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Education Committee February 15, 2022
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WALZ: All right. I think we're going to go ahead and get started today. Thank you for coming today and welcome to the Education Committee public hearing. My name is Lynne Walz and I represent Legislative District 15, which is all of Dodge County and part of Valley now. I also serve as Chair of the committee. The committee will take up the bills in the order on the posted agenda. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your position on the proposed legislation before us today. To better facilitate today's proceeding, I ask that you abide by the following procedures. Please turn off or silence your cell phones or electronic devices. The order of testimony is introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral, and closing remarks. If you will be testifying, please complete the green testifier sheet and hand it to the committee clerk when you come up to testify. If you would like your position known but do not wish to testify, please sign the yellow form at the back of the room and it will be included in the official record. If you have written materia--l materials that you would like distributed to the committee, please hand them to the page to distribute before you begin testifying. We need 10 copies for all committee members and staff. If you need additional copies, please ask a page to make them for you now. When you begin to testify, state and spell your name for the record. Please speak directly into the microphone so our transcribers are able to hear your testimony clearly. I do want to let you know that Room 1307 has also been designated as a testifier overflow room. Once you have finished testifying, please exit the hearing room and move to Room 1307 to view the hearing. This will also allow those who still need to testify to enter the hearing room. The Red Coats will help us facilitate that process. If you are not testifying in person and would like to submit written comments to be included in the official hearing record as an exhibit, you will find the required link on the bill page of the Nebraska legislators website. Comments are allowed once a bill has been scheduled for a public hearing and must be submitted and verified prior to 12 p.m. on the last workday prior to the public hearing. The comments submitted online and verified prior to the deadline, identified as comments for the public hearing record will be the only method for submission of official hearing record comments other than testifying in person. Letters and comments submitted via email or hand delivered will no longer be included as part of the public hearing record, although they are a viable option for communicating your views with your senator. Finally, please be concise. Testimony will be limited to three minutes unless we need to shorten it a little bit. We

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will be using the light system. Green means that your time has started and you may begin speaking. Yellow means that you have one minute remaining, and you need to stop your testimony when you see the red light. A reminder that any applause or outburst-- outbursts are not permitted in the hearing room, and it may be cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. The committee members with us today will introduce themselves beginning at my far right.

McKINNEY: Good afternoon. Senator Terrell McKinney. District 11, north Omaha.

MURMAN: Hello. I'm Senator Dave Murman and I represent eight counties in the southern part of the state.

MORFELD: Adam Morfeld, District 46.

LINEHAN: Good afternoon. Lou Ann Linehan, District 39.

DAY: Good afternoon. I'm Senator Jen Day, represent Legislative District 49 in Sarpy County.

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Senator Rita Sanders representing District 45, which is the Bellevue-Offutt community.

WALZ: I'd also like to introduce our committee staff. To my immediate right is research analyst, Nicole Barrett. And to the far right of the table is committee clerk, Noah Boger. And our pages today are Logan Brtek and Rolf Kloch. I got it right. Please remember that senators may come in and go or come and go during our hearing as they may have bills to introduce in other committees. I'd also like to remind the committee members to speak directly into the microphones and limit side conversations and making noise on personal devices. We are an electronics-equipped committee and information is provided electronically as well as in paper. Therefore, you may see committee members referencing information on their electronic devices. Be assured that your presence here today and your testimony are important to us and critical to our state government. And with that, we will open on LB888, Senator Day. Welcome, Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Walz and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Jen Day. That's J-e-n D-a-y, and I represent Legislative District 49 in north central Sarpy County, including the areas of Chalco and portions of Gretna and western Papillion and La Vista. I'm here today to introduce LB888, which would add the Holocaust and other acts of genocide to Nebraska's

already existing multicultural education curriculum. This idea was first brought to the Legislature in 2020 by Senator Sara Howard in LB640, which had a number of cosponsors on both sides of the aisle but stalled in committee. Since the introduction of LV640 in 2020, the need for this legislation has only grown further. Alarming, as we become further removed from World War II, knowledge among youth of the Holocaust is declining. In a 2020 survey of millennials and Gen Z, 63 percent of respondents did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, and over half of those thought the death toll was fewer than 2 million. In a different 2018 survey, 66 percent of millennials were unable to identify what Auschwitz was. What is particularly shocking and disappointing about this decline in knowledge of the Holocaust is that it is a relatively recent event that happened only 77 years ago. Unfortunately, unless we work to ensure that this event is taught, only a few generations removed from the Holocaust, ignorance will only increase as it falls further into history. Seventy-seven years removed from these vile atrocities, all but 400,000 survivors of the Holocaust have passed away worldwide. We are losing the most human connection we have with the victims. The remaining survivors have made themselves clear and have urged the world not to forget what happened. The scale of the Holocaust and efforts to wipe its victims from history mean that it is up to us to keep the memory of them alive. Whether we mean to or not, if we do not work to keep the Holocaust as a point of remembrance, we are dishonoring the victims whose deaths came simply because of who they worshiped. Many were even denied the dignity of marked graves. We have the ability to ensure that their memory does not become lost to history. The Holocaust was a unique-- uniquely evil act. However, it did not happen in a vacuum. It is an example of the modern, industrialized bureaucracy being used to exterminate an entire people and culture. Furthermore, as the American Jewish Council points out, it happened in a state that had previously had 14 years of democracy before Hitler's rise to power and was widely viewed as among the most educated, cultured, and developed in the world. The transition from democracy to a totalitarian state and the mass death of the Holocaust can show the roles of historical, social, religious, political and economic factors in the erosion and disintegration of human rights. The same anti-Semitism that has been one of the oldest pathologies of hate in the world still disturbingly exists today. In the 2021 American Jewish Council Survey of American Jews, one in four American Jews have reported being the target of anti-Semitism within the past year, and four in ten have changed their behavior within the past year out of fear over anti-Semitism. According to FBI statistics, nearly 60

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percent of all religiously motivated hate crimes are directed at Jews who make up 2 percent of the U.S. population. The increase in anti-Semitism, combined with our youth's fleeting knowledge of the Holocaust, paints a troubling picture and underscores the need to ensure that Nebraska students are aware of the consequences of unchecked hate, ignorance and discrimination. Just two weeks ago, the standoff and hostage situation at Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, prompted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to issue a bulletin that highlighted the threats against faith-based organizations. This serves as an unfortunate reminder that anti-Semitism in extreme corners of society makes LB888 even more relevant than ever. Since 1992, Nebraska has had a multi--multicultural education requirement in schools. LB888 would adjust Nebraska's existing efforts in this area to include Holocaust education. Currently, 23 states have a requirement that Holocaust education be taught in schools, the first of which being California in 1985 and most recently Arkansas, which passed a requirement last year. Additionally, the concept of Holocaust education remains strongly supported by the public, with 93 percent of Americans supporting the idea that the Holocaust should be taught in every-- to every school student. As those last remaining victims of the Holocaust pass away, now is the time for Nebraska to adopt a Holocaust education requirement as well. While we are losing our living, breathing link with this event, we can ensure that Nebraska students will continue to be aware of what took place and give them the tools to identify hate in the future. We have a number of testifiers here today, including Mark Dreiling, representing Congressman Don Bacon's office as his chief of staff. You'll be hearing from faith and community leaders about the need for this to appear in our statewide curriculum. LB888 is a chance for us to respect and remember the victims of the Holocaust while equipping Nebraska students with the knowledge necessary to reject hate. And with that, I'm happy to answer any questions.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator Day. Questions from the committee? I see none. Are you staying for closing?

DAY: Yes.

WALZ: All right. First proponent.

MARK DREILING: For the record, my name is Mark Dreiling. My first name is spelled with a k. And my last name is spelled D-r-e-i-l-i-n-g. Good? Honorable Senators, first, I want to thank Senator Day for

introducing this much needed legislation. LB888 is a vital tool in the fight against this insidious virus of anti-Semitism. By passing the bill, you bring remembrance to the victims and you honor the legacy of those who have had the bravery to stand up against one of the most odious regimes in the annals of history. As the chief of staff for Congressman Don Bacon, we have spent several years working on a number of initiatives to fight anti-Semitism. One of the congressman's top priorities in that effort has been Holocaust education, and the congressman was one of the key leaders in the House in 2020 in the effort to pass Never Again Education Act. We see legislation like what Senator Day has brought forth as tangential to our work at the federal level. I am also here today as a retired military officer. It is through this lens that I offer my personal testimony to your committee. We've all seen the growing evidence of anti-Semitism and hate, both in this country and around the world, from our elected officials who play off of age-old pre-digital tropes to young people who flirt with Nazi symbolism. We have witnessed brutal crimes against people in their houses of worship. We have seen growing hatred on our campuses. Even in Nebraska, we have not been spared from such acts, as evidenced by the attacks against the Temple Israel Cemetery in Omaha and the South Street Temple, just two miles south of here. Against this backdrop, we've also witnessed an alarming trend in the terms of a lack of knowledge about the Holocaust. Roughly two years ago, a study conducted by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany showed that two thirds of American millennials surveyed were not familiar with Auschwitz, the largest of the Nazi extermination camps. As a military officer, I have always believed that two of the key pillars of American prosperity and the continuation of liberty can be found in our armed forces and our schools. Our military protects the castle walls while our schools help build the foundation the castle stands on. From this perspective, nothing can be more important than what we pass on to our children in our classrooms. The Holocaust is unique in history as it illustrates the ultimate and horrible endpoint of where hatred leads. As Justice Jackson warned at Nuremberg, "If we cannot eliminate the causes and prevent the repetition of these barbaric events, it is not an irresponsible prophecy to say that this twentieth century may yet succeed in bringing the doom of civilization." The passing into the 21st century has not diminished this warning as the firsthand witnesses to these crimes pass away. It becomes incumbent upon us to ensure that they are never forgotten and that their pain and suffering never becomes just a footnote in history. This important legislation is not just about the here and now. It speaks to future generations. It reveals what kind of

people we are and what we intend to be. In a country that did not commit these crimes, some might ask, why is it important that we enact this into our own statutes? We must remember that the regime that committed these crimes by all appearances was not a backwards country. The perpetrators were doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. The Nazi regime planned and carried out industrialized mass murder-- sorry-- on a scale never before realized. And it was integrated all fat-- into all facets of society. So complete was a diabolical incorporation of this machine into every aspect of daily life that no previous century on record has ever seen murder, cruelty, or inhumanities on such a scale in which no one was spared.

WALZ: Sorry.

MARK DREILING: Sorry.

WALZ: No, that's OK. I appreciate you watching the red light.

MARK DREILING: I will send you the rest of my remarks. I had prepared five minute remarks, so I apologize. Again, I thank you for your time for this bill,--

WALZ: Thank you.

MARK DREILING: --and I will submit those electronically today.

WALZ: Thank you. Let's just see if there's any questions.

MARK DREILING: Yes, ma'am.

WALZ: Any questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thanks for coming today.

MARK DREILING: No. Thank you.

WALZ: I appreciate you watching the time.

MARK DREILING: No. I-- I tried to edit some things when I heard three.

WALZ: Next proponent.

GARY NACHMAN: Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Gary Nachman, N-a-c-h-m-a-n. I'm the regional director for the Anti-Defamation League Plain States, which includes Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. My-- my prepared remarks referenced mostly Holocaust education. But I'd be remiss if I didn't make mention that we have seen genocide in six of

the seven continents throughout the world. And it's important that while we study the Holocaust, other genocides are equally important. We monitor anti-Semitic incidences in our region. We've seen over the last 10 years an increase on average about 30 percent of anti-Semitic incidences here in Nebraska. Dear Chair Walz and members of the Education Committee, I'm here on behalf of the ADL, whose mission it is to fight anti-Semitism and to secure justice and fair treatment to all people, to share a perspective of the importance of Holocaust education for students in Nebraska, understanding the lessons of the Holocaust and genocide so they are not lost. And so we can teach our students to resist hatred-- hatred in society that is directed at marginalized or vulnerable communities so that the horrors of the Holocaust are never repeated. One would think that teaching the lessons of the Holocaust in schools would be a given in the United States. After all, it is essential component in learning about world history, the rise of fascism, World War II and genocide, all of which are already part of any respectable high school history curriculum. But recent incidences of students appropriating and abusing Holocaust imagery have served as a reminder and a wake-up call for the need to teach universal lessons of the Holocaust to help ensure that the next generation is getting the fullest understanding possible of the implications of the Nazi genocide of 6 million Jews and millions of others in Europe. The need for Holocaust education, genocide education in our schools could not be more urgent. We've heard from Senator Day about the Pew Research, where two thirds of American millennials do not know what Auschwitz is or that notably, the study revealed that a majority of American teens couldn't answer basic questions about the Holocaust. Not only does the Holocaust and genocide education provide important historical lessons, it can help students grow as responsible individuals as they develop critical thinking, empathy, and social justice skills. Soon, the eyewitnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides will no longer be able to tell their own stories and the responsibility will shift to family members. There are three primary reasons why teaching Holocaust education is so important: respect for differences, understanding where prejudice can lead, and the fragility of democracy. ADL respectfully requests this committee consider the need for and these important outcomes of Holocaust education as you consider LB888. While I believe it is a good start, it is still not complete. Thank you very much.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks for coming today. Let me see if we have any questions.

GARY NACHMAN: OK, certainly.

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WALZ: Any questions? I see none. Thank you so much for coming today.

ELEANOR DUNNING: Good afternoon. My name is Eleanor Dunning. For the record, E-l-e-a-n-o-r, Dunning, D-u-n-n-i-n-g. I'm here today to testify in support of LB888 because I've seen firsthand some of what happens when our young generations of students lack a basic background in genocide and the Holocaust. This fall, I was surprised and shocked when a sorority sister at my small Nebraska university threw a Nazi salute in the air. When I objected, they refused to apologize or treat it as anything more than a joke. The sorority president reprimanded those who were objecting-- who objected to the Nazi behavior. What followed was neglect from the university conduct board and the president. When we brought our concerns to him, he said that he had students from several deprived backgrounds around the state who needed to be educated. An investigation was done over the course of more than a month, and their conclusion was neither that the, pardon, was neither that the student nor the sorority were at fault. I had two days to appeal. To my knowledge, no education has resulted. This unfortunate series of events highlights our need for Holocaust education for students across our state. What is happening on college campuses around the country, not least of which is happening in Nebraska, is representative of a lack of this topic in our high school curriculum. The point here isn't that the college handled the situation badly. The point is that we have graduates of Nebraska high schools who come to college without, as conceded by that one university president, basic information about unspeakable evil. Without specific education requirements, we're sending a generation of young Nebraskans into a world without basic information to allow them to function in modern society. On my father's side of the family, my great-grandfather fought in the Second World War, as did his brothers and his brothers-in-law. I had a great-uncle who liberated a Nazi concentration camp. On my mother's side of the family, unfortunately, several Jewish family members perished at the hands of the Nazis. That generation knew evil firsthand, but that generation is passing quickly. I've had the privilege in my life to have known survivors of the concentration camps who could testify to the evils of the Nazi regime. Most, unfortunately, are no longer with us to share their stories. Now it's up to you as legislat-- as legislators to make necessary changes. As Americans, it's up to us to honor our soldiers and all others who risked their lives to stop the genocide and fight for freedom. As human beings, it's up to everyone, and most especially our educational system, to honor the 6 million Jews who were murdered.

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Thank you so much for your consideration and for your support of LB888. I appreciate your time.

WALZ: Thank you so much for coming today. Questions from the committee? Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. I just want to say thank you for coming, Ms. Dunning. You did a great job. And I know your grandparents would be so proud of you, and it's really important that you came to speak today. Thank you.

ELEANOR DUNNING: Thank you. I guess I mostly want to be here because I am tired. I want to be here because I want to make sure that this never happens to another student, ever. Thank you so much.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions? I see none. Thanks for coming again.

ELEANOR DUNNING: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

SCOTT LITTKY: Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Scott Littky, L-i-t-t-k-y, and I am the executive director of the Institute for Holocaust Education located in Omaha. I'm here as a proponent for LB888. We believe very strongly that Holocaust education should be in every state and would be honored to be the 24th state to see this enacted. We believe that through Holocaust education, we can teach understanding, empathy and, in my opinion, more importantly, to teach young people to be upstanders to make a difference. Our mission is to provide educational resources, workshops, survivor testimony, as we know that's coming to a change in how we do that, integrated arts programs to students, educators and to the public. The IHE also currently provides support to the nine remaining survivors in the state of Nebraska. Our goal is to ensure that the tragedy and history of the Holocaust are remembered, that appropriate fact-based instruction and materials are available to students, educators and to the public to enable them to learn the lessons of the Holocaust; and that as a result, we inspire our community to create a more just and equitable society. With this legislation, it enriches our ability to make these changes. We're living in a time of rising anti-Semitism. The statistics have been stated. The misuse of Holocaust education comparisons is daily and incredibly upsetting. Further, we are losing those who provide witness testimony to the tragedies of the Holocaust.

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It is our obligation to humanity to ensure that our students learn from the Holocaust, as I said, so that they learn empathy, understanding of their fellow person, and to be an upstander when called upon to help another. With this in mind, I again would welcome LB888 to be put into law, and we look forward to being an institution in this state to help make sure that once it is-- it is law that we enact it. Thank you very much.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thanks so much for coming today.

SCOTT LITTKY: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent. I just want to give a reminder to spell your first and last names.

ARI KOHEN: Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Ari Kohen. It's spelled A-r-i K-o-h-e-n, and I'm testifying today as a member of the governance council of the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha. I'm also here as the grandson of two Holocaust survivors. My grandfather, Zalman [PHONETIC] Kohen, was born in 1923 in Romania. My grandmother, Sherry [PHONETIC] Kohen, was born in 1925 in Czechoslovakia. Along with their parents, their siblings, and their extended families, they were deported to Auschwitz in 1944. They were slave laborers at several different camps in different Nazi-occupied countries until they were liberated in 1945. My grandmother and four of her siblings survived. From my grandfather's family, only he and his sister survived. The other members of their family were murdered. I wanted to be sure to testify today in favor of Senator Day's bill, as I believe that Holocaust education is vitally important. There is a lot of research that demonstrates how teaching the Holocaust positively impacts students, reducing xenophobia, and expanding empathy. It's also crucial that students learn about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust today, because it's clear that basic knowledge of these topics is lacking. As you've heard several times, a recent survey showed that 66 percent of American millennials can't say what Auschwitz was. And if one looks at the news locally and nationally, it's very clear that too many people are comfortable minimizing the enormity of the crime of the Holocaust for their own narrow benefit. Even elected officials are now routinely comparing safe and effective vaccinations and simple COVID mitigation efforts to the suffering of the Jews of Europe. When we don't teach the facts about genocide, it is unfortunately more likely that it could be repeated. And sadly, anti-Semitic incidents have surged over the past few years as Jews

have once again found ourselves the targets of terroristic violence and hateful rhetoric in Pennsylvania, New York, California, Texas and, as someone pointed out earlier, even down the street at Lincoln's South Street Temple. If we fail to educate the next generation about the dangers of anti-Semitism, we cannot be at all surprised when it rears its ugly head again. Finally, I also want to note that I believe this bill is a very good first step, but that we should do more. It's vital to add the Holocaust and other genocides to a list of historical events that can be taught in Nebraska schools. But I hope that the Legislature will also think seriously about adding necessary resources for teachers, schools, and school districts so they actually can teach the Holocaust effectively. They'll need to purchase curriculum materials. Teachers will need professional development and-- and training opportunities. Omaha's Institute for Holocaust Education partners with schools and with teachers, helping to train educators in the use of the best curricular materials available on this topic. But teachers and schools have to make the choice to seek these things out. And without resources attached to bills like this one, we won't necessarily see a major increase in-- in the effective teaching of this topic. If we ask educators to include the Holocaust and other genocides in their lessons, we should also make sure they have the support to do it and to do it well. Thank you so much.

WALZ: Thank you so much for your testimony today. Questions from the committee?

ARI KOHEN: Thank you.

WALZ: Thanks for coming. Next proponent.

GARY JAVITCH: Hi. I am here in support of LB888 and my name is Gary Javitch, G-a-r-y J-a-v-i-t-c-h, Javitch. Beginning in 1933, the German Reich launched a systematic state-sponsored campaign to persecute the people they hated. Those people included communists and gypsies and anyone believed by Hitler to be biologically inferior, like the Jews, the mentally handicapped, and homosexuals. Within concentration camps, the regime gassed, shot, beat, overworked, tortured, and starved their inmates, targeting the Jewish population, in particular for annihilation, killing nearly two out of every three European Jews by the war's end in 1945. The war death toll topped 55 million worldwide. Never before in human history had an event of such enormity occurred. That's why many were shocked when last year NBC News released a nationwide survey that showed a worrying lack of basic Holocaust knowledge among adults under 40, including over one in ten respondents

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who never even heard of the word Holocaust. The report showed many respondents were even unclear about the basic facts of the genocide. Some could not even recite the name of a single concentration camp, despite the fact that many were known for their horrendous activities. While the survivors of the camps and their allies say never again to genocide, a growing number of people are saying nevermind and deny the Holocaust ever took place. Holocaust education permits the examination of warning signs that can indicate the potential for mass atrocity. It also illustrates the dangers of prejudice, discrimination, anti-Semitism, and dehumanization. Holocaust education will also reveal a range of human responses and pressures as people to act as they did or not act at all. Indeed, the spike in anti-Semitism is reason enough to increase support for Holocaust education. That alone, only 23 states have an educational requirement for Holocaust education. Nebraska needs to be the 24th, and the phrase never again needs to be more than just a slogan. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you for your time too.

GARY JAVITCH: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

BEN UNGERMAN: Good afternoon. My name is Ben Ungerman, B-e-n U-n-g-e-r-m-a-n, and many of my friends know me as Felix, but it's only coincidence that Felix, as a nickname, happens to be of Hebrew origin. I'm a resident of Bellevue, Nebraska. I'm a descendant of Jewish immigrants who mostly immigrated from Russia, which today is the area of Kiev, Ukraine, and Petrovichi, Poland. Our family, whose names were Achter, [PHONETIC] Katz [PHONETIC] and Ungerman, sought to escape the rising tensions against Jews in Eastern Europe that ultimately manifest decades later in the mass slaughtering of millions of Jews and others deemed inferior by Adolf Hitler in World War II and Joseph Stalin in Russia during the same period. Many were fortunate to have escaped much of what took place during the Holocaust, but some did not. Many of the Katz [PHONETIC] family, my grandmother's family, were unable to escape from Petrovichi, Poland, and today there is a single grave marker for a mass grave for those in the Katz family who were killed by the Russians during World War II. My great-aunt Ilse Rene Heinemann, [PHONETIC] was a young girl during World War II and during the Holocaust. In the months preceding the start of World War II, Great Britain organized a great effort to sponsor and evacuate Jewish children under a program called the Kindertransport that was

able to rescue approximately 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi-controlled Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Poland before the start of hostilities. Sadly, as was the case for nearly all Kindertransport children, their families were eventually killed in Nazi concentration camps, which include some of my family. My Aunt Rene [PHONETIC] and the Kindertransport children went through an extreme period of trauma through their experiences, from having to say goodbye to their families initially for what they would find out later would be the rest of their lives, to being ostracized and teased in schools and overcoming the boundaries of not speaking English as a native language. Most did not speak English, so they had to deal with those challenges in all of their learning. So as a descendant, I am a descendant of families who perished in the Holocaust, but who-- some who also survived. I was close to my aunt and family members from the Katz family, but none of them would speak of these things. We had to discover them through other means. We have an opportunity with LB888 to ensure that none of our youth in Nebraska failed to learn the horrifying lessons of history. As George Santayana, an Italian philosopher said: Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. As many know, the Holocaust was not the first time Jewish people have suffered mass atrocities in history, persecution, and death. More recently, we have seen through reports that the Jewish community is consistently the most targeted religious community in the United States, with between 600 and 1,200 targeting events per year since recorded history of the FBI in the '90s. Anti-Semitic incidents are also being reported at record levels. So I would say in summary, thank you for your time. I know this will make a big difference. As we've heard from Ronald Reagan famously said: Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. It has to be fought for and defended by each generation. We can stop this through education, through making sure that the truth is told, and through a rich history or heritage of education in the state of Nebraska. I'm honored to be here, and I thank you for the time to share this. And remembering the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that said that "Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." And Alexis de Tocqueville's comment about how America is great because America is good.

WALZ: Thank you.

BEN UNGERMAN: But if we cease to educate, we will cease to be good.

WALZ: Thank you.

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BEN UNGERMAN: Thank you.

WALZ: Questions for the-- do you want to-- let me see if there's any questions? Questions from the committee? No. All right.

BEN UNGERMAN: Thanks for your time today.

WALZ: Thank you for coming today. Next proponent.

