

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Urban Affairs Committee February 1, 2022

**WAYNE:** Welcome. Are we on?

**ANGENTIA PIERRE-LOUIS:** Yeah, we are.

**WAYNE:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Senator Justin Wayne and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. I serve as the Chair of Urban Affairs Committee. We will start off by having members of the committee do self-introductions, starting to my right with Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Good afternoon. My name is Senator Carol Blood and I represent District 3, which is parts of Bellevue and Papillion, Nebraska.

**BRIESE:** Tom Briese. I represent District 41.

**HUNT:** Hi. I'm Megan Hunt and I represent District 8, which is the north part of Midtown.

**TREVOR FITZGERALD:** Trevor Fitzgerald, committee legal counsel.

**LOWE:** John Lowe, District 37: Kearney, Gibbon, and Shelton.

**ANGENTIA PIERRE-LOUIS:** And Angentia Pierre-Louis, committee clerk.

**WAYNE:** We will have senators moving in and out. We do have other hearings going on, so they'll go introduce bills at other hearings, but a full transcript will be available and they all have either binders or emails that are sent-- that they do electronically of all the information that will be gathered here today. Also assisting the committee are our committee pages, Rista-- Ritsa--

**RITSA GIANNAKAS:** It's Reetsa [PHONETIC].

**WAYNE:** How you say your last name?

**RITSA GIANNAKAS:** Giannakaus [PHONETIC].

**WAYNE:** Annakaus [PHONETIC]. He writes it out for me too and I still-- I just don't want to mess it up-- from Lincoln who is a political science and economic major at UNL, and Kennedy--

**KENNEDY RITTSCHER:** It's Richer [PHONETIC].

**WAYNE:** Richer [PHONETIC]--

**KENNEDY RITTSCHER:** Yeah.

**WAYNE:** --from Lincoln, who is a political science major at UNL. In light of the ongoing COVID pandemic, we respectfully request that you wear your mask or a face covering while in the hearing room. Testifiers may remove their mask during the testimony to assist committee members and transcribers to clearly hear and understand the testimony. This afternoon, we will be having five bills, which we'll be taking them on their order outside-- listed outside the room. On the near-- on the table of the rear of your interest [SIC], you'll find a blue testifier sheet. If you are planning to testify, please fill that out and take one-- take it to Angenita when you come up. This makes sure we have accurate records. Please note if you wish to have your position listed on the committee statement for a particular bill, you must testify in that position during the bill's hearing. If you do not wish to testify, but would like your position recorded for that position on the bill, you can fill out a gold testifier sheet in the--

\_\_\_\_\_ : [INAUDIBLE]

**WAYNE:** --in the entrance. What did you say? It is a little hot in here and so we're trying to get that taken care of so bear with us. We talk about north Omaha, but they just always try and make it difficult for us. Anyway, I'm going to wait till we get into that. So this will be a little bit different. I'll explain how this first bill will be handled, but it is our policy-- the Legislature's policy that all letters in-- for the record must be received via online comment portal by noon the day before and any handouts submitted by testifiers will also be included as part of the record as exhibits. If you'd like to have any handouts, please provide them to the pages. Make sure you have ten copies. If you don't, tell the pages ahead of time so we can get ten copies by the time you come up and testify. Testimony for each bill will begin with the introducer's opening statement. After the opening statement, we will hear from supporters of the bill, then in opposition, followed by those speaking in neutral capacity. The introducer of the bill will be given an opportunity to close. For the first bill, we'll do the introducer and then we'll have some-- a few invited testimony and then we'll open it up to the categories that are listed outside in the, in the-- and please testify in those categories. You can testify in multiple categories like in Appropriation, but if you're limited to, like, housing, please testify during the housing in support and then we'll do opposition at the end and then neutral at the, at the end, end of that. We ask that you begin your testimony by first stating and spelling both your first and

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last name. We will be using the four-minute light system today. When your testimony begins, it will be green. At the one-minute mark, it will turn yellow. And then at the end, it will be red and we will ask you to wrap up your final thoughts. And with that, I will turn this over to-- I'll be sitting up here after I talk just because-- for spatial reasons, keep some space, but I will not be asking questions because typically the introducer does not ask questions. They usually sit out there. But I will turn this over to Senator Hunt, Vice Chairwoman Hunt.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. As Senator Wayne said, because we expect to have so many testifiers today, we'll invite you up in an-- in order based on the topic, but it'll be pretty clear what, what they are. I'll make sure to tell you again, so. Welcome, Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** Good afternoon, Vice Chairwoman Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. What the committee pages are passing out is some informational diagrams and data that will be talked about by myself, Senator McKinney. Probably Chief Schmaderer will hit on the crime reports and those kind of things. And I kind of want to just walk you through how we got here using this binder. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. Now is the time for big and bold ideas. Since the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA fund, in 2021, a wide range of newspaper editorials, political commentators, and many members of the Legislature have remarked how the funds in Nebraska will be used and how much money we will have. And this money is around \$1.1 billion, which is transformational and game changing for our state. As many of you probably feel, there are a lot of organizations and groups who are collaborating to put this ARPA money to use. And at times-- many times, we have heard from many people. It's probably a little overwhelming as much as we heard about ARPA fills-- ARPA bills. As we consider various proposals as a body, it is critical important that we remember what ARPA was for: to respond to the COVID pandemic and the negative health impacts. One of the key areas where both statute and federal guidance from the Treasury Department seems to be clear regarding ARPA, ARPA should be used and should be targeted to the low-income populations, as these groups were disproportionately impacted by COVID. Specifically, populations located in federally qualified census tracts are presumed to be disproportionately eligible-- disproportionately affected and eligible for ARPA funds. In Nebraska, we have federal-- federally qualified census tracts, of which most are in north and south Omaha. For generations, north Omaha that I represent, and along with Senator McKinney, has been neglected by state and local government officials

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of all political stripes. The social and economic challenges that north Omaha has been dealing with for the past generations of generations, long before I was even born, COVID has showed-- COVID has basically made it worse, but showed the gaps in services that we need. Senator Kinney [SIC] plans to testify behind me and look at the 2000-- or 211 data, unemployment, and a couple other things. And usually senators don't testify on other people's bills, but this is how important this bill is to us. I want to turn first to the handout on 2018. This is a handout that I put on the floor in 2018 and we talked about key areas in north Omaha. Ironically, the first one that this body has passed, along with everybody in here's support, was LR14CA, which is extremely blighted area. We also passed LR-- LB86, which dealt with the middle-income housing and, and historically redlining district. We also passed LB87, which helped with the opportunity zones. And lastly, I just testified yesterday regarding LB129 and how that was used to study the impact of Highway 75 through north Omaha. But what is interesting is when you go to the map, this area of north Omaha, particularly my district in Florence and where we're going to talk about a little bit here today is the Business Park district, has been on the books for years. The issue has never been we never had the funds to get it done. And to me, it wasn't the funds to get it done. It was the political willpower to get it done. We have development everywhere throughout Omaha, but somehow north Omaha has been neglected. But what I want to highlight to you is the next tab is the unemployment. This is from-- and I won't go through a lot on the needs. I want to talk-- let the community behind me talk more. And the report that we put together, our plan put together has most of these needs in here, but I do want to highlight the Department of Labor's report from March of 2020 to March 2021. What they said basically is unemployment, unemployment claims filed by workers who identified their race as black or African American rose disproportionately and women filed higher-- a higher share of claims than normal. Although the black and African American Nebraskans make up a little over 5 percent of the total population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, they comprised of 17 percent of the continued weeks of claimed unemployment from March 2020 to March 2021. As of December 2021, based off of this own report, the unemployment rate for black Omaha still is not-- is still the same as it has been since post 2008 recession. I also emailed you another report regarding the airport park. In there, that, that data showed that today, even today we are seeing triple-- 12 percent, three times higher than the unemployment rate of whites, of black workers and that many of them are underemployed and many of them are at the poverty-- federal poverty level. So over the course of-- since I got back from Africa, Senator McKinney and I almost met

