 51 percent over a decade. We listen to an argument that increased crime merited funding for the training of police today. Have you been paying attention to the news? Have you seen how this has played out in our schools? This is pandemic stress. Does it not merit the same consideration? Here are some better ideas: affordable, quality daycare in low-income areas;

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allocate the funds for affordable, quality preschool; increase social workers in schools; more mental health professionals to work in schools; increase school-based health clinics; wraparound support for families in poverty. These are things we already have in our public schools. We are providing these things in our public schools. We need more funding for them. Play based social-emotional learning support; experiential learning during the summer for kids who qualify for free and reduced lunch; additional paraeducator pay and training; tuition credits for teachers and preservice teachers. We are in the face of a giant teacher shortage. North and south Omaha schools, provide family empowerment educational programming could use an increase. Please remember who is excluded from private schools. Please remember how our tax dollars must be spent and what this money was intended for. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions?

CLEMENTS: I didn't hear the spelling of the name.

STINNER: I was going to ask her.

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: Sorry, D-a-v-i-e-s.

STINNER: Your first name and last name.

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: Sorry, I'm sorry.

STINNER: That's OK.

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: M-a-r-y D-a-v-i-e-s.

STINNER: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Clements, for reminding me. Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: In your testimony, you made this sound as if this were basically we're using the ARPA dollars to fund the Opportunity Scholarships that we have gone through. Is that how you look at this program?

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: It is how I look at this program, and I take the point that was asked earlier about accountability, I believe by Senator Vargas was that about how this was-- how-- and Nebraska Department of Education is subcontracting sort of the distribuny-- distribution, the accountability of this. And I look at how the money is being used, and I look at the intersection of the bills being

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offered in front of the Legislature. And honestly, if this excluded private school tuition and possibly I find some question in some of the technology applications. I don't know about you, but I have a seven-year-old and I watch my seven-year-old on the apps that are supposed to solve this problem. We had COVID as a family in November, and so I got two weeks homeschooling my seven-year-old while doing my job from my house. And seven-year-olds don't use a lot of these technologies, adaptations very well in order to make up for this learning loss. And he was a kindergartner when the pandemic started. So I think some of the technology applications are also really, really questionable in terms of their use. I think the one-on-one tutoring and social emotional support, behavioral health support, those ideas that are within the rules of how this money could be spent make a lot of sense to me. And I would not object to some of those going to nonprofit settings, private settings, whatever. That doesn't bother me at all. But the idea that you could use it for private school tuition as a pilot program that would be extended into the future seems to me to intersect with what has already been argued about.

HILKEMANN: I've had several educators say that our kids have probably, for all intents and purposes, have lost a year in school. Would you-- where would you-- where would you put that assessment?

MARY F. (MOLLY) DAVIES: I would agree with one of the proponents that this has disproportionately affected some students. I can say in my own household, that's true. I have a 10-year-old who lives for school, and it hasn't negatively affected her at all. She's felt some of the social, emotional stress, but basically she's out on the other side already. But my seven-year-old is-- really struggled to get to where I thought he would be in terms of his writing and his reading ability, and that takes extra family pressure. But what I know as a public school educator in our biggest district is that we do offer a ton of support for this. So my-- my son is being offered before and after school tutoring. These things are available. I know at the school where I teach that there are constant supports for tutoring so students can stay two hours after school and access all sorts of resources that are available, and-- and public school educators are paid extra duty pay in order to do that. And those programs are very functional. I think that that probably is the-- the best internal resource for that. But in terms of the students who are the most vulnerable at this time, I don't think that starting a pattern of pulling them away from opportunities that exist where they're at, especially when those have been chronically and historically underfunded. I mean, if-- if the Legislature had come forward and made

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sure that every student in those inner city schools had everything that they needed up until now, I think I would view things a little bit differently at this point. But especially coming from a situation where I taught in the Catholic schools and I witnessed and watched while students had to leave Catholic schools because of behavior, because of drug and alcohol concern, because of their sexuality or gender profile, and were ending up back in a public school after they had made the move to a Catholic school, I find it really-- I am very uncomfortable with the idea that we would redirect public funding for COVID rescue in this direction.

HILKEMANN: Thank you.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. Evening.

JARED WAGENKNECHT: Hi, my name is Jared Wagenknecht, J-a-r-e-d W-a-g-e-n-k-n-e-c-h-t, that's always fun to spell out for you all. I'm a public high school teacher and I'm here speaking as an individual. It's been a tough three years for students. They deserve actual solutions that'll fix this mess and they deserve to be listened to. Unfortunately, the proposed funding for education recovery accounts does neither of those things. Students in both private and public schools need programmatic solutions to meet their most pressing needs. It's clear that mental health and behavioral support are essential for getting students back on track. When the Nebraska Department of Education engaged educators and parents about ARP fund priorities, they clearly identified providing social, emotional, and mental health support for all students. This is exactly what I and other educators see in our classrooms each day, and you've heard a little bit about that today. Student crisis situations that used to happen a few times a semester are now weekly and daily occurrences. Students of all ages struggle with things like attention regulation, metacognition, and other learning skills. But instead of addressing this, we're just giving people money to attend private schools and assuming that they will have their needs met. Unfortunately, mental health and behavioral supports are often less available to students at private schools than in public ones. Many private elementary schools do not have school counselors in their building each day. In the case of Title I needs, these services are actually provided to parochial schools by the public school system. How is sending our struggling students to these schools a solution? Instead of supporting the programs we know our students need most, we're busy trying to figure out how to divert funds into private school tuition dollars. That's not a solution, but it is explicitly suggested in recent ARP policy briefs from the

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typical school choice conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, the State Policy Network, and the Conservative Education Reform Network. Our students and parents deserve actual solutions, not repackaged partisan policies. There are also serious questions about why we're making this money available for digital learning subscriptions and who stands to benefit. If school closures and lack of in-person instruction is the problem, how is funding private virtual learning subscriptions a solution? Last week, The New York Times reported on the massive amount of money being made by ed tech firms, despite a lack of evidence that their services are effective. Are we ready to see tech companies from California and New York swoop in and tell parents whatever they want to hear just so they can get their cut of Nebraska's ARP funds? Whether you're a liberal concerned about privatization of public services or a conservative who opposes government waste, I hope we can all agree that this portion of the proposal is particularly problematic. Lastly, we should be clear about what message it sends to suggest that our solution for learning loss is to pay for students to leave their public school and attend a private one. Year after year, our poorest public schools continue to be underfunded. We can't pay for the public school system we've got. Yet we're told the solution is to divert emergency funding to an additional school system while also cutting state aid. We've heard from the Corrections Department about the incredible needs they had earlier, and you aren't talking about solving those problems by funding a second corrections system. You're talking about increasing the resources to meet their needs, and that's what public school students and parents in your district deserve. Thank you. I'll take any questions.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Any additional opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our number 12 low-income education assistance program. We will now open to the site and building development, which is number 14 on your program.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Hello.

STINNER: Good evening.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Chairman Stinner, members of the committee, what a long day for you. Thank you for putting in the time and the effort. My name is Jennifer Creager. I'm the vice president of public policy at the Greater Omaha Chamber, J-e-n-n-i-f-e-r C-r-e-a-g-e-r. I'm also here tonight on behalf of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and

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Industry, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, the Nebraska Economic Developers Association, and the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce executives. We are here in support of the Governor's proposal to add \$60 million to the Site and Building Development Fund. We're thankful the administration included this in their recommendations and were supportive of this fund. In the interest of your time, we're going to wait to give you details on our thoughts and priorities in this policy area until the committee takes up LB1033, which is Senator Arch's proposal on infrastructure needs in the coming weeks. I should also mention that we are generally supportive of workforce and housing efforts in the Governor's package, but we'll have specific thoughts in the future. And finally, just wearing my Greater Omaha Chamber hat, I would also like to mention on today's lists we're supportive of funding for the North 24th Street project in North Omaha, which you will get to later today, but I didn't want to have to come up twice for you. We know you have a gigantic task ahead of you. The business community stands ready to assist you however we can do that. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? I have a question on the \$60 million. Are there projects that are backlogged, ready to go so that, you know, there's a timeline on spending \$60 million?

JENNIFER CREAGER: Right.

STINNER: Site and building has been a program we've had.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Yeah.

STINNER: And again, it's been oversubscribed. I think Senator Hilkemann actually carried a bill to put some money into it. But I was just concerned about the amount of money that's there and what the demand looked like.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Yeah. So right now, it's funded on an annual basis based on doc stamp revenue, which is around \$2.5 million, I think, on an annual. It's one of the few economic development funds that has a recurring funding source. Senator Hilkemann did run a bill for us several years ago, which I think was a, I'm going to say \$10 million. I can't remember--

HILKEMANN: [INAUDIBLE]

JENNIFER CREAGER: \$5 million, \$15 million, which was a nice one-time bond, but I think that was about five years ago. We-- we-- they have

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projects every year-- it's a competitive basis-- that apply to DED for funding. It's projects every year that they just can't get to. So I think there are funds. There's a specific fund I know DED is thinking about for some of the money in the \$60 million, I shouldn't say specific fund, specific project that they're looking to put some money toward. So I don't think lack of projects is the issue, lack of adequate funding.

STINNER: I was just reflecting on the fact I know it was \$10 million we put in as extra money five years ago. We're using 2.5. I can do the math and I don't get to 60 [INAUDIBLE].

JENNIFER CREAGER: Right. And I know Senator Conrad, I believe, maybe five years before Senator Hilkemann's bill did an additional infusion of \$10 million.

STINNER: Right.

JENNIFER CREAGER: So the Legislature periodically, when they've had money, have put sort of large chunks in the fund to maybe try to catch up. Obviously, the last several years, that wasn't an option. But-- and then we're also talking about larger projects in which we'll talk about what Senator Arch's bill that puts us in a better competition with other states, some infrastructure that we're just not-- we just don't have at this time. But we could talk about that at that hearing.

STINNER: That's what the committee is going to look at is--

JENNIFER CREAGER: Correct.

STINNER: --what do you have in mind [INAUDIBLE] this.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Yep, yep.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JENNIFER CREAGER: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? I'm sorry, I hope I didn't shut you off. Are you an opponent or a neutral?

WILLIE BARNEY: Neutral.

STINNER: OK, thank you.

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WILLIE BARNEY: First of all, Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y, from Omaha. And I've been trying to find the right place to come in and speak, and I thought this would be the most appropriate place. I've spent the better part of the last 15 years working in North Omaha and other parts of the city of Omaha, focusing specifically on reducing gun violence, focusing on improving education, focusing on reducing unemployment in North Omaha. I wanted to bring us back to where we started. There are 25 qualified census tracts in North Omaha based on the ARPA legislation that's been put out here. The unemployment rate, even before COVID hit in North Omaha, was 12 percent. And I wanted to also mention what you said, Senator, proven programs. We have worked with the community, with the police department, with neighborhoods and others. We were able to reduce gun violence in North Omaha by 74 percent over a 10-year period. We were able to reduce unemployment from 20 percent down to that 12 percent, and we were able to reduce poverty from 32 percent, down to 22 percent. And then COVID hit. And so many of those trends that we had worked incredibly hard to get moving in the right direction now have been reversed. I want to share with you over the last 15 years, we have worked with over 8,000 people, over 500 organizations working to improve North Omaha, working to work together with South Omaha and other parts of our city. But I want to bring this back to the ARPA legislation and the opportunity that we have to make historic, a historic difference in North Omaha and South Omaha and other qualified census tracts around the state. There are other funds that are being allocated from the state budget that are going to other projects, but the ARPA funds specifically allow us the opportunity to address things that have been identified since the late 1960s. Dr. King, we just celebrated his-- his work last week, and there are quotes and posts all over the country about his work. One of the things and why he went in 1963 to focus on that march was a march on jobs and freedom. At that time, when Dr. King went to Washington-- Washington, the unemployment rate was 7 percent, 7 percent. And the urgency behind addressing that, he was marching and demonstrating, we have the opportunity in this state to finally address these gaps that have been growing over time. And again, I just want to bring us back, 25 census tracts in North Omaha that fall under the qualified census tract; 11 in South Omaha. There's a number of them in Lincoln. But you have the historic opportunity in the state Legislature to allocate funds. And I'm coming up on this one because the community of North Omaha is not asking for a handout. It's asking for a hand up. It's asking about entrepreneurship, employment, continuing to reduce gun violence and restoring historic corridors like 24th Street, 16th Street, Ames

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Street. This is the opportunity that is right before us right now. I thank you so much for the work that you're doing. I thank you for the opportunity to speak. I hope that we'll have an opportunity to answer any questions. This is 15 years of collective, collaborative work. We have the opportunity. COVID really has wreaked havoc. We have an opportunity to get back on track. But we can close these gaps that have been talked about for 50-plus years.

STINNER: Thank you for that. Questions? I will say this. I was kind of making fun of Senator Vargas about his South Omaha comments, but South Omaha has been left out of this and I wanted to make-- make sure. They were hit as hard as any place in the state. They have a lot of meat packing folks that work in the meat packing business, etcetera. So that's something we need to work on, and we'll take a look at those census tracts and try to-- try to develop something.

WILLIE BARNEY: Thank you for that.

STINNER: I don't know what that will look like yet.

WILLIE BARNEY: Yeah.

STINNER: But I'm sure there are some ideas, but we'll work with Senator Vargas, we'll work with Senator McDonnell. I think you're a South Omaha person. So--

WILLIE BARNEY: Yes.

STINNER: --we've got some representation. Senator Wayne, certainly.

WILLIE BARNEY: Senator Terrelli--

STINNER: Terrell.

WILLIE BARNEY: --McKinney. Absolutely. And I thank you for that because it is, you know, I know we're selling North Omaha, but we know that there's work in South Omaha that needs to be done. There's work in Lincoln. There are other counties that those-- those census tracts are pointing out. And one of the things that is, I'm sorry, I just wanted to mention is in this one specifically, it is about employment, it is about jobs. So we're not against it. We're with that. But one of the things that Tony Goins said that he would-- Director Goins said when he was here is they understand these census tracts that need more attention. I would love to see the state Senate put some parameters and show what percent coming out of the approved legislation will be

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allocated to North and South Omaha, and these other census tracts. Don't leave it to chance. Don't limit this legislation, this opportunity. It should be within the legislation to say this is the percentage that will go to North Omaha, South Omaha, Lincoln, and these other areas that have high concentrations as have been mentioned. But thank you for your time.

STINNER: I appreciate your comments. Thank you.

WILLIE BARNEY: Thank you.