CHRISTINA ELLISON: Christina Ellison, C-h-r-i-s-t-i-n-a E-l-l-i-s-o-n. Good afternoon, Senator Walz and Education Committee. My name is Christina Ellison and I am a teacher in Millard Public Schools. I am here to support this bill. There are a lot of words that should not go unnoticed in this bill. There is a lack of blended in this language, but one I am going to focus on in the underlined part is "acts of genocide." Today, my central point will be coming from the Native American perspective because that is part of my identity. Up to the mid-19th century, Native American acts were just like those of yours and mine: brushing our hair, getting dressed, speaking to loved ones at any time, and possibly even daily prayer in their unsolicited own way. All habitual. Then came in the Indian boarding schools. I once was a sixth grade reading teacher. We had a book in our curriculum about Bayard Rustin, the man behind Martin Luther King. I wanted a nonfiction piece for a text-to-text connection and found a Scholastic article "Would You Be Killed?" It was about the history of the Carlisle Boarding Schools. It was wonderfully written. The photos were captivating. But in contrast, the disturbing and authoritative quote by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, "Kill the Indian, save the man" that our nation was trying to invoke shot out. It was raw, it was real, and it was fact. Now fast forward five years. I taught an intervention class and wanted to use this same article. However, it was at a higher level. Fortunately, Scholastic makes another magazine for striving readers and printed it. What I came to find when reading it with my students is the act of removing the quote, "Kill the Indian, save the man." This comes directly from Captain Richard Henry Pratt, not the author, but they did leave the photo that portrays it, and that's what's attached to what I just gave you. This was bothersome. I reached out to Scholastic's editor. After an exchange of emails and conference calls, the final declaration was: We ran out of room. This was a difficult concept to process. The quote was only six words. I do not feel it was a malicious intent on Scholastic's end. It was just an uneducated edit. To them, it was just some quote by some guy in the Army. Two articles, almost verbatim, and six words made one more powerful than the other. I knew the difference, but another teacher

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probably wouldn't. Nebraska social studies standards were revised and approved in November 8, 2019. However, there have been dramatic changes since then. Indigenous People History Day was recognized on October 11, 2021. The South Omaha Mural Project: Ancestral Voices is now on 23rd and N Street here in Omaha. It represents all the four tribes here in Nebraska. The Washington Redskins football team has changed after 83 years now to the Commanders. And then we know that there's the tragic boarding schools, and we have the largest one here in Genoa that they have revealed 86 remains. A school district cannot rewrite the textbook of these atrocities in our nation's history, but it can offer courses. It can offer human relations class. It can offer something that teaches us about the Holocaust, about the Indian boarding schools, slavery, but it can bring those races together. It can do something such as this service learning project that teaches empathy--

WALZ: Your red light's been on for a little bit.

CHRISTINA ELLISON: I'm sorry.

WALZ: So if we could just make sure that we're paying attention to the light system--

CHRISTINA ELLISON: OK.

WALZ: --as well as we're coming up to speak. Does anybody-- thank you, first of all,--

CHRISTINA ELLISON: Yes.

WALZ: --for coming. Have any questions? I see none. Thank you.

CHRISTINA ELLISON: OK, thank you.

WALZ: Any other proponents?

JENNI BENSON: Oops! Dropped it. Good afternoon, Senator Walz and the Education Committee. For the record, I am Jenni Benson, J-e-n-n-i B-e-n-s-o-n, and I am the president of the Nebraska State Education Association. Thank you, Senator Day, for bringing this bill forward, which NSEA is pleased to support. NSEA adopts resolutions, our belief statements, to support many ideas, issues, and topics important to our students and our educators' success. The studies of diverse cultures is one of our resolutions. The NSEA believes that cultural heritage of all persons should contribute to their positive self-image. It is

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important to the study of diverse cultures and their important contributions to humankind be included in the curriculum of Nebraska schools to promote mutual respect and understanding of diversity. These cultures shall be presented in such a manner that persons with that cultural heritage can feel self-worth from the curriculum. The additions to LB888 increase the belief in teaching a diverse perspective and actual history. This bill enhances the continued need to make sure the studies in this statute continue despite other bills that are being introduced this session designed to censor honesty in education. Teachers must continue to ensure their students learn the complete and honest history so that they have the skills to better understand our society and develop collective solutions to those problems. All students, no matter their race, background, or zip code, deserve an education that is honest about our past and present and imparts a sense of integrity and the courage to do what is right. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Any questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you.

JENNI BENSON: Thanks.

WALZ: Next proponent. Are there any opponents that would like to speak today? Anybody in the neutral capacity that would like to speak? Senator Day, you're welcome to close.

DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz and members of the committee for your attentiveness this afternoon. I know it's going to be a long afternoon, but I just want to quickly mention a couple of things that were mentioned by testifiers. I think one really important point was that there's only nine Nebraskans left who are survivors of the Holocaust. I think that's really important to note. Again, we're really missing those human-to-human stories when we lose people who are survivors. And that, I think, underscores the importance of making sure that this is being taught going forward. I did want to point out just one thing. I posted this on social media this morning, and it started some really wild conversations about the text of this bill. So I just want to make sure that we all know what the bill looks like. If you look on page 2 of the bill, lines 3-8 show what is an already existing statute related to multicultural education. We are not changing anything about that other than adding the underlined part which says "and the Holocaust and other acts of genocide." As related to multicultural education, that is a statute that already exists in state law, and we are not doing anything to change that other than

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adding the Holocaust in there. So I just wanted to clarify that for the record. And then the last thing that I wanted to mention, too, was, you know, I had a few questions about why is this important? Aren't schools already teaching this? Yes, there are schools in Nebraska that are teaching this already, and this is not necessarily for those schools. I think that's wonderful that they're teaching it. But we know that there are schools that are not. And we even received one email this morning, and I'm going to have that district email all of you so you understand where they're coming from. A large district in the Omaha area emailed us and said that they have attempted to implement some of teaching the Holocaust, and they have received a lot of pushback in the form of anti-Semitism. So they would really like it if we could put this into statute so that they would, it would then be clarified for the district. So with that, I'm happy to answer-- answer any other questions you may have.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator Day. Questions? Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: So you're going to get us a copy of that email.

DAY: Yes, we will have them email you.

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

DAY: Yeah.

PANSING BROOKS: Because that is just despicable and shows the needs for this bill.

DAY: Right. Right.

PANSING BROOKS: So I was thinking back to my kids and the government politics. I know that they were taught this. But I can imagine that there are areas that do not teach it. And yeah, it's--

DAY: And other places that are maybe afraid to teach it because of the pushback that they get about--

PANSING BROOKS: Yes, exactly.

DAY: --teaching it.

PANSING BROOKS: And especially with some of the hate that's going on it's critical.

DAY: Exactly. I think it shows the state of politics today that there is even any pushback about teaching the Holocaust in schools so.

PANSING BROOKS: I agree. And-- and America's part in helping to stop that hate.

DAY: Exactly.

PANSING BROOKS: So I don't know how people could be opposed to something like that, but thank you all for coming and thank you for bringing this bill.

DAY: Yes, thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions? Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Thank you, Senator Walz. Senator Day, thank you for bringing this bill forward. As a granddaughter on my mother's side, my grandfather was killed by the Nazis, assuming he was Jew, a Jewish descent. But I thank you for bringing this forward. As someone said here, never again.

DAY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

WALZ: Any other questions? Thank you so much, Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you.

WALZ: That closes our hearing on LB888, and it will open our hearing on LB1112. Senator McKinney. All right. Welcome, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Good afternoon, Chair Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y, and I represent District 11 in Omaha, which is North Omaha. And I'm here to introduce LB1112, which would create the Computer Science and Technology Act. Before I begin, I would like to thank my cosponsor of this bill, Senator Slama, for partnering with me again on this important proposal. You might remember that she and I worked together last session with help of all of you to pass the Financial Literacy Act to ensure that Nebraska students were equipped with the skills needed to manage their own finances and make responsible choices involving money and investment. That bill, LB452, passed in law 49-0. My hope is that this proposal, which deals with perhaps the most critical skill we can teach our students, technology, will also be passed as well. You will hear today from members of the business

community, which is a group of stakeholders that came to me prior to session about this proposal. They will talk about the challenges they face as employers because of the shortages of workforce for tech jobs. They will talk about the crisis employers are experiencing as they want to expand their footprint in our state, but have to go elsewhere because we don't have enough students with technology skills they need to employ. But they will also talk about how LB1112 can change that trajectory and how this will help ensure our students are prepared and educated in the skills needed to succeed in a 21st century workforce. Technology and computer science is no longer limited, just as a coding class, a small handful of students take as an elective. Instead, technology and digital literacy is embedded in every industry our students choose to work in. LB1112 is an important opportunity to increase students' education in technology. In states that have chosen to implement similar proposals, their results, particularly for students of color and females, have been eye-opening. Senator Murman, right here in Nebraska, some of the biggest advancements in technology are happening in agriculture in our rural communities. In Bellevue, Senator Sanders, major investments in cybersecurity are happening because of the Strategic Air Command Center and the NC3 project. And two Lincoln companies that have grown using technology as their backbone, employing hundreds of Nebraskans, Hudl and Nelnet, will share with you why LB1112 is critical for the future workforce. Between bill introduction in January and now, I have been approached by the Department of Education and the Catholic Conference to work on some clarifying language, more so to make sure that we clarify that this is not a mandate on private-- and private schools. It's just-- it's for public schools. And also for NDE, the change on page 2, which adds "or career technical education" to allow for flexibility for districts more so in western Nebraska that don't necessarily have the-- the workforce and the staff so just to create some flexibility. Because in December, the Department of Education updated their standards for a career and technical education to include coursework in computer science and technology, and this change would allow teachers accredited to teach CT to also teach computer science and related technology classes. My hope is that with these changes agreed upon in front of you, this committee will work with me to advance this bill as soon as possible as my goal was to move L.B1112 this session. After hearing from the proponents today, I hope you will agree with me that we can't afford to wait any longer. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have, but have a group of experts behind me that can lend to some more credibility why LB1112 is so important. And with that, I'll finish.

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WALZ: Thank you, Senator McKinney. Questions from the committee? I don't see any--

McKINNEY: Thank you.

WALZ: --yet. First proponent.

MIKE CASSLING: Good afternoon, Chairperson Walz and the Exec-- Education Committee. I'm Mike Cassling, M-i-k-e C-a-s-s-l-i-n-g. I'm here to speak in favor of LB1112, along with the Omaha Chamber, Lincoln Chamber, and State Chamber. Thank you, Senator McKinney, for sponsoring this bill. I'm CEO of CQuence Health Group, a health tech company founded in 1984 by my father. I'm also governor of Aksarben and the chair of the Nebraska Tech Collaborative, which is a Aksarben workforce initiative. The NTC, Nebraska Tech Collaborative, was founded in 2018 as a business-led organization with one really North Star focus: 10,000 new tech jobs by 2024. Of those 10,000 new tech jobs, 40 percent would be women, 25 percent underrepresented groups. There is no secret we have a crisis in this state that needs urgent focus. Our biggest issue facing the state in 2022 is talent and workforce. Simply put, we have an unemployment rate of 2 percent and there's not enough workers to-- to do the job. Specifically in tech, today we have 4,300 open jobs. In four years, we guess that will be north of 10,000. And just so you know, the average salary is \$80,000. In 2019, we only graduated 595 students in computer science. Senators, we have a crisis. And keep in mind, tech is a lot more than sitting behind a computer coding. We need people that can develop design systems along with maintaining and protecting them. It's about cloud platforms, user interfaces, cyber, AI, AR, data science, also new low code technologies, as well as project management. The great thing about this segment is that not only-- you can do it in a four-year degree. You can do it a two-year degree. You can go to a coding school. You can get a certificate. This is truly for every kid in the state of Nebraska. This bill was based on the huge success of Governor Hutchinson in Arkansas, where he made it a priority in 2015. He took that state from 1,100 kids in computer science to 13,000; 294 women to 3,900; 600 people of color to 5,200; 20 computer science teachers to over 600. Just think what we could do in the state with those types of numbers. We work closely at NTC with the Department of Education from the beginning of our foundation, and they've been critical in-- an integral part of our work. Similar discussions have been around computer science, professional development; and our leaders and partners have worked closely with them to create implementation guides, technical proficiencies for every student to achieve at every

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grade level. We built a lot of flexibility in this bill and we think the department can do this. Whether it's hybrid classroom online, the business community, higher ed, and nonprofits are all finding ways to help them to make sure this is a success. If COVID taught us nothing, we can connect with anybody across the state. I hope you support this key bill for the state. This bill will help send a powerful message to those who are making major decisions now. It sends the message that Nebraska is serious about addressing this issue. There's no question Nebraska can be a leader and thank you for your support. Sorry, I had five minutes. I cut it to four, then it was three so.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks a lot.

MIKE CASSLING: I rushed through that.

WALZ: I appreciate you doing that. Any questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. Welcome, Mr. Cassling. You said you could do a four-year degree, a two-year degree, or just coding school. Do we have coding schools in Nebraska?

MIKE CASSLING: We do.

LINEHAN: OK.

MIKE CASSLING: We have coding schools and the newest thing is certificates, where you can actually get a certificate, build on those. So that's in the works with the university system and other systems. So that's the newest level that you can get to.

LINEHAN: But to get any of them-- to get access to any of those programs, you'd have to have a college degree-- a college-- a high school degree?

MIKE CASSLING: High school degree.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you.

MIKE CASSLING: Actually, one of the people speaking today, they're taking kids and a lot of the companies, Hudl, will take them right out of high school and actually move them along. But the key here, this is truly, you know, if a kid can't make it in a four-year college, which a lot can't, which is great, they can go to a Metro or the community college, state colleges. But coding schools, which is some of them are

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12-week programs, it truly is-- makes it acceptable and allows any kid in the state of any socioeconomic class to be able to be in this technology world.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here.

WALZ: Any other questions? I see none. Thanks for coming today.

MIKE CASSLING: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

ITZEL LOPEZ: Good afternoon. Buenos aires. My name is Itzel Lopez, I-t-z-e-l L-o-p-e-z. I am the vice president of advancement and community relations at the AIM Institute. We're an [INAUDIBLE] not-for-profit community in downtown Omaha, with a mission to grow a strong and diverse tech community. I am also currently participating in [INAUDIBLE] Opportunity Corps Women in STEAM, a ten-month education and professional development program designed for women working in industry of the science, technology, engineering, and the arts, obviously men as well, to help women overcome barriers facing STEAM industries by Bio Nebraska and the UNeTech Institute. I am here today to support LB1112, the Computer Science and Technology Education Act, as you guys heard, because of the organization that I work for that I'm very passionate about. So through education, career development, and outreach, our organization has fostered the growth of Omaha's tech sector for more than 25 years. Our vision at the AIM Institute is to create a thriving community where everybody can pursue a rewarding tech career. As someone who was once undocumented, I know what it's like to be facing enormous challenges and discrimination. I also know that having access to outstanding technology education can do to remove barriers and change people's lives. It changed my life, and it can change others. I have also seen how tech education can end the cycle of poverty. Every day in our programs, where we serve over 6,000 participants per year, I know what this bill will impact. It will impact the entire community. AIM promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in the tech sector by making these opportunities available to everyone. We provide career training accessible-- that's very accessible, meaning free of charge, to people from elementary school all the way to adulthood. We understand that a more diverse and inclusive tech workforce will improve the sector for all of us, for all of us. That's why we help all the people that are underprivileged BIPOC, especially. We help them enter the tech workforce. But you heard all of that from Mr. Cassling. Right now there are many unfilled

tech jobs in our area-- in this area. And now the rest of the country has woken up to the overall shortage of these workers. But what is also a concern, and it's surprising the high unemployment and the underemployment in certain areas among historically excluded populations. We're trying to close this gap. Through this bill though, we can connect a tremendous opportunity to the untapped talent that is waiting to be discovered. When we make this systematic change as this bill will do, we can start to build a strong tech workforce that will help economic development and improve the larger community that we all share. I am a child of immigrants, so I have devoted my entire career to helping children and teens become the first members of their families to attend college and specifically getting people into the College of Information Technology and Science at UNO. I have passion for volunteer work, whether that's mentoring other undocumented people, art, so I will stop right there.

WALZ: Thank you.

ITZEL LOPEZ: Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you for being so respectful of the time. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you so much for your testimony today.

ITZEL LOPEZ: You bet.

GUY TRAININ: Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Guy Trainin, G-u-y T-r-a-i-n-i-n, and I'm a professor of education and a teacher educator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I also lead the regional partnership between UNL and Code.org, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to computer science education. I'm appearing today as a private citizen in support of LB1112. I would like to thank Senator McKinney for the initiative and the committee members for their consideration in this area that is critical for the future of Nebraska's students, the economy of the state, and the ability of students to fully participate in society. I believe in the importance of computer science. Computer science has the power to completely change an individual's future. Computer science is everywhere and an understanding of it is necessary for citizenship and professional success outside of high tech. The future of the states is intertwined with its ability to build and sustain a high tech workforce. The Nebraska data collected by Code.org paints a very uneven map of access to computer science across Nebraska. The data reveals that while not perfect, 95 percent of urban and 100

percent of suburban students are in schools that provide access to computer science education. However, only 67 percent of schools in towns and 35 percent of schools in rural settings provide access to these courses. From my experience working with my colleagues at UNL and other campuses and the Nebraska Department of Education, we have an excellent infrastructure to prepare teachers to teach computer science well. We even offer training free for teachers and schools with the generous support of the National Science Foundation and Code.org. While districts have their choice of curriculum, Code.org does offer a high-quality curriculum at no cost to schools. In fact in 2020, just before the pandemic erupted, over 10,000 Nebraska middle and high school students were engaged in the Code.org curriculum. My son is a senior. He's taking computer science class this year with a motivated teacher. And since he has had this experience, he has changed the way he sees his career path. While he still is dreaming of going to med school, he sees computer science as a complementary skill in a growing digital world. He believes that computer science opens more opportunities. Finally, my experience and the productive relationship with the Nebraska Department of Education shows that teachers need incentives to learn and to teach computer science and schools need an incentive to offer it. As I have mentioned, even offering free from pay professional development only attracts the more motivated teachers. It is a problem of equity leaving rural students, including Native American students, behind. I would like to thank you-- to thank NDE for partnering with higher education on this issue. We sometimes disagree about strategy, but we agree on our goal to serve Nebraska students well. I would also like to again thank Senator McKinney and the committee for taking on this critical issue.

WALZ: Thank you. Thank you so much. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. So thank you very much for being here, sir. I-- where am I here? OK. Bottom of page 1, the last paragraph,--

GUY TRAININ: Yes.

LINEHAN: --"Nebraska data collected by Code.org." So you're saying that-- so the bigger schools, urban and suburban,--

GUY TRAININ: Um-hum.

LINEHAN: --are making the cut. But however, when you say towns, you're talking about

GUY TRAININ: The Grand Island, the Kearney.

LINEHAN: And then when you're talking about rural, you're talking--

GUY TRAININ: The smaller schools.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you very much.

WALZ: Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for being here. I'm-- I guess I'm interested. Do you believe-- and maybe we'll ask somebody else that's following-- but are-- do the schools all have computers for the-- for the students?

GUY TRAININ: Yes. Across the state, yes.

PANSING BROOKS: Across the state they--

GUY TRAININ: Bandwidth is a problem--

PANSING BROOKS: Yes.

GUY TRAININ: --that I know is being addressed statewide.

PANSING BROOKS: Yes.

GUY TRAININ: But there are-- so I want to add two things to that with bandwidth. There is the ability to work without bandwidth. You do not need to it and you do not have to be connected to the Internet to work on computer science. And actually, there are significant chunks that happen without any electronics at all, and you're just learning the principles and you can practice in many ways.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. And then my other question is, let's see. I'm just trying to-- so could there be clou-- do they have to be classes in computer science or could an art class have a computer course? Is it-- this is beyond just a computer science course--

GUY TRAININ: Yes.

PANSING BROOKS: --or a coding course.

GUY TRAININ: And exactly. So this does not have to be a separate class that teaches only computer science. It can be integrated. For example, emerging media arts and the University of Nebraska has a center for emerging media arts, and all the students there take coding that is connected to their creation of art, not as future high tech workers.

PANSING BROOKS: So--

GUY TRAININ: They are very-- there are variations on that theme that can be incorporated, for example, into other areas in career and technical education. Manufacturing, for example, everything is now done on computers, and kids need to know how to program these machines.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. Because I don't see that exactly in this bill, but maybe I'll talk to Senator McKinney later, because it seems really more hyperfocused on taking computer science and technology courses and not expanded to the point that it could include other courses as well. So-- but that's your intent. And are you finding the kids that are coming to the university are-- I mean, what percentage do you feel are computer illiterate?

GUY TRAININ: And as far as coding, many, many are computer literate skills,

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

GUY TRAININ: So they have a basic understanding or a-- those who are motivated, so those who are right now choosing to go into these classes come with knowledge. The ones who are not choosing because it's not a requirement are coming with very low knowledge and therefore they're very unlikely to pursue not just high tech paths, but even other paths which require a computer science as part of the deal, but not as the main deal.

PANSING BROOKS: OK, so I may have misunderstood. So you really do want the school, the high schools to be teaching coding.

GUY TRAININ: Not necessarily coding. But if you asked me about what do we see in higher education?

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

GUY TRAININ: So what we can clearly see in higher education is around that pathway.

PANSING BROOKS: Having at one point considered being a computer science major, I know how hard that can be. So-- and think how long ago that was. That was Fortran, all those things. But I agree. It's very important for our students. So thank you for being here today.

WALZ: Thank you.

GUY TRAININ: Thank you.

MATT MUELLER: Good afternoon, Chairperson Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Matt Mueller, spelled M-a-t-t M-u-e-l-l-e-r, and I'm here today representing Hudl in support of LB1112. I want to thank Senator McKinney for bringing this legislation forward. I'm currently chief operating officer at Hudl, and I have been with the company since 2007. I received my bachelor's degree in computer science from what is now named the Raikes School of Computer Science and Management at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Throughout my career at Hudl, my computer science education has paid great dividends, especially as a business leader in a nontechnical role. My foundation in computer science gave me the language to understand the challenges and opportunities that our product and engineering teams encounter, and it helps me communicate with them daily. Even though I'm not coding or working in machine learning algorithms every day, I need to understand how those things work so I can help lead our business and guide us through things, through the different challenges. And I expect those same understandings from each of the business leaders across our team, across the multiple different functions, including finance, sales, marketing, and human relations. This is not just a tech-only expertise. The unified understanding of computer science principles has created this common language that we can work from and allows us to work very efficiently around the same goals. When students ask me for advice, I often recommend that they develop a solid understanding of computer science, no matter their career aspirations, because I believe it is the minimum to be successful in any software technology company today. I believe so strongly in the value of computer science that I'm encouraging my own middle school-aged son, Braylon, to find extra classes at his school to reach computer science proficiency. Students need this education to compete in today's workforce, and Hudl needs more talented people. This bill would provide students the skills and competencies to not only help them secure high-skill, high-wage jobs, but it would also help other Nebraska-based companies flourish. Hudl is proud to be named among some of the successful and growing businesses in Nebraska. And while organizational missions may differ between these companies,

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we share a common need to hire amazing talent. There's no doubt that the competitive landscape pushes us to be better employers, but the fact that we're competing for a very small pool of qualified candidates and demand for this-- and the demand for this talent in Nebraska currently outstrips supply is very tough. If we can increase the size of the Nebraska talent pool, all of us will win. I'll end by stating that Nebraska has-- Hudl has called Nebraska home since 2006. We are focused on building a great internship program that provides students with real-world experience. This is an important talent pipeline for us as well. We're proud to hire many former interns and young people who start and build their careers at Hudl. We have grown to a team of more than 3,000 "Hudlies" spread across 19 countries. Our continued growth will be propelled by the talented developers, data scientists, and other IT professionals we can bring onto our team. We chose to build our global headquarters right here in Lincoln because we believe in the talented people in our home state and we believe in creating job opportunities both here in Nebraska and worldwide. We're excited to continue investing in our community and this industry and thus fully support this bill. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Questions from the committee?

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. Could you explain how your-- give us some idea of how your intern program works?

MATT MUELLER: Sure. So we will take a variety of students starting from freshman year of college all the way through to seniors in college. And then we will place them internally and we place them with an internal mentor on our team that that helps coach them and guide them based on their skill level. So if it's someone who is a technical major, we would pair them with someone who is an engineer on our team and help them based on the skill level. And then they will function in real-world projects for us. We put them on the front lines and like to have them build things that-- that our users end up using. And I can tell you that a football coach on a Saturday or Friday night, they want it to work. So-- so it's a real good learning experience for our team right away.

LINEHAN: How many interns do you try to have?

MATT MUELLER: Our goal this year is to have around 200 interns, this aspirational target, and we'll try to get there. But-- but it really requires dedication across our entire team. To handle that many

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interns requires a really solid planning and education process, but we're fortunate to have really talented people at Hudl that are excited about that.

LINEHAN: And are you mostly reaching back to your home base, the University of Nebraska?

MATT MUELLER: You know, the University of Nebraska is great. You know, being here in Lincoln, it's about a 10-minute walk, so it's very convenient for a lot of those students. But-- but we are open to internships from anywhere. We do have some remote internship opportunities, so we have not just limited ourselves to Lincoln, Nebraska. And obviously, COVID has made us more comfortable with handling remote work. But as a-- as a global company with employees all over the world, we were fairly comfortable with that to begin with. But we have, you know, students from-- interning for us from California, from Texas and Washington. So it's not just-- not just Lincoln, although we find that Nebraska universities tend to be our strongest pool of interns.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here.

MATT MUELLER: Sure.

WALZ: Senator Hansing Brooke.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for being here, Mr. Mueller.

MATT MUELLER: Thank you.

PANSING BROOKS: We're also thrilled that you're in Lincoln and grateful for your great work. I guess I've heard some mumbling prior to today from people saying, well, I-- I'm terrible at computers. I can't imagine forcing kids to have to know computers. And as somebody who like-- who likes to dabble in all that and sort of is semi adept at it, I just wish you could talk a little bit about your thoughts about how there are kids that are not necessarily great at some of the computer science areas. So can you speak to that so that we aren't setting some kids up for failure?

MATT MUELLER: Sure. I appreciate that. The way I think about-- about technical education is that there's a spectrum of skill sets that are required. Some people need to be great coders. Some people need to be great testers. Some people need to be great designers. Some people just need to understand what was built and how to go communicate that

effectively into the market. And so you don't necessarily need to be a very skilled computer programmer to be valued in the tech business. Where we find the gap of right now we are missing a lot of engineers. I think that is when you-- when you hear what this bill is and it's why you're asking a lot of questions around computer science earlier, you're seeing that there just aren't as many people, you know, with that skill set to come in and fill that gap for us. But-- but overall, when you hear someone say, you know, I just don't know about computers, I'm nervous about it. I think what we-- we try to find is a way that it connects with that person, like, what is something you would do every day on a computer? What is something you do every day on your phone and how can we help you simplify that process? Let's look at ways that technology can actually make your life more efficient. And by-- by homing in on something that meaningfully connects with them, that's how we think about this, right? And so what we are trying to do is and what excites me about this, what we do at Hudl to try to help everyone is how can we help connect with you in a different way to help you learn and see what's available for you and then maybe find that spark that does unlock, you know, that deep level of technical engineering expertise that-- that can make you a pretty valuable skill to have.