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daily with many of the people in this room to come up with the north Omaha plan. We have been in talks with the south Omaha senators and we have no problem incorporating their plan. Just at the time, I wasn't going to speak for them, nor were Senator McKinney, as we didn't know all the details of what their communities may have needed. But one thing I want to highlight, as you see Senator-- or senator-- I upgraded you to Senator Rodgers, Chris-- Chris Rodgers, Commissioner Rodgers is here to talk about the alignment. What you also have in, in your packet is a, is a letter from-- to-- letter from the mayor regarding how we're going to align and I'm going to talk a little bit more about how we're going to align. The point of it is, is there's never been this kind of alignment at the state level for north Omaha. There never been this type of alignment for a community plan at the community level. And why is that important? Just last Saturday, we were on a call with over 300 people who are aligned and behind and see this as transformational change that we need in our community. So the one way we'll work together with Douglas County is we have outlined money for mental health and juvenile intervention. These are two areas in their ARPA plan that they are looking at funding and building something successful. I want to go a little bit more in detail of the city of Omaha because it's ironic that the city of Omaha has done a great job of helping with the nonprofit sector, sector in building affordable homes. But what we're finding out is as homes are being built, the homes that are staying there are looking outdated and looking like they don't belong. Well, the city of Omaha has what they call the exterior repair program. And I'm not going to go through all the programs that we listed, but I'm just going to highlight how this coordination can work. The exterior repair program is designated to certain census tracts east of 72nd Street-- well, actually east of 72nd Street for low-income areas. They set aside about \$1 million already for that particular program. What our plan does is we're going to infuse dollars into that program. So as we build up new houses and infills, that the neighboring houses can also be upgraded to make sure that they are part of the neighborhood, that they're not left behind. Same as the rena-- rental rehab program and other programs that the city is already doing, we're looking to enhance what the city is doing, not compete, but make sure we have a targeted approach to the neighborhoods and make sure we leave absolutely nobody behind. One of the biggest and most exciting pieces of our plan is the business-- airport park business development part two. That's part of down by the airport, our area a little bit east of 16th Street. One of the things we noticed with all the affordable housing going into north Omaha is we don't have an economic generator. We don't have a lot of jobs being pulled into the area or businesses being pulled into the area. I sent

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everybody today a report that was done for DED that shows that this area can-- will add about 225 jobs. We have estimates up to 400 jobs and these are great-paying jobs. And what you'll hear is-- from an admiral who flew in today or flew in yesterday who will testify that if we get this airport project done, more likely than not-- and somebody can lock them in today-- they will move their company or expand their company to this area because of the alignment of what not only we are doing, but what they see from Omaha North all the way through college engineering program. And this is a high-skilled job as far as engineering company and they can actually make a big difference in our community. In fact, DED estimates that this area and this business park can generate anywhere between \$10 million to \$542 million for the state's economy. Helping north Omaha helps the entire state. And I fundamentally believe if we get north Omaha right, then Ord, Nebraska, Ogallala, Norfolk, the same problems of economic development, we can get right there too. And that doesn't include the additional workers in supply that would come from that. LB1024 would adopt the North Omaha Recovery Act, which is comprised of two bills. I introduced this bill to set up the committee. I also have another bill in Appropriations to help fund it. Under this bill, \$450 million in ARPA funds would be placed in-- it would be a new cash fund for North Omaha Recovery Fund-- North Omaha Recovery Act Fund. The fund would be managed by a special committee of the Legislature, North Omaha Recovery Special Committee, consisting of the following members: the Chair of the Urban Affairs, the Speaker of the Legislature, the Chair of the Appropriations Committee or his or her designee, and two members of the Legislature appointed by the Executive Board, who represents a district containing one or more qualified census tracts located within the boundaries of a city of a metropolitan class. The special committee under LB1024 is modeled after the Statewide Tourism and Recreational Water Access Resource Sustainability Special Committee, i.e. STAR WARS. As laid out in this proposal, the grants or refundable loans will be distributed by the special committee and would target four-- pretty four broad areas, which is housing and homelessness, community and business recovery, community well-being, and community assistance and programming. I know there are a number of individuals and organizations that plan to testify here today. I respectfully ask this committee to do the invited proponents testimony first, followed by proponents in public health, negative impact-- negative economic impacts, which includes housing, job training, minority business-- minority-owned business assistance, then followed by the services to, to disproportionately impacted communities, which is youth employment, parks, demolition, home, home repairs, gang and crime prevention, and then lastly, infrastructure. After each of these

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categories are talked about from the general proponents in-- behind us, we can follow with opposition. Again, we can't stress the importance of this infusion of cash in our Nebraska system that is designated or at least prioritized by our federal government for census tracts. And those census tracts are greatly in north and south Omaha. It's time for a big and bold plan. This plan you'll hear about has been pretty much adopted by the entire community and the community is asking this body to move this legislation forward to the floor so we can move this along and get our community served. And with that, I'll answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Thank you. Senator Wayne, how does, how-- what's the process here with this bill and the funding and appropriations and, and all of that? How do you see that-- how do you see the process working?

**WAYNE:** Well, ideally I would like to move this bill out as is with the \$450 million coming out of this committee, and amend it on the floor to what Appropriations would, would, would deem appropriate. Because we introduced two bills, we weren't sure how they were going to move timing. So the appropriation bill was introduced as a backup plan and actually worked out the way we thought it would, whereas Governor's plan went first. Now we're doing the Governor's budget, so we won't get to the ARPA bills for two or three weeks, but we can at least move this bill forward and still kind of work out where everybody's at.

**ARCH:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Arch. Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. Thank you for bringing this forward. This is so exciting. I do have one question and I'm not seeing it-- I know you know this inside and out, so maybe you can point me to the right place. Metrics, so important when we do a big project like this. How are we going to measure what we treasure so we know that we're on the right track? And should you want to replicate this, as you talked about, in other parts of the state of Nebraska, how will you measure our-- what will we utilize for our metrics?

**WAYNE:** So in the plan on page-- I believe it's 11-- 17, it starts our community, community engagement outcomes look and we have an entire process of using evidence based and so how I envision this working is we would send out a request for qualifications and we would put out a

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proposal and there would be somebody who would be administering our, our grant process and our loan process and we would establish those metrics at the committee level the same way the STARS committee did theirs with the RFP to, to set up how they would do it.