J. SHANNON, JR.: I'm back again, J., the initial, S-h-a-n-n-o-n, and I am here speaking on-- to second the motion of Mr. Barney in respect to the position of neutral and the Governor's proposal. And I don't want to again wax poetic about things that have already been said. But I will add this in addition. What seems to be happening from the perspective of I'm going to call it East Omaha is that in this situation, like my friend and colleague said, we have an opportunity to make history. I think we're taking this opportunity to make sure that we make good on promises, make good on things that we've heard, make good on conversations that we've had privately with people that we hold close to our hearts. And what I would like to see happen is for us to take a stance for equality when it won't hurt us, take a stance for something that you may have in the back of your mind, something that, you know, may feel you may know is important, but you may not have ever found the funding to do. It may be that you've heard about the Empowerment Network plan for the last 15 years. How can we stimulate that? It may be that you have heard about building projects specifically like the Malcolm X Foundation and other things that will benefit our community that you may not have had the dollars to do, know that there's a need, but not had the dollars to be able to fix the need. This is an opportunity for America-- America to rescue itself. Though I've had-- I've heard a lot of different descriptions of basketball facilities in western Nebraska and what I would call West Omaha, again, I'm a youth worker for over 12 years. Though I love sports, sports will not be the end-all, be-all for our children. Though sports is a vehicle to help our children, we need more. And in order for us to do more, we have to take opportunities when they present themselves. And ARPA funds is an opportunity that will-- that has presented itself and should be utilized to benefit the things that we wish we could do, not the things that benefit our partners or future constituents that could vote for us the next time we come up for election. Let's take a step for all of humanity, not just what matters to us. Thank you.

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STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Thank you. We're in the neutral capacity, is that?

_____ : Yes, sir.

STINNER: OK.

MARCOS MORA: Well, thank you, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marcos Eduardo Mora Barrientos Hernandez Rodriguez [PHONETIC]. For time's sake, we're just going to say Marcos Mora, all right?

STINNER: You do have to spell it, though.

MARCOS MORA: We also want to get out of here. So Marcos Mora, so Marcos, M-a-r-c-o-s, last name Mora, M-o-r-a. I'm the secretary of the Latino Economic Development Council in South Omaha, and we are here and [INAUDIBLE] for the governor-- Governor Ricketts' COVID bill. We feel that South Omaha basically has, you know, been left out and we're here. North and South-- South Omaha have been detrimentally affected by COVID. In South Omaha, especially the ZIP codes 68105, 107, 108. We are in support of North-- our North Omaha brothers and sisters in receiving funds, but at the same time, South Omaha, we're always struggling, you know, to get funds and find funds. And so we're here really to say, don't forget about South Omaha because both of these communities have been greatly impacted. South Omaha businesses and families have been devastated. They-- they've paid with their lives. Latinos keep paying the price. In March of 2021, the Pew Research Center conducted a national survey reporting in about half, 49 percent of Latino households someone lost a job or wages during the pandemic. Latinos now are the biggest ethnic group in the United States at 18 percent; in the state of Nebraska, 11-- 11 percent. Yet we're still being overlooked. This once-in-a-lifetime infusion of federal funding should offer this lifeline to South Omaha and North Omaha. Not doing so will hurt the increasingly important role that Latinos in North Omaha play in the U.S. economy, which requires a growing number of workers to sustain general prosperity. Our community, as said by the U.S. Joint Economic Committee, play an outsized role because they are more likely than non-Latinos to be working or seeking work or are significantly more likely to be entrepreneurs. South Omaha, one of Nebraska's hardest hit and finest sectors, need aid because Nebraska needs Latinos. In 2010, the total Latino population of Nebraska was a bit over 167,000 people, representing less than 10 percent of the state's population. In 2020, it reached 234,715. It is expected that

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Latinos will become more than one fourth of Nebraska's population by 2050. So today, on behalf of the Latino Economic Development Council, I ask to consider relief, you know, and consideration for South Omaha. My family has been here since 1925. My grandfather arrived here and my aunts and uncles. We've all been involved in South Omaha all of our lives. I'm a third generation. We've all been along 24th Street. I got pictures of my grandfather on 24th in the 1930s. My aunts and uncles are the-- the founders of Latino Center of the Midlands, which before was the Chicano [INAUDIBLE] Center. So my family has a lot of history. We love Omaha. We love Nebraska. We love the Cornhuskers. And so we really just want to see, you know, we feel that there's a group of us leaders, which is the Latino Economic Development Council, and we just feel that we-- South Omaha has been left out. We're hard workers. You know, just like all the other generations were in South Omaha, the Czechs, you know, the Italians, everybody. You know, they came, worked hard and that's what people are doing in South Omaha. They're working hard, but we need funding. You know, our Cinco de Mayo event, I don't know if you guys know this, is actually one of the largest ethnic festivals in the country. We have people coming from six states, you know, from Denver, Chicago, Minneapolis, Kansas City. You know, we put ourself on the map for that. But at the same time, our economic, we have an economic struggle on 24th Street because of the hardship that we just went through COVID. So really, we would appreciate any assistance that we can help for our businesses, whether it be loans or affordable housing, infrastructure. We're working on the redevelopment of South Omaha, our plaza, you know, there's a lot of work to be there. You know, Omaha has really developed a lot of their areas around town. South Omaha and North Omaha are some of the most undeveloped areas in Omaha. And I told them, we won't make Nebraska and Omaha great until we include everybody and do that. So I thank you for your time today.

STINNER: Very good. Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you for your time.

MARCOS MORA: Thank you.

STINNER: Anyone else in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on the site and building development. We'll now open on item number 15, Law Enforcement Training Center.

DOUG HANSON: Thank you.

STINNER: Good evening.

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DOUG HANSON: Good evening, Chair Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Doug Hanson and that is D-o-u-g H-a-n-s-o-n, and I'm a public engagement specialist with Olsson, Inc. Prior to joining Olsson, I proudly served as the administrator for Nebraska's State Building Division, and I am familiar with the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island. Last year was the deadliest for active duty law enforcement in nearly a century. Four hundred and fifty-eight officers died in the line of duty in 2021 due to direct exposure to the virus during the commission of their official duties. I am here in support of these COVID recovery funds for the Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. LB1014 would enhance and expand law enforcement tra-- training capabilities at the center and provide essential health and safety measures so that training may continue through this and future pandemics. Olsson was hired by the League of Nebraska Municipalities to recommend needed COVID-related infrastructure improvements at the campus. Olsson does have an office in Grand Island, and we've teamed up with the RDG Planning group out of Omaha. RDG has nationwide experience in law enforcement training centers, which includes the Omaha Public Training-- Safety Training Center. LB1014 includes \$47.7 million related to the ability of Nebraska law enforcement to respond to an increase in violence due to the pandemic. From 2019 to 2020, Nebraska saw an increase in violent crimes of over 50 percent in homicides, a 5.8 percent increase in arson, and a 5.3 percent increase in aggravated assaults. While caseloads were increasing, officers were leaving the profession in record numbers, exacerbating a perpetual deficit in trained law enforcement personnel. Required-- Nebraska does require a well-trained law enforcement to deal with this, and the existing facility is ill equipped to address it in its current state. This funding would purchase land and expand the facility's capacity to follow best practices for current and future generations in law enforcement. The priorities for deficiencies that we have found at the center are identified in your handout, but limited firing range capabilities-- It is very close to the Central Nebraska Regional Airport-- no weapons training facilities, and inadequate vehicle training, driver training at facility. It also-- this would address efficient classroom space to increase offerings, including a new concentrated focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion training, as well as a studio to support remote training for rural communities. The funding would cover these hard costs and costs related to design, contingencies, and inflation. The handout does illustrate existing conditions, graphically and conceptual improvements at the campus, as well as some of the key points regarding the COVID pandemic and its

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impact on law enforcement. I would be-- be very happy to answer your questions. I know you've had an extremely long day today, and I want to thank you for your focus throughout the day.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you, Mr. Hanson, for being here. Miss you on the 309.

DOUG HANSON: Thank you.

ERDMAN: We have, as you remember, you and I have toured this facility at least a couple of times. Earlier today, the presentation was made that we were going to expand the rooms another--

DOUG HANSON: Dormitory.

ERDMAN: --dormitory another 50 rooms. The question I asked was, is the dormitory rooms a problem or is it the training space that is the shortfall at the Training Center?

DOUG HANSON: I think it's both. The dormitories would greatly assist in getting more numbers in there. Again, that may be-- part of the issue right now with some of the training rooms is they don't provide much separation between the cadets that are there. And that's-- that is COVID related. So I think it is both. The training lines there-- there are a number of, if you look at their weapons training facility, the rifle range, they have no indoor facility. And during-- we were out there last week and during winter months, you know, if it's zero degrees out there, we're asking them to go out and try to shoot a gun, which they in real life, they're going to do that. But yeah, it's-- it's, you know, it's been around for quite a while now and it certainly needs improvements.

ERDMAN: So are you having trouble finding enough people to fill the classes?

DOUG HANSON: To fill classes?

ERDMAN: Yeah.

DOUG HANSON: That's probably a question for law-- or for the Crime Commission. I don't think so. I'm going to have two testifiers here from sheriff associations that-- that they may be better equipped to answer that question.

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ERDMAN: They were also going to purchase \$2 million worth of land to build a new driving range or whatever it was.

DOUG HANSON: It's the current track, vehicular track, it's a flat track, it's breaking up. You can see some photos of it. It's a .7-mile track. It's just not long enough. So yes, they're looking at-- with super elevated curves like you'd find on a real highway; with, you know, things that would reflect not just highway conditions, but rural gravel roads, some of those conditions as well that-- that they currently don't do.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

DOUG HANSON: So thank you, Senator.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

DOUG HANSON: Thank you. Thank you.

KEVIN SPENCER: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening. Good to see you.

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes, good to see you as well. Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Kevin Spencer, spelled K-e-v-i-n S-p-e-n-c-e-r. I've been the Chief of Police of the Scottsbluff Police Department since 2013 and have served in law enforcement for over 30 years. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on LB1014 in strong support of the \$47.7 million the Governor allocated for COVID-related infrastructure improvements at the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island. I'm testifying on behalf of the Scottsbluff Police Department as-- and as president of the Police Chiefs Association of Nebraska. I'm also testifying on behalf of the Police Officers Association of Nebraska and the League of Nebraska Municipalities. First on behalf of PCAN, POAN, and the League, I want to sincerely thank Governor Ricketts for including the \$47.7 million for the NLETC in his proposed ARP Act budget. Let me underscore how important the NLETC is to police departments and other law enforcement agencies across the state. I know firsthand-- I know from firsthand experience the staff at the Crime Commission and NLETC are dedicated and work extremely hard. The NLETC trains all police officers, except for those from Omaha, Lincoln, Bellevue, Papillion, and La Vista. OPD and LPD train their officers at their own academies. The officers of the other three cities are trained at the Sarpy-Douglas Law Enforcement Academy. Our

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local law enforcement agencies and citizens we pledge to protect and serve need and deserve to have the best trained officers possible. Due to COVID 19, law enforcement agencies are coping with the need to address vacancies due to COVID and increasing numbers of open positions, elevated caseloads, and increased violence and criminal activity. Law enforcement agencies throughout Nebraska are facing a severe recruitment challenge, and we cannot afford to have NLETC shut down or continue with inadequate facilities. This translates to critical need to expand the NLETC to provide the training now and in the future to complete-- to compete with other states for top talent while reducing the spread of disease among trainees by increasing officer wellness and resiliency. In preparation for this hearing, I toured NLETC again last week. The handout provided by Doug Hanson of Olsson, Inc., outlines the upgrades to the NLETC that need to occur inside the facility as well as outside. Buffalo County Sheriff Neil Miller will address the needs-- needed upgrades inside the facility. The COVID-related infrastructure improvements needed outside but within the overall training center include security fencing with lights, a 20-station targeting station at an outdoor shooting range, and land acquisition for an updated vehicle track and skills pad to reflect actual conditions. The driving track now is only seven-tenths of one mile, falling apart, and a totally inadequate to address the current standards of 2 to 2.2 miles for an effective driving track. It should be noted that NLETC has been providing housing for first responders who need to quarantine, as well as assisting in other COVID-related issues. In summary, to address the significant effects of COVID on law enforcement in Nebraska, it is critically important to invest \$47.7 million into NLETC for needed COVID-related infrastructure improvements. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration, and I'd be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Chairman Stinner. Thank you for I call it sitting here all day because you guys were in the front row when I think most of us walked in and you-- you sat there. Part of earlier today, I know you were here when we talked a little bit, there were some questions about LB51, the training aspect of this. And yet then I think when the director came in and he talked about that, right now, it's a little bit over a 16-week wait or the next class. This class is full or whatever, the next one is maybe not. When I talked to some of my local sheriff's department or whatever here and over the interim, they all

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talked to me about they cannot get nobody in the class. So talk about that a little bit. Where-- where do we really sit with that?

KEVIN SPENCER: Well, I know that for the past five years that the classes were not full. But the past two classes, they had an overage. So there were more officers trying to get into the academy than they had spots for. Currently out on my end of the state, we're struggling to find qualified applicants. I've had four openings for quite some time. I've tested three times and I have one person that I'm doing a background on right now, so I could potentially hire one-- one out of the three.

DORN: So-- so explain what--

KEVIN SPENCER: One out of four, sorry.

DORN: When-- when you do have an applicant and you are in the position then that you want to hire them, what process do they have to go through? Do they have to go through the 16-week training first?

KEVIN SPENCER: What our department does is, of course we go, we advertise. That takes a while. We do a civil service exam. They do a physical fitness test because we know that they're going to have to pass one once they get to the academy and we don't want to lose them when they get there. So we do that up-front. They interview in front of the Civil Service Commission at an oral board, and then we get the list certified and we're talking probably three months right there. So once the list is certified, we start the backgrounds of the top three candidates, and that can take up to a month and a half to two months. And then we give them a conditional offer and we set a start date at that point. So essentially the shorter answer-- answer is it would take-- the soonest we could do it is probably nine months before we get an applicant out on their own and through the academy. So-- but now, because of LB51, we have 16 weeks to get them into the academy, so they have to be enrolled and meet all of the requirements for the first available academy so.

DORN: Thank you for that explanation. Thank you,

KEVIN SPENCER: You bet.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Thank you, Officer Spencer. What does it cost your department to put a person through the academy?

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KEVIN SPENCER: It doesn't cost us. It costs us wages and some overtime.

CLEMENTS: The state provides the training--

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes.

CLEMENTS: --at the state's expense.

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes.

CLEMENTS: I wasn't sure about that.

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes, they do. They do.

CLEMENTS: All right. Thank you.

STINNER: Do you have a feel for how many vacancies, especially outside of Lincoln and Omaha, how many vacancies there are for-- for jobs? You say you got four openings now. How many more across the state?

KEVIN SPENCER: It's a pretty good number. I think there's well over 100. I know Dr. Arp said over 100 this afternoon earlier, but I think it's more like 163 is the number that I said. But it's been a few days since-- since I've looked at that information I know out in the Panhandle. Sidney has struggled tremendously. Chadron has struggled tremendously, and those agencies are providing 24-hour coverage for their communities. And it's tough. It's tough to do. It's a scheduling nightmare to provide that coverage.

STINNER: Do you think that's COVID induced or a portion of that was COVID induced? Or--

KEVIN SPENCER: You know, the timing is impeccable if it's not. It's just hard to get people interested in being a police officer right now.

STINNER: I see, but we'll still have to fully staff and we'll still have to train 160 or so. And--

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes.

STINNER: --constant training from time to time I would [INAUDIBLE].

KEVIN SPENCER: And then we're going to have turnover during that time as well.