PANSING BROOKS: You've thought outside the box to make that connection with sports. So it's the same kind, I mean, each field has an opportunity, I believe, right?

MATT MUELLER: For sure. We spend a lot of time with education actually around inner city youth that we actually educate into to what jobs exist in sports. Many people don't realize that in sports there are a lot of other jobs other than athlete and coach. And-- and so when-- when we actually go in and we talk to these-- these classrooms, we'll stop and say, like, look, there's-- there's an immense amount of value you can bring to a sports team without being LeBron James, without being, you know-- you know, some-- the top-level athlete that you're in love with. Like, let's-- let's talk about how you can go impact that. Yeah. Hey, Scott Frost, right? And so let's think about what that means for you and different ways to do that. And then we often show our tools and use that as a way to-- to spark and say, here's how you-- here's why you should get excited about math and statistics and actually engineering and programming because there are hundreds of jobs, you know, across the U.S., thousands of jobs across the U.S. that are impacting teams from a technical level that use our tools every day. And so we use this as an entrance into them. But that's one way, and it helps, in fact, sports people. But there are people who

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maybe don't want to be involved in sports organizations. And so what's so important about a bill like this is that it actually allows us to reach every student and unlock that spark and hopefully find a way to connect with them around, you know, what could-- what could be a meaningful change in their direction of their life.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

MATT MUELLER: You bet.

WALZ: Any other questions? I see none. Thanks a lot for coming today.

MATT MUELLER: Thanks so much for your time.

WALZ: Next proponent.

TIFFANY GAMBLE: Good afternoon, Senator Walz and the Education Committee. My name is Tiffany Gamble, spelled T-i-f-f-a-n-y G-a-m-b-l-e, and I am the founder of Emerging Ladies Academy. We empower black girls in technology. We provide skills, education, mentorship, and a safe place for black girls interested in pursuing a leadership role in the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. I'll be discussing six topics to advance the bill. LB1112, Computer Science Technology Act. First of all, computer science can improve problem solving skills. It will teach kids how to approach problems critically and be economical in their solutions. Critical thinking skills are essential to the workforce in the 21st century. We have to be "viligant" in preparing the next generation to be able to solve complex problems, providing balanced STEAM participation. Large gaps within-- large gaps exist in the United States when it comes to STEAM careers. Women and minorities, such as blacks and Hispanics, make a large chunk of the workforce, and yet only a fraction are employed in STEAM-related jobs. These gaps echo similar discrepancies when it comes to STEM education. The notion that computer science and technology is only for males is outdated. We have to disrupt this notion by requiring that all students partake in computer science classes. This bill can make that happen. It provides better career opportunities. This country has a deficit of skilled workers. Up to 2 million jobs are available right now in America, and they are unfulfilled. In Nebraska, the number is hovering over 4,300 unfulfilled jobs. What will this number look like within the next five years? This bill would provide youth with the chance to learn computer science, foundational skills to build-- to build upon when they graduate. They will also be prepared to compete in computer

science-related careers. They'll also be able to compete globally. Several countries around the world are-- already require computer science classes in their grade schools or are working on implementing this requirement. Countries like England now require some form of coding to be taught to children age 5 to 16. We have a responsibility to prepare our youth to complete-- compete on a global level. Right now, we are not educationally preparing them. They can also earn-- have greater earning potential. Computer science majors can earn around \$60,000 right out of college, and the average salary across the field is \$103,000. This gives students with computer science backgrounds great opportunities. The medium salary in Nebraska is \$61,000. Early access to computer science education can put students on target to earn this much and more early in their career. We can also close the gap in gender and diversity. In the technology pipeline. Specifically, the double buy for women and girls of color begins early in access and participation. I'm done [INAUDIBLE].

WALZ: OK. I don't know what happened to our red light, but apparently it's not.

_____: Oh, sorry.

WALZ: It burned out. I thought maybe the bulb burnt out or something. Thank you. Thank you for watching the time. I appreciate that very much. Do we have questions from the committee? I do have a question. What-- and I'm sorry. I'm one of the people that Senator Pansing Brooks was talking about. I couldn't even like-- I couldn't hardly pass typewriting.

PANSING BROOKS: I didn't throw you under the bus.

WALZ: But what defines a computer science class?

TIFFANY GAMBLE: In my opinion, it's a broad view of the fundamentals of computer science. Coding is a big one, right; learning how to create a web page; learning how to create a website; learning how to work with tools on your phone. I look at the future of technology, so I want to see what the future will look like, or I want to show the youth what the future will look like. We have to prepare them. Within the next five years, we are going to be struggling. You know, we already struggle. So I just want to give fundamental computer science education to our youth.

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WALZ: OK. All right. I appreciate your feedback on that. Thank you. Any other questions? I don't see any. Thanks so much for coming today.

TIFFANY GAMBLE: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

TAYLOR KORENSKY: Thank you for your time and for sponsoring this important bill, Senator McKinney, and in advance of computer science and technology education in Nebraska. My name is Taylor Korensky, T-a-y-l-o-r K-o-r-e-n-s-k-y, and I'm the founder and CEO of Appsky in Omaha. Our team specializes in designing and developing custom mobile apps and web apps, using cloud technology for startups, organizations, and businesses in Nebraska and across the country. We have been in business for a little over five years and have a team of close to 20 individuals. However, only six of them are based in Nebraska and only one of them is a full-time software developer. In order to deliver the services we offer and continue to grow, Appsky and other companies like us across the state rely on being able to hire local individuals with advanced technical skills, as well as the many roles that support these types of developments. If local talent is not available or qualified for the work, organizations are being forced to look elsewhere around the country and even in other countries. My peers and competitors are all experiencing an unprecedented situation. Through many conversations and by being an active participant in workforce development through the Nebraska Tech Collaborative, the Greater Omaha Chamber, and sitting on the board of Tech Omaha, I hear the same conversations repeated year after year about the lack of available software developers and technical talent needed to support their operations. In addition to that, we have seen a high rate of turnover since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and there are no signs of that stopping unless we create a place where technical positions are supported and encouraged throughout the various stages of education. Parents and teachers are desperately trying to provide their student, their kids and students with STEM based experiences as they are seeing the need to understand even the basics in their own workplaces. There is a pilot after-school program that is being offered this school year at Fort Calhoun Middle School that focuses on providing STEM experiences, including computer science, each week. They had an overwhelming interest and over 150 families applied when only they were accepting 60 into the program this year. The main situation I can contribute to my overall interest and drive to pursue programming and software development as a career was taking the AP computer science course my senior year of high school, which happened to be the only

year that they offered it at Mount Michael. With confidence, I can say that if I wasn't lucky enough to graduate in the year that they offered computer science classes, I would not be running a growing software development company in Nebraska today. We need to set a standard for providing kids exposure to computer science and technology early on in their educations. In addition, it will be important to show them real-world implications and examples of how technology will be applied in many ways across dozens of career path options. Passing this bill would make Nebraska a leader in setting this example. Companies and organizations like Appsky are willing to step up and to provide what is needed to support successful implementation of this bill, as many are seeing the long-term positive effects that it could have on the Nebraska ecosystem. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to present today.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thanks for coming today.

TAYLOR KORENSKY: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

ART BROWN: Good afternoon, committee, Senator McKinney. My name is Art Brown, that's spelled A-r-t B-r-o-w-n. OK. I'm here today to provide supporting testimony for LB1112 on behalf of Metropolitan Community College, where I currently serve as dean of information technology. I would like to begin by sharing that the information technology, our academic fosee, excuse me, academic focus area at Metro has a well-established and highly successful track record of serving and supporting our K-12 educational partners in our four-county region, which includes Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington Counties. This four-county region is also home to 7 of Nebraska's 12 largest K-12 districts, which the MCC IT academic focus area already supports by providing a variety of early college-- early college experiences for students in these districts. After a thorough review of the proposed LB1112 draft legislation, I'm highly confident that MCC is well positioned to provide ongoing support and expanded support for all K-12 partners in our four-county region. As referenced in Section 2 of this act, the MCC IT academic focus area has worked diligently over the last five years to rebrand and establish our various programs as well respected, well first-training solutions. Additionally, we continue to work hard to position ourselves as an-- as an institution of first choice for sourcing options for several top tier IT employers in the Omaha metro area. Because of our successful ongoing efforts to

establish and maintain partnerships with several local employers, we are able to provide and share first-rate curriculum with our K-12 partners. This collaborative effort further can help ensure that K-12 students are receiving the most relevant and in-demand technology skill needs to enter this competitive 21st century IT workforce. As referenced in Section 3 of this proposed legislation, the MCC IT academic focus area has also developed and successfully deployed several high-quality courses in all of the initially identified areas of this bill. All of these courses are currently being offered by both traditional MCC and concurrent enrollment student populations. Our proven track record of developing high-quality curriculum in these various IT pathways is further evidence that MCC can continue to be an invaluable resource to all K-12 districts in our four-county service area to help support this proposed mandate. Finally, as referenced in Section 5 of this proposed legislation, the MCC IT academic focus area has already taken early steps to validate that all various-- all of our various IT options in computer science and technology courses meet and/or exceed nationally recognized ISTE standards for students. This past fall, we began a process of conducting course audits and developing course outcome maps to ensure all of our courses and programs accurately and collectively map to these nationally recognized STEM curriculum standards. Our defined goal is to complete this curriculum mapping process by the fall of 2024. This timetable would coincide with the anticipated implementation of this legislation. Our hope and expectation is that this exercise will provide an added layer of confidence for the Nebraska State Department of Education that MCC can and should continue to be a trusted curriculum provider/training partner to our local K-12 partners. Further, the fact that our MCC IT academic focus area is highly proficient-- is highly proficient at developing and delivering courses-- I will pause here out of respect for time and defer to any questions that you may have.

WALZ: I really appreciate that very much. Questions from the committee? Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Thank you, Senator Waltz. Dean Brown, thank you for being here. At Metro Community College, Is there room for the Baby Boomers that are leaving the workforce? Are we still trainable? I mean, I can't work my iPhone but, I mean, there is going to be a large group of people that aren't working.

ART BROWN: Right. I would say yes. You know, frankly, the concurrent enrollment high school students that we serve now are very talented

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students. I think we have-- we're working on capacity. I see great promise with that population of students so I would say yes to that question.

SANDERS: Thank you.

ART BROWN: Yeah.

WALZ: Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. How many students do you have? I don't know how to ask the question. You-- Metro is providing this to multiple schools.

ART BROWN: Correct.

LINEHAN: So do you have an idea on the number of students [INAUDIBLE] total students?

ART BROWN: Yes, I did check. Currently, I mean as of 2020, our last data report, 2021, I'm sorry, we were approaching 200 actively enrolled students in this particular focus study area.

LINEHAN: And do they come to Metro or do they stay at their own schools?

ART BROWN: It's a wide variety. So we go to some schools, students come to us, and we do remote delivery as well. So it's all over the board.

LINEHAN: OK. Thank you very much for being here.

ART BROWN: You're welcome.

LINEHAN: Appreciate it.

WALZ: Thank you. Any other questions? I don't see any. Thank you so much.

ART BROWN: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

MAGGIE GLENNON: Hi, good afternoon, chair, members of the committee. My name is Maggie Glen and that's Maggie Galli. And I join you here today from Code.org. We are a nonprofit dedicated to expanding access

to computer science and increasing participation by young women and other students who are underrepresented. We do this through a variety of ways through providing free curriculum to K-12 schools and partnering with local institutions like UNL to provide professional learning to any teacher who wants it. And we're here today in support of LB1112, which would expand access to foundational computer science for all students. Computer science courses are a critical step in preparing Nebraska students for success in their education and as citizens of the 21st century. While Nebraska has made significant strides and progress in ensuring high-quality computer science instruction for all students without targeted policies and resources to further implementation of these courses, students who are currently underrepresented will likely continue to be underrepresented, just like rural students. As you've heard quite a few times today, it's nearly impossible to find an industry or field of study that's not being transformed, disrupted, or reimaged using software and computer science. But at its core, computer science is a foundational skill for K-12 students and helps develop skills like logic, critical thinking, and creativity. Every student in every school should have the opportunity to engage in foundational computer science throughout their education. Six different studies show that children who study computer science performed better in math and science, excel at problem solving, and are 17 percent more likely to attend college. Just as we teach students how to dissect a frog or how electricity works, it's important for every student to understand and learn the building blocks of the technology that surrounds us. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you for testifying today.

MAGGIE GLENNON: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

SCOTT HENDERSON: Good afternoon. My name is Scott Henderson, S-c-o-t-t H-e-n-d-e-r-s-o-n, and I'm representing NMotion startup accelerator and Gener8tor, also a startup accelerator nationally. The number I want to put in your head is, I think everyone who's spoken so far has really hit all of the right notes. But I want to share one specific is \$250 million; \$250 million was invested in Nebraska startups in the last year alone, all of which were code-based companies. That's going to fuel hundreds and then eventually thousands of jobs, high-paying jobs here in the state of Nebraska, all because of people who are

familiar what was possible with computer science. I spent my career 20 years away from the state of Nebraska in Atlanta, in Pittsburgh, in Boston, Louisiana. I can tell you the single greatest constraint on every high-growth startup community is software engineers. They need more software engineers. Second greatest constraint is software adjacencies. Senator Brooks, you mentioning things of, you know, does everyone have to be a computer scientist? No. You have to be aware it's possible. In the last two years alone, we've invested a million dollars in ten new companies, half of which came from Invest Nebraska, which the state helped seed. But the money came from the proceeds of a guy named Vishal Singh, who's a designer, small town Nebraskan who's created Fitbit for cattle. And he worked with computer sciences to do that, sold it for a lot of money to Merck Animal Health Science and helped not only create wealth for those who were there, but now helped seed ten new companies, which is exciting. And I mentioned that because in the next two years we're raising money from the private sector to be able to create ten new companies, as well as accelerate and invest in ten other companies that will be Nebraska based, as well as help ten other companies without investing, all of which are going to need computer science and computer aware entrepreneurs. I just think about myself in high school taking typing classes and how typing was a simple thing. And I think at this level of computer science education, it's like typing. It's just what's possible and what can I do? So it's a matter of getting the tools in the hands. And I'm going to finish with three names: Keith Fix, he's just raised \$3 million retail aware. He's a registered member of the Ponca Tribe. Because of computer education, he's able to create company that's creating hundreds of jobs. Liz Whitaker, [PHONETIC] she's created a company, just raised \$300,000. She is aware of what's possible with computer science. And then I already mentioned Michelle, but I'm going to just mention Dusty Birge, Benkelman, Nebraska. He's just raising \$700,000 because he's not a computer scientist, but he's aware of it because he had a fundamental skill and he could create a company that's going out there and changing the world. So I submit these ideas for you for your consideration. But I want to show that this is fundamental to the high growth startup ecosystem and absolutely, we are highly in favor of this legislation. Thank you, Senator McKinley. Any questions?

WALZ: Thank you. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. Were you here previously last year?

SCOTT HENDERSON: You saw me at-- I was previously at another committee that you, yes, exactly.

LINEHAN: With the North Omaha.

SCOTT HENDERSON: This was, yes, this-- well, this is my fourth appearance in front of a committee because there's a lot of high-growth startup activities. But yes, I was in-- I was there for the North Omaha. It was actually for the prototype grant. Yes. Yes.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here.

SCOTT HENDERSON: Yes, absolutely.

WALZ: Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for being here, Mr Henderson. I love "software adjacencies." I've learned a new phrase--

SCOTT HENDERSON: There you go.

PANSING BROOKS: --so that's good. And that fits exactly with what we have been talking about, that it would be opportunity for in a lot of different fields and areas. So that really helps explain it, too, and supplementing the previous testimony.

SCOTT HENDERSON: You're welcome.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming today.

SCOTT HENDERSON: You're welcome. Thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions? I don't see any. Thanks so much for your testimony today.

SCOTT HENDERSON: All right. Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

STAN ODENTHAL: Good afternoon and happy Tuesday. My name is Stan Odenthal, S-t-a-n O-d-e-n-t-h-a-l, think I'd be able to spell that right by now. I am the director of business relations for Heartland Workforce Solutions. We support LB1 12 and what it means for the future of Nebraska's business and workforce. Heartland Workforce Solutions is the designated local area recipient for federal workforce development funds under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, receiving funding for the three-county area of Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington Counties. In our role, we actively try to bring partners together to build talent pipelines and connect job seekers with

available jobs. Unfortunately, many of the businesses I work with on a daily basis are not finding the skilled and trained workers they need. This is especially common among employers looking for IT talent. There are not enough available skilled workers with the competencies needed to fill the needs of Nebraska employers. IT occupations are unique. They are not industry-specific occupations, but can be found in every single industry and are vital to the success of all industries, from healthcare to manufacturing to transportation to government, and everything you can think of. It's not just the tech companies. Businesses are seeking skilled IT employees through a number of mechanisms, including great partnerships with Nebraska's public and private colleges and with the workforce system. We regularly host hiring events with many companies looking for IT employees. Businesses are also actively using the H-1B system to bring highly skilled foreign labor for these positions. Nationwide, six out of the top 10 H-1B occupations are IT specific. In Nebraska, it's common that the top five are all IT specific occupations that are being certified. These methods are great, but due to a lack of sufficient IT focus college graduates, a lack of training programs in general, and a cap on the H-1B system that inhibits employers from actually being able to fill all of-- all of their needs in this area. We need that spark that people have been talking about. We need to get more students interested in this at a younger age. On a regular basis, we see upwards of over 100 people walking through our doors on a daily basis to look for employment, and very few of those individuals have IT skills, even though that's what employers are asking for. Nebraska businesses need more IT talent in order to grow and in order to stay competitive. LB1112 will get-- will help get more people interested in this important and high-paying career pathway and will have a lasting effect on Nebraska's economic growth. We raise our voice in support of this bill. And with that, are there any questions for me?

WALZ: Any questions from the committee? I see none. Thanks so much for your testimony today. Next proponent. Any opponents? Anybody who would like to speak in a neutral capacity? Oh, oh.

SARAH CENTINEO: I'm sorry.

WALZ: OK. You can go ahead.

SARAH CENTINEO: My name is Sarah Centineo, S-a-r-a-h C-e-n-t-i-n-e-o. I'm here on behalf of the NASB. I am also a board member for Bellevue Public Schools and on behalf of NRCSA. Today we are opposing LB1158, I'm sorry, LB1112. Did I get that-- I got the [INAUDIBLE] I apologize,

LB1112. One of our standing positions at the NASB is to not support unfunded mandates. And this bill is similar to Senator McKinney's previous bill for the personal finance. And I would like to make the committee aware of how that has actually impacted our districts, especially some of our rural districts. What has happened is that there has now been-- and a requirement because personal finance used to be rolled into business classes and was rolled into-- in Bellevue, it was actually rolled into our social studies curriculum. Because it's now a graduation requirement with its own curriculum, we actually have to pull that all out and repackage it in order to have a standardized graduation curriculum. Along with that, much like the personal finance bill, this bill requires, I believe it's by '23-24. What-- the way the bill works, it would require our current freshmen to incorporate a graduation requirement for computer science and computer literacy. What that means to those kids, and I have a sophomore in high school, is that he would have to-- they have to realign their credits in order to meet that graduation requirement, even if they were on pathways, whether it was an AP pathway, whether it was automotive. In Bellevue we have this amazing career technical center where we also have healthcare and we are implementing an education system. All of those things make it very difficult for our students. I also would mention that this is a huge burden on our rural schools. As much as these computer science majors make coming out of school, they don't make it teaching computer science; and finding and retaining those teachers is exceptionally difficult. I had the opportunity to talk to my assistant superintendent and we are already short computer science teachers in Bellevue, and that's in the metro area. There are-- I have so many things, but I want to be respectful of the time. These mandatory requirements for kids who are not particularly interested in computer science mean they can't pursue other things that would be their electives, whether that's career prep or technology specific things like I mentioned with the automotive, with the automotive programs. Computer science and coding isn't for everyone, but nobody graduates from high school computer illiterate because it's part of all of our curriculums. It's required, especially with COVID in our implementations. It's just a part of everything that we do. So I have a lot more, but I will be respectful of time, but I would be happy to take any questions. And we would be happy to work with Senator McKinney to do this. And these-- these, and I-- and I'm sorry to go on, but this is a separate graduation requirement as the bill is written. It is not incorporated into other existing curriculums or programs.

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WALZ: OK. All right. Thank you. I appreciate that. Questions from the committee? Senator Murman.

MURMAN: Thank you, Senator Wal. And thank you, Miss-- Mrs. Centineo,-- Miss Centineo, for testifying. You say it is in all your curriculum now and the way this bill is written, it would require five credit hours. So in other words, it is an unfunded mandate to have another instructor or more to teach those five credit hours.

SARAH CENTINEO: It would require similar to what we had to do with personal finance, which is-- and so we wouldn't want to have redundant curriculum, right? So if you have a computer aspect in let's say media, let's say marketing or something like that and you have this computer science technology part. If we had a computer, a separate computer science requirement, we wouldn't want the redundancy of forcing our kids to-- because that is going to be a graduation requirement, to also include that into the elective requirement. But that means that we can't have that same-- same teacher teaching both. Right? So you can't offer all of those same things. Eventually, it would require us to limit the electives we can actually offer because we don't have-- there's-- everything's finite. All resources are finite so.

MURMAN: So there is other curriculum available that is more specified or specific for IT that you could be teaching--

SARAH CENTINEO: Yeah, we are--

MURMAN: --if you had the funding to do it I guess.

SARAH CENTINEO: There's already through the NDE and that's in my-- in the-- in the letter, it is included that we have computer science requirements, our computer literacy requirements that are actually allowed to be rolled in with the flexibility into our curriculum. So as things change, right, so health, one of-- in Bellevue is our health sciences. So as health sciences have improved and electronic medical records and all those things, we incorporate all of those changes so that our students are career ready when they leave high school. Pulling this out separate, it's-- it's quite burdensome for-- for us as a bigger district. And it's, frankly, I don't know how small districts would be able to-- to handle that requirement much less-- not to mention there was a mention this band-- broadband issues. Just accessibility is an issue in rural communities so.

MURMAN: In rural communities, schools, I assume it would be through the ESUs or some type of distance learning programming in many of the schools anyway.

SARAH CENTINEO: Yeah, and they would have to-- so and they again would have-- would see the same issues we see in urban schools, which those kids have to-- there's only so many hours in a school day. They would have to give up some other either elective or some other something in order to incorporate this requirement. My-- my suggestion would be to have legislation where districts are required to have access to science instead of a graduation requirement. That would be something that would free up resources, but would maybe meet the spirit of this legislation.

MURMAN: Thank you.

WALZ: Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for coming today, Ms, Centineo.

SARAH CENTINEO: It's Centineo. It's fine. I answer to anything. It's all right.

PANSING BROOKS: Sorry, I'm very sorry. So in Senator McKinney's bill, he talks about that the computer science and technology courses could be offered in traditional classroom, a blended learning, or online-based programming. So I don't understand quite why-- and why that would cause an extra problem, because they did talk about the fact that it could be even offline, that it be a program within the computer itself offered to the kids.

SARAH CENTINEO: Sure. And that, the difference, I would say, is between accessibility and implementation. Them being accessible is different from them implementing it. So you would still have to have the time requirements. You would still have to have instructors. You would still, those things would still exist so.

PANSING BROOKS: I guess what I'm wondering about is sometimes writing requirements are fulfilled in social studies courses or I mean, they're a way to get multiple requirements done in different kinds of courses. Isn't that true?

SARAH CENTINEO: Yeah, I think the flexibility piece is very important. But the fight, the way the bill exists, at least the way I wrote [SIC] it, and I would be happy to be corrected if I misinterpreted, but it

doesn't-- it doesn't provide much flexibility for incorporating the computer science, which I-- truly not exactly sure exactly what that means, whether it's coding, whether it's something else or-- or some kind of hybrid situation. It's a little unclear to me. But-- because it is different in healthcare, it's different in different education, it's different in automotive, it's different in every profession. There's going to be some fundamentals that are same, but it really is different in application.

PANSING BROOKS: So have you talked to Senator McKinney's office about this?

SARAH CENTINEO: I have not had the opportunity. I know that his office has been, I-- before this testimony, I spoke with some of my colleagues on OPS and I know that I am under the impression they have had communication with him, so.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. Well, I'm sure he's willing to work through whatever it is. So thank you.

WALZ: Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. Does Bell-- you're at Bellevue, right?

SARAH CENTINEO: I am. Yes.

LINEHAN: So do you work with the Metro Community College on their program? Is that accessible to your students?

SARAH CENTINEO: We have-- we have our own freestanding automotive program. So I think we partner with them in some other areas, and I just can't tell you what their-- we-- we explore partnerships also with the base, but with all of our community partners to be able to give our kids every-- truly as many options as we can so.

LINEHAN: But you're not sure if you work with them on this computer.

SARAH CENTINEO: I just don't know off the top of my head.

LINEHAN: That's fine. All right. Thank you very much for being here.

WALZ: Any other questions? I don't see any. Thanks so much for coming today.

SARAH CENTINEO: Thank you.