**BLOOD:** So it'd be done at the state level and--

**WAYNE:** It would be done at the state level.

**BLOOD:** --reported to the Legislature on a yearly basis or--

**WAYNE:** Yes and so that's why when we set up the committee, we wanted the Urban Affairs Chair, regardless of where I'm here, that this would be housed there, that they would have to come back to Urban Affairs. But we also wanted to make sure Appropriations or his or her designee and the Speaker be on the committee so there is complete transparency of where the funds are going.

**BLOOD:** Excellent. Thank you so much.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Blood. Senator Briese.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. Thank you for bringing this, Senator-- Chairman Wayne. The project inventory that I see in this plan, does that add up to roughly \$450 million?

**WAYNE:** \$437 million. If we added south Omaha in, it'd probably an additional \$100 million and that's what we're looking at doing is, is trying to figure out how we just do a Omaha plan. Again, it was just the timing of the issue, why we didn't collaborate with them at the time. So, yeah, \$437 million, \$450 million.

**BRIESE:** OK and if we aren't talking about the entire 450, it would be up to that committee to prioritize this and do what's appropriate or most appropriate?

**WAYNE:** Correct.

**BRIESE:** OK.

**WAYNE:** And if, if we had a significant decrease, let's say \$300 million, that committee would, would most-- well, I'd be the Chair of it, so we would have a couple more community hearings to figure out, out of that pie, where things should go, but we, we won't do it in a vacuum.



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**BRIESE:** OK, thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Briese. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your introduction, Senator Wayne. Next I'd like to invite up Senator Terrell McKinney as an invited testifier. Welcome.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Vice Chair Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. I am Terrell McKinney. I represent District 11, which is north Omaha. Spell my name, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y. I am here to speak today as a cosponsor and proponent of LB1024 to adopt the North Omaha Recovery Plan. As a lifelong, lifelong north Omaha resident and state senator representing District 11 in the State Legislature, which encompasses north Omaha, I assert that it is well past time that our state invests resources in communities affected most by the COVID-19 pandemic. It shouldn't come as a surprise that communities most affected are also communities that are most historically disenfranchised in the state of Nebraska. Out of curiosity, me and Senator Wayne pulled some stats made from a 211 in Nebraska between 2020 and 2021 in District 11, in District 11 and District 13. For those who are unfamiliar, like 911, 211 is a special telephone number in the U.S. and Canada. While 911 provides emergency assistance, 211 is designed to provide information and referrals to health and human services and other social programs. In 2020, in 2020, the numbers for District 11 were 5,275. For District 13, the total number of requests was 4,318. Subsequently in 2021, the totals for District 11 were 12,231 and the total requests in District 11 [SIC] were 11,509. Among these calls, the top inquiries were housing, shelter, and utility assistance. These facts clearly infer an influx of unmet needs and a hunt for resources. Since the, the beginning of the pandemic, crime has also gone up in areas of theft and also evictions have risen as well at an alarming rate. These facts infer that there is a grave lack of accountability in ensuring that residents of north Omaha and northwest Omaha have access to adequate and actual affordable housing, transportation, food, food access, and overall resources for families with the most needs. I have stated before that money is not the end-all-be-all, but money is a tool that will go a long way in changing the trajectory of north Omaha. In this Legislature, we frequent, we frequently discuss our state's low unemployment rate. As a representative of District 11, I must point out that north Omaha has great, greatly surpassed the state's average, which is-- which would already not in good shape prior to the pandemic. The commitment the state of Nebraska has dedicated to the sustainability of north Omaha and its residents has been nonexistent throughout my lifetime. The, the result of this inaction has resulted in more than half of the residents and families living below the

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poverty line. And with poverty having a strong correlation to crime, has resulted in a disproportionate number of individuals from north Omaha being incarcerated or being affected by the criminal justice system. We're always asking, spinning our wheels as what can be done or how do we help our community. The plan is here and the time is now to invest in community, invest in small business and entrepreneurship to create job growth in north Omaha. As I close, I would be remiss if I did not reiterate that the guidelines laid out in the final rules made it clear that the funds from the American Rescue Plan Act are for communities hit hardest by the pandemic, especially in qualified census tracts. Based on the forward-- based on the foregoing, I ask that you vote in favor of LB1024, get it out on the floor, and continue to support as it goes through the process and thank you and I open myself up to any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator McKinney. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony today. Next, I'll invite up Douglas County Commissioner Chris Rodgers. Welcome, Commissioner Rodgers.

**CHRIS RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Vice Chair and members of the committee. My name is Chris Rodgers, C-h-r-i-s R-o-d-g-e-r-s. I represent district 3 in Douglas County, which is northeast Omaha. I want to begin by thanking Senator Wayne and thanking Senator McKinney for the work they've done on this and putting this forward. But I also want to thank the efforts that they put in and listened to a lot of the people behind us and the effort that's been going on probably for the last 15 years or so in that respect. So to save time, I want to just get directly to the point that Senator Wayne made and kind of explain where I think this fits into the county's perspective. I've heard definitely comments on some boundaries and some lines laid down in respect to the funding and what it would, would do and what it's targeted toward in some respect. And I've heard the term on the floor, ongoing funding. What I want to kind of frame this up to say that how I'm going to explain this to you, I don't think it's ongoing funding to some degree. I want to talk about the specific areas that Senator Wayne talked about, which is mental health and juvenile justice. These are areas that the county has been in and that we see this opportunity as a steroid shot to advance the plan that we put in place to some degree. So if these funds are there for us in that respect, it wouldn't be a one-term shot. It would be into a plan that's going on, the county has investment into keeping up. I want to talk specifically about mental health. Just today, the county approved, with a supermajority vote, a plan to have a study done to get a feel for what are the services and the capacities needed for mental health and the

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understanding. Where are we going to go with \$50 million of this money that we've set aside to try to address mental health? We went that route because the county has chosen to stay into-- to the areas of jurisdiction that we've had to some degree, which has largely been health, corrections, criminal justice. That effort, in addition to the monies here, we hope will help us with some of the issues that affect a lot of people that live in the districts that we represent. For instance, Douglas County has been, for the last couple of years, the largest mental health institution in the state because there's a large amount of individuals with mental health issues in our jail. The money that we're going to invest we hope gets at that and additional investment that is put in by the state will help us address this issue and get those individuals out of there and not be in a situation where their conditions get worse by sitting there in jail if they don't need to be there. Let's say juvenile justice. For the last two years, we've doubled down and made investments in infrastructure and service and programming. The efforts that this money will help us now will help us in our efforts to get up front more in regards to trying to address the whole issues of the family. It will affect the district of north and south Omaha, particularly because the unfortunate issue is that 90 percent of the young people that sit in our detention center are people of color. The work that's being done and the services that this funding will do will help us to address those issues and the funding issues that go on outside of there. Because a lot of those issues that we're dealing with there have a whole, complete social view that affects them being in there. The same, public health: the county is going to invest \$5 million in public health in addition to the money that we're doing right now. As Senator Wayne said, the COVID-19 pandemic kind of exacerbated a lot of those inequities. And though the county is not particularly in the housing business, I do want to advocate for the money that's lined in there for affordable housing, job training, other things of that sort. These are social determinants of health that we saw play out in the public health realm and that we on our board of health know will help us get a lot of those inequities in healthcare and those disparities. I want to lay out to you a little more too some of the county skin in the game right now, in addition to the mental health piece. So of the money that we've had, the allocation right now that's probably out the door is somewhere between \$5 million of funding that's going there. There's potential of money that will directly affect north and south Omaha and how it gets laid out of a possible another \$10 million impact that could come to those areas, in addition to this \$50 million in mental health that we think will significantly affect the area. So I want to thank you for your consideration. I want to put on record that I support this effort and

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hopefully it gets full funding. If it does not, I think the work that they've done is worthy of consideration from here on out, as they plan and direct this, that somehow they'll get there in the future. And if you got any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Commissioner Rodgers. Any questions from the committee?