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STINNER: Exactly.

KEVIN SPENCER: So my four openings, I had one retire, two just leave the profession, and one went on to be a Nebraska State Patrolman.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you for coming all the way from Scottsbluff. And as Senator Dorn, sitting all day. I appreciate that. So are you familiar with what they're doing in Bridgeport, where the county sheriff is doing law enforcement for the city as well?

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes.

ERDMAN: Have you ever-- have you talked to Milo, our sheriff, about how that-- how he thinks that's going?

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes. I know Milo well. Yeah, he speaks highly of it.

ERDMAN: I think the city, I think the city is getting along fine there. I think--

KEVIN SPENCER: I think so too.

ERDMAN: --they appreciate it as well.

KEVIN SPENCER: I think Milo and his crew works hard.

ERDMAN: I'm wondering if that isn't a model for some other smaller communities like Bayard and some of the other communities may do this similar thing.

KEVIN SPENCER: I'm sure there have been conversations about that. So if I was in their shoes, I would certainly be looking at that. We have tried to consolidate three times in Scotts Bluff County. And I'm to the point now where I call it an unnecessary political interruption.

ERDMAN: I was--

_____ : We have a few.

ERDMAN: I was county commissioner when they put that in place with-- with the county sheriff.

KEVIN SPENCER: I think that was a good move.

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ERDMAN: I think it was too, so. Anyway, one of your-- one of your officers happens to be one of my cousins, Zack Rada.

ERDMAN: Oh, no kidding. Yes, Zack is a good guy. He's going to be taking promotional test here in the next few weeks.

ERDMAN: He enjoy-- he enjoys his job.

KEVIN SPENCER: He's a-- he's a good guy. He's a good cop.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Very good. Additional questions?

KEVIN SPENCER: Thank you, guys.

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you and drive safely.

KEVIN SPENCER: Yes, we appreciate you guys.

STINNER: Thank you.

NEIL MILLER: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

NEIL MILLER: Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Neil Miller, spelled N-e-i-l M-i-l-l-e-r. I've been the sheriff of Buffalo County since 1991. I've served in law enforcement for over 45 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on LB1014 in strong support of the \$47.7 million the Governor allocated for COVID-related infrastructure improvements at NLETC. I am testifying on behalf of the Buffalo County Sheriff's Office and the Nebraska Sheriffs Association. Across the state, I think-- we thank Governor Ricketts for including \$47.7 million in the NLETC proposed ARP Act budget for essential COVID-related infrastructure. I had prepared testimony. It's been handed out to you. I want to cut right to the area that I wanted to cover with you and then would take some questions. Inside the Law Enforcement Training Center, we're looking at and asking for more effective-- making it more effective addressing training issues related to the pandemic and any future pandemics by having a skills tactical building, modified entry with increased security, expanded cafeteria and food prep areas, new technology rooms, dormitory living units, and an indoor weapons training facility since there is no indoor shooting range at NLETC

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currently. I would tell you that this, along with the law enforcement recruitment and retention bills that we've had introduced this year, which we look to try and recruit people maybe from outside the state of Nebraska. We look at providing some incentives to law enforcement officers through income tax reduction, through some type of funding for them for a number of years. There are like four bills that have been introduced for that. And then there is a bill in there for the reciprocity training. I truly believe Nebraska is in a crisis mode of law enforcement officers as far as the shortage that occurs. I can tell you that we're very fortunate. I am up to full strength with the number of officers that I'm assigned, but I am the exception, not the rule of what's going on. If you look at Red Willow County right now, you will see that I believe they are authorized seven or eight deputies. I believe they are down to two. It is a very, very concerning thing and I don't know what the answer is, but I do know that we need to be doing something because we are this short of not having law enforcement officers in our communities. And so I think it's important that we look at this as well as any of the incentives or the recruitment and retention measures that we can to try and bring more officers into Nebraska and try to promote law enforcement to the younger group who-- who really don't necessarily want to do this job. The people that apply for this job, we have a-- we have a-- just a very small number compared to what we used to. Used to be we would have a room full of people and that's not the case anymore. We get-- we're happy if we get five people apply for a job. So with that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and I would answer any questions that any of you have.

STINNER: Questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming in and being patient.

NEIL MILLER: Thank you very much.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional proponents? Good evening.

JON CANNON: Good evening, Chairman Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jon Cannon, J-o-n C-a-n-n-o-n. I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials, otherwise known as NACO, here to testify in support of the appropriation that's been proposed by the Governor for the Law Enforcement Training Center. First, I think most people in this room would probably agree that-- that this is kind of off subject a little bit, but maybe investing in some Barcaloungers in the-- in the committee hearing rooms would be OK for a lot of the folks that have

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been here all day. All kidding aside, though, what we have been saying to our folks out in the counties regarding the American Rescue Plan Act is that this act was a \$1.9 trillion bill that was passed by Congress and signed by the President last spring. And I don't know about you all, \$1.9 trillion is a lot of money. It's a million times 1.9 million bucks, and that's mind-boggling. What we have told our folks is that therefore what we need to do is make sure that we are investing this wisely. And because this frankly, is a bill that our children are going to be paying, and so it needs to be invested in things that our children can point to and say that was a good investment. Where the counties come into this is we're creatures of the state and we exist at that intersection between the state's power and local responsibility, along with our friends in the cities. Nowhere is that more visible than in wielding the police power of the state. And so when it comes to the counties' priorities for the state's allocation of ARPA funds, we think that investing in something like law enforcement is probably one of the top most things that you could do. We think it's good for recruitment, we think it's good for training, and we think it's good for retention for our law enforcement officers across the state. With that, I'd be happy to take any questions you might have.

STINNER: Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JON CANNON: Thank you, sir.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? I didn't think there would be with these guys sitting here. [LAUGHTER] Anybody in the neutral capacity? OK, well, that concludes our hearing on the Law Enforcement Training Center. We will now open on the behavioral health and nursing assistance, item number 16. Any proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? That concludes the hearing on behavioral health and nursing assistance. We'll now open on item number 17, meat processing plant grant. Proponents. I don't-- I'm not sure there's anybody left in western Nebraska. Welcome.

DAVID BRIGGS: Good evening, Chairman Stinner and Appropriations Committee. My name is David Briggs, D-a-v-i-d B-r-i-g-g-s. I'm here as the CEO of Sustainable Beef. We're in the process of building a brand new beef processing facility in North Platte, and we're here to speak in favor of the Governor's recommendation of \$15 million to help us complete a wastewater treatment facility at that plant before we turn

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the water back to the city of North Platte. It's been well documented that during COVID if you go to your local supermarket to get a ribeye, you may not have got a ribeye. You may not have gotten any beef that day because the disruptions in the beef supply chain. And so a few of our western Nebraska cattlemen came together and said, we're going to make a difference in this industry, mainly for the good of our children. We have three-- three packers or three feedlots have started this process about two years ago, and every one of them has a young child about 30 years old that would like to make a difference in this industry. And so we-- we set out on the journey to try to increase capacity in the beef industry. Between 2012 and 2016, the beef industry closed several packing plants across the United States. It's called shackle space, and those-- that ability to process livestock actually decreased significantly to the point that in the last four years, we've actually had less shackle space available than we had animals to process, which really caused a disruption in the cattle supply coming into the plant. And of course, COVID caused-- caused a lot of supply issues coming out of the plant into the supermarkets. The city of North Platte stepped up and said they would like to have this facility in their community. They are-- they have-- they have promised us a site and we're in the process of getting ownership to that site, 80 acres right next to the wastewater treatment plant on the east side of North Platte. We're in the process that we will need to raise the elevation of that site about six feet to build our plant there. The plant will be \$325 million and this \$15 million from the state would help us complete that project. So with that, I'd be happy to take any questions and it's a very good project.

STINNER: Thank you very much. Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: Are you the only plant that's going to receive any of this \$15 million?

DAVID BRIGGS: That's correct.

HILKEMANN: OK.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Mr. Briggs, thank you for coming from Alliance. Possibly you could be the only person in the room that drove further than me and Senator Stinner. So I appreciate that. So how much is it going to cost to construct this plant?

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DAVID BRIGGS: \$325 million.

ERDMAN: 325. Do you know why the Governor chose \$15 million as the number?

DAVID BRIGGS: It's my belief that-- that that is what it's going to cost to build the two ponds on our property before we turn the water back to the city. And it's a capital expenditure under the ARPA funds, and I think he chose that out of our line item, the 325.

ERDMAN: And I know you may not know the answer to this, but do you believe that that is all the money out of ARPA funds that would qualify for the meat plant? Is there more money that could be available used from the ARPA funds?

DAVID BRIGGS: There is another bill that Senator Groene has introduced, and he believes that there is more money available [INAUDIBLE] that could be eligible. And that is a discussion we'll have at another hearing.

ERDMAN: So what is his? Is his bill? How much is his bill?

DAVID BRIGGS: \$75 million?

ERDMAN: Is that in addition to this 15?

DAVID BRIGGS: That'd be correct.

ERDMAN: They're getting close to where I want it to be.

DAVID BRIGGS: OK.

ERDMAN: It's pretty close. So the funding that you have now secured, do you have enough funding to start the project?

DAVID BRIGGS: We do not. We are about \$75 million short of what it takes to build the project. And so this-- this amount would definitely help us get to that goal. We are in the process every day of working to procure the rest of the funds to get the project done.

ERDMAN: So if you were to secure \$75 million from the ARPA money, that would be sufficient to fund the project?

DAVID BRIGGS: That's correct.

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ERDMAN: When is-- what's the attitude of how long it'll take or the opinion how long it will take to get it set up to where you will be open for business?

DAVID BRIGGS: It'll take us two years to build the project. And then once we start processing animals, it will take us six months to a year to get to capacity. Once we're at capacity, we'll employ 875 employees. And Senator or Ernie Goss from Creighton's economic impact indicated a billion dollar benefit to the city of North Platte per year once the project's at capacity.

ERDMAN: So it's my opinion probably anybody can slaughter animals, but not everybody can market them. Have you-- have you thought about markets on where you're going to market your-- your beef once it's processed?

DAVID BRIGGS: We have, yes.

ERDMAN: OK. Are those international, local, what is your goal?

DAVID BRIGGS: It'll be-- it'll be a majority of domestic, but there will be-- there will be some international business, yes.

ERDMAN: OK, OK. You know, as I said earlier, I don't think 15 is near enough. I think it should be more like 100. So that'd be my goal to see what I can do to help you.

DAVID BRIGGS: OK, appreciate your support.

STINNER: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Briggs. I'm wondering how far away is the next beef processing plant from North Platte?

DAVID BRIGGS: Right. So Lexington would be about 60 miles to the east is the next processing plant.

CLEMENTS: Lexington, is it beef processing?

DAVID BRIGGS: Yes.

CLEMENTS: Did you say you'd like to hire 875 employees?

DAVID BRIGGS: That's correct.

CLEMENTS: That's all I needed. Thank you.

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STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thanks for coming today, David. Have you, do you know, have you applied to the incentive program in the state of Nebraska? Have you looked into the incentive potential?

DAVID BRIGGS: We have. So we were approved for the Nebraska Advantage Act in Decem--on December 1, 2020. So we have applied for that, have been approved for that program.

KOLTERMAN: The Nebraska Advantage Act, the old program.

DAVID BRIGGS: That's correct.

KOLTERMAN: And have you-- are you utilizing any of the local efforts, things like TIF and community block grants and things of that nature?

DAVID BRIGGS: Correct. So we have been approved for \$21.5 million TIF project bond from the city of North Platte.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you very much.

DAVID BRIGGS: Yep.

STINNER: Additional questions? Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you for being here. Maybe Senator Erdman asked a question and I didn't hear it. When-- when-- sitting here today, when is the projected startup date of this?

DAVID BRIGGS: Right. So our-- our plan is to start construction late spring once we get all the funding in place. I do not want to start construction unless I have all the financing in place because I don't want a half-built plant and neither does North Platte. So we want to have all the proper financing in place before we start construction. But we actually have chosen our general contractor. We've chosen-- they've told me they have their dirt contractor ready to go. We know the grading plan is done. As soon as we get the financing in place, we can start construction.

DORN: Start construction and then when you start construction, what is the timetable?

DAVID BRIGGS: 24 months.

DORN: 24 months. Thank you.

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STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. I have a few additional questions, I just thought about. The salaries of the rank and file employees, what-- what's your starting wage going to be?

DAVID BRIGGS: Right. So right around \$25 an hour, so they'll make just over \$50,000 on the line workers.

KOLTERMAN: Plus benefits?

DAVID BRIGGS: Plus benefits. That's correct. We will have, according to our Nebraska Advantage Act application, we will have over 50 employees that make over \$80,000. And we think that actually is very doable because all of our-- this is much like a co-op where really all the brain trust is going to be in North Platte. We don't have-- we don't have a home office somewhere else. All the-- all-- the whole operation will be in North Platte. The CEO, the CFO, the HR manager, all those people will be in North Platte. So all of our senior management will be in North Platte. So we think to be able to accommodate the Nebraska Advantage Act requirements will be very, very easy to do.

KOLTERMAN: My last question would be as you've-- you know, obviously you've done a lot of research in meat packing. Are you using any new technologies to expedite how you do it and cut down on the labor, potential labor shortage and what kind of new technologies are you using?

DAVID BRIGGS: Right. So the-- the main-- the main difference from our plant compared to existing plants is actually we started with a blank piece of paper. And our-- the consultants we have are mainly former Cargill people that retired and they all retired young and they want to continue. Well, they're just thrilled to death to work with a project, a blank piece of paper and then design the plant to what's most efficient. We believe our plant will probably be about 20 percent less employees than at a comparable plant in the United States because of the design of the plant, how all the carcasses flow through the plant. And so that-- that is the main difference. There is some automation, but there's still a lot of physical work done in these plants.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you.

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STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming in. Thank you for being patient.

DAVID BRIGGS: Thanks for your time.

STINNER: And drive safe.

DAVID BRIGGS: I will. Thank you.

STINNER: Good evening.

ASHLEY KOHLS: Good evening. Good evening, Chairman and the rest of the Revenue [SIC] Committee. My name is Ashley Kohls, A-s-h-l-e-y K-o-h-l-s, and I serve as the vice president of government affairs for Nebraska Cattlemen. I'm also here to testify on behalf of Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Corn Growers, Nebraska State Dairy Association, Nebraska Soybean, and Nebraska Wheat Growers. Much of the comments that I had prepared today already covered by Mr. Briggs. So I'm going to skip to the numbers which I hear this committee appreciates. So every sector I'm going to speak specifically to beef. Every sector of the beef cattle industry has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, a total beef cattle industry impact of COVID-19 was about sixteen point or, excuse me, \$13.6 billion in total economic damages. So if you look towards the specific sectors for the beef animals on the cow/calf side, that's about \$216 per head; and the feedlot side, that's about \$146 per head. So expanding processing capacity and diversity will increase supply chain resiliency by providing more options for cattlemen and women to market their cattle. When existing capacity is slowed or stopped for reasons like a pandemic, regional plants like the one proposed by Sustainable Beef in North Platte is well positioned to increase Nebraska supply chain resiliency in the future. And, again, we're grateful for the Governor for putting this in his proposal. And also, as Mr. Briggs mentioned, LB783 with Senator Groene, which asks for \$75 million for this project as well.