WALZ: Any other opponents? Anybody who would like to testify in a neutral capacity? Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Thank you to everyone who came to testify. Whether a proponent or opponent, I think that good dialogue is always helpful. I just want to say that, you know, I believe our state is at a crossroads of are we going to continue to be stuck to the path or are we going to work to innovate our state for the future? And to do so, I think we have to do things like LB1112 to prepare our kids for the future. Because if we don't, we're going to be stuck with a labor shortage and nobody to hire, and we're going to have to go outside the state to hire a lot of individuals. So that's why this is important. To the opposition, you know, I mean, if it's already a part of what you're doing, then I don't see how it would be so difficult to implement. In the bill when you look at Section 4, line 19: Such computer science and technology education course offered by school district may be available in a traditional classroom setting, a blended learning environment, or online-based or other technology-based format that is tailored to meet the needs of participating from the students. I don't see how that is difficult. You could take an online course without an instructor. There are five-year-olds that know more about computers and phones than me. Believe me, I work with kids. [LAUGHTER] They are already way ahead of me and I'M-- I consider myself a millennial. And that's the heart of this. How is our state going to handle a labor shortage in ten years when we don't prepare ourselves for that workforce? We're already being left behind. And if we continue to just say no to say no, then I don't know what we're going to do. This is designed to give districts and the department latitude. It's broad because it's beyond just technical coding and traditional sitting on a computer and typing a bunch of language I don't even understand. It-- it's not forcing kids to use computers, in my opinion. We are-- we are-- we are exposing our students to-- to technology because the future is technology. When you look at the auto industry, what is it, GM is going all EV? When you look at the future and what crypto and all these other things, if we just say no, because no is the answer all the time, then I don't know what we're going to do. We have to motivate our kids and spark their minds. And my goal is to spark those minds to set them up for success. It's not to burden [INAUDIBLE] districts. I actually haven't talked to any school districts. I briefly talked to somebody from, I think, NSB, but I haven't talked to any other school districts as well. And, you know, some background information that I have, one second: 77 percent of Nebraska high school students attend a school that offers computer

science, but only 2.6 percent of those students are enrolled in foundational computer science courses; 20 percent-- 22 percent of students enrolled in computer science courses are female. Black, African-American, Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Latinx, and Native American students are half as likely as their white and Asian peers to enroll in computer science. Only one Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander student enrolled in computer science and technology. When you look at the demographic breakdown, that's the issue. It's already an issue in tech when you talk about females and individuals from minority populations that there's already a barrier and it's a gap that we have to close. And I just think LB1112 helps us get closer to closing that gap. And I'll just leave you with a quote from, you know, Nebraska native Malcolm X: The future belongs to those who prepare for it today. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator McKinney. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Walz. Can you run by that statistic again? 77 percent of the students, it was like--

McKINNEY: The statistic. It says 77 percent of Nebraska high school students attend a school that offers computer science, but only 2.6 percent of those students are enrolled in foundational computer science courses.

LINEHAN: It'd be interesting to know if those are advanced classes.

McKINNEY: And I remember when I was in high school, I took a digital, some-- some type of digital course at North, where we, you know, played with shooting video like recording videos and music and all type of stuff in high school. And also, when I got to college, I took some digital marketing classes too. But it's-- it's, I've-- I've taken those courses and it wasn't coding. That's the thing. I didn't have to sit in front of a computer and type a bunch of letters and words that make no sense to me. It was flexible graphic design, and those type of things could count.

LINEHAN: Thank you.

McKINNEY: No problem.

WALZ: Other questions? OK. I have a question. You and I have had a lot of discussion about this. So I guess, you know, on one hand, I hear that there are already fundamental skills being taught. And in the

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bill, it says that it requires each student to complete at least one five-credit-- at least one five-credit high school course in computer science or technology prior to education [SIC]. So my question is, is it your intention to have this a separate class that teaches, I don't know, some computer science coding something? Or is it your intention to have the experiences that you have with computers in business or health or automotive to be part of that five-credit as opposed to one class that everybody has to take?

McKINNEY: No. I wanted it, like, that's why we put "blended" in here, because it could be blended into the learning environment, so it doesn't have to be just one separate class--

WALZ: OK.

McKINNEY: --the way I read this.

WALZ: OK. All right.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

WALZ: All right. I just wanted to make sure that that's what your intentions were.

McKINNEY: No problem.

WALZ: Thank you so much, Senator McKinney. Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Thank you, Senator Walz. Senator McKinney, thank you for bringing this bill forward. So when I served as mayor for the city of Bellevue, there were so many programs that I was invited to-- to see. So let me just: robotics program, STEM programs. How would they integrate that or be part of getting credits for being in those classes already?

McKINNEY: I mean, if they already have taken the courses whenever this gets implemented, I just think when you go back to how we're grading courses, that checks the box. I took robotics or I took the graphic design course, so I don't even have to think about it. When we really think about it, a lot of the students are already taking what would be required. It's just putting it into statute.

SANDERS: Thank you.

McKINNEY: No problem.

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WALZ: Any other questions? I don't see any. Thanks, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you.

WALZ: Appreciate it. All right, we did have 10 proponents position comments for hearing record and one opponent. So with that, we will close on LB1112. And we will open on LB1158. Hold on a minute. If I could ask how many people are here to testify on LB1158, can you raise your hands? All right. Thank you. Senator Sanders, welcome.

SANDERS: Good afternoon, Chairman Walz and fellow committee members. I am Rita Sanders, R-i-t-a S-a-n-d-e-r-s, and I represent District 45, which includes much of the Bellevue-Offutt community in eastern Sarpy County. Today, I'm introducing my priority bill, LB1158, to update our parental involvement and academic transparency law. The proposal was developed with input from Nebraska Association of School Boards, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Student Educators Association, the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, and the State Department of Education. LB1158 update-- updates a 30-year old statute for clarity and recognition. Recognize the role that technology plays in our classroom today. We have taken this bill in a very different direction from where we started. First, I'll tell you. [INAUDIBLE] past few months, then I'll explain why it's timely and needed. The first draft of this bill was admittedly too demanding. It created a new process where teachers and administrators kept a running list for parents to access online. The list included learning materials, training materials, and more. After discussions with education stakeholders, we identified a different way forward that was more agreeable for everyone involved. Together with groups, my office spent weeks tweaking language and running each and every change by the rest of the group. This is what led to the product you have in front of you today. I am proud of the work we did arrive at this point. Let me summarize the law we already have. Chapter 79, Sections 53-- 530 through 533 provides that school districts must create a policy that addresses specific issues. Those issues are related to parental involvement and academic transparency. In the spirit of the original law, LB1158 is focused on local control. The districts will still decide the content of their policies. There has been some misinformation about this bill, so I want to clarify something before I continue. This bill does not require schools to post their curriculum online. This is, this is not in this bill. Schools will have to post links-- wait-- schools-- it's getting late. Schools will have to post links to their school and district policies. Again, I emphasize, this has nothing to do with curriculum. This bill

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is a reasonable update to a 30-year-old statute. Educational technology and communication has come a long way since the brick cell phone. LB1158 would ask districts to address digital materials and other materials in their policies. Again, the local school district decides what that policy is. It also contains cleanup and clarity language such as including the word guardian. The bill also clarifies that any public hearing, as described near the bottom of page 3, must include an opportunity for public comment. LB1158 requires that every school must publish a link on their website to their school and district policies so that they are easily accessible to parents. Finally, the bill includes a familiar accountability mechanism that is similar to be found, one found in the Superintendent Pay Transparency Act. This bill is also a moderate, down-the-middle approach towards transparency. In other states, we see proposals like cameras in the classroom or reporting sites to report teachers. LB1158 is a reasonable, smart, thorough, and timely update that clarifies and strengthens the essential bond between the parent, the child, and the school. I want to close by saying, last summer, Commissioner Blomstedt described, and I quote: A crisis of confidence in our system had the health standards debate last year. Now this bill is, is not in response to the health standard draft, nor does it deal with criminal race theory. But LB1158 will play a part in restoring that trust. I am proud of the work we did with education organizations to get to this point, and I'm so thankful to the over 150 parents and citizens who commented on the Legislature's website in favor of this proposal. I ask the committee to pass LB1158 to General File. And at this time, I will welcome any questions you may have.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Questions from the committee?

PANSING BROOKS: I have a couple. Yes?

WALZ: Yes. Go ahead.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. Thank you for bringing this bill, Senator Sanders. I just have a couple of questions. As you know, truancy has been one of my big pushes, and I had a bill this past year that did not surpass the filibuster. So I guess I'm concerned here that if a, if a child is removed by their parents from a class and it could be for ten days during some subject matter and what happens to that child, then they're sick ten days then they get a, a letter from the county attorney and they're sent-- I, I presume that was not your goal.

SANDERS: No, truancy is not addressed in this.

PANSING BROOKS: Yeah.

SANDERS: What's addressed is the policy of the school, so that district makes that policy and posts that.

PANSING BROOKS: OK, but do you see what I'm saying?

SANDERS: I do.

PANSING BROOKS: They could be gone ten days because they don't like some policy that's being taught in whatever class. And under the law, compulsory education, it says that only school authorities have the authority to, to give permission to be absent. So I don't know if we can maybe talk about that and work on this.

SANDERS: Absolutely, that is something we can certainly--

PANSING BROOKS: Pardon me?

SANDERS: Absolutely, that is something we can discuss.

PANSING BROOKS: OK, and then we just heard a bill-- the other question that I have is that we just had-- heard a bill on the Holocaust, and some people might object to that teaching because of CRT or whatever it could be. So my concern is then should those children not attend that and not learn about the Holocaust then if somebody thinks it's, it's too much about critical race theory?

SANDERS: So that is for each school board to decide, it's the district's decision to make that policy and to post that policy. This does not say they should or shouldn't. But this, this bill is to say this is a policy--

PANSING BROOKS: Oh, OK, so-- but if the policy is--

SANDERS: --needs to be posted.

PANSING BROOKS: --to teach that-- if they decide to teach the Holocaust and we pass this bill, or even if we don't pass the bill on Holocaust, they decide to teach it, then parents can remove their kids from that course.

SANDERS: But I think this will bring parents closer because we'll be transparent about it. If a policy is passed, say, in Bellevue Public School and they are going to teach it, I think, I think most parents

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will see that's a good idea and it's posted and that opens a conversation.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. I hope so. It just concerns me, but I don't know. Thank you very much for bringing this.

SANDERS: Thank you.

PANSING BROOKS: Appreciate it.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? I see none.

SANDERS: Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator Sanders. First proponent.

MORFELD: Welcome.

DOUG KAGAN: Good afternoon. Doug Kagan, D-o-u-g K-a-g-a-n, 416 South 130th Street, Omaha, representing Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom in support of this bill. We currently are witnessing in our state a momentous amount of scrutiny given public school policies, curricula, and materials by taxpayers, particularly parent taxpayers. We perceive the problem in terms of some school districts either not publicizing to parents and taxpayers the process for purchasing and ordering staff training or curriculum materials or lack of transparency about how the public can access this information either in person or online. Procedures for individuals to examine and approve such material should be convenient, public hearings publicized. Granted, some school districts, and I cite the Millard School District particularly, already are very transparent in the curriculum adoption process, whereby policies and expenditures of all kinds are easily accessible online and open for personal inspection at reasonable times. Once their curriculum teams make recommendations for instructional materials, including books, the district seeks community input through community review nights with additional times for review if necessary. Following a review, final recommendation is made to the school board. This should and could serve as a template. However, other school districts like OPS do not oblige parents or taxpayers by easily making their materials subject to open public inspection, evaluation, and comment before purchase. OPS spent over \$5 million, some of it wasteful spending for elementary-level books that we consider pure indoctrination. I cannot imagine why a little boy or girl would want to read about social justice, the romantic relationship of a Mexican communist, or a "Kid's Guide to Gender Identity." This situation has

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bred and breeds a climate of public distrust. Therefore, we view LB1158 a solution-- as a solution by requiring every school district to uphold the same standards for public examination of policy and material comment. We believe it would cultivate a solid working relationship between parents/taxpayers and public school districts. Thank you.

MORFELD: Thank you, Mr. Kagan. Any questions for Mr. Kagan? Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Senator Morfeld. And thank you, Mr. Kagan, for your testimony. Quick question. So we should just pretend that social injustice is not happening in our, in our communities and haven't happened in our history of this nation?

DOUG KAGAN: No, it shouldn't be ignored, but we don't think little boys or girls are mature enough to understand it.

McKINNEY: When are they mature enough to know?

DOUG KAGAN: Well, I don't know, Junior High, High School. It's, it's just the age level we're concerned about.

McKINNEY: What is age appropriate?

DOUG KAGAN: I don't know, you can pick an age, teenage, adult.

McKINNEY: Is there never an age to say to a young little boy that it's, it's not OK to call somebody from another race or somebody with a different identity, a bad name or something like that? So we just don't teach those fundamentals as a community and just wait till they turn 12 or 16 and start teaching those type of fundamentals?

DOUG KAGAN: Well, it'd depend upon the family doing that.

McKINNEY: All right, thank you.

MORFELD: Any other questions for Mr. Kagan? OK, thank you. Next proponent testifier. Welcome.

DENNIS SCHLEIS: Hi. Greetings. My name is Dennis Schleis, that's D-e-n-n-i-s, last name is S-c-h-l-e-i-s, and I live in Omaha. I support LB1158 for this reason. My wife and I homeschooled our three children. The reason we did this is because even years ago, we did not like what we heard about in the local school curriculum. I wanted to

know who made the decisions about what books the children read, textbooks and other items used in the classroom. Back then, there was nothing online, of course, or nothing out in hard copy by the school district telling us who made these decisions and what criteria they used to buy all the classroom materials. When I called the school head office, I was grilled about why I wanted to look at these materials and what group I was working with. That was none of their business. I pay a lot of property taxes that go to my school district and I don't think that I should have been looked upon with suspicion. All my wife and I wanted to know is what classroom textbooks our children would be learning from. If I had known that we would actually have a voice in what our children learn from and the right to voice our objections, we might have sent our children to public school. Thank you.

MORFELD: Thank you, Mr. Schleis. Any questions? OK, seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent testifier. Welcome.

JEANNE GREISEN: Good afternoon. I wasn't really prepared to talk to this one-- about this one. I'm talking about the next one, but I do want to address this one.

MORFELD: Ma'am, can you tell us your name and spell it, please.

JEANNE GREISEN: Jeanne Greisen. It's J-e-a-n-n-e G-r-e-i-s-e-n. I support this bill, and I ask that you support this bill because the local control is where education needs to go. And just listening to you, Senator Pansing Brooks, that you think that it would be inappropriate for a parent to take their child out of a class. Parents have control over their kids. The government doesn't own our kids. And so I talked to a lot of people lately, and they're all homeschooling and their kids are thriving. And so that should tell something that something is-- tell us all that something is failing. And so for the government to think they control our kids is completely wrong. The parents are in charge of their kids, their parents are in charge of teaching them. If they stay home, they might learn more than what they could learn in education. I see that with my own kids, they're learning on working on cars. They're learning-- working on some engineering kind of stuff that they're not getting in schools. So it needs to go back to the schools. What's done in rural Nebraska doesn't necessarily fit what's in Lincoln, Nebraska. And these kids are thriving. And let's look at the education where we are, we've looked at the statistics coming out, Lincoln across the state actually is failing these kids. Fifty percent is not proficient in education in basic classes: science, math, English. Failing. So to say that you

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guys want to have control and not let it go to the local control is a misconception. So let the local parents, let the local school boards decide what they want to focus on with their kids. It's a government of the people, for the people, by the people, and that's how you give the control back to the people. That's all I have.

MORFELD: Thank you, Mrs. Greisen. Any questions? Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for coming, Ms. Greisen, Greisen?

JEANNE GREISEN: Um-hum.

PANSING BROOKS: I'm sorry if you misunderstood what I was saying. What I was saying is that what I'm concerned about is that kids are getting charged with truancy if they miss school for 20 days or more. And so it's setting them into the school-to-prison pipeline because they get charged. So I'm concerned about the fact about whether or not with pulling the kids out of school. Since the law says that only the schools can excuse a child, then theoretically, if a parent-- I'm not saying that the parents shouldn't have control, and I also believe in local control. So I'm with you on that. So I'm sorry if I misspoke or you misunderstood me. But my goal is not to have those kids placed in the juvenile justice system precipitously. If, if the parents pull them out, there has to be some way to protect those kids from getting charged with truancy because they've also been sick ten more days. So that's what I'm concerned about. Thank you.

JEANNE GREISEN: So can I respond to that? So I've had that happen with my kids that I get letters saying, oh, they've missed this many days--

PANSING BROOKS: So have I, yeah.

JEANNE GREISEN: --of school. But guess what? We're out learning in real life.

PANSING BROOKS: Exactly.

JEANNE GREISEN: And so maybe that law needs to be looked at saying--

PANSING BROOKS: That's what I tried to do.

MORFELD: Yeah, we tried that.

PANSING BROOKS: Exactly what I tried.

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JEANNE GREISEN: I mean, seriously,--

PANSING BROOKS: I wish you came in on my--

JEANNE GREISEN: --let's let parents start educating their children, like, maybe we went on a trip somewhere. Maybe we went--

PANSING BROOKS: Exactly.

JEANNE GREISEN: --out and actually went to the farming community to the farm and actually did farming for the week that we're harvesting. Can you tell me what they might learn?

PANSING BROOKS: So please listen for the truancy bill that I'm sure will come up again next year.

JEANNE GREISEN: Perfect.

PANSING BROOKS: It was filibustered and I agree parents may be taking their kids to do something else that's educational. So thank you. That's all [INAUDIBLE].

JEANNE GREISEN: Awesome. I'll show up and testify for that one, too.

MORFELD: Thank you, Ms. Greisen. OK, next, next testifier, proponent testifier.

JUDY KARMAZIN: Good afternoon.

MORFELD: Welcome.

JUDY KARMAZIN: I'm sorry I wrote good morning on the paper. My name is Judy Karmazin, K-a-r-m-a-z-i-n. I'm from Gibbon, Nebraska. I'm speaking today as a mother and grandmother. I am retired senior litigation paralegal. I specialized in black mold. My pro bono work in L.A. and Orange Counties in California consisted of working with women and children, both boys and girls who had been raped or molested. I prepared them to testify in court. It was difficult, especially with the young ones to understand it was not their fault. When California passed the Common Core bill, which contained CSE teaching, it became more difficult when their teachers were teaching them graphic explanations of body parts, acts, role playing, and videos taught as normal. God gave them the ability to know right from wrong, not the government. Children did and do not need to know explicit body parts or positions to know it is right to testify in court or to stop the

abuse. My biological father sexually abused my older sister. I was a witness to this abuse at age five. My sister was too scared to tell our mother. I was not. I did not need the correct terminology of what I saw to tell her it was wrong. My innocence as a child ended at five. Please stop this vile information from robbing our children of their innocence. Romans 2:18: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against an unholiness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Our Nebraska children are born with God-given rights and ability to succeed or fail on their own accomplishments. CRT only teaches them racism. Adults have the moral obligation to stop abuse or bullying of any kind. Thank you. Any questions?

MORFELD: Thank you very much, Ms. Karmazin. Any questions? OK, seeing none, thank you.

JUDY KARMAZIN: Thank you.

MORFELD: Next proponent testifier, please.

KATHY ADAMS: Good afternoon, Senators, and all. I am Kathy Adams, and I come before you this afternoon in support of LB1158. LB1158 gives the parents and guardians their rights back as the primary caretakers of their children. It gives the parents/guardians their rightful place as the primary educators of their children in the home and direct how their schooling goes according to their values, morals, traditions, and faith or lack thereof. I am very thankful that this is giving parents/guardians the right to know exactly what is being taught by being able to see the curricula and all resources and media that are used, what teachers have been taught, what are on the library shelves, as well as collections within the classrooms. Giving the parents the right and ability to go into the schools their children are attending, sit in on classes, be in assemblies and hear the guest speakers is huge and opens pathways of communication between parents and guardians and their children, as well as teachers and paras. It also gives more eyes within the classrooms, hallways, lunch rooms, etcetera, to help with the shortages of teachers and other staff. It gives parents and guardians even more chances to become better acquainted with other families and staff, all while being there for their children, as well as giving the teachers better opportunity to get better acquainted with them. LB1158 can bring about better teamwork between all as opposed to it being parents versus the teachers. Teachers and parents/guardians collaborating together is way better for the children and a plus for all. Thank you for the opportunity to stand with you in support of LB1158.

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WALZ: Thank you. Let me see if we have any questions. Any questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you.

KATHY ADAMS: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

LAURA RAUSCHER: Hello, I'm Laura Rauscher, that's L-a-u-r-a R-a-u-s-c-h-e-r, and I'm speaking on both of the bills being proposed today, LB1158 and LB768, and just combine them. I began school in a different world. We always said the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of our day. I felt safe at school because I was safe in my entire neighborhood, neighborhood. After morning chores, I was able to roam the neighborhood here in Lincoln, Nebraska, until evening dinnertime. If I was hungry or thirsty, it was assumed that wherever I was, I would be offered what I needed. After all, my mother did the same for my friends. We were cautioned to avoid strangers and knew who they were because we did know our neighbors and who we could trust. There was a general acknowledgment that the Ten Commandments were right and to be obeyed both at home, in the neighborhood and at school. As a quick refresher, the first two commands-- commandments highlight our central task of worshiping only the Lord putting no idols in his place of authority in our life. Driven home was not taking God's name in vain. Bar soap was sometimes administered to such a mouth. Keep the sabbath day holy. Those were the days that all retail stores closed on Sunday, and only open doors were to churches or homes. Honor your father and mother with the reward of having a long life or disobey and wait until dad got home. Do not steal as you would be taken back and made to repay. Do not murder, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness, lie against your neighbor, neighbor. Like I said, a different world. The Kinsey books, printed in 1948 and 1953, took some time to filter into our school systems, but filter they have. If you watch what many of your constituents have, the eye-opening documentary called "Mind Polluters," you will then understand why so many are up in arms. We want the right to go into our children and grandchildren's schools and to check the library content. We want to be able to enforce the individual teachers to alert us to outside influences who want to come into our schools and preschools and push an agenda that would not line up with our standards or even trying to, to get-- convince our children to change their sex without parents' acknowledgment. I get it. These bills will not guarantee safety to our children, will not stop CRT, social/emotional learning, or grossly handled sex education that appear to be the global goals of remolding our life. I publicly ask

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that any parent listening today to make all sacrifices needed to take your children home from public school. There are so many great and viable options, and it really is a pleasure to be with your own children. However, for those dear children who will be left behind, I again ask you to vote yes for both LB1158 and LB768 and refresh yourself on Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 in your Bibles. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. And thank you for being "mindly" of the--

JUDY KARMAZIN: Yeah.

WALZ: --or being mindful of the time. I appreciate that. Any questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you.

JUDY KARMAZIN: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

JILL GREENQUIST: I assume you'll be OK if there's two of us here. I also will follow the lead of the woman before me, and I will combine the two bills, so I know that you'll be patient with me as I-- you'll hear me going between the two. My name is Jill Greenquist. I am in Omaha, Nebraska. I need you to know I'm actually not from Nebraska because everyone loves to say--

WALZ: Can you just spell your name.

JILL GREENQUIST: Oh, yes,--

WALZ: I'm sorry.

JILL GREENQUIST: --thank you for reminding me. No, thank you. And am I speaking loud enough? I know that was an issue in the room that I was in previously.

WALZ: Yeah, you are.

JILL GREENQUIST: Good. Jill, J-i-l-l, Greenquist, Green light the color -q-u-i-s-t. I'm in Omaha, Nebraska, around the midtown area. I'm speaking to you as a mother, biological and bonus. I'm speaking to you as a wife, and I'm also speaking to you as an educational professional and a business professional. I am speaking to you today to protect my children from activist individuals and entities who believe that their way of educating children should go beyond the standards of math,

science, language arts, and social studies. I believe these people are good-hearted and we just have different views. So I need to say what I'm going to say, and they're going to say what they're going to say. And that's OK, because that's what a democracy is about, right? In truth, I am disappointed that the Nebraska Department of Education cannot be trusted with establishing educational standards that are focused on the essentials of education. I do not want the issue of educational standards and learning content to have to be added to the work of the State Legislature. You have a lot to do. However, I am writing to support LB6--768 and LB1158 because it has been shown to me that the Nebraska Department of Education cannot currently be trusted with establishing commonsense standards, particularly around health education. Now I want to give you a little background on myself and why I feel particularly committed to having my voice heard. Two years ago, as I said, I became the bonus mom of twin daughters. They were eight years old at the time. They're now ten. And one year ago I became the mother of this little guy at the age of 41, it was kind of a miracle, right? And I'm really tired. So having a kid in your 40s is awesome and hard. Now, I made the biggest professional decision of my life at that time. I decided that I would quit working to focus on them. I didn't think I was going to originally, but until last year I was a hardworking, committed professional 20 years, 15 of those years I was working in education. I was both a teacher and working in education advocacy throughout the country. However, I decided last year that it was right for me to stay home and to stay focused on my children. That's what was right for me. Now, it was during this time that I started watching the State Board of Education meetings online. I was made aware of state and national struggles that parents and community members were and are having with various education entities to make certain that kids were being taught what parents desire. That's what's important to me, what parents desire. Is that the red light that means I need to stop?

WALZ: Yeah, that's the red light.

JILL GREENQUIST: Awesome. All right. Well, I thank you for your time. You know where I stand. I support LB768 and LB1158, and I just appreciate being here today. And it was worth lugging around this 30-pounder to do it.

WALZ: Thank you. Let me see if there's any questions.

JILL GREENQUIST: Oh yes, questions?

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WALZ: Any questions from the committee? I don't see any. He's adorable. Thank you.

JILL GREENQUIST: Thank you. Bye-bye.

WALZ: Next proponent. Are you going-- anybody that's going to be testifying on LB758 [SIC--LB768] and LB1158, if you are going to do that, that's great. But just make sure that you also fill out two green sheets, one for each.

JANET JOHNSON: OK, so it's, it's OK to do that?

WALZ: Yep. It's OK to do as long as you fill out two green sheets.

JANET JOHNSON: OK, great.

WALZ: Thank you.