**CHRIS RODGERS:** Thank you all.

**HUNT:** Thanks for coming down today. Next, I'll invite up Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer. Welcome, Chief Schmaderer.

**TODD SCHMADERER:** Thank you. My name is Todd Schmaderer, S-c-h-m-a-d-e-r-e-r, 505 South 15th Street, City of Omaha Police Chief. Senator Wayne and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, the American Rescue Plan provides a unique opportunity to address significant needs, particularly in the city of Omaha and particularly in our north Omaha community. As such, I'm a proponent of LB1024. The city of Omaha's priorities are closely aligned with LB1024, especially with violence prevention and intervention, job training, youth programs, affordable housing, and assistance to unemployed workers. The north Omaha community has worked closely with the Omaha Police Department to reach some of our lowest violent crime records in the history of the city. However, they are still disproportional and they have spiked during the pandemic. There are three steps that I see in order to reduce violent crime further in the city of Omaha. And as the city of Omaha's crime goes down, the state of Nebraska's go down. That's the imprint and the impact that we have on the state. First one is mental health. Douglas County has stepped up on this front. Commissioner Rodgers touched on that during some of his testimony. Number two is recidivism rates. We have way too many repeat offenders and there are a number of bills that you'll see throughout this legislative session attempting to address that. But probably the biggest area that I see is, is that area of root causes: employment, poverty, affordable housing, education. The greatest opportunity to address quality of life and for a disproportionate crime reduction is to address root causes. Arguably, our north Omaha community of-- the-- one of our greatest poverty areas has suffered the most during this pandemic, so we have a dual opportunity here, a dual opportunity. We can assist with coming out of the pandemic, but we can also address the root causes that have forced an unequal starting point. So I was asked one time, Chief, if you had 1,000 more officers, how much, how much would crime go down? What could you do with 1,000 officers? My response was I would rather have 1,000 jobs strategically placed in

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the right part of our city to affect poverty. That would reduce violent crime far more than 1,000 more police officers. So I close with I am in support of LB1024. I view it as transformational. I view it as a rare opportunity. I concur with the two Omaha senators that have brought this forward and also concur with Douglas County Commissioner Chris Rodgers on his previous comments. I'd be happy to take your questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Chief Schmaderer. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being here today. Next, I'll invite Admiral Osie Combs. Welcome.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Well, good afternoon, Vice Chair, Senator Wayne, and members of the Urban Committee. My name is Osie V. Combs Jr. I'm a retired rear admiral in the United States Navy. Proudly--

**HUNT:** Can you spell that for us, Admiral Combs?

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** O-s-i-e, V is the middle initial, C-o-m-b-s, Jr.

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Rear admiral of the United States, retired. It is my pleasure to address this group and just start by saying I'm the president and CEO of Pacific Engineering, located right here in Roca, Nebraska, right outside of Lincoln, Nebraska. Many people have come to visit us recently, including the Governor, people from Washington, and they're surprised that we have a small minority firm doing significant defense work for this country right here in Nebraska. And with that backdrop, I want to say a couple of things-- and please keep me on track for time. You know, we, we talk a little bit, but we're small, but with a big footprint. We lead and we like to think of ourselves being on the bleeding edge of technology, not the cutting edge because we are first. With that, I can say that, without getting too deeply into the weeds, we have significant projects. For example, our missile systems that support and defend this country, we are playing in that arena. Many of you might not know that, but we have talented people doing it. Secondly, as Nebraska leads in center point pivot systems, we're working. We are looking to ways to improve that technology efficiency to bring revenue to the state. We are currently residing in 72,000 square feet of building space where we are making these products and we have grown that additional 50,000 square feet since 2018-19. We had representatives from the Governor's office to attend and at that time, we made commitments we were going to grow. We moved into our new facility and now we're outgrowing that facility because

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we have gone after projects. A couple of our current customers include the, the largest Navy systems command, the Naval Sea Systems Command, to build weapon components for this country. We support the Marine Corps. We support the Navy Strategic Program Office. We support the Army Materiel Command. We support industries like Northrop Grumman. We-- research centers like Penn State, Lockheed Martin, just to name a few. Now, we've been in Nebraska for a bit and we love what we are doing. Again, I stated we're veteran owned and we are minority owned, but let's talk to something that's dear to our heart: growth and strategy and revenue as a CEO. Many of you may remember the-- as we had COVID-19 and the pandemic, we developed a product called Rapid On Demand Portable Platform. These drive-through pods that you went through, PEI built those pods. The first pod that went through for drive-through testing we placed in north Omaha and that was for a reason, it was a purchase. See, people often forget many of the stores, the CVSes, the Wal-Marts, so this-- or whatever you get the shots are not located in certain communities. And when the bill talked about making sure people were taking care of for the pandemic, we said we will do this. Yes, we made a couple of remarks on the local TV and talked about we were doing things. Well, we, we followed that because we adopted the slogan "Take it to the People" because we care. Not only did we start-- am I up?

**HUNT:** You're up, but I'll let you finish your thoughts.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** If you could wrap them up?

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** I'm going to be very quickly. Thank god I didn't see those slides.