STINNER: Thank you.

ASHLEY KOHLS: Also while I'm up here quick--

STINNER: OK.

ASHLEY KOHLS: --while I still have a green light, we also want to express, that same group of folks wants to express support for line item number 20, which is the small processor grants as well.

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STINNER: You bet. Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

ASHLEY KOHLS: Thank you.

NICOLE FOX: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

NICOLE FOX: Nicole Fox, N-i-c-o-l-e F-o-x, and I'm testis-- testifying in support specifically of the meat processing plant grant in LB1014 on behalf of the Platte Institute. The animal processing sector alone accounts for \$18 billion in output and nearly 28,000 jobs in Nebraska. One of the most well-known disruptions from the COVID pandemic was the impact on the food supply chain. 2020 saw significant disruptions in meat processing operations. Employee health concerns led to both reduced operations and even complete shutdowns of meat processing facilities. Facilities were operating between seven-- 60 to 70 percent of capacity at one point. Livestock producers were forced to pay additional feed costs, scrambled to find alternative processing facilities, and even euthanized their animals. Even under perfect conditions, processing facilities needed to operate at peak capacities to avoid backlogs. Prices for meat skyrocketed at the retail level as concerns over shortages led to consumers to buy all inventory that was available. According to a report the Platte Institute published in conjunction with the Nebraska Farm Bureau, the losses suffered by beef producers was estimated to approach \$971 million, while pork producer losses were estimated to approach \$166 million. The severe negative economic impact to Nebraska's meat processing industry can be reflected in the state's partitia-- participation in the Paycheck Protection Program. The pie chart and table in front of you show that the agriculture secture-- agriculture sector received the greatest proportion of the state's PPP loans and accounted for 21,977 jobs. Another metric to note is one of the major pandemic relief packages aimed specifically at agriculture, the USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. This program set aside \$16 billion for direct support related to the pandemic, allowing the agricultural commodity and livestock producers who suffered a 5 percent or greater price decline or who had market supply chain disruptions to apply through their local Farm Service Agency. In Nebraska, producers of most major commodities and livestock received financial assistance under the program. In the September 2020 report that we coauthored, Nebraska producers were allocated \$679 million through CFAP, with 60 percent of the aid flowing to livestock producers. LB1014 proposes to address the

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negative economic impacts suffered by Nebraska's agriculture sector, particularly the meat processing industry. Per the Governor's 2021-2023 mid-biennium budget proposal, \$15 million in ARPA funding is being proposed for fiscal year 2022-2023 for supporting the proposed meat packing plant in North Platte. The North Platte project was proposed to address the food side-- food supply chain issues that surfaced during the pandemic. Construction of this new plant requires updates to infrastructure that assures a safe water supply for North Platte's residents. According to analysis by Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, the North plant [SIC] project has the potential to create nearly 2,000 jobs and a \$1.16 billion economic impact by 2024. The Platte Institute's-- ARPA funds. In addition to creating jobs, expanding access to processing is beneficial for producers and consumers. It gives a measure of stability and economic recovery for Nebraska's agriculture sector. It proposes to lessen the risk that another food supply chain crisis does not negatively impact Nebraska's economy in the foreseeable future. And with that, I conclude my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I'll take any questions if anybody has them.

STINNER: Thank you very much. Questions?

NICOLE FOX: All right.

STINNER: Seeing none, thank you. Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on item number 17, meat-processing plant grant. We will now open up on item number 18, North 24th Street project.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: Good eve-- after--

STINNER: It is, it is evening.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: Good evening, Chairman Stinner, Appropriations Committee. Just like the gentleman back here, I wasn't sure where to slip in, but this will kind of be a little bit about that area. I'm Randy J. Goodwin, R-a-n-d-y J G-o-o-d-w-i-n. I'm a native of Omaha, attended UNL, Air Force veteran. I've lived in Los Angeles for the past 28 years, 25 of those, I've been a working actor, top 1 percent, and a filmmaker for the past ten. One hundred and forty one. Do you know what that number means? It represents famous Nebraskans who have made it in Hollywood who are very recognizable. How about 135,838? The number of Nebraskans who have left Nebraska looking to make it big in Hollywood and have done at least one Hollywood job. Seven out of nine,

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the number of graduates from the Johnny Carson School who leave Nebraska for Hollywood. We all know Gabrielle Union, right? She's currently shooting a movie called Inspection in Mississippi. Producer Kristin Hahn, she's producing the movie Hail Mary, starring Jennifer Aniston, shooting in Atlanta. Mark Johannes, who recently worked on the NBC hit-show The Blacklist, created by Nebraska's own Jon Bokenkamp, which shoots in New York. And my fellow Creighton Prep alum, Bob Wiltfong, known for It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, which shoots, where? Anybody? Philadelphia, yes. More importantly, not Nebraska. The economic development potential, as well as the ability to inspire and promote dreams, is more important than the actual filmmaking itself, if you ask me. The dying hopes of young people in north and south Omaha alone is not only heartbreaking, but it's dangerous. It leaves kids without dreams to fall into that, which will make them feel like they need to be a part of something, anything. What I do for a living promotes a healthy self-image, confidence, work ethic, camaraderie, a major economic boost, sustainability, and major bragging rights because who wouldn't want to visit a state where major films and TV shows are shot, a place that showcases its famous Nebraskans? And we need to do more of that because we have a lot of us and I've spoken to quite a few and they're willing to come back home and shoot here if we build it. We're losing our young people, which are our future workforce, right, to places like Georgia, Louisiana, Ohio, not to mention L.A. and Canada, because the doors close to dreams that probably all of you have had in this room at one time or another. You've seen a commercial, a movie, a TV show. You thought I can act better than him. I can direct better than that. I could write a better script. And you probably can. And if you ask your kids or your grandkids or your neighbors, you want to be in a movie, want to be on a TV show? I bet you \$100 that ten say yes and the other two are liars. The film industry can and will not only employ but also educate anyone who is interested in the myriad and diverse number of jobs within this industry. I'm talking electricians to editors, everyone, plumbers, you name it. They're in there. I vowed to become successful in Hollywood and bring it back to Nebraska. I vowed to never let another eight-year-old kid have to let a dream die because no one came back to show him the way. Thank God I made it and I'm here and my team is effective and we know what to do and we need your help to make the chicken. Colonel Sanders did not open KFCs first. He sold chicken. He sold the product. We have to make and sell the product here. And we have the talent, we've got more Nebraskans in Hollywood. I see it. It's going to be quick. We have more Nebraskans in Hollywood per capita than any state in this country and Omaha has more Nebraskans in

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Hollywood than any city in the world per capita. We have people here that this is what we do and this is what we love and we want to bring it back here and share it. We want to build it here. I hate Hollywood. I hate making money for Atlanta and Canada. I hate making money for everybody else. Yes, I get paid, but I want us to get paid. I want us to be able to circulate that money in our community. I hate that kind of-- oh, I'm sorry. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for your testimony. How's that?

RANDY J. GOODWIN: I get upset about this and I get passionate about it because I love what I do. I had no support when I was eight and this can help so many people that, that-- look at all of the-- like so many people testified today with the young people and suicide and drugs and man, this business, this business saved my life, and I'm a Christian in Hollywood. I don't bend, so we build it here, we don't bend. Any questions?

STINNER: Thank you. Questions?

KOLTERMAN: I have a question.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: Yes.

STINNER: Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thanks for coming. Did-- so you graduated from-- tell us your background from Omaha.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: Oh, OK. I grew up in, in the Wakonda Elementary School area, Nathan Hale, Creighton Prep, Northwest, UNL, and then off to the military.

KOLTERMAN: So you're a graduate of Johnny Carson?

RANDY J. GOODWIN: No, I did not go to Johnny Carson.

KOLTERMAN: OK.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: I just know a lot of people who do. I'm just one of those guys that's blessed and I never went to school for any of it. I didn't go to school for acting. I didn't go to school for directing, writing, or editing, yet I, I-- it's, it's what I do for a living and I teach it. I teach how I did it and it helps a lot of people. I've been coming back for 17 years doing acting and writing classes for

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free called "Navigating Hollywood with Integrity" and how I-- and what I wish I knew and I-- there was another people-- couple who came up today to testify about the Empress Project in Fremont, the Digg Site Productions. I'm on that board and I do all that from L.A. to help them educate young people in the film industry in every aspect of it. We do film festivals every year. I mean, it's just-- there's so many young people that want it and want to do it and they're leaving the state. All these young people are leaving the state looking for something. I want to keep them here. I love my home. I would rather be born no place other than Nebraska or Omaha. This is, this is me, this is where I'm from, and I'm always in my sweatshirts in, in California and they hate me for it.

STINNER: Thank you for your comment.

RANDY J. GOODWIN: Thank you, thank you.

STINNER: Thank you.

WILLIE BARNEY: I hope it's OK-- we were told that we could speak on multiple items, I'll keep it quick. Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y. I couldn't leave and go back to Omaha without speaking on this particular project. I would really encourage the Appropriations Committee to spend that time with Senator Wayne and Senator Terrell McKinney. They have spent quite a bit of time in the community. We have pulled 8,000 people. We asked them what are their priorities? They talked about the Malcolm X project. They talked about 24th and Lake. They talked about the Great Plains. They talked about entrepreneurship, their other dreams and visions about creating movies and keeping our kids engaged. And I just emphasize that when north and south Omaha-- there's a study that has been, has been completed and shows that when these areas are truly equitable and they reach their highest potential, it will add \$4 billion to the regional economy. That means everybody wins. When north wins, when south wins, it adds \$4 billion of economic activity. But I would just encourage the committee to please spend time with Senator Justin Wayne, Senator McKinney. They have outlined, based on the community, what those recommendations are for 24th Street, 16th Street, 30th Street, and Ames as well, but there are specific projects that will have a positive impact on the economy of the state. So thank you for your time, appreciate it. It's been a long day, but I wanted to make sure that these folks that we've talked to for years are, are represented, so thank you for your time.

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STINNER: Appreciate you sticking around. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on North 27th-- or 24th Street project. Number 19 is commercial real estate assistance. Any proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on number 19, commercial real estate assistance. We'll now open it up for item number 20, small and medium meat processors.

JOHN HLADIK: Good evening, Senator Stinner and members of the committee. This is the best Appropriations Committee I've ever been to. I appreciate you sticking around. Senator Brandt was adamant that I bring you his box of candy, but how do you record that on a quarterly lobbyist report? I stayed away from that. J-o-h-n H-l-a-d-i-k, John Hladik, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Center for Rural Affairs. I also want to thank Governor Ricketts for the support he's shown to small and mid-size processors. It's a really big deal in rural areas and it has not gone unnoticed. Allocating nearly \$10 million to the independent processor assistance program is a smart solution that gets a lot of support. I will save my best comments for the LB755 hearing and I just want to talk a little bit about the informal survey we conducted with the state's small and mid-sized processor to give you an idea of how that money will be spent and the demand that we're seeing out there right now. Drawing from data prepared by the University of Nebraska's Department of Animal Science, we estimate that about 80 to 90 separate businesses in the state would qualify for assistance under the independent processor assistance program and we were able to speak to 34 of those in the last couple of weeks. Of the 34, we spoke with 32 shared plans to utilize the program. These 32 proposals would result in up to \$14 million in requests. It would allow each locker to process anywhere from 4 to 30 more beef per week and an additional 8 to 10 hogs per week. And we're confident that a large number of the 40 to 50 businesses we've not yet contacted are similarly positioned, doubling both the dollar value of proposed investments and the increased capacity that would result. So in the handout, you'll see a list of the businesses we spoke with and the details of the request and to save you a little bit of time, we put those that are in your districts up on that top line. And I'd be glad to answer any questions about this document or the list or the conversation we've been having.

STINNER: Well, thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

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ERDMAN: Thank you, Senators Stinner. So I appreciate you coming and the information you shared. Senator Brewer has been trying to work on getting state-inspected meat inspectors so that these small plants can sell meat directly to the public. What is your opinion, if you have one, on that?

JOHN HLADIK: Well, what I can say is that the biggest bottlenecks where it's the hardest to get in is those facilities that are USDA inspected right now, simply because you want to be able to market your meat. You want to be able to sell at retail. And so state inspection would allow that. So it could, it could help relieve that bottleneck by providing an additional option. There's a lot of moving pieces there too, but I definitely recognize that, you know, relieving some of that bottleneck in our USDA facilities is going to make a big difference.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JOHN HLADIK: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll-- that concludes our hearing on item number 20, small and medium meat processors. We will now open on item number 21, which is really kind of opening up for public comment. And I think we've had two or three public comments already, but we'll try to actually reclassify those back down into the public comments.

BRADY RHODES: Excellent.

STINNER: Good evening.

BRADY RHODES: Thank you, good evening. Thank you. I thank you all to sticking around here and for wading through all this. My name is Brady Rhodes, B-r-a-d-y R-h-o-d-e-s. I'm the collaborative coordinator for the Community Impact Network of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster County. It's one of the 22 community collaboratives throughout the state that do the job of on-the-ground work of understanding what's going on in the community, what's needed and wanted. So we're a little bit out of place in this, but they-- we've got some valuable information to share and some valuable requests to make so that's what we're using this for. Together, the collaboratives have kept track of the issues and the resources gaps that are relevant to different

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regions of the state and communicate these to you through playbooks that outline in detail the challenges we're seeing on the ground and the locally based responses we propose to respond to these gaps. While we provide these playbooks to the Legislature and the administration, no accommodations or recognition of them appears in the Governor's budget. This is an important omission, as the playbooks and the collaboratives represent a ground-level view of what can be done and provides creative responses to respond to these challenges. I'm coming before you today to respectfully ask that you make room in the allocations for projects such as ours to have a chance for funding. You've got some question marks in front of you about what to do with these multimillion of dollars. We've got a very small request, but one that you can start to use to respond to these local projects that really are going to put a big return on your investment. Our, our request is, get ready for it, \$160,000. You can spread this over a couple of years if you need to. What-- this would go to help fund an intensive, multi-year project to address the crushing workforce shortage while simu-- while simultaneously helping businesses and workers affected by the pandemic. The rural poor in Nebraska are silently suffering group, long used to gaps in resources and opportunities. Ironically, it's through the workforce shortage that we have an opportunity to right some of these historic imbalances. Historically low unemployment in our area and across the state has employers posting jobs, but not receiving any applications when in the past, it would get 20 to 30 for a position. Because of this, employers are having to look to potential candidates who have been considered unhireable before. These are the individuals in our community who are on public assistance, have felony histories, or health concerns. They were never considered for these openings in the past because there are plenty of other applicants. Now these opportunities are available, yet in order to take advantage of this, work needs to be done in two key areas; with the potential employee and the potential employer. To get ready to hire, these individuals need individual support to get them-- to get their feet underneath them. Perhaps they need help coordinating childcare, fulfilling certifications or soft skills training. On the other side, the employers need help adjusting their employment pathways to support individuals with applications or with mitigating the real effect and impact of the cliff effect or simply building their own awareness of what it's like to work with people who are on public assistance. Higher-paying jobs that are not available in the past are not only available now, but are welcoming applications from this group of people that did not receive the invitation in the past. Our project can support this. We can give this away to plant a bold

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stake in the ground in our regions. Our goal is to reduce poverty in our area 30 percent by 2030 and we can do this by taking this opportunity, this current challenge that's in front of us and solve two birds with one stone, supporting those individuals, coordinating the services they need throughout this four-county region, and making them eminently more hireable to employers who need them. Our colleague here with the United Way can speak on this in a little bit more in addition. I'm happy to answer any questions.