JANET JOHNSON: I have, I have another one then to bring you. My name is Janet Johnson, J-a-n-e-t J-o-h-n-s-o-n. And my husband and I are residents in Sarpy County in Papillion, La Vista School District. And so I want to thank you for hearing my comments, and I would like to thank Senator Sanders for introducing LB1158. So I'm here to express my support. I read the bill, and I'm guess I'm finding out today that maybe I'm not positive of everything that, that is provided in the bill, but I will express what my support is for and that is for transparency for making the district policies, as Senator Sanders said. And I'm not sure if her bill will actually provide for also transparency in curriculum. But I know as a parent and a grandparent, that is of the utmost importance to me that we would be able to access what materials are being taught in the schools that our children and grandchildren and neighbors and friends go to. And one of the benefits of this is also that it, it, it requires accountability for the curriculum that is being advanced. And so that is my support for LB1158. My support for LB768 also is that I feel that the five major subjects that are mentioned in the Nebraska Constitution, that is for reading, writing, math, social studies, and science should be standardized as, as decreed by the Department of Education, but they are not commissioned to write standards for health education. And that was a very big disappointment to me last year, the battle that we went through with all of that and that, that it should be a local control, a district control for those kind of standards. So thank you very much for hearing me. Appreciate it.

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WALZ: Thank you and I appreciate you respecting the light. Let me see if there's any questions. I don't see any. Thanks for coming today. Next proponent. Good afternoon.

AMBER PARKER: Good afternoon. Amber Parker, A-m-b-e-r P-a-r-k-e-r. I'm going to have a different angle. I grew up in an abusive home and, Senator Morfeld, you squeezed my hand so hard a few years ago and refused to let it go and people were out of the room. I don't bow down to people that think they can abuse people in power. On page 2--

MORFELD: I'd like to note for the record that's not true and I don't appreciate you--

AMBER PARKER: That is a lie.

MORFELD: --spreading--

AMBER PARKER: That is a lie, sir.

MORFELD: --misinformation.

AMBER PARKER: Let's go back to the cameras. You squeezed my hand. I tried to pull it away and you refused to let it go. I want to go on--

MORFELD: That is an absolute lie.

AMBER PARKER: I want to go on to page 2.

MORFELD: I will not sit here here and listen to that.

AMBER PARKER: Yes you did. You are lying.

MORFELD: I have, I have--

AMBER PARKER: You are my lying, Senator.

MORFELD: --distinctly tried avoiding you--

WALZ: OK, hold on.

AMBER PARKER: You are lying.

MORFELD: --because of these lies and these rumors that--

AMBER PARKER: No, it is not a lie, sir.

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WALZ: Hold on.

AMBER PARKER: It is not--

WALZ: Amber,--

AMBER PARKER: --let's get camera.

WALZ: --can you--

AMBER PARKER: Page 2. I'm a proponent--

WALZ: --you only have about two minutes left.

AMBER PARKER: --to LB158-- excuse me, I want to get this correct-- and I want to note that Sergeant of Arms are coming up against me when I just shared that a man, Morfeld, squeezed my hand-- LB1158. I grew up in an abusive home. On page 2, it says: Requests that a child be excused from specific instruction or activities in this. With the abuse that I grew up in, I want to speak for the children and truancy laws should not be bullying the parents in the state. That needs to be dismantled. Senator Pansing Brooks, I've heard you bring that up, and I just want to address that because I've talked to parents that have had to go before courts of law because their children were sick. That's a nanny-state mentality and that needs to be done away with. But the children in classes learning what the Nebraska Department of Education wants to teach anal and oral sex. Are you kidding me, to tell a parent that they don't have the rights to take their children out. And what is wrong with our state to say that they want to teach children sex? That's wrong. I did not want to come up and bring forward a testimony that is so personal, but there-- it is clear that there is an agenda here and the children need to be protected. And this sets around the parameters and boundaries in this and, therefore, any parent that would feel that their child in instruction or activities that should be the parent's decision, regardless of the truancy laws. And that's important. You address a lot of mental health. Senator Walz, I've heard you, you've brought forward bills in those areas. Let's think of the children's mental health and what it does when, when parents don't have that safeguard or given parental rights in the state of Nebraska to protect their children with the materials that they would feel may be of sensitive nature to their children. That is something to highlight and to bring forward and to say, please pass LB1158 out of committee. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Did you fill out both-- two green sheets?

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AMBER PARKER: Yes, I did.

WALZ: All right, thank you.

AMBER PARKER: I did. It was-- am I supposed to hand that in now?

WALZ: Yeah.

AMBER PARKER: At the same time?

WALZ: Yeah.

AMBER PARKER: Oh, I didn't realize that. I apologize.

WALZ: Yeah, you, you just testified on both, right?

AMBER PARKER: Yes, I'm a proponent. No, I, I thought the hearing for LB768 isn't--

WALZ: OK.

AMBER PARKER: I thought this was-- I'm sorry.

WALZ: So you're just testifying on LB1158 right now?

AMBER PARKER: This is LB1158. Because my understanding is you have another hearing for LB76--

WALZ: Yes. OK, I just wanted to--

AMBER PARKER: OK.

WALZ: --make sure.

AMBER PARKER: OK.

WALZ: Thank you.

AMBER PARKER: Thank you.

WALZ: All right.

AMBER PARKER: But I'm proponent for both LB1158--

WALZ: Yeah.

AMBER PARKER: --and LB768.

WALZ: All right. Thank you, Amber. Next proponent. Any opponents that would like to speak?

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Good afternoon, Senator Walz, members of the Education Committee. My name is Ann Hunter-Pirtle, A-n-n H-u-n-t-e-r hyphen P-i-r-t-l-e, executive director of Stand for Schools, a nonprofit that works to advance public education in Nebraska. Stand for Schools opposes LB1158. Parent and guardian involvement in a student's education is vital, and we appreciate Senator Sanders' effort to clean up language already found in statute, including guardians as well as parents. But we have concerns that some provisions of LB1158 are overbroad and punitive. In the past year, bills similar to LB1158 have been introduced in states including Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, and others using, using model legislation from Arizona's Goldwater Institute. We're concerned that the model legislation in this bill discourage teaching about challenging but essential topics and broadly politicize curriculum. In our view, this bill assumes an adversarial relationship between parents and teachers, as well as between parents and schools, which is not consistent with the reality that we see and hear about from the vast majority of parents in Nebraska. Nebraska statute already requires school districts to establish a policy updated annually at a Public Board of Education meeting, stating how the district will seek to involve parents in the schools and parents' rights relating to access to the school's testing information and curriculum. For years in Nebraska, parents have been able to excuse their students from assignments or classroom activities they find concerning whether that be reading a certain book, participating in aspects of health education, or singing certain songs in a music class. Public school districts are also subject to Nebraska's public records laws, as well as federal statutes like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, which govern the availability of student records and parent or guardian access to classroom material. This means parents, guardians, and the public already have access to much of the information that LB1158 seeks to make available, but LB1158 creates punitive clawback provisions for state funds if districts are found to be in noncompliance with very broad provisions of this bill. I do want to draw a contrast to some of the superintendent compensation provisions that Senator Sanders referenced. The clawback provisions in that instance relate to a very specific instance of a school failing to file notice of a change in superintendent pay or a contract. Whereas in LB1158, the circumstances under which TEEOSA funds could get clawed back are very broad, and so that's one of the concerns we have. And,

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yeah, this bill would withhold tax dollars from districts found to be in, quote, material violation of LB1158, either from the state through the TEEOSA formula or locally through the county treasurer. It's unclear from the language what a material violation would be under the statute, and we have concerns about why defunding a school district would be the right course of action in that event. We do also have concerns about how this statute could add to teacher workloads that are already stretched to the limit by the pandemic. If a student's parent or guardian objects to a general subject like a music class or health and family education, a district, especially a smaller district, may not have the staff to provide related alternative education. So for these reasons, we oppose LB1158 and we urge you not to advance it. Happy to take questions.

WALZ: Thank you. Thank you for coming today. Questions from the-- Senator Murman.

MURMAN: Thank you, Senator Walz. And thank you for testifying. So you believe that making it more clear to parents what is being taught to their children is not a good thing and causes an adversarial relationship with the school?

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: I think what this bill assumes is that parents are not getting that information currently and that there's not a way for them to get that information currently. And there is. I point out-- let me look up the, the section here. Nebraska Revised Statutes Section 79-530 to 533 do already provide for districts to create a policy to make materials available to parents upon request. I think this bill assumes that if parents request those materials, they're not getting them. From, from my understanding, that is not typically the case and we have again problems with the punitive provisions as far as TEEOSA funds.

MURMAN: So if I could ask. So just making it more easy for the parents to access that material and making it more clear to them is not a good thing?

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: I think making access easier is fine. I would question why the punitive provisions are then necessary.

MURMAN: Thank you.

WALZ: All right. Thank you. Any other questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you for coming today.

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ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Thank you.

WALZ: Next opponent.

JULANE HILL: Madam Chair, committee members, my name is Julane Hill, J-u-l-a-n-e H-i-l-l, and I'm here today to speak to the opposition of LB1158. I did not come here prepared to speak against this bill. However, after hearing conversations, I, I feel compelled. I, I am-- I don't have my notes in front of me, so I'm going to talk, talk off the top of my head. I'm a retired health education teacher and I have been in education for 40-plus years. I taught health education in numerous school districts, and parents have always had the opportunity to view any curriculum that has been-- is being used in the school district. They also have the opportunity to look at lessons, materials, or activities that teachers are going to use in the classroom. And I'll give you an example, because one of the things that I'm hearing here is focused on sexual health and sexual health is a hot-button issue. So I taught sexual health to seventh graders and we had to provide-- because of transparency, we provided the parents an opportunity to go through every single lesson. The teachers that were teaching this, this content area, we were, we were providing the entire curriculum to teachers in the evening-- or to parents in the evening. Parents would come. They would go through the curriculum with us. We would share every video, every teaching activity, every handout that was going home to the parents. And we had full transparency. And I think sometimes we forget-- we, we just-- parents sometimes assume schools are doing a great job. And so they don't access their ability to actually ask, can I see this curriculum? Can I see what is being taught to my children? And I know it's because they're busy. It's-- their days are full. They're working two, three jobs. But I just wanted to let you know that, that we, we do provide the transparency and it's out there. It just needs to be taken advantage of.

WALZ: Thank you.

JULANE HILL: Thank you for your time.

WALZ: Thank you very much for your testimony. Any questions from the committee?

JULANE HILL: And I'll fill out a green sheet.

WALZ: All right, thanks.

JULANE HILL: Thank you.

WALZ: Next opponent. Anybody that would like to speak in the neutral capacity?

KYLE MCGOWAN: Good afternoon, Chairperson Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Kyle McGowan, K-y-l-e M-c-G-o-w-a-n, and today I'm testifying in a neutral capacity for the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, and Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education. Senator Sanders, we feel did a good job in updating a, a 1994 law. Schools have never been afraid of transparency. Schools should be following the law now. This law-- Senator Sanders' efforts, which really has evolved and we appreciate the conversations she's had with different education groups. To your question, Senator Murman, probably has made it easier for parents to get information. So that's a good thing, correct? However, what we're seeing a little bit even today, and I would say to Senator McKinney and Senator Pansing Brooks, the greatest strength of schools is also our biggest challenge. We serve all children with a lot of different ideas out there, and there's got to be a point where your local school board says, we are going to teach about the Holocaust. We are going to teach about racism. And if you go to the public school and the school board has vetted their information, it will be taught. So one of the things that we talked to Senator Sanders about was trying-- if, if this bill is going to encourage parents to opt out of more things. Today, parents can opt out of different curriculum today. OK? There's a process. There is a, there is a process that every school is required to have to choose a curriculum which is ultimately agreed upon or not agreed upon by their elected school board officials. If there's a challenge, then there should be a process for that challenge. Since I'm short on time, I would say the last thing is the reason we're neutral and can't agree is just because of the excessive penalty. We think it should just be a part of accreditation, lose accreditation if you're not following the law. I do have something off the NDE website that talks about how schools could lose their accreditation, which is, by the way, a great way for a superintendent to lose their job. So I'll, I'll stop there and try to answer any questions.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Any questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. So there's certain subjects that historically have been parents might get upset. So those are automatically, if I remember, two decades, two decades ago, they send

you home a letter and say, do you want your child to opt out of sex education? OK, so what other subjects-- is that basically--

KYLE MCGOWAN: Well, I would say this is a changing world. Everything seems to be getting more controversial. And so that-- that's a very common one. Probably what I dealt with as an elementary principal and a superintendent primarily had to do with either evolution versus creationism. Had-- there was a parent upset that we had Harry Potter in our, our, our library because it was about witches and things like that. So I will tell you at 100 percent, we would have discussions with these parents and parents are responsible for their children. We need to respect their values. And if they think their kids shouldn't read Harry Potter, then I respect that. But to have multiple parallel curriculums available is not reasonable. So if you don't want to dissect a frog, we get it. We might provide something else. But if a person then doesn't like the alternative, how many alternatives do we get? I don't think it's a good idea to send a kid home. We, we don't want children missing school because, you know, something that's going to be read. There are places in a school that are safe in which children might do some independent learning. But we can't have five or six different opportunities for an alternative curriculum. Does that make sense?

WALZ: Um-hum.

LINEHAN: Yep. Thank you.

WALZ: Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for coming, Mr. McGowan. So did you hear my question about truancy and how those numbers could add up and pretty soon the child is truant?

KYLE MCGOWAN: Yeah. First of all, you know, the truancy law came about because of, of, of, you know, the researches, the more you're in school, the probably the better you're going to do on the assessments that we have in school. But--

PANSING BROOKS: Which is why we don't want them charged and taken back to court and we want them in school.

KYLE MCGOWAN: We-- a-- now this is just personally as a former superintendent, if a kid is missing a lot of school, the worst thing to do is kick them out of school for missing school.

PANSING BROOKS: Right.

KYLE McGOWAN: OK? So--

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

KYLE McGOWAN: Yeah.

PANSING BROOKS: Yeah. So I, I mean, I just think we need to figure out something because Nebraska state law says the schools are in charge of authorizing when a, when a child misses school and whether, whether it counts against them or not, so we would have to be dealing with something on that to--

KYLE McGOWAN: Yeah, and this isn't really, I, I assume, related to LB1158, but most schools would have a process in which a parent would come in and say, listen, my kid missed school because of X, Y, Z. So, you know, can you back off a little bit.

PANSING BROOKS: One would hope, but that's not always true. OK, thank you.

WALZ: All right. Any other questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you very much for your testimony today. Anybody else that would like to speak in the neutral capacity?

SARAH CENTINEO: Sarah Centineo from Bellevue Public Schools. Madam Chairperson and--

WALZ: Can you spell--

SARAH CENTINEO: --Education Committee. Sarah, S-a-r-a-h, Centineo, C-e-n-t-i-n-e-o. I'm here on behalf of the Nebraska Association for School Boards and the NAS-- or and the Bellevue Public Schools as neutral on this bill. I wanted to give-- I thought it was important for this committee to have the perspective from the school board since this is what the, the bill affects. We have had in Bellevue-- and I-- so I'm also very active on the NASB and I have opportunities to work with my colleagues in the rural and urban areas. And we all have policies that address transparency and accessibility for parents, whether it's curriculum and all teaching materials. I appreciate Senator Sanders updating this bill to include nontraditional parent structures or guardianships and the digital-- we appreciate-- and the digital resources. We have had quite a roller coaster of meetings because of the issues that you certainly are familiar with and have

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seen here today. But we've never had a complaint that a parent has never been able to access the, the information that they've requested. So I didn't want this committee to have-- get the impression that it was because there was, there was some underlying issue. I think it's wonderful to update and keep things current. I would-- we would implore the committee to reconsider the penalty version of this bill. It's, I think, the best way to characterize it, it's kind of a hammer for an issue. The penalty version of this bill is to, is to withdraw state funding in violation. As a little bit of background, I'm also a lawyer, so I like process. The process here is a little unclear as to if there's an appeals process and how that would be meted out. The other problem is the county treasurer in districts where there are multiple school districts, there, there are counties with multiple school districts and there are multiple-- and there are county districts with multiple counties, right? So that portion is just problematic. The devil's quite frequently in the details in bills like this. So I just think that when we look at implementation for something like this that to flesh out that, that portion would be better serve all parties. And that concludes my comments. So I'm happy to ask-- answer any questions.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions from the committee? Senator Murman.

MURMAN: Thanks, Senator Walz. And thank you for testifying. Is Nebraska Association School Board still a member of the national organization?

SARAH CENTINEO: We are currently a member. We had dues paid and now I'm not under, I'm not under oath, so I'm giving you the best of my ability. I think our dues, our dues are due in, in the summer. So we were paid in the summer. So our dues then we are due to pay dues again on an annual basis, I think, in June. But I would have to check with our executive director.

MURMAN: OK, I've got to apologize. I was in Africa when you had, I think, your national or your state meeting.

SARAH CENTINEO: Sure.

MURMAN: And I think it was discussed there whether or not to remain a member of the national organization.

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SARAH CENTINEO: Like many things, like many things, we are seeing how things evolve and what kind of corrective actions, you know, any of-- any association we would be involved with or partner with to make sure that they represent our, our constituents, our districts and, and our, our families and our parents and the people we are-- we're elected to represent.

MURMAN: OK, so you know there was a problem with the national organization and involving the Attorney General United States that kind of had the image at least of being against parental involvement in school board meetings. So that's why I'm just asking, you know, what was the reasoning if you know about, you know, are, are you kind of on probation of whether or not you remain a member of the national organization or did you decide just to stay on or--

SARAH CENTINEO: So I, I can, I can tell you what I, what I understand, and I really do appreciate the question because transparency is very, very important. And right now, no decision has been made to renew our, our, our membership with the national, with the national organization. We have been in communication with them and continue to be in communication to see about what our expectations are of the national organization. But we're also in communication of our Nebraska school districts to make sure that we're meeting their needs and that their voices are being heard so that-- I believe we wrote a letter and I, I, I just-- I wasn't quite prepared for this. I've been involved in it, you know, explaining our stand about the perception of this letter that parents weren't included and, and invited, frankly, to be a part of our, our process to make sure that all of our districts know and that all of our families know and the people who elect us to our local boards know that we do work with their-- or appreciate their involvement. And I know our executive director met with some concerned parent organizations about this very issue. And there has been continuous communication to make sure that, again, everybody is being heard and everybody's needs, needs are being met.

MURMAN: Well, this, this bill is all about parental involvement, and I hope the Nebraska Association of School Boards is-- continues to encourage that. Thank you very much.

SARAH CENTINEO: Yes, of course. Thank you. And I appreciate the question.

WALZ: Senator Pansing Brooks.

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PANSING BROOKS: OK. Thank you. Thank you for being here again, Ms. Centineo.

SARAH CENTINEO: Sure.

PANSING BROOKS: I am-- I'm looking at Section 6 of the bill and it basically has a reasonableness standard. So you talked about being a lawyer so--

SARAH CENTINEO: Sure.

PANSING BROOKS: --I think I can talk to you as a lawyer. So anyway, they'll make a reasonable effort to make any learning materials available for public inspection. But then it goes on to say that if the reasonableness standard isn't met, which can be objective at times, that state aid is taken. That seems like a pretty significant penalty without ability to appeal or an ability to have some sort of due process methodology. So do you have any thoughts to that?

SARAH CENTINEO: Generally, a reasonable standard, and I know that as far as information requests, the attorney general has some opinions on that. So we would rely on that from, from a legal standpoint on reasonableness. And if I understand your question as far as state-- can you ask me your question again? I'm sorry.

PANSING BROOKS: Yeah, well, if, if the parents come in and think what the, the, the schools and the superintendent tried to comply and the parents think that what-- their effort wasn't reasonable, then all of a sudden they're, they're-- they-- the schools can possibly lose state aid and not have an appeal method.

SARAH CENTINEO: And, and that is very-- that's where we would encourage Senator Sanders to reconsider this, this penalty portion, because that would be punishing an entire district and a lot of kids for a violation of a reasonable-- reasonableness standard. The other thing-- and what concerns me is that with the county treasurers to withhold funds, are they the final arbiter of what reasonableness is? And that is not really their, their training-- within their wheelhouse and their training. So as a, as a, as a lawyer, that's, that's a difficult-- I guess that's a, that's a hurdle for me. So we, we would hope-- while we support this bill, we would hope that the penalty portion is revisited.

PANSING BROOKS: That's-- I would hope you'd think that, so.

SARAH CENTINEO: Right.

PANSING BROOKS: That's a pretty strong penalty.

SARAH CENTINEO: It is. It is, it is a strong penalty.

PANSING BROOKS: So for especially such a light standard in law. Anyway, thank you for sticking to that. I should have asked people before you. Thank you.

SARAH CENTINEO: No problem.

WALZ: Thank you. Any other questions? I see none. Thank you for coming to testify today.

SARAH CENTINEO: Thank you.

WALZ: Anybody else that would like to speak in the neutral capacity? Good afternoon.

MITCH KUBICEK: Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Mitch Kubicek, M-i-t-c-h K-u-b-i-c-e-k. I currently serve as a director of learning for Milford Public Schools, and I'm testifying today on behalf of our district and on behalf of Nebraska ASCD. I currently serve as the executive director of Nebraska ASCD, a state-- statewide organization that represents approximately 350 educational leaders, teachers, and administrators. Our-- one of our primary purposes is to help review policy for topics related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. We would like to thank Senator Sanders for her work on this bill. This bill helps ensure families continue to have access to educational materials, and this bill modernizes the language of the original bill put into law in 1994. Nebraska ASCD supports transparency in schools. We support family involvement in education. Research on effective schools clearly supports positive impact a strong, a strong family and community relationship has on a student's education. After a thorough review of the language in LB1158, I'm here to testify in a neutral position. We feel it would be beneficial to clarify the term "learning materials" included in this bill. We wonder how the term "learning materials" might be interpreted when district policies are developed. Districts currently develop curriculum documents such as pacing guides that already include topics for courses. If learning materials were interpreted as any material or activity used in a classroom, and this information was also required to be collected and kept up to date in real-time, this could divert a considerable amount of time away from planning for and delivering instruction. For example, one of our

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elementary math teachers was looking for additional ways to support students as they were learning long division. This teacher found a diagram online and created a card for each student to use as they worked their problems. This proved to be very helpful for students. If this card was considered part of the district's learning materials, we may feel the need to gather and record this information. We are not concerned about being transparent about this additional content. Our concern is about taking staffing and time away from instruction. If we were to reallocate a current employee to complete these types of tasks, we may have to shift a staff member away from instruction. For example, many of our paraprofessionals currently serve small academic groups throughout the day, and by removing them from small groups, we could potentially eliminate individualized instruction for as many as 25 to 30 students. This bill also includes withholding of school funds by the Commissioner of Education. We're supportive of accountability in schools. However, we are also supportive of processes that address issues directly at the building or district level. I appreciate Senator Sanders' comments about local control. We felt like current complaint procedures at the building level, we'd be able to resolve issues rather than to go directly through the process outlined in this bill. We support the efforts to ensure curriculum topics are readily accessible by families, and we support the work to ensure transparency in schools. We ask that clarification to the terms in this bill be considered not to divert limited resources away from instruction by possibly requiring the additional collection of learning materials. We also encourage language that promotes local communication in the, in the conflict resolution process. Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Any questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. So I'm not familiar with your group, Nebraska-- what's ASCD?

MITCH KUBICEK: ASCD is Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. We are a state affiliate of the national organization ASCD.

LINEHAN: And you have 350 education leaders?

MITCH KUBICEK: Yes, we have-- currently, we have around 350 members from the state of Nebraska and some members-- or some people in

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Nebraska are members of the national organization ASCD. And they may or may not be a member of the state affiliate.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions? I see none. Thanks so much for your testimony today.

MITCH KUBICEK: Thank you for your time.

JENNI BENSON: Good afternoon again.

WALZ: Good afternoon.

JENNI BENSON: Evening, maybe. I am Jenni Benson, J-e-n-n-i B-e-n-s-o-n, president of the Nebraska State Education Association. At this point in time, NSEA is neutral on LB1158. Even though we have some significant concerns on how LB1158 intends to mandate the mechanics of transparency upon local school districts and the additional teacher/staff workload it could create. However, we thank Senator Sanders for working with us on our concerns and are in an open and upfront matter. This is not a new policy. Nebraska's public record act already requires that public records belonging to a political subdivision or tax supported district in the state may be reviewed by citizens of the state and all other interested persons. Our concern is that LB1158 creates another set of mandates on top of existing mandates, as well as a new set of statutes that must be adhered to by teachers and school officials. We all recognize that these past two years have been challenging, and this is especially true for our students, for our educators, and for our parents. Our schools and teachers are and must continue to be focused on meeting the needs of our students. The workload educators are facing is overwhelming. It is important that we not unnecessarily add to the burden on our schools and teachers. Curriculum information is readily available to parents. Parents already have the ability to opt their children out of activities they find objectionable. I want to briefly address Section 6, which was already spoken about. It provides the requirement: To the extent practical, each public school district shall make a reasonable effort to provide the learning materials, including original materials. Unfortunately, there are people that no matter how reasonable you tried to be, requests are never satisfied. I want to finish by mentioning the same Section 7 of the bill that creates a new and very chilling enforcement of a mechanism that allows withholding education and state funding to a school. The NSEA, on behalf of our

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28,000 members across the state, ask that the committee consider amendments to the bill that would align more closely to the state records act or possibly even conduct an interim study to explore options to achieve the bill's goal. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. I agree with you that teachers shouldn't have to be burdened with more, but wouldn't this mostly fall on administrators?

JENNI BENSON: Well, I would think that-- our concern is that everything trickles down. And typically in a small school district or even a larger school district, the burden would fall then on the educators to provide-- this is exactly what a previous speaker was talking about. If you did an activity-- I was just in a small school district where they talked about making curriculum and doing things for their staff. It all falls on the teacher. So this would also fall on the teacher, and that becomes just really burdensome in the whole arena of what they're dealing with.

LINEHAN: Well, I think we had a testifier say that the school boards and the administration have to, have to review and clear the curriculum.