**HUNT:** Yeah.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** The-- but we started in Omaha, north Omaha because we wanted to be first so people would be there. And one of the individuals there, I remember, said, you build it, they will come. We've taken this as well as to the Washington, D.C., area where we made the truck and we have that slogan. Build it and they will-- you know, take it to the people because we care. We have it, but it started here. We're-- currently we are working that and we really support the recovery plan, LB1024. There are many aspects that's important to us, like for the EC 2.9a. You've got the list. I won't read them to you, but we are there. So how do we do this? We need the workforce and we need the people and the Governor asked and the

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Lieutenant Governor asked where are you going to get the people? And I said, we're going to grow our own. We have partnerships with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. We have-- we hired an internship and we brought him on as a Ph.D. when he graduated. He's on our staff, one of our leading material scientists. We have a second Ph.D. graduating in May is coming on board. We currently have an intern right now, an electrical engineer, working. We have people and we are establishing the workforce. So what does that mean? We need to go to the Omaha North High School for that talent there. We need to start early and bring the talent now. We cannot start high-level programs in two days. It takes a measured program that this bill offers that opportunity to take advantage of and not just here for Nebraska, but lead the country as we support and defend this country. It's right at the heart of strategic programs here where you have a major base and we have strategic importance. We also have other work that's important. We need to move on to the community colleges. We need touch labor. We need the skills. Not everyone needs the four-year degree. We are running short in this country on that middle touch labor we need. And at the same time, we need to take advantage of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, where we have their graduates. We are working with them and the same thing with Creighton, the same thing with Doane University. We have our production manager from Doane. We have staff members. We are there. The bottom line, we have to develop the talent. We need to stop skipping over the existing talent that's right under our nose. Train them, work them, qualify them, get them excited. And as the chief of the police stated-- and I have a statement by saying we need to get our Ps straight, the priorities. We need to focus more on production and productivity and less on prisons. So when you give the productivity and the jobs, your prison population will go down. Now with that said, I thank you very much for your time and I summarize by saying it is a great return on investment by supporting this bill. It builds the public trust and it gives visible evidence of what's possible. It allows for high-paying jobs. We're talking jobs created in 50,000--

**HUNT:** Admiral, I need to ask you to wrap it up.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** I'm wrapping up, two at once. The growth, defense, Nebraska-- the bottom line, we are invested in a community. We have truckloads now and we would like to continue to do so. And thank you--

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** --very much for your time. You've been very kind.

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**HUNT:** We-- thank you. We've got your testimony. Any questions from the committee? Senator Lowe.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Yes, sir.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt, and thank you, Admiral, for being here. It's an honor--

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Thank you.

**LOWE:** --to have you here--

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Thank you.

**LOWE:** --and in Nebraska. I just have one comment. You said you want to go to high schools and make sure those, those students in the high schools can see what they can do and, and to bring them on board. I would suggest maybe middle school students because by the time they get to high school--

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** It's too late.

**LOWE:** --it's too late.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** May I comment?

**LOWE:** Please.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** I totally agree with you, but we want to make sure where you have centers there we can drop down. We're talking programs. You start this. And actually, I have challenged many places across the country. We really need to start in middle grade-- the elementary schools to get them interested. But middle schools, we get them excited on a science track and we have to pay attention in middle schools because if they cannot pass algebra, you can't go to the higher level. So we must focus on those programs and in middle school algebra one, those first levels. So I agree with you, then go to high school, but get him excited and then they will find a way to go all the way through the program. Thank you for your question and I agree.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Lowe. Any other questions? Thank you, Admiral, for coming today.

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Thank you for allowing me to speak.

**HUNT:** Next I'll invite Mark Norman from the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. Welcome, Mr. Norman.



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**MARK NORMAN:** Good afternoon. Thank you and of course, I have to follow the admiral, so thank you for your service--

**OSIE V. COMBS JR.:** Thank you.

**MARK NORMAN:** --appreciate it. Vice Chair Hunt and members of the committee, I am Mark Norman, M-a-r-k N-o-r-m-a-n. I'm the senior director for business attraction and expansion at the Greater Omaha Chamber. I'm here to express our support for LB1024, the North Omaha Recovery Act. We thank Senators Wayne and McKinney for bringing this to the committee and soliciting our input as the package was put together. There are many worthwhile projects and ideas in this bill and the chamber has been supportive of these concepts since the mid 2000s. We also want to emphasize that we recognize that communities of color in both north Omaha and south Omaha have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, which has expanded the already existing-- exist-- already existing economic gaps. That's why a historic investment in these communities by the state of Nebraska is so important. Senator Wayne has asked us to specifically address the airport business park today. Our chamber has been looking for opportunities to create an employment center in the north Omaha area for over a decade now. We have evaluated many sites and opportunities for redevelopment, but always came back to the same conclusion. There are just not that many sites where you can find a site of any mass of, of land. In a recent visit to north Omaha by an out-of-state company looking to locate in north Omaha, the company stated, we do not want to be in a one-off location. We want to be located where other businesses can also locate so we can create a cluster of similar businesses. When we first looked at what we were calling the "Airport Business Park 2" location-- and, and 2011 is when we first started looking at it. It provides the opportunity for up to 140 acres of contiguous property through the acquisition and assembly of multiple properties. We conducted some preliminary engineering studies and determined a potential price tag of about \$50 million at that time in 2011. About \$30 million was acquisition and \$20 million was, was infrastructure. At the time, this seemed like a daunting price tag, so we continued to look for other opportunities. We looked at multiple sites. We looked at redevelopment of buildings, but we always ran into an obstacle of some sort and always came back to the "Airport Park 2" as the best alternative. Early last year, with the help of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Omaha Public Power District, we contracted with Lamp Rynearson to update the "Airport Business Park 2" study and to look at the best way to structure the phasing of development and also update our infrastructure costs. Looking at the acquisition of property and how new infrastructure

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needed to be installed, as well as stormwater management, it was determined that it was best to acquire all of the properties at once and develop the main core of properties. This would provide for an initial 100-acre core development and the ability to add a 22-acre phase two and a 25-acre phase three. Our 2021 cost estimates put the acquisition at roughly \$50-60 million and infrastructure at \$30 million, including contingencies built in. The North Omaha Recovery Act, along with other potential funds from the city and private contributions, would be able to establish this project. This would get us the massive land we would need to create a major employment center easily accessible to the north Omaha community. As our potential prospect we mentioned earlier had requested, many businesses could locate on the site. The chamber prepared an economic impact analysis demonstrating the potential of the site. So a little bit different inputs than what the state study put together, but utilizing the implan-- impact analysis software as well. We estimated that seven projects could locate in phase one, which is the core 100-acre property, and employ up to 1,700 people. So at full build out, this would generate a direct and indirect economic impact of \$650 million annually to Douglas County and statewide, it would be \$738 million. So you can see a good return on investment. So in addition to this project, we have already supported the North 24th Street proposal in the Governor's ARPA bill and believe that is worthy of additional investment. We're looking forward to testifying on Senator Vargas' bill to support investment in redevelopment in south Omaha like the Southside Terrace, affordable housing plans in the South 24th Street streetscape. So wrapping up, we support LB1024 and the effort to create an industrial park and other business opportunities in north Omaha. Thank you and I'd be willing to answer any questions you may have.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Norman. Any questions from the committee? Yeah? Oh, no. Thank you.

**MARK NORMAN:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thanks for coming and I would like to invite up Officer Tony Conner from the Omaha Police Officers Association. Welcome, Officer Conner. Good to see you.