HILKEMANN: Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

BRADY RHODES: Thank you very much for your time. She's connected to what we're doing.

JODI GRAVES: My testimony is also in-- was also, also in his packet that you just received.

_____ : OK.

JODI GRAVES: My name is Jodi Graves, J-o-d-i G-r-a-v-e-s, and I'm the executive director of the United Way of South Central Nebraska, located out in Hastings. As Brady shared before me, our two entities are partnering on a significant multiyear intensive project that will dramatically impact workforce shortage, reduce the number of individuals on public assistance, and enhance the community well-being for all in our region. Ideas like this represent businesses and community leaders who have been working together throughout the pandemic to solve our own local issues. We have dedicated cross-sectional representatives looking at this from multiple perspectives and they are all aligned and on board with this significant initiative. Good ideas like this need funding and we are committed to managing these funds to benefit individuals, families, and employers. This is one-time funding that would be transformational to hundreds of families in our community, not just short-term transformational, but break-out-of-the-poverty-cycle transformational. Let me tell you a bit about our region as related to this. The four-county population is right around 46,000. About 70 percent of that is in Hastings and Adams County. In October of 2021, we had 800 open jobs in our area. Our community is above state averages in several challenging categories: 14 or-- excuse me, 12.4 percent poverty; 32 percent liquid asset poverty compared to the state at 21 percent; 14 percent zero net worth compared to the state at 6.7 percent. Rather than deal with these two challenges separately, our local solution is to solve them together using improved coordination

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to reduce system barriers and service gaps for the vulnerable in our population so that more people have the foundation under their feet to be ready and able to access high-paying jobs that are now available to them that were not before. Could this be the moment we've been waiting for to reright the ship? For too long, we have been cobbling together public assistance programs that do the job of applying the Band-Aid, but there is no accountability for moving people off of that assistance. It simply requires coordination that is not currently available in communities. This funding would change that for south-central Nebraska. It would allow us to help knit together the diverse social service agencies in our community and get people on a pathway to job readiness, placement, and advancement, as you can see in the illustration in your material. In order to make this game-changing shift in the public assistance landscape of our community, we will use the current crisis to move from a poverty management system to a poverty alleviation system. Here's what I mean by this: the current way we do things-- and this is true throughout Nebraska and the country-- is to operate in silos, responding to the need at hand with short-term transactional solutions that do not go far. They're simply Band-Aids that do little to help the underlying and often systemic issues or community illnesses. This is a locally sourced, locally supported solution that the community is already rallying around to provide resources and engagement in diverse ways. Your allocation could provide the boost we need to move this from a small pilot to a scaled response to two challenges facing our community right now. Thank you for your consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

HILKEMANN: Are there any questions for Ms. Graves?

JODI GRAVES: Thank you.

HILKEMANN: Thank you.

MIKE FOX: Good evening. My name is Michael Fox and call me Mike, M-i-k-e F-o-x. I'm with the Miss Nebraska Scholarship Program. And the program is a nonprofit-- not-for-profit organization that has been in Nebraska for 84 years. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Miss Nebraska-- cost the Miss Nebraska organization over \$40,000 in revenue for 2020. There are no local or state competitions in 2020 because of the pandemic. The 2021 state competition expenses were over \$30,000. These totals do not include scholarships awarded to the competitors. This is only for the production. Expenses to conduct in 2022, in June this year, will top \$35,000. Seen in the handout there, the funds

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available toward that production is \$17,759. All of the people with this organization and the production are volunteers. None of the board or anyone else draws a salary. This organization runs financially pretty much even year to year. The request for \$20,000 would help us with the production for this year. Please consider helping the Miss Nebraska organization to provide an avenue for scholarships for the young women of Nebraska. The Miss Nebraska Scholarship Organization is affiliated with the Miss America Organization. The Miss America Organization is the largest scholarship organization for women in the United States. Any questions?

HILKEMANN: Any questions for Mr. Fox? Thank you very much.

MIKE FOX: Thank you.

JAMES GODDARD: Good evening. My name is James Goddard, that's J-a-m-e-s G-o-d-d-a-r-d, and I am the senior director of programs at Nebraska Appleseed. I thought it made sense to speak under the negative economic impact section because it seems most relevant, but my, my thoughts for you are essentially looking globally at LB1014 and the set of priorities it contains. And I just want to start with looking back. Just a few weeks ago, according to a recent survey, nearly half a million Nebraskans reported they had difficulty paying their usual household expenses. At the same time, more than 75,000 Nebraskans said they were behind on their rent payments. The same-- nearly the same number, said that they didn't have enough food to eat. All of that's just to say the impact of poverty along with a pandemic are still with us and need to be addressed and that this is an immense opportunity to be able to do some of those things. Now there are some positive investments in this bill, things like workforce housing, public health response, child welfare provider rates, investing in child mental health support. So there are some good things in here, but as a set of priorities for \$1 billion for ARPA spending, we need to strike a balance between things like infrastructure, water, and building with investments that put direct support in people's hands who are struggling. Overall, this bill does not strike that balance because it skews heavily towards buildings and waterways and not people. It doesn't do enough to help those facing serious difficulty. The vast majority of funds are allocated to areas that don't put direct support in people's hands; \$284 million is allocated to water, sewer, and broadband, alone. It's unclear to me why some of these projects could not be funded by the infusion of funds that Nebraska will soon be getting under the federal infrastructure bill. Ultimately, we need to prioritize the bulk of these fundings to those

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hit hardest by the pandemic, investing support in the near term in places like food support, subsidizing childcare, enrolling children in healthcare, and simply putting dollars in people's hands. Looking down the road, we should explore things like guaranteed-income programs and developing and subsidizing truly affordable housing, especially for renters. In short, this is a significant opportunity that I know you all recognize to do a lot of good and help our friends and neighbors. Long-term projects have their place, but only in the appropriate balance with meeting people's needs that they have today and this bill doesn't strike that balance. Thank you.

STINNER: Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JAMES GODDARD: Thank you for your time.

STINNER: Good evening.

HANNAH YOUNG: Good evening. Good evening, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Hannah Young, H-a-n-n-a-h Y-o-u-n-g, and I am here to testify in the neutral capacity on LB1014 on behalf of Nonprofit Association of the Midlands, or NAM. NAM is a statewide membership association of more than 13,000 organizations of all sizes and missions, employing 90,000 Nebraskans. Since March of 2020, our members have stepped up to serve communities and been on the front lines reacting to the impact of the pandemic has had and continues to have on Nebraska families. The American Rescue Plan Act direct funds to Nebraska to support, recover, making clear that nonprofits are eligible for funds to support services and implement strategic investments in communities to drive sustainable change. Because our members are on the front lines, we are here today to thank the Governor for his efforts to work with the Legislature on the distribution of the \$1-point billion funds and state recovery funds. In the Governor's plan contained in LB1014, we see very viable investments, while we see-- also see shortcomings and that is why we were testifying today in the neutral capacity. Recognizing this transformational significance these dollars could have across the state, the NAM took-- team took the lead last summer and began to organize the nonprofit community to discuss and plan for, for recommendations to state government on the expenditure of these dollars. We conducted multiple surveys throughout the pandemic to understand the needs and prioritize those needs. We worked with the Nebraska Children and Family Foundation and the community coalitions across the state to utilize their data and developed five key areas of concern where investment is needed: early childhood and childcare,

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food, health, housing, and workforce. Based on the data in those five key areas, we hosted three Zoom roundtables last summer and fall with hundreds of Nebraskans from across the state to gather input and develop specific recommendations. We then came together again before the holidays to analyze those recommendations and prioritize components on how dollars could be spent under the federal law's guidelines. We saw common threads among these five priorities and how interconnected they were, such as fair and liveable wages, the need to improve data quality, need for culturally appropriate services, and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic that fell on people of color and those with lost incomes. But probably the most useful information for you all is where we worked directly with our partners on getting bills introduced this session for your consideration. These bills evolved from a 20-month process of collaborating with those people on the frontlines who know what they-- know what can have the biggest impact on their communities under the guidelines. Unfortunately, LB1014 does not contain all of-- many of those priority recommendations. Because the Legislature makes the hard decisions on how to appropriate dollars, we are confident they will take a closer look at these bills as hearings get underway this session and make the best decision possible for Nebraskans. I'm happy-- thank you for this opportunity and I'm happy to take any questions.

STINNER: Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

HANNAH YOUNG: Thank you so much.

TINA ROCKENBACH: Good evening, Chairperson Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Tina Rockenbach, T-i-n-a R-o-c-k-e-n-b-a-c-h. Thank you for this opportunity to enter comments on this important bill related to the allocation of funds, particularly those awarded through the American Rescue Plan Act. I'm the executive director for Community Action of Nebraska. We are the state association of Community Action, representing all nine of Nebraska's community action agencies currently serving all 93 counties. I am here today in the neutral capacity to show both support for the Governor's efforts to appropriately allocate the designated ARPA funds and enter some of our additional thoughts and concerns related to the funding available. Let me start by providing some insight into the efforts of Community Action since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since day one, our agencies have been on the front lines, deploying programs and services to individuals and families who find themselves caught in the cycle of poverty. While we consider ourselves the experts in the war on poverty, no one was prepared for

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the influx of need, as well as the need to deliver these services in an unorthodox manner. That is, until COVID-19 became the daily norm. Our agencies have worked tirelessly to ensure food security, emergency rent assistance, utilities assistance, weatherization of homes, toggling remote and in-person Head Start, and fielding unprecedented requests for those whose jobs were furloughed or eliminated. While we pride ourselves in our ability to always have a solution for those struggling, it doesn't eliminate the wear and tear on all involved. As I sit here today, these requests and struggles continue. Agencies are continuing to deliver food security to a larger-than-normal clientele, continuing to felicitate drive-thru food pantries with steady demand and decreasing supplies. While in many areas of the state, the general population appears to be adjusting to a COVID-present society, we are continuing to see those forced into poverty by this pandemic. With spread of Omicron, agencies are again dealing with closing Head Start facilities due to outbreaks and returning to virtual assistance application processes to reduce exposure while still ensuring our clients are served. While addressing the safety need, it creates a new one. The vast majority of our Head Start families have expressed concern regarding food security during these facility shutdowns. Our agencies are working to put together food boxes to help the entire family, not just the student. This, in turn, is increased demand in another capacity as we work to address all food security needs. In reviewing the ARPA recommendations presented in LB1014, I am disappointed to see that there is very little allocation in the area of food security. This is an unprecedented time in which excess funding available and this is the time to make it count. I thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts and I'm confident that this committee will provide recommendations that address the needs of Nebraskans and move our state forward, leaving this battle behind. I'm happy to answer any questions at this time.

STINNER: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

TINA ROCKENBACH: Thank you.

STINNER: Anyone else for the other comments on the negative economic impact? Seeing none, we will now move to item number 22, salary increase 24-hour facilities. This is under premium pay. Any proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, any-- anyone in the neutral capacity? That concludes our hearing on item 22. I'll open it up just for general comments on premium pay. Is there anybody here that wants to have some comments on it? Seeing none, we'll move on. That closes the hearing on other. We'll now go to the next section of

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water, sewer, broadband. The first item is Perkins County Canal project. Any proponents? Any opponents?

AL DAVIS: Long night for you guys. I appreciate--

STINNER: Good evening.

AL DAVIS: --your stamina and your willingness to stick it out because I know it's been a long day. Reminds me of my days in Judiciary. So is this evening--

STINNER: Well, welcome back.

AL DAVIS: Is it evening still or is it night at this point? My name is Al Davis, A-l D-a-v-i-s, and I'm here today as a registered lobbyist representing the 3,000 members of the Nebraska Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Nebraska Sierra Club opposes LB1014, in opposition to the massive lake proposed by the STAR WARS Committee and the Perkins County Canal Fund. Unfortunately, the STAR WARS Committee placed its focus on big-picture items rather than small pick-- projects dispersed across the state, which would be far more beneficial to our citizens. The lake project is an incredibly poor idea, fraught with extreme financial risks and damaging environmental costs. The Lower Platte River system is all-- despite all appearances, a fragile entity which has been continually marginalized over the past 150 years. Further degradation is dangerous. The construction of a massive lake will encompass a lengthy, permitting period, in addition to potential lawsuits associated with anticipated environmental degradation, which could potentially affect the many associated river-dependent species living there. The proposed lake will be susceptible to deposition of silt in the sand and the incursion of carp and other opportunistic creatures whenever the river floods, as happened only a few years ago. As such, there will be significant cost to maintain the project. Finally, the many images of the lake feature extensive housing and residential developments, which will also contribute to environmental degradation in an area that is still remarkably natural. And why should the state really be engaged in an economic development project whose result will be more mega mansions for the wealthy from Omaha and Lincoln? Our second objection to LB1014 is the proposal to divert hundreds of millions of tax dollars for the construction of a canal to bring South Platte water from-- into Perkins County, Nebraska. Again, this project may result in decades of lawsuits. Whether another state can use its powers of eminent domain to seize someone's land is an open question, which must be settled in the courts before even

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considering the feasibility of beginning construction. Again, there will be significant permitting issues associated with the proposed proposal because a canal without a reservoir is a road to nowhere and certifying a dam for construction is also a decade-long process. The Appropriations Committee should consider all the possible outcomes before signing off on such a questionable and risky project and boxing in federal and state dollars, which could be used to help our fellow Nebraskans secure a better future. The state needs more public lands for its residents. It needs strong water infrastructures. It needs a more extensive trail system, improved state parks, and more open spaces, but it also needs better broadband access for all Nebraskans, investment in low- and middle-income housing, assistance for our embattled nursing and assisted living facilities, and investments in childcare. The Governor may want more corn and more mega mansions, but that doesn't fit the needs of the average Nebraskans. These projects should not be funded. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your time.

AL DAVIS: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on Perkins County Canal project, item number 24. We'll now open up testimony on item 25, drinking water projects.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Good evening.

STINNER: Good evening.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Thank you for staying so late this evening, appreciate it.