JENNI BENSON: Right. But if you have a parent come in and want alternative curriculum or want to different things or want, as this says right here, original materials, learning materials, reasonable effort, those materials have to come from the educator, right? They have to come from the teacher and that provide-- that makes them have much more work to do to just provide all of that every time if someone is requesting it.

LINEHAN: OK. And then I think part of the conversation, and, and I know we've been here a long time, so.

JENNI BENSON: That's OK.

LINEHAN: Part of it is having the parents have access to new material that's being introduced when it's at the administrative level, the school board level, new instructional materials. I don't think we're talking about a card to help with division. I think we're talking about books and the curriculum that the school is adopting.

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JENNI BENSON: But I also believe that any time you have a mandate like this that's open to interpretation, that's what's going to happen. It's going to be interpreted that-- then it comes back on the classroom teachers to provide those things.

LINEHAN: OK, but this is a different question?

JENNI BENSON: Yes.

LINEHAN: Would you have a problem with parents being able to access material that school boards or administrators are looking at?

JENNI BENSON: I already-- no, I already said that we don't have a problem with that.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you very much.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you--

JENNI BENSON: Thank you.

WALZ: --for your testimony today. Anybody else that would like to speak in the neutral capacity? Senator Sanders, you're welcome to close.

SANDERS: Thank you, Chairman Walz. I would like to thank all those that testified today. And I'd like to again reiterate that this bill is very reasonable. It does not require a list of all the material, curriculum school-- that the school uses. It's about policy and it leaves the power in the hands of the local school boards. I also want to correct a claim that this was a Goldwater template. This is not. We worked long and hard with several of those that are connected with the school and school boards. It is, it is a necessary update for an existing policy, a 30-year-old statute that was written when people watch music videos on MTV and their mobile phones were the size of bricks and they used dial-up Internet. So we need to change that. This is what the people want. Just, just look at the crowd that is here today, the Legislature website submissions and your email box-- inbox. We need to listen to the parents who are asking for an update. I hope that this will foster a stronger relationship with, with the school and the parents. Our world has changed and our transparency laws should change. And I believe this is a step in the right direction. With that, I will take any questions you may have.

WALZ: Questions from the committee? Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. I agree that the communication needs to be strong and direct with parents and the schools. I presume you heard my question about due process and the fact that it's a reasonableness standard. So if it's reasonable in somebody's mind or that they reasonably think that the schools have not properly complied, they could lose their funding in TEEOSA. That hurts the children.

SANDERS: But we needed a mechanism for some accountability and that was suggested. There are several others. But it does--

PANSING BROOKS: There are other methods in the statutes.

SANDERS: And there is also in a, a right to appeal. They can be heard.

PANSING BROOKS: There is?

SANDERS: Yeah. Let me go back in here.

PANSING BROOKS: I'm sorry I missed it.

SANDERS: It says opportunity. School district--

PANSING BROOKS: What page and line?

SANDERS: --and an opportunity and that--

PANSING BROOKS: What page and line? I'm sorry.

SANDERS: You are-- we're in Section 7,--

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

SANDERS: --line 12.

PANSING BROOKS: OK: opportunity to be heard-- commissioner, after notice to the school and an opportunity to be heard. Yeah, but if the commissioner decides that was wrong, then there's no opportunity to appeal after, I think, so that's why I said it.

SANDERS: So we'll work on that.

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

SANDERS: Absolutely.

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PANSING BROOKS: That's great, but I agree transparency and communication is key.

SANDERS: And I believe my intent was to foster a good relationship with the parents and the schools.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

SANDERS: I think that's where it needs to start and hopefully build a better relationship and trust. And I love it that the parents want to be more involved.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you.

WALZ: Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. And thank you for introducing this bill, Senator Sanders, to get parents more involved in our child's education. I think we know that parental involvement is one of the key aspects in a child's success. So the-- and maybe you sort of answered this question to Senator Pansing Brooks, but in discussion, in discussion about this bill previous to this hearing and as some of the testifiers said the main issue is the penalty provision. Would you be willing to modify that language somehow to, to change the penalty provision or eliminate the, the provision where they would lose their state funding?

SANDERS: Absolutely, open up for discussion.

DAY: OK. Thank you.

SANDERS: You're welcome. Thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions? That was going to be my question, so. Any other questions? I see none. Thank you, Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Thank you.

WALZ: That closes our hearing on LB1158. Do you need a bathroom break, five minutes? OK. All right. And it will open-- you need a bathroom break? OK. OK, open on what? And we will open on LB768. Just one second.

ALBRECHT: Sure.

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WALZ: I'm sorry.

LINEHAN: I'm sorry.

WALZ: I'm sorry, Senator Albrecht.

ALBRECHT: You're fine.

WALZ: I just had to clarify something.

ALBRECHT: It's a long day.

WALZ: How many, how many are here to testify on LB768? All right. So we are going to shorten the testimony to two minutes. You know, one thing I love about our Nebraska Legislature is that we all get the opportunity to come to a public hearing and speak. And I want to make sure that everybody who is here gets the opportunity to speak. So number one, we're going to shorten the testimony to two minutes. Number two, I really would appreciate it if everybody would stay on topic and please watch the light. A lot of people came from far away and that is, you know, I just want to make sure that everybody gets the opportunity to speak. So wanted to reiterate that two minutes. And welcome, Senator Albrecht.

ALBRECHT: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Walz and members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Joni Albrecht, J-o-n-i A-l-b-r-e-c-h-t, and I represent Legislative District 17 in northeast Nebraska, which includes Wayne, Thurston, Dakota, and a portion of Dixon Counties. Today, I'm before you introducing LB768, which removes the word "comprehensive" in Section 79-712 from the Health Education Program and prohibits the State Board of Education from developing, approving, distributing, adopting or promulgating any academic content standards in the new content area that is not explicitly authorized in Nebraska statute. Last March, I introduced my first bill to the Education Committee, LB281, also known as Erin's Law, at the request of my constituent, Michael Carnes from Wayne, Nebraska, who has worked with me for more than four years trying to get this bill to the floor. The purpose of LB281 was to educate K-12 children in an age-appropriate manner what appropriate touch is and what to do if a student feels that they're being touched inappropriately. I don't know how many children have been victims of sexual abuse during this time, but until I have confidence in what and how things are being taught to our children, I am not comfortable putting my name on this bill. In the process of preparing LB281, my staff and I worked closely with the

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Nebraska Department of Education to make sure that we were drafting legislation that would work well with their system. It happened to be the same time the State Board of Education and the Department of Education published the first draft of the Health Education Standards. Because the standards contained a section in each grade level about safe touch, Brian Halstead, the deputy commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education, contacted my office to compare the content of my bill to similar, similar language in the new Health Education Standards draft that, that came out that day. While Mr. Halstead guided my legislative aide through the standards, they quickly landed on the kindergarten Human Growth and Development section where Lisa, my LA, read out loud to him. Quote, State medically accurate name for body parts including genitalia. And discuss different kinds of family structures. For example, single parent, blended, intergenerational, cohabitating, adoptive, foster, and same-gender and interracial. Lisa asked Mr. Halstead if she was reading it correctly. If that was really the content for kindergarten and did this mean that the kindergartners would be expected to be tested on this information? Mr. Halstead said, yes, that is just a draft, and each local school district would be available to decide as it was not a standard mandate by the Legislature. I then went on to discover a shocking content material in every grade. In response, I informed my fellow state senators and 30 of us immediately signed a letter sent to the State Board of Education and the Department of Education and the commissioner imploring them to scrap the standards. That was the beginning of a journey that led us to the legislative bill, LB768. Sadly, the public trust has been broken, and now it's time for the Legislature to step in and restore that trust. When any trust is broken, excuse me, the people of this great state will lose trust in all of us and our government. We can't let that happen, and we won't. I come before you today to be sure that the State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education do their job by doing ours. Citizens deserve it in any sort of-- in anything short of sending a clear and concise message to the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Commissioner of Education is dereliction of our sworn duty. All taxpayer-funded agencies require transparency and oversight. This bill provides a long overdue check of the Nebraska Department of Education and its over 500 employees who coordinate education in our state. Local control is set forth by our Founding Fathers and Nebraska has embraced this idea since it becomes-- it has become a state. Local control is how we prevent another disaster, like the proposed education standards. Parents are the primary educators of their children. There is no purer form of local control than a parent or guardian directing their

child's education. Our job is clear. We should keep it short and simple. The State Board of Education and the Department of Education should focus on improving the standards that they have been authorized to formulate by this legislative body. Everything else should be returned to and be decided by the local schools themselves. These health education standards have created a crisis of confidence in the State Board of Education and our Department of Education, as evidenced by the overwhelming number of parents, Nebraska parents, grandparents, teachers, and others from all corners of the state who are standing in opposition of this content. The Nebraska parents and guardians are the primary educators of the children, and the State Board of Education and the Department of Education stepped outside of their jurisdiction when they published a Health Education Standard draft that introduced such controversial content unrepresentative of the majority of Nebraskans. Article VII of the Constitution of the State of Nebraska says that "The State Department of Education shall have general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the Legislature may direct." It also says: that the duties and powers of the State Board of Education shall, excuse me, be prescribed by the Legislature and that the Commissioner of Education shall have the power and duties as the Legislature may direct. Clearly, in Nebraska, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education and the Commissioner of Education are all to be directed by the Legislature. In the year 2000, state statute 79-760 was put into law, which requires the State Board of Education to adopt measurable academic content standards in subject areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and history. You will notice it was only the core topic standards that were mandated by the Legislature. Our job is clear that we should keep it short and simple. The State Board of Education and the Department of Education, along with the commissioner, should focus on improving standards that they have been authorized to formulate by the Legislature, and everything else should be returned to the-- to be decided by local schools themselves. As state senators, please join me and let's represent the people and the children by stepping in to settle and reestablish trust among parents, teachers, and students across Nebraska. Let's create legislation that clearly defines the roles of the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Commissioner of Education the way that those who have gone before us originally intended. I encourage you to vote LB768 out of committee where it can be debated on the floor so that all Nebraskans can see that we are doing our job in directing the educational system of our great state. And I'll be happy to take any questions.

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WALZ: Thank you, Senator Albrecht. Questions from the committee?
Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for bringing this, Senator Albrecht. Do you have some of the information that you're talking about that so objectionable that you could send to us?

ALBRECHT: Sure.

PANSING BROOKS: OK. I just don't know.

ALBRECHT: Objectionable in?

PANSING BROOKS: Well, I haven't seen what is being used that you, that you find objectionable.

ALBRECHT: Well,--

PANSING BROOKS: So if it's--

ALBRECHT: --the whole, the whole standards in education is, is extremely objectionable in many areas--

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

ALBRECHT: --to a lot of people, and I'd be happy to go over those with you--

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

ALBRECHT: --if you'd like.

PANSING BROOKS: So it using actual biological terms that's objectionable?

ALBRECHT: Oh, I think they're-- there are very, very few parts that I don't think very many people would probably say are exceptional. I mean, it's just the fact that most people are not the ones that I am here to, to defend, if you will, are the majority people in the state of Nebraska who object to the standards. If their state school or if their school board wants them to engage, I think that would be up to them as parents to go to their school board members and let them know where they stand on these issues.

PANSING BROOKS: OK, well, I, I agree that people should talk to people,--

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ALBRECHT: Thank you.

PANSING BROOKS: --but I don't know about the-- I, I don't object to using biological terms for--

ALBRECHT: Well, I don't know that it's just the biological terms themselves. We had, I don't know, over 200 letters. And I think a lot of the people that couldn't come today addressed to the committee exactly how they felt--

PANSING BROOKS: OK.

ALBRECHT: --about what was going on. I think it's imperative to, to read those. I sat through them all last night and there's a lot of information in there. So thanks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you.

ALBRECHT: Yeah.

PANSING BROOKS: OK, thank you.

ALBRECHT: Um-hum.

WALZ: Other questions from the committee? I, I have one.

ALBRECHT: Um-hum.

WALZ: And I'm not seeing it in the bill. So, so what does that process look like if it's up to the Legislature?

ALBRECHT: Well, anything that has been introduced from the floor of the Legislature are, I would say, hot topics that need to be vetted out on the floor of the Legislature. For instance, Senator Linehan had her, her reading by the time you get out of third grade bill, that was big. The civics bill, that was big. Anything in the health portion of it has been drugs, alcohol, and suicide and that came from the floor of the Legislature--

WALZ: OK.

ALBRECHT: --directed to the Department of Education.

WALZ: So, so somebody, Senator, Senator McKinney can bring a bill to the Legislature and it gets passed as a health standard or not passed as a health standard?

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ALBRECHT: Correct. He has one as a matter of fact right now with a, with a nice fiscal note, but, but it's directing the Department of Education to do what the floor of the Legislature approves.

WALZ: OK, even if it's a bill that gets passed and it's not--

ALBRECHT: Yep.

WALZ: All right.

ALBRECHT: Pretty much.

WALZ: OK.

ALBRECHT: Yeah.

WALZ: All right. Well, thank you, Senator Albrecht. Any other questions? I see none. Thank you.

ALBRECHT: Stay to close.

WALZ: First proponent. Good afternoon.

DOUG KAGAN: Good afternoon again, Senator. Doug Kagan, Omaha, representing Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom. The last few months have seen the fury of numerous angry mama bears and others unleashed against what we term an underhanded attempt by several State Board of Education members to drive through a set of sex education standards that violate traditional societal norms. The tidal wave of shock, anger, and resentment stems not only from the surreptitious way in which these standards appeared, but also from the fact that a cross-section of society, particularly individuals who hold traditional values, were not consulted or solicited beforehand in discussing and producing these standards. These state board members have lost and violated the trust of Nebraska taxpayers who pay for curriculum costs. A majority of state board members apparently intend to pursue this indoctrination of our children, judging by their vote on February 4 to not dismiss these standards permanently. Therefore, the only remedy for this situation is to pass a bill to prohibit the state board from adopting, approving, and distributing such standards. Local school districts still can promulgate these standards for their own programs, monitored and scrutinized by local parental and taxpayer involvement. As required by state law, the state board must adopt statewide standards for the basics as we know them: reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, but not health/sex education

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standards. The Legislature never has expressly authorized the state board to adopt such standards. Nothing in our state constitution requires the state board to adopt health/sex education standards. This board should concentrate on producing and advocating core curricula that demonstrably improve academic achievement in our public schools, not subvert the morals of our children. We urge this committee to advance LB768 to the full Legislature for debate. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. You were right on time. Appreciate that. Very good. Any questions from the committee? Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Chair Walz. What are traditional values?

DOUG KAGAN: That's a very relative term, and I think you'll see it quite a lot in this instance. Traditional values, I can just give you my opinion and what our traditional values have come down through the years in our country ever since our Founding Fathers.

McKINNEY: So if we go off-- if you're, if you're basing your judgment of traditional values on the Founding Fathers, then you believe in slavery as well, right?

DOUG KAGAN: No, I don't believe in slavery.

McKINNEY: But you, you said you based it off the traditional values of the Founding Fathers who owned slaves.

DOUG KAGAN: Well, it's a general term. I didn't want to be specific.

McKINNEY: All right. Thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you.

DOUG KAGAN: OK. Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent.

MARY HAMILTON: Hi.

WALZ: Hi.

MARY HAMILTON: My name is Mary Hamilton, and my name is M-a-r-y H-a-m-i-l-t-o-n, and I live in District 25 and I'm here in support of LB768. I'm a certified K-12 state of Nebraska teacher, and I would like to see guidelines for health education standards for Nebraska Public Schools clearly defined. CRT and CSE do not have a place in

becoming the standard in education in Nebraska. I want to see the curriculum and programs that public schools use align with the values of the majority of the Nebraska parents. I would like to also ensure that medically inaccurate and unscientific concepts do not become the standard in education. Ninety percent of Nebraskans participating in the survey from Nebraska Department of Education showed that we did not support draft number one. There was overwhelming opposition to both drafts that were presented by the board. I was present at several of these meetings and saw and heard testimony presented. Testimony was presented from a freedom of information requests that revealed emails from some of the board members that were recruiting outside groups such as Planned Parenthood and some of these board members overstepped their bounds. Emails show that Debra Neary urged the department to use an advocate of comprehensive sex education employed by Women's Fund of Omaha. We, the parents and teachers, feel that we are left out of the process. We also believe that the State of Nebraska Board of Education is getting rid of them like we requested. Facebook, where there were over 20,000 members in this group that I belong to, it's called the Coalition to Protect Nebraska Children. I'm truly concerned about the harm this may cause, and I also want to add that a lot of people are taking their kids out of public schools. I was a public educator. I am now homeschooling my grandchildren because I do not believe in this. I don't want this for our kids. But I do have three children that are not homeschooled because their parents can't.

WALZ: OK.

MARY HAMILTON: So thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks for coming today. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you.

MARY HAMILTON: Sorry, I had to talk really fast, but thank you so much for your time.

WALZ: That's all right. Next proponent.

WARD GREISEN: Good afternoon.

WALZ: Good afternoon.

WARD GREISEN: My name is Ward Greisen, W-a-r-d G-r-e-i-s-e-n, and I'm in support of LB768. I believe Nebraska State Board of Education needs legislative oversight in their development of educational standards. Through the course of last year, the board tried to implement radical

health standards that sought to sexualize our kids. As a knowledge of their plans grew, so did the opposition of parents, grandparents, concerned Nebraskans across the state of Nebraska. Even with this opposition, the State Board of Education continues to make plans to implement these health standards, as became glaringly obvious during last-- their last meeting. LB768 would, would rein in this madness and set limits around the content of any health standards. The State Board of Education needs this oversight. They have lost the confidence of Nebraskan parents and grandparents. They have demonstrated through their meetings they are more focused on their own personal agenda than the education of our, education of our kids. Recent articles on Nebraska schools statewide proficiency level show our schools are failing. When English and math test scores show proficiency levels in the 40s and 50s, something is seriously wrong, and yet our State Board of Education is focused on teaching first, second, and third graders gender identities and sexual acts. The State Board of Education needs to get back to the basics of education teaching the English, math, and science. This bill would be the first significant step toward ensuring this happens. Please support this significant piece of legislation. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks for being on time.

WARD GREISEN: Yeah.

WALZ: Questions from the committee? Senator McKinney.

WARD GREISEN: Yes.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Have you ever thought about, you know, maybe our proficiency levels in our schools are low because so many kids who you mentioned in your testimony don't feel as though they're accepted or they could be themselves inside a school, so they're checked out?

WARD GREISEN: You know, I think the proficiency levels are low. I think it's a, it's a matter of, I think, number one, family support. You know, I grew up in a, a family. My dad had an eighth grade education and the very thing he focused on all of us kids and I've got, you know, four brothers and four sisters. The main focus, he said, was education. Everything else was secondary to him.

McKINNEY: But what--

WARD GREISEN: And he drove that in us. He did not accept anything less than, you know, getting A's and B's and putting forth our best, and

it's through that background that drives proficiency. And then you take it to the schools, right? And you need the schools to be focused on these skills to teach the kids. And if they're focused on these, these skills, and I'll use the basic skills of English, math, and science and things like that, basically the bill you introduced earlier, you know, in computer science and getting these kids excited about those things is so very important.

McKINNEY: I agree it is important, but we also have to make sure that we have environments in our schools, in our education system where our students can live and be themselves and not feel like they're being ostracized and discriminated against. So I, I, I, I think that we ought to have to think about that when we talk about test scores are low. Think about the environment in which we're subjecting students to if we want-- if, if we don't want to allow them to be themselves or educate their peers on why another student may believe in something or view themselves in a different light. But thank you for your testimony.

WARD GREISEN: All right. I guess we'll just agree to disagree on that.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

WARD GREISEN: So thank you.

WALZ: Thank you.

WARD GREISEN: Yes.

WALZ: Thank you. Any other questions? Senator Day. Oh, sorry, you have another question.

WARD GREISEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. So you mentioned-- you said our State Board of Education is focused on teaching first, second, and third graders gender identities and sexual acts. Where did you get that information from?

WARD GREISEN: So, honestly, just go into the State Education Board meetings. If you listen to last month's meeting, listen to some of the testimony that Kirk Penner put forth and listen to some of the testimony that some of the people that spoke in the meeting put forth. And I think there's a lot of information out there that supports what I just said there.

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DAY: So have you read-- did you actually read the standards [INAUDIBLE]?

WARD GREISEN: I personally have not. No, I went on the testimony that I heard in the meeting.

DAY: I have the standards and they're not teaching gender identity or sexual acts to first, second, or third graders.

WARD GREISEN: OK, well, that's not kind of what I heard in the meeting.

DAY: So I would hope that we would be able to read through the standards as opposing-- as opposed to taking the testimony of someone who hasn't read the standards. So thank you.

WARD GREISEN: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent. I think that's all the questions.

WARD GREISEN: Yeah, before I get up to leave this time.

WALZ: All right.

WARD GREISEN: Thank you. Yep.

WALZ: Yeah. Next proponent.

JEANNE GREISEN: Sorry, I would have combined if I knew we could have before, so I'm here again. My name is Jeanne Greisen, J-e-a-n-n-e G-r-e-i-s-e-n. I'm here in support of LB768. This bill is needed to clearly define the guidelines for health education in Nebraska. And in addition, the curriculum needs to match up with the values of Nebraska parents. As a healthcare provider, I think it's safe to say that most Nebraskans support their children being taught the dangers of illegal drugs, which it states in the Legislature, and the dangers of illegal drugs and legal abused narcotics, benzodiazepines, what have you. I think it's also safe to say that it would be a good thing for kids to be taught health benefits of proper sleep, which there is an alarming trend of sleep deprivation in these kids, which is causing many health issues which happen to mimic ADHD. I think it's safe to say that most Nebraskans would agree that proper nutrition is important to be taught in a health class, considering the cost of diabetes in Nebraska is \$1.4 billion a year. That's alarming. And kids are overweight and they're obese. I think it's safe to say that most Nebraskans would

agree that the dangers of social media and the stress that the social media puts on kids is real and should be talked about in relation to good health. Most Nebraskans-- what most Nebraskans don't want their kids to be taught is comprehensive sex education, which, which is offensive, startling, and inappropriate for adults, much less children. If you think it's an exaggeration to use those words offensive, startling, inappropriate, I urge you to listen to the Nebraska State Board of Education meeting. That was, what last week? The most recent one. An entire day was wasted. Yes, wasted, discussing, voting on amendments or proposals, and manipulating ways to corrupt the minds of children with comprehensive sex education. Yet, not one thing was discussed that entire day that would have changed the life of one child. In conclusion, I urge you to vote for this bill.

WALZ: Thank you. Thank you.

JEANNE GREISEN: Thank you.

WALZ: Questions from the committee? Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. And thank you, is it Mrs. Greisen?

JEANNE GREISEN: Um-hum.

DAY: OK. Thank you for being here today.

JEANNE GREISEN: Sure.

DAY: So you mentioned comprehensive sex education and then talking about offensive, startling, and inappropriate for adults, much less their children and corrupting the minds of children. What is it in the standards that you feel is offensive, startling, and inappropriate?

JEANNE GREISEN: So I saw some of the first ones that were put forward with the graphic pictures teaching kids about their body. Do I think it's appropriate to show young kids pictures with a mirror checking out their-- they're looking in a mirror with a handheld mirror, checking out their privates or doing inappropriate things with little boys and their penises? Do we have to put that in, in education? Can the parent not teach that at home when they feel that that age is appropriate? Because maybe a kid in first grade is not ready for that. Maybe they're ready for that in third grade.

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DAY: Were they teaching kids in first grade to examine their genitals with mirrors?

JEANNE GREISEN: Is that in there now? Is it in the standards that they were wanting to do? Yes, it was in there.

DAY: They were teaching first graders--

JEANNE GREISEN: So nothing, nothing has been done yet because the State Board of Education keeps tabling these things that they want to put in there. So is it being taught now? No. Do they want to teach it? Yes. Is that why we're here? Yes, because the State Board of Education is hellbent on getting these to go through and because there's so much opposition, we're holding them off. But that is where you guys have to come into play and not let this go forward. That's what they're wanting to do. And I urge you listen to that last education board meeting and then Kirk Penner will read to you, and so will the guy testimony-- his testimony out of Kearney. What's in the books in these public schools? Do you think it's offensive to have a book read, what's the difference between a fag and a refrigerator? Do you think that's offensive?

DAY: Ma'am, I would venture to guess that there is nothing in these books using the word fag [INAUDIBLE].

JEANNE GREISEN: That is in the Kearney High School Library. It is in Kearney.

DAY: OK. Thank you.

JEANNE GREISEN: He took it out-- he checked it out.

DAY: Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you.

JEANNE GREISEN: You're welcome.

WALZ: Next proponent.

AMBER PARKER: OK.

WALZ: Stay on topic. Go ahead.

AMBER PARKER: Amber Parker, A-m-b-e-r, last name, Parker, P-a-r-k-e-r. I'm a proponent for LB768 because the Nebraska Department of

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Education, quite frankly, all of the members in 2021 should have been fired from what was being pushed. How can you explain to teach children anal and oral sex? That was in the first draft. This agenda goes back to 2015. There was a legislative resolution, LR334, and in it-- Senator Morfeld, this was your legislative resolution, and it was to do an interim study on comprehensive sex education. And at that hearing and tying everything together here in a nutshell in a short time is Planned Parenthood educator was chosen, someone who had been, excuse me, a Planned Parenthood educator for 15 years, the Nebraska Department of Education was not representing, representing a majority of the Nebraskan parents. They were representing Planned Parenthood agenda, and that's not right, and I, I, I questioned why in the world of the meetings that I have been to hasn't been talking about reading, writing, arithmetic. It's been talking about sex and that these, these seven board members want to push this. And the parents raised red flags saying, we do not want pedophile grooming. Again, why would you-- and some of you say pedophile grooming. Because why would you teach children anal and oral sex? This was in the first draft. This is greatly concerning. It is time for the state senators to stand up. Please pass LB768. It will put the parameters and it will bring a focus back on education. This is not a job of any person to share and force and teach children anal and oral sex, as that first draft showed. And that in itself was greatly, greatly concerning.