**ANTHONY CONNER:** Good afternoon, Chairman Wayne and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Anthony Conner, A-n-t-h-o-n-y C-o-n-n-e-r, president of the Omaha Police Officers Association. I have served the citizens of Omaha for nearly 22 years as a police officer. For 18 years, the majority of my career, I patrolled the same

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north Omaha neighborhoods where I was raised. What I can tell you from my experience is that most police officers quickly realize that we will never arrest and incarcerate our way out of the systemic problems facing north Omaha. Police officers know this because of the nature of our job. We find ourselves in situations when ordinarily-- ordinary people run out of moral and legal options to solve their problems and we connect daily with citizens who are victimized by choices of others. We respond to those who have buckled from the stress caused by generational poverty, food insecurities, homelessness, mental illness, and drug abuse. Under my leadership as president of the OPOA, we have renewed focus on preventative and restorative measures to help address the root cause of crime and the years of neglect in north Omaha. We have financially supported the Center for Workforce Development and their Project Reset program. We have supported PACE financially and with volunteer hours coaching kids. We have helped Operation NETS and a host of other community service projects. Our commitment to real and lasting change in north Omaha is genuine and so I am here today to support LB1024. And while we stand firm in need of fair and impartial policing, we also realize that what this community needs most is opportunities. We have a chance with these available funds to make an immediate impact. The issues caused by generational poverty, lack of quality education and opportunities, and limited economic growth and job creation must be addressed in order to end the violence and crime that continues to plague north Omaha. The OPOA is proud to support LB1024 and I would like to personally thank my senator, Senator Wayne, for bringing this idea forward and I'm certainly available for any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Officer Conner. Any questions from the committee? Seeing no questions--

**ANTHONY CONNER:** All right, thank you.

**HUNT:** --thank you for your testimony today. So that concludes our invited testimony. And next, we're going to invite up any proponent testimony from the general public and we'll start with proponents who want to speak about public health. Welcome.

**KENNY McMORRIS:** Welcome. Thank you. All right, Vice Chairwoman Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee, I am Kenny, K-e-n-n-y, McMorris, M-c-M-o-r-r-i-s, and I have the pleasure of serving as the CEO of Charles Drew Health Center, located in north Omaha. I'm also here testifying on behalf of the Health Center Association of Nebraska, which represents the seven federally qualified health centers here in our state. We stand in strong support of LB1024 and

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would like to thank Senator Wayne for introducing this vital legislation. LB1024 directs \$450 million from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to be used primarily for work revitalization and the improving of the living standards of families in north Omaha. North Omaha historically has some of the highest need of all the state. Mainly due to the history of discrimination, segregation, and redlining, north Omaha is one of the most economically deprived areas in our state. Rates of unemployment, homelessness, poverty, uninsured, and chronic disease are all significantly higher in north Omaha than the rest of the city, as well as the state as a whole. While Nebraska has a 10 percent uninsured rate, 20 percent of north Omaha residents are uninsured. In the 68111 zip code where Charles Drew main campus is located, 30 percent of our residents have incomes below the poverty line, as opposed to 9 percent of the rest of the state of Nebraska. As we all know, this is not a phenomenon, but rather a reflection of generations of poverty in the north Omaha community. At Charles Drew Health Center, we served 14,000 patients in 2020. Approximately three-quarters of our patients are people of color, 82 percent had incomes below the poverty level, and 46 percent are uninsured. In addition, many of our patients have even more significant barriers to care, such as housing insecurity. At Charles Drew, we served over 3,000 patients experiencing homelessness in 2020. Charles Drew has been inundated with COVID-19 cases, as one of the few accessible healthcare providers in north Omaha. Federally qualified health centers are an essential component of the safety net system providing comprehensive medical, dental, behavioral health, substance use, and enabling services to any patient, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Statewide, the seven FQHCs have provided over 60,000 COVID-19 tests and vaccinated over 41,000 individuals. We have been on the frontlines of this pandemic and will continue to do so as we always have. FQHCs are an excellent investment in the long-term well-being and the community, both in terms of health and the population and economic security of our areas. Charles Drew provides services to those individuals who other health system-- health systems do not, supporting them holistically and advancing greater economic opportunities. Currently, Charles Drew works with several of the schools to provide mental, physical, and oral health services, ensuring our babies have the care they need to thrive and learn in our schools. Additionally, we work with community partners to provide seamless access to resources. The economic impact of FQHCs is also worth noting. Charles Drew Health Center alone provided over \$35 million in economic impact to the north Omaha community, including 272 jobs at the health center and more broadly within our community. Statewide, FQHCs provide \$208 million in economic impact, over 1,600

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jobs, and \$168 million in savings to the health systems due to our high quality of care. Continuing investments in FQHCs would be a boon to our community. ARPA funds provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Legislature to invest significantly in the communities that need it most. The impact of COVID-19, generational poverty, inequities and lack of equitable economic opportunities are experienced every day in north Omaha. There remains a great need for affordable and accessible healthcare in "north O" and in other low-income communities statewide, which is-- complements the vision of LB1024. Thank you again to Senator Wayne, Senator McKinney, and Vice Chairman Hunt and members of the committee. We encourage you to advance LB1024 to General File. I'll field any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. McMorris. Any questions? Seeing none, I get my teeth done at Charles Drew.

**KENNY McMORRIS:** Yeah, there we go.

**HUNT:** Go to the dentist, so--

**KENNY McMORRIS:** Yes, yes, no thank--

**HUNT:** --thanks for the work you do.

**KENNY McMORRIS:** And thank you for being a patient of our health center.

**HUNT:** I'll invite up any other proponents who want to speak on public health. Welcome.

**PAUL FEILMANN:** All right. Got my heavy-duty mask here. My name is Paul Feilmann, F-e-i-l-m-a-n-n, 5152 Jones Street, Omaha, Nebraska, 68106.

**HUNT:** Mr. Feilmann, can you spell your first name too for the record?

**PAUL FEILMANN:** Yeah. Paul, P-a-u-l.

**HUNT:** Thank you. It just helps our transcribers.

**PAUL FEILMANN:** Senator Wayne and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, I just want to bring in some information. I've got a pamphlet that I've given you. I'll kind of go through it page by page because I think it's got some information I'd like to share with you. I'll tell you a little story real quickly. Five years ago, my wife had a back pain and she kept complaining about it and complaining about it. Finally, she went to a doctor. Doctor said, everything's fine,

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you'll be OK. Continued, she went to another doctor. She said, you need to get a scan, CT scan. And so they did and they found pancreatic cancer. So because they found that quickly, diagnosed it carefully, the Med Center took over from there and she's five years out now and doing great. The reason I tell you that story is because what I'm trying to address today is poverty impact in our community, the health of our community. And if you look at the first page, the scan with these, if you think of these as CT scans of our community, you look at the top one, all of them have yellow, which highlights the area that LB1024 is addressing. The first one is the percentage of children in poverty is-- it's color coded. Dark colors go up to 100 percent. Then you go to the next one. This one's a very disturbing one. It's life expectancy. The life expectancy difference between-- this is the second one, the yellow-- in this LB1024 area, the life expectancy difference between that and west Omaha is 20 years. That's worse than, than in, in some of the bigger metropolitan areas in, in the country. The third one is also very important to mental health-- and I'm a licensed mental health therapist-- is the exposure to violent crime. You see the high--the dark areas in that? That's the number of violent crimes per 1,000 individuals. The worst areas experience 39 violent crimes, murder, all kinds of violent crimes, per 1,000 individuals. That's not for a whole area. The next area goes into food insecurity, the lack of access to a computer. It also talks about severe cost burdening, which is lack of income for the family. The next one has more to do with mental health. It has a graph which talks about ACEs, adverse childhood experiences, and that's major traumatic events, unaffordable housing, being treated unfairly by race, parents in prison, jail, victim of violence, so forth. Then there's a couple of pages here, which I won't go into detail, but it's a white paper report on the psychological, emotional health detriments of poverty, has to do with individuals, parent-child relationships, and so forth, all the damage and psychological trauma. And then there's another page. This one is particularly important. This is school attendance. There's like 94 percent correlation with poverty, which is without school-- I mean, this is data that's just been put out by Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Center. Lastly, I'll refer you to the movie out of Omaha. If you haven't seen it, it's a well-known documentary. It's on Amazon Prime and YouTube. It follows three adolescent brothers in north Omaha for eight years. Two of them were able to get out of the LB1024 area that we're talking about and now raising families in Grand Island. The third one did not get out, got involved in a homicide and is serving 90 years in the State Penitentiary. So I am fully in support of this. This is a game changer

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for kids and families in our community. I really appreciate your support. Anything you can do to move it along.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Feilmann. Any questions? Seeing none, thanks for your testimony.