STINNER: We get the big bucks for this.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Same at this time of night as it was earlier today? Chairman Smith-- Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Annette Sudbeck, A-n-n-e-t-t-e S-u-d-b-e-c-k, and I am the manager of the Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District, which encompasses the eastern half of Knox County and the majority of Cedar and Dixon counties in northeast Nebraska. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support, support of LB1014. The Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project is identified as a recipient for a portion of the ARPA funding and meets eligibility requirements for

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water quality under the water, sewer, and broadband category. I'll be highlighting some of the points from the document handed out that was submitted to Senator Gragert and Governor Ricketts. The Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project is a very important water system in northern Cedar and Knox counties that is overseen by the Lewis and Clark NRD. The system provides drinking water to 902 rural connections, 4 communities, 3 housing developments, and 5 campgrounds. The current source of the water served is from Lewis and Clark Lake, impounded by Gavin Point-- Gavins Point Dam. The water is treated at a plant in the Devils Nest region of Knox County and distributed through nearly 400 miles of pipe to customers in an area where quantity and quality water is difficult to locate. CKRWP is in need of significant improvements, including development of an alternative source due to the diminishing projected lifespan of the intake in Lewis and Clark Lake. The intake, intake is subject to inundation of sediment, which has advanced significantly with the floods of 2011 and 2019. In December 2021, the LC NRD Board of Directors took action to move forward with planned development of a groundwater site and related infrastructure in Knox County to replace the surface water source. CKRWP anticipates starting work on several of the project components in late 2022. It is anticipated the cost necess-- the cost of necessary improvements will be more than \$32.3 million. The improvements are designed to last a minimum of 35 years and situates the system to serve new connections. The ability to utilize ARPA funding to make the critical changes to Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project will allow water rates to be maintained at a level that can be better tolerated by customers in a system that already has high rates. A couple of notes of interest: the Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project serves several connections, campgrounds, and housing developments along Lewis and Clark Lake and the Missouri River, including the Weigand Recreation Area, where marina improvements are proposed as part of the STAR WARS bill. Also, the village of Santee is currently seeking an alternative drinking water source and Cedar-Knox has kept open communications with their engineers so that the village can determine if they are interested in pursuing Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project as a potential solution to their water needs. We'd like to thank the Governor and thank you for your time today and for your service to Nebraska.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: Is-- this allocation of \$30 million each, is that basically going to your project? Is that the total amount?

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Right, that is basically going to our project, yes.

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HILKEMANN: OK. And so you-- I'm a native of Randolph so I know the area a little bit.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Um-hum.

HILKEMANN: So, so, so this is, this is the northern part of Cedar County.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Right, the northern part of Cedar and Knox County, the eastern half of Knox County. Right, it's very difficult to locate water resources in that area due to the glaciation-- glaciated nature of the aquifers, very difficult to find. Sometimes you can find good quantity, but not good quality. Other times you could find-- can find good quality, but very limited resources.

HILKEMANN: And we're looking at just for the-- we're just looking at drinking water for these folks up there?

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Drinking water, some folks do have pasture connections, businesses, so on, but yes, primarily drinking water.

HILKEMANN: OK.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

ANNETTE SUDBECK: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our item 25 hearing on drinking water projects. We'll now open on item number 26, STAR WARS. Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thank you, Senator Stinner and members of Appropriations Committee. My name is Mike McDonnell, M-c-D-o-n-n-e-l-l. I'm representing Legislative District 5. Also tonight I'm filling in for Speaker Hilgers. He unfortunately could not be here tonight. He wanted to get a couple of things in the record based on the work of the, the STAR WARS Committee and you're going to be getting a number of, of handouts based on our correspondence over the, the summer working with HDR and the reasons we want to move forward. And we also want to thank the Governor for his \$50 million of ARPA money towards the STAR WARS project. Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you. Any questions?

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McDONNELL: Those items that will be handed out to you-- well, I thought we'd move a little faster on this. I should have gave it to you much earlier, I apologize. It's the Statewide Tourism Recreational Water Access and Resource Sustainability. It's from John Engel that he gave to the STAR WARS Committee. Also LB406 preferred initiatives dated 12/30/21. Also, some letters of support from Friends of Knox County, also Laci Mueller, president of Keith County area. And the, the information from Friends of Knox County was signed by Brock Nelson. Also Kay Orr and there is Mary Wilson, Lake McConaughy Advisory Committee. Also, there's an article that was included from the-- about the Lower Platte, "Local leaders weigh in on lake proposal." So that's also in your packet.

STINNER: So we have the information that's been supplied to the committee. Do you plan on having additional meetings? I, I saw where the final report from the committee isn't due till like next year.

McDONNELL: Yeah, the-- we-- the committee goes into effect and stays in effect until the end of 2022, but also Speaker Hilgers has introduced a bill that's in front of Natural Resources that will be heard on, on more details on how STAR WARS will work going forward on the three projects talking about the Lower Platte, Knox, and Lake McConaughy.

STINNER: So our committee can conclude that this is the conclusion of your committee's work, is that--

McDONNELL: No, this is the-- as I said, the STAR WARS Committee will stay in effect until the end of the year, but with the bill that's being introduced in front of Natural Resources, there will be more details. We are asking for a total of \$200 million, but we're concentrating on-- today on the ARPA funding of \$50 million.

STINNER: OK. Thank you very much. Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. So Senator McDonnell, on the Mary Wilson comment with McConaughy organization, are they-- did you present to those people what you're trying to do at McConaughy?

McDONNELL: Yes. So during the, the summer, the STAR WARS Committee, along with HDR was hired. We traveled and we had meetings, public hearings in Niobrara and the McConaughy area and then on the Lower Platte. So the information that you're being handed to right now kind of-- it summarizes what happened over those events and then where

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we've moved as a committee, the information we received from HDR narrowing some of the requests we had from those three different locations as we had public hearings.

ERDMAN: So then you-- the people in Ogallala, you presented that to the. They're in agreement that you're on the right track?

McDONNELL: Yes.

ERDMAN: OK.

STINNER: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, thank you. Thank you for being here and answering the question. I guess give me-- explain a little bit of a timeline. You said the, the bill is going to Natural Resource District [SIC], so is the probability that we're going to have that bill come out of there and we're going to have discussion on the floor this year or is this \$25 million, \$25 million in funding that we request is to allocate this year and then the bill won't come till next year or what, what are we looking at, I guess, what is the project--

McDONNELL: The-- yeah, the bill that will be heard in Natural Resources will be my priority bill and the, the idea of breaking down the, the \$200 million. But today we're only talking about the \$50 million that the Governor has put in from the ARPA monies.

DORN: So that-- when it's your priority bill then, you-- that will be to the floor. We will most likely have a discussion on the floor then.

McDONNELL: The bill that Speaker Hilgers introduced on behalf of the STAR WARS Committee will be my priority bill and it will be on the floor.

STINNER: Very good, thank you. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

McDONNELL: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents?

JULIE HARRIS: I think we're now to the point that I could be back in Scottsbluff wishing my dad a happy birthday had I left when this hearing started. I'm Julie Harris, J-u-l-i-e H-a-r-r-i-s. I'm the executive director of Bike Walk Nebraska and I'm here in support of

the projects recommended by the STAR WARS Committee. These projects will contribute significantly to tourism and hospitality sectors in the state and in the nearby communities. I've seen some of the concept plans in the-- mostly in the-- for the Niobrara project and I was pleased to see walking and biking facilities included in those plans. I have some copies here that I'm hoping got some additional ones-- if not, I'll-- can get them to you later-- of the State Game, Game and Parks Commission's SCORP report, SCORP being State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. They have to update it every five years, includes a lot of surveying and community engagement and the SCORP surveying indicates that trails are the number one thing by far in all of the different regions and overall in what the citizens of Nebraska are hoping to have in their recreational areas. So we know that Nebraskans want more trails and this research was done before the pandemic and the bike boom even happened. I know we've heard a lot today about sports and recreation facilities. It's worth noting that trails can be used by almost anyone. They don't require a team or special equipment or anything of that nature. They provide a free and safe outdoor and therefore pandemic-friendly way to get physical activity. I want to talk briefly about a complementary project that would go with the STAR WARS proposal for the lake between Omaha and Lincoln and it's worth noting that Senator Hilkemann has a bill, LB813, that will be also addressing this. The MoPac Trail is a multi-use trail. It's a former rail line. It runs between Omaha and Lincoln. There is an eight-mile gap in this trail in Cass County and while we don't know where Lake ARPA is going to be located, we do know that it's probably going to be a very reasonable, bikeable distance from the MoPac Trail. So we are hoping that this STAR WARS bill can be amended to include funding to close, to construct the gap in the trail in Cass County. This is not a shovel-ready project per se, but it's an almost shovel-ready project, otherwise I could have been done a long time ago this morn-- this afternoon. But it is something that could be done in the short term that could complement this bigger project in the long term. The MoPac Alliance is the group of organizations for which I'm here speaking to you tonight. It's Bike Walk Nebraska, the Great Plains Trails Network, and the Nebraska Trails Foundation. We have been working for the last three years to activate the MoPac Trail in Cass County and have received a letter of support from the Cass County commissioners after a unanimous vote to provide it for us that we can use when looking for private funding and for grants and other things for amenities for the trail. So we've been doing a lot of work. There has been private investment. It's something we know Nebraskans want and this is complementary to a STAR WARS project. So that is what

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I am hoping to leave you with tonight. I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.

STINNER: Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JULIE HARRIS: Thank you.

STINNER: Thank you for coming in. Any additional proponents?

JIM SWENSON: I think the finish line is in sight. Good evening, Chairman Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jim Swenson, J-i-m S-w-e-n-s-o-n. I am the deputy director of Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 North 33rd Street here in Lincoln. The STAR WARS proposal serves to address economic development, expanded recreation opportunity at specific locations in Nebraska, including Keith to Knox Counties where Game and Parks manages large-scale park operations. We support this initiative, as those locations-- at those locations are excited to help facilitate this project. We see benefit for both the communities and the public that visits the parks in those locations. The concepts proposed as part of the planning process are very similar to designs that we see in our long-range plans for these park locations and can serve both-- all those locations very beneficially. Proposed infrastructure will serve to answer concerns that are often expressed by the public for recreation and water access and their growing demand for those types of activities. We look forward to working with the STAR WARS Committee. Thank you and I'll answer any questions that you may have.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you, Mr. Swenson, for being here. I'm looking at the map that was passed out. Is that Arthur Bay where the marina is going to be?

JIM SWENSON: It's actually on the south side of the lake is where the concept design is at, close to the deepwater area on that side of the lake.

ERDMAN: How far up from the--

JIM SWENSON: Probably a quarter mile, maybe.

ERDMAN: Is there public access, access to that?

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JIM SWENSON: Public access is-- would need to be developed to get into that location.

ERDMAN: Down-the-road picture comes in? So we're actually going to build it wider than 92 where two vehicles can actually pass?

JIM SWENSON: That-- part of the proposal is to put some turn lanes in there and address those safety issues that you're familiar with.

ERDMAN: Have you ever spoken to highway department about doing something to 92?

JIM SWENSON: I have not myself, no, sir.

ERDMAN: That's a dangerous road. So how many-- looks like you're going to have some boat slips and whatever else there. What are you doing there?

JIM SWENSON: Yeah, it's a marina development with some slips in there for long-term holdover and public rentals will probably be the formula, similar to what we do in our Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area right now, very successful, very high demand. It promotes a lot of longer-term tourism.

ERDMAN: So it would be a public-private partnership. Somebody else will manage that, Game and Parks won't?

JIM SWENSON: Potentially, yes.

ERDMAN: What does Central think? Is Central OK?

JIM SWENSON: Yep, Central's been involved in these, just like in the advisory committee that you're familiar with out there, been involved in too and their, their support it, yes.

ERDMAN: Are you familiar with the gentleman who wants to build a golf course on the west of Bayside, east of Bayside up there along the south side of the lake?

JIM SWENSON: I have heard of that project, but I have not had any discussion with him.

ERDMAN: OK. I toured that facility about two months ago, spent two or three hours driving around out there.

JIM SWENSON: Yeah.

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ERDMAN: He's got an ambitious goal. You know, I, I don't know whether he's going to get that done or not. You guy-- he hasn't spoken to you about it?

JIM SWENSON: No, no, not--

ERDMAN: OK.

STINNER: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Senator Stinner, and thank you, Mr. Swenson. I'm looking at roadway improvements at Lake McConaughy. Looks like there's a Lakeview Road that goes in. What kind of road is that now and what would it-- what would be the improvement?

JIM SWENSON: The concepts that were discussed here in the planning process would be for all-weather surfacing on those roads to facilitate access all seasons of the year.

CLEMENTS: Is it gravel now?

JIM SWENSON: A lot of them are gravel. There are-- I'm not-- the Lakeview, I'm not 100 percent familiar with that road, but we've got a combination of gravel access out there and some asphalt access. On the north side of the lake, the road that comes all the way in along Shoreline, that is all asphalt.

CLEMENTS: This is on the south side. It would be--

JIM SWENSON: Um-hum.

CLEMENTS: --asphalt proposal?

JIM SWENSON: Proposed.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

STINNER: Any addition-- Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: So-- thank you, Senator Stinner. So on this map, Jim, how far up would the marina be because they-- you got this, you've got this oil road going all the way past Bayside clear up past there. Have you seen that?

JIM SWENSON: Yeah, it's-- I see-- I can see the picture you're looking at there, so yeah that--

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ERDMAN: Is the marina going to be down this way where the water is deeper?

JIM SWENSON: I don't believe-- I don't think a-- you know, looking at that reservoir, it would be closer down to the dam--

ERDMAN: OK.

JIM SWENSON: --is where it would be because the water and the makeup of the reservoir itself would probably accommodate it better.

ERDMAN: So what's the significance of this road if it doesn't lead to the marina?

JIM SWENSON: It gives them access. You know, the development plan that we've got out there for recreation on the south side, that benefits us as well because we've got some concession operations down there that could be properly accessed, Eagle Canyon and some concessions on that south side.

ERDMAN: So Van's would be at the north part where they make the quarter there?

JIM SWENSON: Van's is-- yeah, about that location on the lake, yes.

CLEMENTS: That's what it says.

ERDMAN: OK, OK.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JIM SWENSON: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, we have to take a five-minute break if that's okay. Our clerk is-- got to stretch her legs.

[BREAK]

STINNER: OK. That concludes our hearing on, on item 26. We'll now open on item 27, State Fair sewer upgrades. Great to see you.

BILL OGG: Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Bill Ogg, B-i-l-l O-g-g. I'm executive director of the Nebraska State Fair. To recognize the achievements of Nebraskans, to

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celebrate youth and fair traditions, to showcase agriculture, while providing educational and entertaining experiences for all. Chairman Stinner, I'm humbled to serve the people of Nebraska in working and attempting to fulfill that mission of the Nebraska State Fair. It was very far-sighted wisdom on the part of the Nebraska Legislature and the State Fair Board members at the time in relocating the Nebraska State Fair to Grand Island 12 years ago. Those facilities have well served the community and the state and will continue to do so for years to come. But as with any organization or business, it is relevant and imperative to review where you're at and study and project what you will need to not only stay relevant, but to progress, to grow, and to improve. To that end, the Nebraska State Fair Board, in conjunction with the foundation, the 1868 Foundation, assembled the constituents at Fonner Park and embarked on a master plan for these facilities. Significant and worthy facilities were identified, but identified immediately in the process and documented were some critical infrastructure needs for the campus. Concurrently to this master planning process was the ARPA funding that the state received. This project fits hand in glove with the ARPA funds designated for infrastructure work and we were able to make application for your consideration. I want to note that the process in which we participated fully vetted the eligibility of this project and the justification for investment for legitimate health and safety reasons, for environmental reasons, and for the economic impact that the State Fair, Aksarben, and the myriad of events that the State Fair cosponsors to the economics of Nebraska. I also want to address a potential question regarding the proposed casino on Fonner Park. The need and relevance for this critical infrastructure was identified years before any discussion or possibility of a casino sharing the Fonner Park campus even existed. So while we will work hard to be good partners and synergistic, synergistic co-tenants on the campus, this infrastructure work was not designed, nor any funding included to directly reduce the capital improvement required for the proposed casino. I'd also like to share that this project has very competent and respected resources available, that the funds are managed properly and well within the rules and, and reporting requirements associated with appropriate accounting and transparency of using public funds. Thank you so much for your service to the state of Nebraska and for your tenacity and endurance this evening.