WALZ: Thank you.

AMBER PARKER: Thank you.

WALZ: Any questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you.

AMBER PARKER: Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent. Any opponents?

JULIE FREDRICKSON: I'm for.

WALZ: You are a proponent?

JULIE FREDRICKSON: Yes, I am.

WALZ: OK.

JULIE FREDRICKSON: Sorry, I'm nervous. Senators, my name is Julie Fredrickson. That's J-u-l-i-e F-r-e-d-r-i-c-k-s-o-n. I want to thank Senator Albrecht for this legislation. I have a unique situation in

that I'm running for Legislature in this state. I've been out knocking on doors, talking to constituents. Well, soon to be. I represent a large legislative district that encompasses three school districts: Omaha Public Schools, District 66, and Millard. Parents are very upset. They feel like they're losing parental control of what their kids are taught. They have looked to the school board for years for direction, but they're not getting any control because it's all controlled by the state school board. I would say that I would recommend a solution for this volatile situation that we're in with losing parental control, that you at least consider releasing it to the full Unicameral so they can debate and vote. You've got constituents that you represent just like I will when I'm down here. If you haven't been to a school board meeting lately or you don't read the transcripts, you have no idea how bad it is. People are really upset, and I'm just suggesting that instead of you taking it upon yourselves to kill this bill, that you pass it on and allow 49 senators to debate and discuss the legislation. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks for watching the time. I appreciate that. Any questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you so much. Proponent?

MARK BONKIEWICZ: Um-hum. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Mark Bonkiewicz, B-o-n-k-i-e-w-i-c-z. I'm originally a wheat farmer from Sidney, Nebraska. I live in Omaha now and you have a copy of this document that's coming to you right now, which is a picture of the 49 senators that are currently serving us. And we certainly thank you for your time and energy and expertise in serving us. The green dots on each one of the numbers there are the 28 senators who on April the 1st signed the back page, which is the memo stating that they were against the sex ed standards and CRT standards and social/emotional learning standards that had been introduced by the Department of Education. Since that period of time, there have been ten State Board of Education meetings. The level of opposition at each meeting continues to be higher, higher in percentage. The last time there was only one person who spoke in favor of it. There were 27 people against it. We've had 400 people that showed up in Kearney previously, and the vast majority of those over 90 percent of the people there were in opposition. So I'll just summarize by saying this is the list of the people in the state of Nebraska that are against the sex ed standards and why this bill, LB768, is so important for you to take control and tell the legisla-- tell the school board what they can and cannot create standards on. You have the Governor, the list of the senators, you have the Nebraska Catholic Conference representing a quarter of a

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million Nebraska's Catholics, the Nebraska Family Alliance that represents 200,000, the Protect Nebraska Children Coalition, which is 21,000 people, and Nebraskans for Founders' Values. We have thousands of Nebraskans across the state that receive our minuteman alerts. I urge you to vote this out of committee and be leaders in getting it passed by April 20. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thanks. I just want to clarify and maybe my memory is wrong, Mr. Bonkiewicz. But I think this on the sex standards was separate from the CRT letter. There were two letters.

MARK BONKIEWICZ: Well, they are all mixed together now because--

LINEHAN: Well, I know but for the record.

MARK BONKIEWICZ: Oh, for the record, you just want to clarify that this particular one was for CSE? That's fine.

LINEHAN: That's what we called the [INAUDIBLE].

MARK BONKIEWICZ: OK.

LINEHAN: OK. All right. Thank you very much.

MARK BONKIEWICZ: Sure.

WALZ: Any other questions? I don't see anything. Thank you.

MARK BONKIEWICZ: OK. Thank you.

WALZ: Next proponent. All right, we'll move on to opponents?

JESSE BARONDEAU: Good afternoon. My name's Jesse Barondeau, J-e-s-s-e B-a-r-o-n-d-e-a-u. Please let me to provide the-- some professional medical opinion and recommendations on this topic. I was born and raised in rural South Dakota, now live and practice in Nebraska. I was the only board certified adolescent medicine physician in Nebraska or the Dakotas. I cannot emphasize enough the benefits that could be afforded the Nebraska's youth, families, and communities in allowing the Department of Education to work with professionals such as myself and others to develop and create a medically accurate standard of comprehensive health education for our public schools. I had the pleasure to coauthor a report on this topic that was published in the

Journal of Adolescent Health, and I provided it that in the print with the testimony here. This was written to help state and school board authorities to help make well-informed decisions in adopting the development of medically accurate health education for our youth. These tools are supported by every major medical organization with focus-- with a focus on caring for youth and adolescents, including the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are supported by now decades of research and data that demonstrates the benefits. A lot of research, hard work, and time goes into these standards for the good of our youth and communities and it does get frustrating when misunderstandings and inaccurate political rhetoric drown out the good intentions of such health and education. I would strongly oppose and discourage bills that aim to create government barriers to recommended health education standards that professionals, such as myself, know would greatly benefit our youth and communities. I just want to address a few common, misleading talking points. One, health education is the responsibility of parents or parents who know best. We-- that's partially true, and we encourage parents to talk to kids about this, but that just doesn't happen consistently. Also, the school health education does not prevent parents from this responsibility. We want to work together as a team on this. Thirdly, or secondly, my religious beliefs don't align. Medically accurate health information is accurate for anyone, regardless of anyone's religion. Anybody can practice any religion with or without this health education. This does not prevent that. This health education would encourage to delay sex and be healthy in our relationships. This education will only improve the negative outcomes in the state. It would save tax and healthcare dollars in the long run and improve our rural and urban communities. Government getting in the way of attempts to improve the well-being of the state through medically recommended education to our youth is not conservative or progressive. It's simply a mistake. We should not make this a fight or make it illegal. We should work together on this. Please support medical and education professionals who are trying to combine our local expertise for the benefit of all our children by opposing LB768.

WALZ: Thank you so much.

JESSE BARONDEAU: It was written for three minutes.

WALZ: Let me see if there are any questions.

JESSE BARONDEAU: I wrote it for three minutes.

WALZ: Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you for being here. I don't want to miss pronounce your name, but you're a medical doctor, right?

JESSE BARONDEAU: Um-hum. Yep, M.D.

LINEHAN: So on the second page of this, you said information should be medically accurate information given and then opportunities for adolescents. So you think it should start in kindergarten or in junior high?

JESSE BARONDEAU: Well, age appropriate.

LINEHAN: I think that's the [INAUDIBLE].

JESSE BARONDEAU: It runs-- right. So there's different levels of things [INAUDIBLE]. You shouldn't teach-- we're not teaching anybody how to have sex anywhere. It's more about how to be healthy about it. We realize they're going to find out about it eventually anyway. It just happens naturally. We all know that for eons. So seventh, seventh and eighth grade would be when you teach sex ed.

LINEHAN: Did you read the first draft of the standards?

JESSE BARONDEAU: Yeah, well, yeah, it was kind of-- it was a first draft and it was not very well-- it wasn't ready for publication yet because it was not well-spelled out, which was led to, I think, a lot of the misunderstanding of things because all the little-- a little phrase was not described what it was meant to be.

LINEHAN: So you understand why people were concerned?

JESSE BARONDEAU: I understand exact-- I understand exactly why people were upset by it because it was not released in a very well thought out way. And a lot of-- when you hear sex and kids, yes, it's going to cause a lot of dismay. It's got to be very well-- it's a nuanced conversation. And I don't want to teach a first grader how to have sex. That's, that's silly. But seventh and eighth graders, they're eventually going to learn about that anyway through online porn, YouTube, friends. We've learned about this since the 1960s, 1800s, people have always learned about this stuff.

LINEHAN: Probably since the beginning of time.

JESSE BARONDEAU: Yeah, humankind. Yes. So-- and now have even more ways to learn about it more quickly. We just want to get ahead of that and give accurate information so they can make accurate, healthy decisions, which could be abstinence or health, or know where to go to get help when they run into these situations, either on their own or force or whatever it may be. First grade teaching accurate body parts are that-- they teach what a penis and vagina is by calling it the "hoo" and the "ha ha" or whatever. That is actually a relevant medical thing that we're trying to get away from that because that kind of makes confusion when they get older and when you're talking about things, there's no reason not to call it a penis and vagina. That's just what it is. That's not weird. Seventh and eighth grade is when the sex ed could start. And if it sounds like a crazy thing, it probably is. I would recommend asking the professionals what they're trying to get at, rather than learning a phrase and go on social media and hearing-- it's like a big gossip rumor that just blew up. I think-- I moved here as this was going on, so I kind of learned about this as it was happening and when I saw what they were trying to do, like, well, it makes a lot of sense. But I also-- I'm from South Dakota, the culture is the same. I could see everybody getting upset about the same thing. It was a lot of misunderstanding and it was a lot of wasted time in the school board meetings about it. And I would not gauge the who-- how the population of Nebraska is for or against this based on who shows up to a meeting at 6:00 in the morning or 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. on a Tuesday, like I just did here. That's not the population of Nebraska. But in general, we're trying to help people out and we're trying to do the things that works together with everybody. I'm religious and I'm, I'm Lutheran, kid's are Catholic. So, so for all--

LINEHAN: Thank you.

JESSE BARONDEAU: --it's meant to be helpful.

LINEHAN: Thank you.

WALZ: Appreciate that. Any other questions? I don't see any. Thank you for coming to--

JESSE BARONDEAU: Thank you.

WALZ: --testify today. Any other opponents?

DENISE POWELL: I think I can officially say good evening now instead of good afternoon. Good afternoon, Chairman Walz-- Chairwoman Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Denise Powell, D-e-n-i-s-e P-o-w-e-l-l, and I'm here as a mother of two students currently enrolled in Omaha Public Schools, Western Hills Elementary, go Wildcats. My kids are in second grade and sixth grade. But I'd like to focus on my daughter, who's in sixth grade and at a really critical age where these kinds of health programs have the greatest impact. I want you to imagine being an 11-year-old girl today, and I know that that is a harder ask for some of us here today. But believe me, when I tell you that the society we live in tells you that all the things that are happening naturally to your body are gross, embarrassing, should be hidden away or moved entirely, your body hair, your period, your training bra, your changing hormones. Those are things that can be a recipe for a really, really tough few years. Added to that is social media creating an unrealistic standard of beauty and perfection, making that awkward transition of puberty even more painful for some. Now growing up, puberty and sex were not things that we spoke about with my parents. When I got my first period, I was terrified and embarrassed of what was happening to my body and mortified that anybody in my school would know. Because of the foundation given to my daughter at school, I was able to have more in-depth and open conversation with her. As a result, she's prepared for the changes that come with puberty. While I always wanted to believe that I'd be a much cooler, more open parent than my parents were with me, I sometimes find it difficult to start conversations with my daughter. That's why I'm enormously grateful for the lessons that she's receiving in sixth grade. She came home with several questions that opened the door to age-appropriate conversations around sex and sexuality. She asked me questions like what happens if somebody forces you to have sex? And I thought it was illegal or impossible for someone to have a baby if they weren't 18. This conversation, sparked by what she learned in school, was really, really important, as she's about to enter junior high next year. There are studies by health organizations, including the American Psychological Association, all reporting an increase in major depression and rates of suicide among teen girls in the U.S. And to get even more specific. A study by the American Association of Pediatrics-- oh my light is red. Oh look, two minutes are so fast.

WALZ: I know they are.

DENISE POWELL: OK.

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WALZ: I apologize. Sorry.

DENISE POWELL: Sorry.

WALZ: Let me see if we have any questions.

DENISE POWELL: Great.

WALZ: Questions from the committee? Don't have any. Thank you.

DENISE POWELL: Thank you so much for your time.

WALZ: Appreciate your testimony. Next opponent. Good afternoon.

DEBRA McKNIGHT: Good afternoon. My name is Debra McKnight, D-e-b-r-a M-c-K-n-i-g-h-t. I serve as a United Methodist pastor. I have been in Nebraska since 2007, and I'm here to wholeheartedly object to this bill. I believe proactive, age appropriate, research-based sex education standards are essential to the health and well-being of young people that I nurture in my congregations, in my home, and beyond. During the debate about health standards, I attended many times. I watched people who could not identify what DSM stands for use that acronym. I watched people offer aggressive behaviors, talk about Sodom and Gomorrah and Christian values. As a pastor in the United Methodist Church with a master's of divinity, I want to be clear that they do not represent the only voice within the Christian tradition, and they are based in nostalgia more than biblical scholarship. Students need and deserve proactive education. Anything less than this is a failure on the part of adults. I want this kind of education for my second grade daughter. I have read all of the standards in depth. I support them. I also have a master's in curriculum and instruction, and I have worked as an educator and as a pastor with LGBTQIA folks. Young people in this space of identity development need to see books about a prince running away with a prince or a family with two moms or a family with a mom and a grandma. Because when they start to see that they don't fit in, they don't think, ah, there's a bias in my culture. They think something is wrong with me. I lament the number of times that I have heard, as a pastor, the story of someone who said I felt like something was wrong with me. This is the experience growing up and we can do better.

WALZ: Thank you. Questions from the committee? I don't see any.

DEBRA McKNIGHT: Thank you.

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WALZ: Thank you for waiting all afternoon. Thank you for your testimony. Good afternoon.

SARA RIPS: Good afternoon. My name is Sara Rips, S-a-r-a R-i-p-s. I am the LGBTQ legal and policy counsel for the ACLU of Nebraska. I am here today to speak in opposition to LB768. The ACLU supports students' rights, parents' rights, educational equity, gender and racial justice. As such, we oppose this measure as it is a candid reaction to recent efforts by the State Board of Education to develop content area standards related to comprehensive health education. The issues that generated the most discussion clearly targeted LGBTQ youth and families and hateful, harmful political rhetoric, and sought to inject aspects of erasing truth from discussions of race and gender in our schools. The State Board of Education is an independent state entity accountable to voters. As part of their responsibilities, they provide curriculum guidelines to assist schools while upholding our strong tradition of local control and parental involvement. Unfortunately, this measure could have unintended but serious consequences by ending the State Board of Education's already existing content, education standards for agriculture, world languages, skilled and technical sciences, physical education, and fine arts. Further, this measure will most definitely disparately impact rural school districts who will lose access to the up-to-date best practices, standards, and metrics. We must do what we can to ensure that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, have access to the best possible education. And we must respect teaching truth in our history and our science and reject efforts of government censorship in our curriculum discussions. We must do what we can to ensure that all teachers, regardless of district, have access to the best possible resources and supports. And-- thank you, Senators.

WALZ: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that. Senator Murman.

MURMAN: Thank you, Senator Walz. Before this past year, do you think the State Board of Education members when the voters voted for or or didn't vote for them, do you think most voters really knew much about who they were voting for?

SARA RIPS: It is my sincere hope that everyone who participates in our democracy takes the time to learn about the candidates and their positions. So I-- I hope that everyone who voted took that time, Senator.

MURMAN: Thank you.

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WALZ: Any-- Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: You said you were most concerned about rural-- or am I-- I don't want to misquote you. You said something about rural districts.

SARA RIPS: Yes. So part of the reason that the State Board of Education is empowered to develop content area standards is to ensure that all school districts across the state have up-to-date best practices, metrics, rubrics, and curriculum. And so by limiting it to only reading, writing, math, science, and history basically, right, to social studies, you-- there is a serious cutoff there of all of the other content area standards that already exist that allow our rural school districts to compete.

LINEHAN: Why would it be different from rural than urban?

SARA RIPS: I think that a lot of the-- the school districts, OPS, LPS, District 66, that they have better funding and ability to-- to develop those things and it leaves rural school districts who might not have the same funding opportunities in the lurch.

LINEHAN: Thank you.

SARA RIPS: Thank you, Senator.

WALZ: Any other questions? I don't see any. Thank you very much.

SARA RIPS: Thank you, Senator.

WALZ: Next opponent.

JULANE HILL: Are you tired yet? My name is Julane Hill, J-u-l-a-n-e H-i-l-l, and I'm testifying in opposition of LB768. COVID, disease prevention and control, improper nutrition, bullying, dating violence, teen pregnancy, alcohol, tobacco, and substance abuse, suicide, depression and I could go on and on, but you get what I'm getting at. All societal ills are laid at the front doorstep of our schools, and our schools are expected to positively impact them and they do. Many accomplish this through comprehensive health education. Comprehensive health education is built on pedagogy delivered by professional educators and provided to all students grades kindergarten through high school. One of the key parameters of comprehensive health education are health education standards and sex education is only one content area out of eight. These standards are research based and guide the knowledge and skills students should learn, practice, and

demonstrate. They create a framework for teaching, learning and assessment, and articulate a trajectory for knowledge and skill acquisition across all grade levels. Standards describe what students are expected to know and do, while locally defined curriculum and instructional materials are used to help students master the standards. A comprehensive health education curriculum guided by the health education standards provides a clear set of behavioral outcomes. It is research-based, medically accurate, and provides age and developmentally appropriate information. Comprehensive health education is theory driven and addresses social influences, attitudes, norms, and skills that influence specific health-related behaviors. Students learn how to assess their vulnerability, their health risk behaviors, health problems, and exposure to unhealthy situations. Instructional strategies such as group discussions, cooperative learning, problem solving, role playing, and I could go on. They all help to build personal and social competence by building the essential skills they need in order to deal with societal pressures and to avoid or reduce risk-taking behaviors. And finally, curriculum materials are free of culturally biased information and are inclusive of diverse cultures and lifestyles. And one last thing I'd like to say is if LB768 were to pass, health education standards, which are totally voluntary here in Nebraska, they are not required, would be eliminated along with others that you heard from, from Sarah Rips. And health education would be reduced to the teaching of drug use, misuse, and abuse, and intellectual disability and other developmental disabilities. Is that what we want for our children? Thank you.

WALZ: Let me see if we have any questions for you. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thank you so-- oh, wait. We do. Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Aren't they voluntary now?

JULANE HILL: Yes.

LINEHAN: So you don't think they-- you don't think the school board should be in charge of what's being taught?

JULANE HILL: No. The state standards that the Department of Education puts out that are research, medically accurate, theory driven, they are the best practices. Schools can adopt those if they want to or they can create their own. They don't have to adopt those. The only standards that are required for schools to adopt are the reading, math, science and social studies.

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LINEHAN: That's because the Legislature said so.

JULANE HILL: Right. Right. But most schools will adopt standards. They're looking for that guidance.

LINEHAN: No, but you understand we're skipping this step. I think that's Senator Albrecht's point.

JULANE HILL: Yes.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you for being here.

JULANE HILL: Thank you.

ABBI SWATSWORTH: [INAUDIBLE] use the on-deck chair, which I recommend to keep things moving. Good evening, Senators. My name is Abbi Swatsworth, A-b-b-i S-w-a-t-s-w-o-r-t-h. I am here tonight representing OutNebraska. We're a statewide education advocacy organization for the LGBTQ community. [INAUDIBLE] research conducted by Nebraska youth about Nebraska youth, which will --you will hear more of, 54 percent of LGBTQ youth reported that their LGBTQ identity made it harder for them to participate in their classes. Forty percent of Nebraska LGBTQ students felt unsafe or uncomfortable in their classes. And all students responding to the survey overwhelmingly reported the need for more information on sexual orientation, gender identity, consent and healthy relationships, and skills and resources. The Trevor Project reports that affirming spaces lower the rates of attempted suicide among LGBTQ youth. But only one in three LGBTQ youth found that their homes were affirming, meaning that affirming schools are more important than ever. Comprehensive health education would include education on sexual orientation and gender identity, which helps those students to feel seen, heard, and respected, or thereby affirmed and can be suicide prevention. If we are talking about preventing suicide among youth, we must talk about comprehensive sex education and comprehensive health education in general. The removal of the word "comprehensive" from this statute is dangerous and leaves youth at risk. I'm happy to try to answer questions.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions from the committee? Senator Pansing Brooks.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you for coming, Ms. Swatsworth. Can you speak a little bit more about the definition of comprehensive and what-- what you think about that [INAUDIBLE]?

ABBI SWATSWORTH: Yeah. I believe comprehensive to be much more than just the very basics we might get. I think it does include medically accurate terminology for body parts. It includes social, emotional learning about different family structures that honor the reality of Nebraska's students because we do have students who live in families that are single parents or grandparents, blended families, interracial families, gay families. So I think it includes that. I do think it also includes information about gender identity, sexual orientation, things that, as I said, see, hear, and respect all students. I think it includes more than just drug and alcohol and developmental disability information, but includes information about how to stay safe, how to make healthy decisions about your own body, how to engage in healthy relationships and the dangers of unhealthy relationships, and adolescent dating violence which happens. I think all of that is wrapped up in the word "comprehensive." And so that's partly why I believe its removal can be so dangerous.

PANSING BROOKS: I presume it also includes good and bad touch like from an adult.

ABBI SWATSWORTH: Yes, it would. And teaching those medically accurate terminologies is what is the basis of safe or unsafe touch as we talk about which is the best practice now actually, safe and unsafe touch. And without those medically accurate terminologies, it's much harder to talk about that. Children need to know at an early age what those are.

PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for advocacy--

ABBI SWATSWORTH: Thank you.

PANSING BROOKS: --for LGBTQ+ community.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Could you-- thank you, Chair Walz. Could you share the survey with us?

ABBI SWATSWORTH: I'm sure we can make the survey available, yes, both the infographic and the full survey can be made available to the whole committee.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much, appreciate it.

ABBI SWATSWORTH: You're welcome.

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WALZ: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony today.

ABBI SWATSWORTH: Thank you.

WALZ: Good afternoon.

JAMIE GOULD: Good afternoon. My name is Jamie, J-a-m-i-e, Gould, G-o-u-l-d. Quick warning: I'm going to discuss sexual assault. The point of school is to prepare students for the real world. Do you not need to understand your own health in the real world? I was a researcher with the Adolescent Health Project in Women's Fund last year, and we researched Nebraska students' experiences in school-based sex ed. We surveyed 204 students ages 15 to 19 across Nebraska, and the results speak for themselves. Students want comprehensive sex ed in school. We found when they don't learn this content in school, they largely turn to the Internet and social media. Most reported doing so to learn about sexual orientation and gender identity, while about two thirds wanted to learn both in school. I was sexually assaulted when I was 15. If I had received comprehensive sex ed, I would have been taught the warning signs. Removing "comprehensive" from the statute is ridiculous to me. None of us would say students don't need a comprehensive understanding of math or the English language. It seems people are opposed to the word because actual comprehensive sex ed is queer inclusive and provides resources to have safer sex if students choose. Comparing respondents in Douglas County to outside Douglas County, youth from rural areas were less likely to list family as a current source of information on consent and healthy relationships, mechanics of sex, media literacy, and puberty and adolescent sexual development. But they were even more likely than Douglas County students to list sex ed as a desired source on gender. Even if we assume the parents educating their children are doing a satisfactory job, what about students who don't teach them or-- I'm sorry, I lost my place-- or whose family isn't safe? We found that students of color, girls, and queer students are all disproportionately less likely than their white, male, cis, straight counterparts to receive sex ed from family. Parents can opt their kids out of sex ed, but the students without safe adults in their lives can't opt in if it isn't provided. You have a choice. Please choose all students. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you very much for your testimony today. Any questions from the committee? Senator Day.

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DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. And thank you, Ms. Gould, for being here today. I appreciate you sharing your story about sexual assault and being willing to talk about that. I have a similar story, so I know how hard it is to discuss. You mentioned the opt in and opt out. There-- help me remember, was there an opt-out provision with the-- the standards?

JAMIE GOULD: I don't know specifically about the standards, but my understanding of how that is all set up is if a school district decides to adopt them, it's up to the individual districts for if you can opt out.

DAY: OK.

JAMIE GOULD: I'm-- I'm not confident in that, though.

DAY: OK, thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. Are you seeing that in the rural school districts they don't have sex ed?

JAMIE GOULD: No. Sorry. What I was trying to say with that, many are talking about how in more rural parts of Nebraska, they are more family oriented. But when we compared the respondents from Douglas County to outside Douglas County, the youth from rural areas were less likely to list family as a current source of information on four topics.

LINEHAN: All right. Thank you.

WALZ: Other questions from the committee? I see none. Thank you.

JAMIE GOULD: Thank you.

WALZ: Next opponent. Good af-- good evening, I guess.

THEODORE BLAYLOCK: Stuck on my glasses. Good afternoon or evening. My name is Theodore Blaylock, T-h-e-o-d-o-r-e B-l-a-y-l-o-c-k. I have not talked to my parents in a while. This is a decision that no one makes lightly because it's your parents. Your parents are your primary caregivers. They're supposed to love you unconditionally and without expectation. They're supposed to be there for you when you need them. I needed them this past year, but I was turned away. My decision to

cease contact with my parents was the hardest decision I've ever made in my entire life. It is something I'm still processing and working through. The intense pain of missing someone who has caused you harm is something you don't navigate very easily. I do not want to end contact with my parents. It was the last decision I wanted to make. I had to do it to protect my emotional health. This decision was also the reason I become an independent adult that pays all their own bills so early in life. I'm only 22 years old and I pay my own car insurance, rent, phone bills, utilities, health insurance, university, Internet, car maintenance, etcetera. You may be wondering why this is relevant to whether or not the Nebraska Board of Education has access to enacting the comprehensive education standards or not. I had no choice in the matter of becoming financially independent. It's a slow process of being removed from these sources of income from my caregivers, all due to the fact that I came out as nonbinary, was pursuing top surgery and a name change and started hormone replacement therapy. It wasn't my first time coming out. I had come out as queer as only a couple years prior. It was liberating for me. However, this time it felt more weight had been placed on my shoulders. I felt more invalidated. After they found out I was pursuing top surgery. I was accused of having a disorder called Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, which reinforces the idea that-- that being transgender is purely peer influence to be different and that my gender journey was illegitimate. [INAUDIBLE] Sorry.