**PAUL FEILMANN:** Thanks.

**HUNT:** Any other proponents who want to testify about public health, come on up.

**PORTIA CAVITT:** Good afternoon. I'm Reverend Portia Cavitt, P-o-r-t-i-a C-a-v-i-t-t. I pastor at Clair Memorial United Methodist Church, 56th and Ames, and I am the president of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the IMA of Omaha, that serves those underserved in north Omaha, as well as the president of the Great Plains Black History Museum that oversees the Martin Luther King Monument on 24th and Lake. I debated whether I would come up for public health, but what I have to say falls into all categories. When we think about people that live in north Omaha, I know that in this state, we want to think that north Omaha is only African Americans or minorities, but there are a lot of different races of people in north Omaha. And as the pastor of the church, I have to deal with everyone that comes ringing the doorbell that is in need, whether it's for food, whether it's for someone just to listen to them as they share or in the midst of losing a loved one. They are looking for that spiritual support. And so when we think of public health, we have to look at it in all aspects, not just physical, but spiritual, mental, emotional. And so when we think about that, it's been a long time coming for north Omaha. For 50 years, it has been the most neglected area and under supported in the city, as well as the state of Nebraska, and now is the time for us to do what is right. With the funds that are coming from the federal government, we know those blighted areas and we need to step up to the plate and do what needs to be done. We have missed the mark of this area and with these recovery funds of 2022, it gives us the right means in which to help and to do what can be done. At the church, not only are we a hub for food programs, we also have a 35-plot garden that we manage as well as to distribute food too. We have been a vaccination clinic through this pandemic every Wednesday and other churches in the IMA have likewise opened their doors so that people can not only get their vaccines, but also their boosters. And now they are able to receive KN95 masks that Douglas County Health Department are giving out to distribute at that time. We are looking as the IMA to work with the United Healthcare system that we can offer mental health training to our members, our colleagues, so that when

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people come in, you should be able to not only listen to them, but also see what they stand in need of. We are also thinking about opening up telehealth rooms in our churches so that people can come to the church. If they don't have internet access at home, but still need to see a doctor, in the midst of this pandemic, we want to make sure that they can still see a healthcare provider, that they don't have to go without being taken care of. Likewise, we are trying to push for it, the Heritage Health Adult Expansion Program. There are still a lot of people who are not receiving health insurance and the plan that we passed here in this Legislature, that we need to make sure that it is accessible so that people can apply and move forward in their help. Therefore, I took the time out of my busy schedule to come and to support my senators, Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney, and to ask that you would do the right thing. Recognize if your pocketbook is hurting in the midst of this pandemic, quadruple it, four times is what people in my community are dealing with. We served over 280 people in our food pantry on the third Saturday and it is still going on. People are still in need. And so we need you to pass this North Omaha Recovery Act so that we can continue to provide social services to other people. We don't have the money, but the money--

**HUNT:** Can you wrap up--

**PORTIA CAVITT:** --is there.

**HUNT:** --wrap it up, Pastor Cavitt?

**PORTIA CAVITT:** OK, so just want to remind you that the church has been an integral part in the community. Most states always come to the church and ask that we would do what we can, but we need you to help us to meet the needs of the people. So please consider this plan and do what is right for the people of north Omaha.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Pastor. Any questions? Good to see you. Thank you for coming down.

**PORTIA CAVITT:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Are there any other proponents who want to speak about public health? All right, I'll invite up any proponents who want to speak about-- oh, sorry. Come on-- sorry about that. Welcome.

**RAHEEM SANDERS:** Greetings and salutations. All right. So my name is Raheem Sanders, R-a-h-e-e-m, last name, S-a-n-d-e-r-s. I'm here representing PPRP Innovations, the leading public health-based innovation firm in the Midwest, and I'm here to talk about public



health, but in a different aspect and why we support LB1024. We've heard from a lot of good professionals today about a lot of the work that they've been doing as it relates to traditional public health. But one of the questions that I have-- don't have to answer-- do you know why public health was started? I guess the bigger question is do you know by who and why? All right, I'll answer that for you. Public health was created in 1800s, early 1800s in London by a gentleman named John Snow. There was a cholera epidemic going on. Nobody knew what, how, and why. People were using means such as alcohol and opium to treat this, but still, the epidemic continued. But what John Snow did is he looked out of traditional means and explored new, innovative ways to get the job done. And that's how he found out that one of the main water sources in the town was the main root cause of this epidemic. I bring all that up because a lot of the good people here, they been talking about a lot of work they been doing, and in our field, we deem that traditional public health. What I'm asking you guys today is to support a bill, LB1024, that not only supports traditional public health, but all the aspects and components of public health to help improve a community. North Omaha is no different than any other minority community in the United States and metaphorically, a lot of these communities have been having cholera outbreaks for hundreds of years. There's been no support in the main aspects in drivers of disease, but there's been no support in the innovation of doing things different and investing in a community to help solve their own problems. Since the pandemic, we've been on the ground not giving out vaccines. We ain't been giving out no mask, but we have been working on increasing, enhancing public health-based innovation, especially in north Omaha. And that's why we support this bill here because not only does it handle all the components, as the other speakers mentioned, but it also has an economic aspect as well. And a lot of you fine people are smart individuals and you know one of the main drivers of poverty is lack of economics. North Omaha is a rich community filled with a lot of talent, a lot of diversity, and a lot of ideas that can change this world. What I'm here today to ask you fine ladies and gentlemen is to consider supporting this bill because not only does it provide the direct needs that we have as it relates to public health, it also invests in the indirect needs that are necessary for a community like north Omaha to grow. You guys have the opportunity to do something that nobody else in the country is doing. That's why all the minority communities look the same. Nobody cares. All of them look the same. East to west, north and south, don't matter where you go, it all look like north Omaha. But we're talking here today because you got an opportunity to change that. You have an opportunity to invest directly into traditional public health and into

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innovative public health to do something that no one else in this country has done yet. So my question to you is now that you know, metaphorically, that there is a cholera outbreak in your community, what are you going to do about it? Thank you for your time, ladies and gentlemen.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Sanders. Are there any questions? Thank you for coming today.