STINNER: Thank you for that. Questions? Senator Erdman.

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ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Who owns the fairgrounds there, is that Fonner Park? Do they own those or does Grand Island and who owns that facility?

BILL OGG: The Hall County Agricultural Society owns the property of Fonner Park. State Fair has long-term leases for buildings on the structure, as does the city of Grand Island.

ERDMAN: So, so wouldn't it be the tenant-- or the owner's job to do the drainage and not the tenant?

BILL OGG: The consortium of users is critical to the success of this campus, Senator, and so the, the State Fair has taken the leadership in assembling this group of people for the benefit of not only Grand Island and certainly not just for Fonner Park campus, but for Grand Island, central Nebraska, and the whole state.

ERDMAN: So this funding that's we're-- that's been allocated here, is that going to pay for the whole project or is the, the landowner going to-- the people who own the facility going to pay some of this?

BILL OGG: There will certainly be participation on all of the parties that are involved in the campus to, to make this critical infrastructure. And again, this is only infrastructure. This isn't new buildings or--

ERDMAN: I understand.

BILL OGG: --whatever. It's, it's, you know, sewer, power, water, utilities, those types of very necessary work that needs to be done before any other progress can be made. Those projects would certainly be funded privately by the respective organizations that are most involved and invested in those.

ERDMAN: So what's the total cost of the whole project?

BILL OGG: Our master plan, there's this \$25 million plus another \$35 (million) and change-- \$35 million that the community of Grand Island intends to invest in this project or in, in the campus, sir.

ERDMAN: So the picture on the front here, is that when they had the floods at the State Fair?

BILL OGG: That was, that was taken in 2019 and dramatically shows what a little over an inch of rain can do to our campus. The, the State

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Fair buildings that were constructed by the state, you know, in 2009 and '10 are famous worldwide for hosting events, particularly beef cattle events, very, very significant buildings. But again, with just an inch of rain, we've got eight inches of water for our guests and participants to get through to access those buildings. It's--

ERDMAN: It's kind of peculiar that they would build those facilities without taking into consideration the drainage.

BILL OGG: No, sir. It is-- the-- but the consideration was taken. Work was conscientiously done. The, the reality is that in several hours, this water will drain off, but in those several hours, critical decisions are made for people to attend the event or, or not to come. And so significant economic impact is created plus then the, the environmental situation of this water standing on that facility and the slow drainage thereafter.

ERDMAN: It took a lot longer than a coup-- several hours to get the rain away.

BILL OGG: Well-- so I guess that reinforces the need to do that.

ERDMAN: I was there.

BILL OGG: Very good. Thank you, sir, for attending.

ERDMAN: I was there. I should have brought my boat. Yeah, so when, when they moved to-- when the Legislature moved the State Fair, I had a son that was involved in the Legislature. He was Chairman of the Ag Committee and he spent a whole year moving the State Fair and he would go to meetings and I'd say, where are you going? He'd say if I told you, I'd have to kill you. And then finally, when they finally got the decision made-- because they had four cities bid on it and Grand Island happened to be the best-- but they finally got it moved. That was a good move.

BILL OGG: And I appreciate that history lesson. I was not physically here in Nebraska at that time and I do enjoy working with your son and-- as a sponsor with the Nebraska Farm Bureau.

ERDMAN: Yeah, thank you.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Senator Kolterman.

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KOLTERMAN: Thank you. Senator Stinner. First of all, welcome to Nebraska. You haven't been here very long, have you?

BILL OGG: 19 months, sir.

KOLTERMAN: 19 months. And in that period of time, you've, you've wrestled with some real strong challenges going back to the floods. And then, of course, you had the financial challenges that you faced. I'd just like to thank you for hanging in there and pulling it back together.

BILL OGG: Oh, that's so kind. Thank you, sir. This is a wonderful fair and the people of Nebraska love this. I call it a public trust. We're undecided if we are a state agency or a quasi state or we're a nonprofit corporation, but the people of Nebraska love this public trust and that is humbling and motivating for us to serve this institution.

KOLTERMAN: Thanks for coming tonight.

BILL OGG: You're welcome, sir.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

BILL OGG: Thank you, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Good evening.

MATT RIEF: Good evening. My name is Matt Rief, M-a-t-t R-i-e-f. I work for Olsson and we are part of that team who completed the master plan for the Fonner Park campus. And as Bill said, I kind of led that effort for that critical infrastructure improvements and that's a pamphlet that is handed out to you and it kind of outlines what those critical improvements are. And a lot of it is addressing those drainage concerns out there and those issues and they just weren't able to stretch those dollars far enough when they built those buildings, they put it into the buildings. And they're great buildings and they serve that campus really well, but what else this does with these critical infrastructure improvements, it lays that groundwork so we can improve those facilities, expand those facilities, and build new facilities out there and Bill alluded to that too with the additional investment from the community. This study involved the whole campus and this critical infrastructure serves probably about 200 acres of the ground. But when you look at it, we're divided into

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five zones and it's about in the middle of your packet. There's a map like this right here and each one of those five zones in there and we broke up the infrastructure improvements for those five zones. So those five zones amount to about 65 acres. There is a zone left out and that's the far north zone. That where-- is where the potential casino could be. They will have some infrastructure needs there too when they build that facility and if they build that facility. May wonder what's included in that \$25 million request. There's over 10,000 lineal feet of storm sewer. There's 1.5 million square feet of pavement. Part of that's pedestrian pavement, you know, so you can access the buildings without walking through water. Part of it's for vehicles and parking lots. There's been many times in recent years, that-- parking lots you couldn't access. You can utilize all of them and it costs the State Fair money because they had to relocate those vehicles or bring in buses to bring people in. And that's what this addresses from there. It also addresses some landscaping for stormwater quality, also some storm detention cells. With that, this kind of just lays the groundwork for that critical infrastructure for the future of that State Fair and take it from a reasonable level to a national level for those livestock and for agriculture shows that want to come to the state. With that, I'll leave it up to questions you may have.

STINNER: Questions? Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you. Thank you for being here.

MATT RIEF: Yeah.

DORN: Whenever I've gone out to State Fair, it's, it's pretty flat.

MATT RIEF: Yep.

DORN: So it's kind of hard to get-- where I come from, we have hills, so it's easier to get the drainage. You just-- water runs downhill and out there, you have issues. But what caught my attention was you said there was 62,000 feet of pavement going in.

MATT RIEF: No, 65 acres. That's the, that's the acreage, acreage of where these improvements are located at, those shaded areas in there.

DORN: About how many miles of highway would that be?

MATT RIEF: Jeez.

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DORN: I-- My estimation was it's 10, 15 miles that you're planning on paving.

MATT RIEF: I should get my calculator out for that, but I don't think it's quite that much in there.

DORN: Well--

MATT RIEF: Yeah.

DORN: Yeah. I don't know if somebody else-- Senator, Senator Clements is always the one with-- that comes up with the numbers, so he might tell me if I'm wrong.

CLEMENTS: What was the number used?

MATT RIEF: About 1.5 million square feet.

CLEMENTS: 1.5 million square feet.

DORN: 1.5 million square feet and you divide it by 24 feet, which is approximate distance of a road--

_____ : [INAUDIBLE]

DORN: It comes up to 6,000-- 62,000 square-- 62,000 feet, which-- and a mile is 5,280 feet [SIC]. So that's why it was 11 to 12 miles. So and I guess I-- when this project was mentioned or whatever-- and the only reason I'm making a comment is I didn't realize it was also all the pavement and other stuff. I thought it was just for drainage and I, I wondered how \$25 million would be for drainage out there because-- yeah.

MATT RIEF: I mean, when you look at it for drainage, you got to improve the pavement area. You got to regrade it. I mean, we're in a flat area.

DORN: Yeah.

MATT RIEF: I mean, it's really difficult and you have-- some of these areas in these improvements, we're just going to pave the driving lanes. We're not going to pave the whole parking lot. There's other areas we're going to pave the whole parking lot. So I think that's kind of where-- just to get that to drain in the area and it's just so

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flat and we can't build storm sewer everywhere to make it drain. So it's kind of plus and minus if you do-- build a little more pavement--

DORN: But I guess our-- I've heard at one time that you're proposing maybe even a collection-- holding pond because--

MATT RIEF: Yeah.

DORN: I don't care where you go with it. Grand Island is flat.

MATT RIEF: Yeah and--

DORN: It's not just going to runoff.

MATT RIEF: If you look at that area four, there is a detention cell on that corner--

DORN: Yeah.

MATT RIEF: --and we would expand that and then build a new outlet to the Wood River and that would be part of those improvements. Right now, there's, there's some storm sewer pipes on the north and the south end, but they're really undersized and that's what restricts it. A lot of the town of Grand Island drains to those areas. And part of this would be-- is basically constructing that new outlet in that southeast corner of the property--

DORN: Thank you.

MATT RIEF: --which would outlet to the Wood River.

STINNER: Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: I'm just curious. This-- aren't they going to be building a casino out there?

MATT RIEF: Yes and that area is north of area two. It is not in the shaded area. It's up here.

HILKEMANN: Two, oh.

MATT RIEF: It would be north of there.

HILKEMANN: Um-hum.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

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ERDMAN: Isn't that where they set up the carnival?

MATT RIEF: Yes, they would.

ERDMAN: So this area here where it says paved parking, that's paved now, correct?

MATT RIEF: That is not paved.

ERDMAN: You got to pave that. Then over here, you're going to have just paved driveways?

MATT RIEF: It will be some paved lanes. The master plan is slightly different than what you have in there.

ERDMAN: OK.

MATT RIEF: You see the area right in the middle there that would be a proposed building.

ERDMAN: Right.

MATT RIEF: And then to here, I would believe this area would get paved and these would be some driving lanes.

ERDMAN: So then this, this is a significant parking up here. You're not going to do anything with that?

MATT RIEF: That is in the city of Grand Island.

ERDMAN: We've parked there.

MATT RIEF: Yes, you do park there and they are actually looking at regrading that area and doing that on their own.

ERDMAN: OK.

MATT RIEF: That has been discussed too. It was outside of the limits of the state fairgrounds of Fonner Park campus, but that does-- area would need to be addressed too. Could we stretch those dollars and maybe pave some there? It might be, but I know the city is looking at that area too, consideration and making some improvements.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

MATT RIEF: Thank you.

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DORN: You dropped a piece of paper.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on the State Fair sewer upgrades. That was item 27. We'll now start on item 28, Ft. Laramie-Gering Canal. You know, now I'm really convinced there's nobody left in Scottsbluff. We got the attorney here. How are you, Adam.

ERDMAN: Is there only one attorney in Scottsbluff?

STINNER: There's just one, it's Adam.

_____ : Easier to serve a warrant.

ERDMAN: Well, thanks for coming.

ADAM HOESING: All right, thank you, Senator Stinner. Thank you, committee. My name is Adam Hoelsing. Before I spell that, I have paralyzed vocal cords. I've had this condition since birth. I've always talked like this. If I need to repeat myself, let me know. Don't be afraid to ask me questions. Adam, A-d-a-m, Hoelsing, H-o-e-s-i-n-g. As Senator Stinner said, I'm the attorney in private practice in Scottsbluff. I represent Gering-Ft. Laramie location. Unfortunately, general manager couldn't be here today. He had a private appointment he had to keep. The Gering-Ft. Laramie district is approximately 54,000 acres, surface water irrigation district in Scotts Bluff County. We operate the Nebraska portion of the Ft. Laramie Canal. We're also responsible for 51 percent of the operation and maintenance costs of the Wyoming portion of the Ft. Laramie Canal. That canal was part of a North Platte project under the Bureau of Reclamation. It's been operated since about 1920. Because Gering-Ft. Laramie, particularly the land under it, has very little groundwater available for irrigation, it is dependent upon this canal to form dryland pasture for your irrigated reel crop and alfalfa production. In July of 2019, tunnel 2, a tunnel on the Wyoming side of the canal, collapsed. The costs to immediately repair and return that water for the remainder of 2019, as well as 2020 and 2021 were just over \$7 million. Those were just temporary repairs, though, and now the matter of the permanent fix is upon us. The rough engineers' estimate that fixes about \$45 million between tunnels 1 and tunnel 2. We have to fix both because the Bureau of Reclamation will not allow water to be delivered without both being permanently fixed. Of that 20-- of that \$45 million, 51 percent is our obligation, or \$23 million. The state

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of Wyoming is in the process of budgeting, for their own state purposes, \$22 million to Goshen Irrigation District, which spurred our application for ARPA to this committee. The need to repair that canal is imminent and it will be a one-time fix. It will be a 100-year fix. It will be a permanent fix to continue to deliver water down the Ft. Laramie Canal. As you can imagine, when LB1014 came out, we were quite pleased with what we saw. We've attempted to raise funds through the FEMA grant process. We were unsuccessful there. We've attempted to ask the Bureau of Reclamation for funding. We've been largely unsuccessful in the Bureau of Reclamation. Even if we were, you'd likely see that being a 100 percent loan. We have one source of income. That's from our landowners. Our landowners pay all salaries, operation, maintenance, as well as all debt for the district, so a 100 percent loan, while it would fix the problem, it would almost be untenable for the landowners who would do it and increase their O&M 50, 60 percent. Thank you for your consideration and we're in support of LB1014.

STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Senator Stinner, thank you. Thank you for coming. It's, it's my understanding that Wyoming is going to fund their half. Is that what you believe?

ADAM HOESING: I believe that's going to happen. Everything indicates positively in that direction. The select water committee in Wyoming has put it in their budget. I believe the governor is working with that committee and there's no indication otherwise.

ERDMAN: So shortly after the collapse that happened in '19, I went to the canal and toured that with Senator Steinmetz from Torrington. We went back to her office and we have the governor of Wyoming on a conference call. Then he reassured me that day that whatever it took going forward, they didn't-- we had no idea what it was going to be, but he reassured me that if he was in the state house going forward, they would make sure that they paid their half. And he was trying to make sure that we understood the significance of that and that we would pay our half. So I would assume that the governor is totally on board with this and I think it will probably happen on Wyoming's side.

ADAM HOESING: I would agree with that. I can't reiterate enough on our side, both from the Legislature as well as the Governor's Office, we've had tremendous support.

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ERDMAN: What was disappointing is the bureau should pay this. It's their canal, it's their tunnel--

ADAM HOESING: Yep.