WALZ: Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it. Any questions from the committee? I see none. Thanks for coming today.

THEODORE BLAYLOCK: Some of the definitions, I have some bolded words in there with like definitions on like the last page, like just--

WALZ: OK. All right. Thank you.

JILL BROWN: Good evening, everyone.

WALZ: Good evening.

JILL BROWN: Thanks for hearing my perspective. My name is Jill Brown, J-i-l-l B-r-o-w-n. I'm trained as a developmental psychologist and a professor at Creighton University. My own research includes gender norms, sexuality risk taking, and parent-child relationships. As species evolve, their sexuality also diversifies and evolves. We all know this. Human sexuality thus is the most diverse and varied of all of our species. There's 7 billion of us on Earth, most of us born from

some form of human sexual contact. It's common. It's natural. It's also variable. One would imagine that if you ever visit-- if you had never visited Earth, that information about sexuality might be very easily transmitted. However, we know that this is not true. It's not easy for us to talk about. Senator Albrecht says that we should really depend on parents to provide this education, along with some of the other proponents of this bill. I'd like to just share some stories. We have candid conversations in my college psychology of gender class. I'd like to share some of the reflections with you. My dad used to say I pay taxes, so I don't have to have this conversation with you. My mom's one and only sex talk included that if I sat on a boy's lap, I would get pregnant. I was young when we had this talk. I believed her and I was so traumatized I had panic attacks after this conversation. At Christmas, if I saw Santa Claus at a store, I would freak out for fear I would have to sit on his lap. My dad's speech to my brothers, keep it in your pants. My dad's speech to me, keep your pants on. That was it. My mom was an OB-GYN, so when I was eight years old, I knew things like spermatogenesis and ovulating because I used to read her medical books. But I had no idea how the ovules and the sperm got together until one day my mom, the OB-GYN, told me that a fetus was made and developed when two people really love each other. I was totally confused and thought anyone that I loved was a potential impregnator. I respect that parents are doing their best. I do. I'm a parent myself. However, the gaps in the knowledge are huge and real. It needs to be comprehensive, it need-- if it's going to be effective. It can't be the bits and pieces of information that students hovel together. To me, CSE is the biggest gift we can give the children, but it has to be comprehensive. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Thanks for watching the time. Questions from the committee? Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairman Walz. Thank you for being here, appreciate your testimony. I just wanted to point out about three quarters of the way down the page you mention research from Jones in 2018 found that three quarters or 75 percent of high school students report that pornography is their main source of information about sex. And children and teens are looking for information. If it doesn't come from comprehensive sex ed from a trusted adult, pornography becomes their instructor. So why is utilizing pornography as a way to learn about sex a potentially dangerous thing if we're not teaching kids?

JILL BROWN: Yeah, I mean, I think that the pornography industry has no intention of being educators. They're not out to educate. They're not

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interested in the broader scheme of relationships and consent and any of that. So if we rely on pornography, we're missing a huge part of what makes us human and what makes, you know, sort of healthy sexuality a positive thing.

DAY: OK, thank you.

JILL BROWN: Yeah.

DAY: Sorry, I just wanted to mention again, you said that, you know, children and teens are looking for information about sex so.

JILL BROWN: In my-- in my classroom, it's-- it's what-- it's all they want-- they want to know and they report not having it.

DAY: OK, thank you.

WALZ: Yeah. Any other questions? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Chair Walz. I'm confused. Are you talking about college students?

JILL BROWN: In-- I'm talking about conversations in college classrooms--

LINEHAN: OK, but this is--

JILL BROWN: --reflecting upon their education.

LINEHAN: They're talking about when they were teenagers. You're not saying that they get to be freshmen in college and they don't understand how babies are made.

JILL BROWN: Not at all. This is just reflecting on how they were taught by their parents about sex.

LINEHAN: Right. But OK. I just want-- we're not saying that 20-year-olds don't.

JILL BROWN: No. These are just sort of vignettes of what the conversations in our classroom.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you much.

WALZ: Any other questions? All right. Thanks for coming today. Good evening.

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EMILY HUYCK: Sorry.

WALZ: I said good evening.

EMILY HUYCK: Oh, good evening. Yes, I'm here. OK. Good evening. Thanks for letting me dialogue with you all this evening. My name is Emily, E-m-i-l-y, Huyck, H-u-y-c-k, and I'm the executive director at Montessori Co-op School located in Omaha. We're a nonprofit Montessori school accredited by the NDE. We serve children 18 months through 6th grade. We have a comprehensive health and sexuality curriculum at the Co-op. I just wanted to share a little bit about the evolution of this curriculum and the positive outcomes with you this evening. Long story short, five years ago, teachers came to my office, asked me how to handle questions about sexuality and health from students. Went to the parents and caregivers and asked, what do you want your children to know about-- about health and sexuality? The response: Parents want their children to value and care for themselves and for others. Here's what we had: students curious about their bodies and health development; teachers who want to be prepared to support their health and sexuality development; and parents and caregivers who want children to be health and say-- to be safe and healthy. From there, we went to the experts in the-- in medical health. The experts fully support school-based, comprehensive, inclusive sex and health education. So it's what we implement at the Co-op. For our students: because sexuality and health curriculum is comprehensive, we follow a scope and sequence. Skills and content are presented at developmentally appropriate-- appropriate times, pre-K through sixth grade. Because our curriculum is comprehensive, it means it's inclusive. Not only for LGBTQIA students, this comprehensive curriculum creates a positive, welcoming, safe school environment for all of our students. Because it's comprehensive, it's scientifically based and medically accurate. Teachers answer questions with facts, not lies. LB768's intentional deletion of the word "comprehensive" from a bill about health and sexuality curriculum makes me question Senator Albrecht's ability to make decisions about what should be included or that she and her bill-- she and her bill cosigners are fit to do so. Why is she ignoring the experts? It is conclusive across the board in support of school-based, comprehensive, and inclusive sex education. I recommend you leave it up to the experts. Any questions?

WALZ: Thank you. Let me see if there's any questions. Senator Linehan.

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LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here. I appreciate it. But you say in your second paragraph, I think, that the first thing you did was pull the parents in.

EMILY HUYCK: We did, yes. Yep. We sat down and said, hey, this is coming to us from our students. How should we do this? We're a cooperative. I know we're a little bit of an anomaly, but I want you all to know that this can happen and it does exist and that comprehensive is the only way forward. But yes, we brought parents in. We sat down and we said, how do you want to-- how should we deliver this? Does this-- is this enough for you? What-- what do you need?

LINEHAN: And did they remain involved until--

EMILY HUYCK: They remained-- they are involved throughout the whole process. Every year we send out an email. We, for each lesson, we send out resources, we send out videos so they can-- they know that we're going to be talking about consent because children are going to go home and ask questions. They're prepared to take those honestly with all the information that they need.

LINEHAN: So I think that's kind of where we miss the--

EMILY HUYCK: Yeah, you got to get-- yeah, it's like--

LINEHAN: You've got to have the parents--

EMILY HUYCK: You got to have the parents

LINEHAN: --in the room.

EMILY HUYCK: --teachers, yep.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you very much for being here.

EMILY HUYCK: You're welcome.

WALZ: Any other questions?

EMILY HUYCK: Thank you.

WALZ: Thanks for coming today.

JO GILES: Good evening, Chairperson Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jo Giles, that's J-o G-i-l-e-s. I'm the executive director for the Women's Fund of Omaha, a local nonprofit

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working to address gender-based inequities in our community. The issue of health education is directly at the intersection of our work, focusing on reducing STDs and unintended pregnancy rates of young people, and creating a community where everyone can live free from gender-based violence. At the foundation of this prevention work is education. The research is clear and it is extensive. Comprehensive and inclusive health education, including sex education, delays the age of first sexual activity, reduces unprotected sex, and reduces unintended pregnancy. It prevents child sexual abuse and reduces bullying and suicide attempts as inclusive sex education directly contributes to positive school environments. Additionally, comprehensive health education is supported by medical experts. There's a list of those in my testimony. Omitting complete health information for young people leaves a devastating hole in their education and does not prepare them for life. Comprehensive health education meets young people where they are. In Nebraska, 57 percent of students have sex by the time they graduate high school. Yet, only 8 percent of students have ever been tested for an STD. Additionally, 11.6 percent of high school students in Nebraska experience sexual violence. All young people deserve access to complete, honest, and accurate information to make informed decisions about their health and their futures. The Women's Fund of Omaha respectfully urges you to vote against LB768 in committee and allow the education experts to follow best practices and provide young people in Nebraska with a complete and accurate health information and education. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you so much. Questions from the committee? Senator Linehan

JO GILES: Yes.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here. Was the Women's Fund involved in writing the standard to state?

JO GILES: No.

LINEHAN: You weren't involved.

JO GILES: We weren't involved in writing the standards. One of our employees applied to be on the writing committee and was denied.

LINEHAN: OK. Thank you very much.

JO GILES: You're welcome.

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WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? Don't see any. Thanks so much for coming today.

JO GILES: Thank you.

SARAH FORREST: Good evening, thank you all for being here. Senator Walz, members of the Education Committee, my name is Sarah Forrest, S-a-r-a-h F-o-r-r-e-s-t, and I am the director of operations from the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers, here testifying in opposition to LB768. For those of you who may not be familiar with CACs, I have a handout going around that talks about what we do, which is help with the responding to reports of child abuse across the state of Nebraska. Today, we're here in opposition to LB768 for one simple reason. We strongly believe that our state has to do everything in our power to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation. And one proven strategy for protecting children is school-based comprehensive health education. Educating students along with their parents and school staff on key topics related to child abuse and sexual violence is prevention and response. It reduces risk and makes sure children recognize grooming and abuse when it occurs and know where they can get help when they need it. Child sexual abuse is a major public health challenge in our state and across the United States. One in 10 children will experience sexual abuse before they turn 18, most often by those they know, love, and trust, family members, friends, coaches, teachers, peers. Last year, this committee unanimously advanced LB281, which had many positive elements, right? It would have included evidence-based sexual abuse prevention, curriculum, body safety, consent, boundaries, the ability for children to say no, skills for recognizing and reporting abuse. And our concern here is that this bill, LB768, would prevent and discourage schools from taking on that important task. Our members across the state for school districts that do offer child sexual abuse prevention education, they do see an increase of reports after that, those sessions are held, they prepare for it. They see the impact of children being able to understand what's happening to them. Maybe they didn't have the words to explain it or they didn't know it was wrong. And once they have that education, they're able to come forward. So I see my red light is on, but we would urge this committee not to advance LB768 and I'm happy to answer any questions.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions? Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: So I don't remember any reports or reading what in the standard, the original draft, address the issues you just covered?

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SARAH FORREST: There was actually a lot about sexual violence prevention, so teaching the concept of consent, right? So maybe at a young level kindergarten, the concept of consent could be could I ask-- could I share your toy? Can I use your paintbrush? But that same concept can apply to touch and romantic relationships and helping children understand that they have the ability to say no. If an adult wants to hug them or offers an unwanted touch,--

LINEHAN: So how much do--

SARAH FORREST: --they have ability to say no.

LINEHAN: So how many students in the state currently have that in their curriculum?

SARAH FORREST: I am not familiar with the exact numbers. Most of what I can report is anecdotal from our members across the state who work with individual school districts and just say, oh yeah, this school or this teacher maybe does a program. I think there are many holes and gaps; and our CACs, some of them are able to provide, again, training not just to students, but we really strongly believe in educating--

LINEHAN: But you don't have any exact data?

SARAH FORREST: No.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you much.

SARAH FORREST: Um-hum.

WALZ: Any other questions? Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairwoman Walz. And thank you for being here today.

SARAH FORREST: Sure.

DAY: Just maybe piggybacking off of Senator Linehan's question. And this is just how I've taught my children and correct me if I'm wrong, but teaching kids the biological names for their genitals is also a strategy in preventing child abuse. Correct?

SARAH FORREST: Absolutely.

DAY: OK.

SARAH FORREST: Yes. Yes, I do it with my own children. And you know, when I was growing up, it's not that we didn't talk about it, but actually working in the field of responding to child abuse has made that one of the things that before we had children, my husband and I talked about that. And I was like, I'm going to teach my children this because I've seen what happens when kids don't know the names for their body parts and just heartbreaking things that, you know, abuse goes on unreported or people didn't understand what a child, a young child was trying to disclose to them was happening because they didn't know the medically accurate names for their body parts. So--

DAY: OK.

SARAH FORREST: I-- I'm 100 percent with you, and I think the research backs us up as well, I hope.

DAY: OK. Thank you.

WALZ: Thanks. Any other questions? I don't see any.

SARAH FORREST: Thank you all for staying tonight.

WALZ: Thank you for testifying tonight. Next opponent.

LILY CASTELLAN: Hello, everyone. My name is Lily Castellan, L-i-l-y C-a-s-t-e-l-l-a-n, and I am here testifying in opposition to LB768. I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. I am a public health student at UNO, a former youth researcher with the Women's Fund of Omaha, a proud member of the LGBT community, and a product of the Omaha Public schooling systems. I was also once a child, a child who felt alone and afraid because I didn't know that there were other people like me; a child who felt unsafe in my classroom because my fellow classmates didn't understand me. You all have the power to make sure that no other child feels the way that I did. Please do what is right, and don't be afraid of hurting the other side's feelings as they are not the ones being affected by these changes. Students across the state are the ones being affected by these changes, and they deserve equitable access to information about STD and pregnancy prevention, consent, mental health, anatomy, and more. They're going to find out about this stuff one way or another. There's no preventing that. Wouldn't you rather have them learn this information from a trained teacher in a safe environment rather than from the Internet, social media, or pornography? Wouldn't you rather a child learn about pregnancy prevention instead of them getting unintentionally pregnant

at age 15? Wouldn't you rather a child understands consent in anatomy so that they can report if someone touches them unsafely? Schools are supposed to be a safe place where students can access unbiased information, not information that has been curated to make certain groups more comfortable. If I can be courageous enough to stand up here as a young person in a room full of powerful adults, then you can all be courageous enough to do what students and young people are asking you for. Please don't give in to the fear and hate and do what is right. We are tired of fighting so hard for access to basic education, and we are tired of asking nicely. If you care about the success and well-being of Nebraska students and youth, please rethink who this bill is truly benefiting. Think about how many of the proponents were young people, none of them. You all need to be addressing the wants and needs of youth rather than the wants of adults spreading misinformation. Youth are the future, not them. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you very much. Questions from the committee? I don't see any. Thanks for coming tonight. Next opponent.

ETHAN HOTCHKISS: Hello, my name is Ethan Hotchkiss, E-t-h-a-n H-o-t-c-h-k-i-s-s. We live in times of problems we never could have imagined having. It's easy to say the other side is stupid or selfish. But many of us are motivated by the same things, such as peer pressure and the many stresses put on us by every aspect of life. And thus we see many people who don't really believe in what they stand for. We live in times where it is necessary to try to empathize with everyone. However, it is OK to not understand someone's suffering. It is OK to even think they're stupid for suffering in the first place. What's not OK is dismissing people, ignoring their suffering, and continues to suppress someone's cries for help. LB768 is just one small piece of an entire party with the goal of shutting us down, pretending they don't hear us. However, our voices have been ignored for too long, and there is still a chance to win this small battle. Although we continue to be forced to endure bullying, we must remember the importance of kindness and cooperate with those who are against us. In the end, to see change, we must bridge the gap with those who hold that power. I consider myself lucky to have been exposed to the real impacts that the injustices of today's world have on people. It has led me to see no choice but speaking up and tell you that those you have tried to suppress are those you need to listen to most. If your child is using any of the popular social medias, they are likely being exposed to disturbing content that promotes hypersexual activity, unhealthy beauty standards, and toxic relationships just to name a few, all

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while being exposed to anyone else on the site to find and contact them. The reality is that most parents don't have the time, let alone the knowledge, to fully prepare our youth for today's world. LB768 is a complete step backwards in this regard. It adds one more thing for parents to have to take responsibility for as the public schools fail to progress with humanity.

WALZ: I think your light's on red.

ETHAN HOTCHKISS: Oh, sorry, I hope to inspire you to notice when you feel the desire to hate someone and shut them down with all you can that you might benefit most from hearing what they have to say. It feels almost impossible to empathize with people that you cannot relate to.

WALZ: Let me see--

ETHAN HOTCHKISS: I ask you to question why you believe what you believe and consider that you may be part of the problem. I hope you can find it in your hearts to hear those who this bill will directly affect. Thank you.

WALZ: Let me see if we have any questions. Questions from the committee? Thank you. Next opponent.

ZOE MILLER: Hello.

WALZ: Hi, how are you?

ZOE MILLER: Good, how are you?

WALZ: Good.

ZOE MILLER: My name is Zoe and I am a constituent of District 20 in Omaha, and I'm here testifying in opposition to LB768. Nebraskans must have access to comprehensive and inclusive--

WALZ: Oh, can you spell your name for us real quick?

ZOE MILLER: Yeah. Z-o-e M-i-l-l-e-r.

WALZ: Thanks.

ZOE MILLER: Nebraskans must have access to comprehensive and inclusive health education in their schools. We don't live in the past anymore and absence only, fearmongering health education is just like not

effective at all. And our health education curriculum is in dire need of reworking to be more inclusive and honest, meaning we can't just cater health education to straight, cisgender white men. When we have comprehensive health education in our schools, we can help prevent suicide, sexual violence, high STI rates, and high teen pregnancy rates. I would hope that's something every person in this room would want to see instead of our youth dying from suicide, people being raped at universities just down the street, almost 4,000 cases of chlamydia in 2020 in Douglas County, and almost 1,000 teen births in 2019. If we're able to adopt these comprehensive, inclusive health standards at schools, I can guarantee you'll see drops in suicide, sexual violence, STIs, teen pregnancies, and abortion. When bills like this get introduced, I, along with many, many of my peers, feel targeted, uncomfortable and angry, some of which you saw today. Bills like this are the reason we have so many talented, smart, and courageous young people leaving Nebraska. I've always thought of Nebraska as the good life. I grew up here with my family, went to school in Omaha, and now attend UNO, but I'm continuously proven wrong, maybe not by Nebraska, but by the Nebraskans who essentially hold the fate of so many vulnerable students in their hands. I urge you guys to oppose LB768 and consider the impact it would have not only for our children, but for the many generations to come. Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you. Questions from the committee? I see none. Thanks for coming tonight. Next opponent. Anybody who would like to speak in the neutral capacity? Senator Albrecht, you're welcome to close.

ALBRECHT: First of all, thank you all for listening. I've been in your chair and it's hard to take a long day of testimony. And I just want to say that, you know, there are a lot of letters. I implore you to open them all because there's last I saw 75 opponents, 200 and some proponents. But I've heard the cry over the last year on what's taken place while we were in session last year. I-- I am imploring you to take a look at what our responsibilities are in state statute. When it comes to comprehensive sex education, CRT, anything that was within that health standard, you know what? We are putting a lot on our teachers right now. We have a lot of them that are retiring early. We have a lot of them that are not coming back to substitute. And it's not just COVID. It's stuff like we just all heard today. It is helping them make decisions to either stay or go; to either get into the profession of teaching or not. I spoke to one of my superintendents and I said, tell me where you're at. What's-- what's the biggest thing that you're dealing with right now? And it's everything I just said.

These teachers are having a lot of pressures put on them. I would take back every mandate we've ever had on a school if they would first and foremost teach our core subjects and make Nebraska proud to be in the top 25 of the country, not in the-- with math and reading in the 50 percent. We're in 50th place in the country. We can't have that happen in the state of Nebraska. We owe our children and our parents more. All I'm going to say is when it comes to the responsibility of us teaching our children first and foremost parental rights, they have the right to know what you're going to teach. And just in case you don't know, it's already being taught in the big schools. They've already made that decision. They've made the decision and the parents don't even know it's happening. The parents don't even know when their children go to school what they're being taught. Either they choose not to engage or the children are maybe happy they're not engaged or parents are just not showing up to parent-teacher conferences. I don't know what the story is out there. I raised two children myself. All by myself. And I'm here to tell you, I'm quite proud of both of them and the choices that they have made. Everyone can do what they want to do, be who they want to be. But when it comes to our teachers that have to all of the sudden pivot and move to other subjects that are taking up so much time and energy in the school system and in the school day, for us not to have enough teachers, I have to wonder what's going to happen to the future of our state. You know, I looked at Senator McKinney had introduced LB1112 and that would adopt the Computer Science and Technology Act. When that comes from the floor of our Legislature and we get to decide whether that's a good bill, bad bill based on whatever we think's going on in our district, that's who we are representing. But-- but he has a fiscal note of \$50,000 to develop that. How much do you suppose it cost in time and energy and all the list of people, and I can get you that list, of who actually participated in putting that education standards together, how much time and energy did they put into this very large package that was very uncomfortable for parents and school districts to swallow? And just for the record, Lisa Schulze is from the Women's Fund of Omaha, who was helping put this program together. And she was in many of the FOIA information that was out there that was-- was requested by certain groups. But I'm just saying parents, you know, if they can opt out of certain things, great. I have a granddaughter that's in a school that happens to-- her teacher wanted to study a particular book. That particular book made my daughter very uncomfortable, didn't want my daughter-- my granddaughter to listen. That's her choice. And she went to the school. They talked about it. They changed the book. But you know what? Parents shouldn't have to chase after things. They

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should be able to go to their school board, know and understand the curriculum that's being presented. But again, we as legislators decide the big stuff, the big stuff that's going to make a difference in the-- in the fabric of education in the state of Nebraska. So again, I'm just going to reiterate that Nebraska, in Article VII, that Constitution of the State of Nebraska says that the State Department of Education shall have general supervision and administration of school systems of the state and such other activities, as the Legislature may direct. That's us. It also says that the duties and powers of the State Board of Education shall be prescribed by the Legislature. That's us. And the Commissioner of Education shall have the power and duties as the Legislature may direct. This is already in statute. I'm not-- I'm not asking for anything more, anything less. I'm just asking for us to know and understand that this issue in the state of Nebraska for anybody who's running an election is the hottest issue, second to property taxes, income tax, corporate tax, anything else. This is truly a bigger issue in our state because it's about our children and it's about their future. And I'm just asking for your support to help get this out of committee and take a few steps back and understand that parents do count and school boards count. They know what's going on in their local districts. I found that out when I asked a lot of the schools to write letters to the State Board of Education, helping them understand what was going on in these health standards. And I implore each and every one of you, if you haven't opened this, take the first draft and look at the second draft and tell me that you're OK with this being in our school system. That's all I have to say. Anything else?

WALZ: Yes.

ALBRECHT: Yes.

WALZ: Questions from the committee?

ALBRECHT: It's been a long day. Sorry.

WALZ: I do have to clarify. I don't know where you got the information that we're 50th in the state, but I don't believe that's the case.

ALBRECHT: It is the case. It was--

WALZ: We'll--

ALBRECHT: And I'll be happy to show it to you.

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WALZ: OK. The other question I have is that just-- I'm just trying to figure out where you're at with mandates or not mandates because are you saying that we-- we should not mandate our schools to do extra curriculum, period? Because last year you brought a bill, LB281, I believe--

ALBRECHT: Um-hum.

WALZ: --that was a mandate to the schools.

ALBRECHT: Um-hum.

WALZ: Is that something that we can repeal if that's-- I mean, are we mandating schools or aren't we? I just want to know where you're at.

ALBRECHT: OK, here's the way I look at it. When I-- when I looked at LB281 and I thought, you know, we're going--

WALZ: It's a mandate.

ALBRECHT: It would have been a mandate.

WALZ: It is, yes.

ALBRECHT: But you know what? I pulled back on that for that reason. You know, why would I mandate when the-- when the-- the counselors in school and every teacher is obligated when they hear that a child has possibly been compromised in any way, they're going to report it if it's-- if it's against the law, right? They have a mandatory reporting. Correct? Teachers and, you know, anybody within that school system. So, you know, at this point, I'm not OK with that bill. I'm not OK with that bill because-- because it was going to be rolled into this big, huge educational faux pas that-- that should not have been happening. There's-- there's too many things. And Senator Walz, I do believe that that there are a lot of things that we-- we could go back and start taking away from our teachers so they had time to be engaged in the most important things that are happening today in our schools, whether if it is sex education, I'm not saying you can't have it. But you know what? Every-- every school in the state is going to have a different way of approaching it. I'm appalled at what is currently going on in the bigger schools in the state of Nebraska. And truly, I-- I really believe there's going to be a mass exodus out of the public schools if we don't get a-- get a hold of this. It has to come from us on what we want to do in the grand scheme of things.

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WALZ: All right. I just wanted to make sure I had clarification on your mandate. Senator Day.

ALBRECHT: Thank you.

DAY: Sorry, I just have one more question. Thank you, Senator Albrecht. I appreciate your passion for this issue. It's very clear. I think you and I are on opposite sides of this discussion. But again, I appreciate the effort to get parents involved in children's education. So when we talk about the health standards that were presented last year, as I remember it, districts could opt out of that. Was there an opt out option?

ALBRECHT: You know, they say that. But when it comes from your State Board of Education, your Department of Education, and your Commissioner and they said, well, you can-- you-- you can make a decision if you want to or not. What I heard from our schools and the school boards, but mostly those in higher authority, they'll have to do it. Because if they don't do it, they're not going to receive any federal funding. That's how they hook you. So that's why it should not be a part of--

DAY: So was there a-- was there a provision in the health standards that-- that-- that kept them from receiving federal funding if they did not, if they opted out?

ALBRECHT: There's-- there's a lot of different things that go into it and I can't tell you positively, but that's what I was hearing when the people were-- were asked to write letters to the State Board of Education. They said, you know what? If this goes through, we're going to have to do it anyway. And if we don't do it, they're going to take federal funding away from us.

DAY: OK, thank you, Senator.

ALBRECHT: Thanks.

WALZ: Any other questions? I see none. That ends our--

ALBRECHT: Thank you.

WALZ: --hearing on LB768 and ends our hearings for today. Thank you.