ERDMAN: --and they should be the ones funding the bill, not us.

ADAM HOESING: Yep, I understand. And that's, that's a fight we've had multiple times the last couple of years. It's also a fight that the 17 western states have had since the 1980s when the bureau really changed direction.

ERDMAN: So they've, they've-- we've done some work on tunnel 1, correct?

ADAM HOESING: They did work on total number one. They, they put steel sets in tunnel 1. They also did some ground shoring which filled voids behind the lining. They did all-- also did that to tunnel 2. So both of those tunnels are now in a temporarily stable condition because of that, but they both also restrict flow and they both also need a permanent fix.

ERDMAN: And they have done some work on tunnel 3 as well, but that tunnel is about a mile long.

ADAM HOESING: They did work on tunnel 3, which is wholly in Nebraska. That's our tunnel.

ERDMAN: Yeah.

ADAM HOESING: Fortunately, tunnel 3 was oversized, so we did put steel sets in that. We put some void crowding in that. It restricted our flow, but because it was oversized, we're treating that as the permanent fixed.

ERDMAN: You know, one of the things-- I talked to the manager of the Gering-Ft. Laramie about a month, two months ago, maybe and there were a couple of suggestions they had on how to fix that. One of them was make an open canal.

ADAM HOESING: Right.

ERDMAN: And I'm not so sure that might not be the best idea.

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ADAM HOESING: That's, that's not off the table. So Goshen Irrigation District hired HDR in September. Since September, there's been substantial progress. They're down to three final possibilities, one of which is open canal.

ERDMAN: So they haven't put any of the dirt back in the hole, have they?

ADAM HOESING: They're doing that now.

ERDMAN: They are?

ADAM HOESING: They would have to move that dirt anyway because that dirt was sitting in a pile right on top of it.

ERDMAN: But if they left that open, wouldn't that be easier to make an open, open canal if they didn't put the dirt back?

ADAM HOESING: Not necessarily. That dirt was sitting right next to that hole, they'd have to move that dirt regardless.

ERDMAN: Have you been there?

ADAM HOESING: Yes.

ERDMAN: Quite a hole.

ADAM HOESING: It's a small mountain, yep.

ERDMAN: Thank you for coming.

ADAM HOESING: Yep.

STINNER: Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming in, Adam, and I'll-- hopefully you're staying overnight.

ADAM HOESING: I'll think about it. Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on item 28, Ft. Laramie-Gering Canal. We'll open the hearing up for item 29, water resource data collection. Any proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? That concludes our hearing on item 29, water resource data collection. We'll now open up for hearing on item 30, wastewater system projects.

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TIM McCOY: Good evening, Chairman Stinner and members of the committee. My name is Tim McCoy, T-i-m M-c-C-o-y. I am the deputy-- or the director, sorry, the director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. I am pleased-- we're pleased to support what the Governor had put in his budget ARPA regarding sewer projects. These are projects at various park facilities. Those facilities have cabins, restrooms, showers, and RV dump stations with septic and lateral systems that are near capacity or have been identified by the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy as failing. So lagoon systems meeting NDEE standards are proposed as the best solution to accommodate our current and future sanitation needs at those sites and they are at-- as the best option for containing recreational vehicle waste that is typically high in chemical content due to some of the additives that are put in. So those projects are at Niobrara State Park, Branched Oak State Park, Two Rivers State Recreation Area, Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area, and Mormon Island State Recreation Area. We believe these projects in state parks are clearly eligible under the federal rules that were identified in the ARPA final rule. They're very critical for maintaining the services that our park visitors expect and income that we derive from those services in our parks system that's continued-- vital to our continued park operations. The other thing it does that's really important is to ensure we are fully compliant with our state and federal requirements regarding wastewater. I, I will indicate these projects have been in the planning phase for a while within our agency. It takes time to build-- to prepare to and build and permit a sewer system, but it does include projects that are at Niobrara State Park and Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area that are necessary and will be important to help accommodate those STAR WARS, STAR WARS-related projects if the, if the committee and the Legislature moves those forward. With that--

STINNER: Thank you for that.

TIM McCOY: -- I will stop my testimony.

STINNER: Questions? Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: Is this-- this is the amount that-- this is got to cover all of the parks?

TIM McCOY: At these five sites down, the amount-- and there's \$8.1 million identified in ARPA dollars. Right now, our best estimates-- and we have bids on a few of these right now-- is that we'll be at about \$9.5 million, a little higher than that on these projects. We

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are seeing the same thing everybody else is seeing. Project costs are getting higher. We've had several, several bids where we only have one bidder, but we've had good bids. But that's always a line you have to watch right now.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner, and thank you for-- Director McCoy coming. I didn't say anything on there for Box Butte. Did you miss that one or--

TIM McCOY: We don't, we don't have the amount of facilities at Box Butte that we've had the issue, but I would expect as we continue to increase our camping developments, we're going to be doing these in more places.

ERDMAN: OK. That was a joke.

TIM McCOY: The road to Box Butte is on, on the list too.

STINNER: Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

TIM McCOY: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? That concludes our hearing on item 30, wastewater system projects. We'll now open up for item number 31, state college facility and equipment upgrades. Thank you for staying this late.

_____ : He gets paid to be here.

PAUL TURMAN: I do. Good evening, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Paul Turman. That's spelled P-a-u-l T-u-r-m-a-n. I'm the chancellor of the Nebraska State College System. I'm here this evening to provide input on the Governor's recommendations for the ARPA request as it relates to the state colleges. As you know, earlier this fall, as you put together LR178, the hearings that looked at the beginning kind of discussions around these conversations. I worked with the leadership at Chadron State, Wayne State, and Peru State Colleges to identify a variety of projects that align pretty closely with the Treasury guidance that was available at the time. We whittled down a primary list of about \$110 million worth of projects to a list of priorities that were at about \$44.3 million, advanced those to the Governor for consideration. And

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what you see in LB1014 provides the \$8 million worth of requests that he felt aligned with his budget priorities. Within those \$8 million, that's \$2 million for STEM project equipment, ability for us to invest in our STEM programs by making investment in a number of our labs and the various facilities, specifically within our RHOP programs at all three of the institutions, and \$6 million worth of water and sewer upgrades that align closely with bringing a number of our facilities up to grade to be able to comply with the mitigation and prevention of COVID and the ongoing impact that we have with the pandemic for allowing for social distancing in a number of our facilities. We also had a variety of projects and initiatives that fell underneath the area of air quality and energy efficiency, IT infrastructure, and cybersecurity. But when you look at the, the package that the Governor had proposed, I think it aligns closely with the return on investment argument that we brought to this committee back in October. How do we make some good investments with these dollars that allow us to make sure that we're doing the right things for workforce and economic development for the state colleges and the programs that we serve? Our ability to make sure that our students are safe and have the highest level of success by bringing them back into campus in person and providing the type of exposure to first-generation students that we have continued to have for the last number of decades. And then lastly, just long-term reduction in costs; keeping our costs down, investing in infrastructure and IT equipment for our students, and the equipment that they need to be successful and to allow them to be able to work through their educational programming at low cost. So with that, I appreciate the committee's time and a very long day. About the only thing I could have requested is that maybe the Governor would have picked something that falls into that first category, that I wouldn't have been the last one, but I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

STINNER: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner and thank you, Mr. Turman, for coming. So the money-- if you send some money over to Chadron State, are they going to use that for the new lab? Have they started building that yet?

PAUL TURMAN: The math science facility?

ERDMAN: Yeah.

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PAUL TURMAN: We are very close to having that project completed. I believe that we'll have that finished up within the next two months. And then, yes, one of the elements of the STEM-based equipment that we requested was the ability to give them even more equipment in their anatomy lab. It's a simulator for their anatomy program itself, yes.

ERDMAN: OK, so will that, will that facility be available for the fall semester?

PAUL TURMAN: It will be available for fall. We will move in beginning in, I believe, May. And about the only thing is the exterior of the building, but we are very close to having kind of a ribbon cutting at that facility to introduce it to the community. It, it looks fantastic.

ERDMAN: Is it east of the old facility?

PAUL TURMAN: It is, it, it's the existing facility and they remodeled the main part of it and then we built to the north a large addition, yes.

STINNER: Senator Hilkemann.

HILKEMANN: I'm making the assumption that these dollars for the water improvement and the sewer are going to be equally-- about equally divided?

PAUL TURMAN: We had a range of projects that we identified and I think what we'll have to do is the board will look at the, the, the recommendation from the Governor. We had our meeting, the last meeting to visit about this, two days before the Governor released his proposal. And so we'll look at those set of priorities and then determine how to allocate them out to the institutions, but each institution will receive a share utilizing a formula based on which ones we think we can prioritize.

STINNER: Thank you. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

PAUL TURMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? That concludes item 31, state college facility and equipment upgrades, and we'll open it up under this water and sewer, broadband to any other comments from people.

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GREG OSBORNE: You guys are rock stars, I'll tell you.

STINNER: I think you deserve a gift or a present or award for being here.

GREG OSBORNE: Well, I-- it's, it's amazing. I've learned a lot today watching, listening and it's just been maybe an eye-opening experience for me. I have great respect for all of you and I guess I didn't have any idea that it was like this.

STINNER: Thank you.

GREG OSBORNE: So anyway, I appreciate it very much. My name is Greg Osborne, G-r-e-g O-s-b-o-r-n-e. Honorable Chairman Stinner and senators of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to allow me to testify today. I am here as a representative of the five Governor-appointed trustees for Wyuka Funeral Home and Cemetery. Wyuka historic cemetery was established in 1869 by the Nebraska State Legislature by purchasing the first 40 acres of the cemetery. There is now 83. Since its founding, Wyuka, even though it's a state-owned facility, has never received any funding from the state. It is an all-faith cemetery and operates and funds itself through sales and services. Wyuka is also Lincoln's first public park. I am here today to ask the committee for a one-time appropriation of \$1.8 million from ARPA funds for Wyuka stormwater project. Phase one of this project was to study and develop a conceptual design to determine how to control the sediment and waste coming into the pond and downstream drainage. This study and report were developed by professional engineers, architects, and a committee of stakeholders. Phase one of three started in early 2020 and was completed last month, December 2021. I emailed each of you the request cover letter and a copy of the very detailed report on January 11, 2022. Phase two is for final engineering, design, and development of an RFP. We will be starting this process as soon as possible. We also are in the process of developing a fundraising campaign to raise funds for phase three, the construction. The write-- the final report that you were emailed has a chart that goes through all the prospective costs for the project. Chairman Stinner's staff, Tamara and Mitch, were extremely helpful in the past few days and I want to thank them both, appreciate it very much for all of your help. It is our opinion that we meet the criteria set forth by the U.S. Department of Treasury's overview of the final rule dated January 20, 2022. On page 37, it states management and treatment of stormwater or subsurface drainage of water. We also feel we meet the criteria of the last

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category, water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure established by this committee and Governor Ricketts. There's 255 acres south of Wyuka Cemetery that drains through this structure on the west side of Wyuka's property. There is a tremendous amount of gravel, sand, yard waste, and trash that comes into the pond at downstream. The report you have answers the issues we currently are dealing with and address is the future success of the stormwater drainage. This project will generate jobs for architects, engineers, contractors, and their employees. It will also create an ongoing maintenance position at Wyuka and at times, a silt-removal company will be used to move sediment in the four bay area. This will ensure water quality and quantity. This project will greatly benefit the public by creating a better drainage flow for the 255 acres south of Wyuka Cemetery and help reestablish the beauty of Lincoln's first park. Thank you for your consideration and I'd be happy to enter-- or to answer any questions.

STINNER: Thank you for coming in. Any questions? Senator Kolterman.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Greg, thanks for coming.

GREG OSBORNE: You bet.

KOLTERMAN: So you talk about the drainage to the south. Is there-- is the, the cemetery-- is it Calvary Cemetery--

GREG OSBORNE: Actually--

KOLTERMAN: --across the road?

GREG OSBORNE: --he 255 acres runs from 33rd Street to about 48th Street, all the way to Randolph.

KOLTERMAN: So--

GREG OSBORNE: And that all comes into Wyuka's pond and, and drainage.

KOLTERMAN: So that all fit-- that all runs into the pond. OK.

GREG OSBORNE: Yeah.

KOLTERMAN: And then--

GREG OSBORNE: There's a drainage structure that was built. In that report that I sent you, there's a drainage structure, structure that

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was built there to accommodate the way the flow comes into the lake. I think at the time that they did that, that they were unaware of the amount of sediment, trash, and things that were coming through that sewer system.

KOLTERMAN: So this, this, this cemetery, is it the only cemetery owned by the state of Nebraska?

GREG OSBORNE: Yes, it is.

KOLTERMAN: Like Fort McPherson, is that federal cemetery, do you know?

GREG OSBORNE: Yes, that's a national cemetery.

KOLTERMAN: National, so--

GREG OSBORNE: Yeah, it's the only one. And it's, it's had its up and downs, but the recent last 10 or 12 years has turned that cemetery dramatically around. And we're in a position where we can start doing some things. There's quite a few historical-- it's on national historic registry and there's quite a few historical-- not only historical facilities there, but there's monuments and there's a big propeller from a WWII plane that is a grave marker there. There's, there's just-- it's a huge amount of history. There's a lot of people that use that cemetery. I had two people tell me they teach their kids how to drive there--

KOLTERMAN: So--

GREG OSBORNE: --and-- but they walk through it.

KOLTERMAN: So, Greg, is the, is the cemetery-- so obviously, do you have to file-- it's state owned. Who, who do you respond to? Do you respond to the Governor--

GREG OSBORNE: Auditor, auditor-- well--

KOLTERMAN: --or the Department of Administrative Services or--

GREG OSBORNE: Yeah, we just have-- we need, we need to follow all the public policy rules, we have to file an audit for the Auditor every year, and I guess the Governor would be the top answer.

KOLTERMAN: He's the one that--

GREG OSBORNE: He was pretty well involved.

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KOLTERMAN: He's the one that appoints all five--

GREG OSBORNE: He appoints the five trustees.

KOLTERMAN: How long is your term?

GREG OSBORNE: Six years.

KOLTERMAN: Thank you.

STINNER: Something for you to look forward to.

KOLTERMAN: Doesn't pay as well as this.

GREG OSBORNE: Don't get too close to [INAUDIBLE] you may be--

STINNER: Oh my gosh. Well, thank you for staying in, staying with us. We appreciate it.

GREG OSBORNE: Well, thank you so much and, and truly, thank you for your service to your districts and to our state. It's just amazing that, that you guys put yourselves out for that and I appreciate it deeply from within my heart.

STINNER: Appreciate it. Any additional proponents that want-- or anybody that want to talk on this particular other category? Seeing nobody getting up, I want to commend Director Will for being here this whole entire time, commendable. I do have 19 proponents who have sent in emails, email letters. Is that what these are or--

TAMARA HUNT: The online comments.

STINNER: These are online comments, excuse me, I thought it was-- yeah, OK. There was no opponents and two neutral. And that then concludes our hearing on LB-- whatever it is, LB1014. It's after 9:00, guys. Plan for tomorrow is we're going to-- we got--