**RAHEEM SANDERS:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Any other proponents who want to speak to public health? Are there any proponents who want to speak to economic impacts, which would include housing, job training, minority business assistance, etcetera? Welcome.

**T. MICHAEL WILLIAMS:** Thank you. Vice-Chair Hunt and committee, I am T. Michael Williams, T M-i-c-h-a-e-l W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, and I am president of the Omaha branch of the NAACP. I want to first celebrate Senators McKinney and Wayne for their efforts in developing this North Omaha Recovery Plan and their stated goal of transforming north Omaha into a more vibrant and resilient community. I want to talk about housing impacts, specifically as it relates to what they've put on-- in their recovery plan on the bottom of page 12 through page 14. I support all of what is written there. In addition, I just want to say in 2017, the homeowner's rate across the country was 72.5 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 26.1 percent for Hispanics, and 42 percent for African Americans. The value of property has stifled during the history of the United States for African Americans. This is seen in a report in 2018 from the Brookings Institute, which showed that homes owned by Black Americans are undervalued by billions of dollars and it's having a domino effect on American families when it comes to paying for higher education and then going into retirement, not to mention other things. A 2021 article based on 2019 information says race plays a significant factor in the home lending industry. Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and black applicants experienced discrimination during the mortgage approval process, but black applicants encountered the most. According to the report, black people were 80 percent more likely to be denied a mortgage loan than a white applicant with a similar profile. And we know that home ownership is a crucial means by which families can accumulate wealth. Over a period of time, homeowners accumulate equity in their homes. In turn, this equity contributes substantially to the wealth of the homeowner. And we understand specifically in Omaha, redlining historically has caused suffering and so I just want to say we stand in support of the housing

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impacts in this plan: EC 2.2a, EC 310 [SIC] A through D, EC 3.12 A through G, which adds up to a little more than \$86 million. I know part of the plan calls for 100 new homes, which it could be 200 homes that individuals could, could purchase simply because the need is that great. Thank you so much for your-- for the opportunity to share with you today and we do urge your adoption of this recovery plan. Thank you so much.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Williams. Questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming here today. Welcome.

**BOB HALLSTROM:** Vice Chairwoman Hunt, Senator Wayne, members of the committee, my name is Bob Hallstrom, B-o-b H-a-l-l-s-t-r-o-m. I appear before you today as registered lobbyist for the Nebraska Bankers Association to testify in support of LB1024. Economic disparities for residents living in low-income and/or segregated neighborhoods have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilization of ARPA funding presents an unprecedented opportunity to enhance the ability of public and private entities to respond to these disparities. These funds can be utilized to rebuild infrastructure, enhance workforce, invest in high-growth and startup businesses, and promote economic development in north Omaha. The banking industry has been engaged in numerous efforts to promote the well-being of individuals and businesses in north Omaha. However, much work remains to be done and ARPA funding will provide opportunities to expand and revitalize north Omaha. In my testimony, I provided some examples. I'll just summarize briefly. There are three in-school banks in north Omaha area schools that have been established by Omaha area banks. Omaha area banks have been promoting financial literacy. Senators McKinney and Slama combined forces last year to pass LB452, which recognized the importance of financial literacy for our high school students and elementary students and banks are promoting financial literacy at the local level, not only in north Omaha, but across the state. Other areas where we think banks are participating, engaged in north Omaha involve direct lending, supporting community development financial institutions with capital investments, supporting Habitat for Humanity. In polling Omaha banks, it looks like the vast majority of banks are participating in the Habitat for Humanity program. The Carver Legacy Center, founded in partnership with American National Bank, is located at 24th and Lake Street. The primary purpose of the bank, as indicated on the bank's website, is to help African Americans grow and sustain wealth, starting with focus on business ownership, home ownership, and community ownership. There's a number of fantastic foundations and not-for-profit organizations in the Omaha area. Omaha banks have collaborated with them to provide loans and other benefits

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to residents and businesses in north Omaha. Some of the foundations and nonprofits that banks identified that they have been working with: the Greater Omaha Chamber Foundation, Grow Nebraska Foundation, Heartland Family Service, Holy Name Housing Corporation, Nebraska Enterprise Fund, OneWorld Community Health Centers, SPARK Community Development Financial Institution, the Empowerment Network, Urban League of Nebraska, Habitat for Humanity, and Transformation 2025. Some of the things that they have collaborated with involve activities related to small business development, housing program support, north Omaha neighborhood revitalization, housing support services, reaching underserved entrepreneurs, healthcare workforce development, and access to capital. That gives you a snapshot of what we believe banks have been doing, what we would like to look at going forward, and maybe some suggestions with the ARPA funding. One is to use that to establish a loan loss reserve for small and minority and women-owned businesses in north Omaha. Some of those businesses who may fall short of meeting credit underwriting requirements, this could provide a safety net or a safe harbor for banks to put those borrowers on the margin over the top to qualify for a bank loan. In reviewing the North Omaha Recovery Plan, it also indicates or addresses the energy burden impact on housing. This issue may not be directly related to ARPA funding, but I would certainly suggest that consideration be given to the dollar and energy saving loans programs by residents in north Omaha. That's a low interest rate loan program that would help reduce the cost of providing-- or paying for energy cost in those homes. And then finally, for finding, finding funding for housing, looking to the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act and the Middle Income Workforce Housing Act as prototypes to use ARPA funds to assist with the home ownership requirements and needs in north Omaha. I'd be happy to address any questions of the committee.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Hallstrom. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for--

**BOB HALLSTROM:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** --coming here today. Next proponent on economic impact.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Good afternoon.

**HUNT:** Hi. Welcome.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Hi. Thank you. Senator Wayne, thank you for the invitation to be here today. Members of the Urban Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and also thank you for

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the work of this body historically to advance issues that have strengthened communities like those in north Omaha that have been marginalized and left out of many of the economic development opportunities. The strategies that we've seen over the, the decades, like housing investment, small business growth, and community programming, I think everyone in the room is excited to see that many of these components are included in the North Omaha Recovery Act plan.

**HUNT:** Ma'am, can I just interrupt--

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Yes, my name.

**HUNT:** Yes. Could you hear us over here and we're, like--

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** I didn't realize, no.

**HUNT:** --she didn't give her name.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Who's that? Yeah.

**HUNT:** Oh, my bad.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Yeah.

**HUNT:** Can you say it and spell it for me?

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** And do I-- and do you want me to start over? I'm joking.

**HUNT:** No, don't start over.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** I'm joking. Everyone's in the room like collectively, no. My name is Cydney Franklin, C-y-d-n-e-y F-r-a-n-k-l-i-n.

**HUNT:** Thank you--

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Yes.

**HUNT:** --very much.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** I'm here representing Seventy Five North Revitalization Organization. I'm also a proponent of LB1024. Seventy Five North, for those of you that are unfamiliar, we are a small, nonprofit community development organization focused in north Omaha's Highlander community. To date, Seventy Five North has invested a little more than \$100 million on 40 acres of north Omaha land through mixed-income housing and a commercial development strategy. What that

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looks like with our strategy in Highlander is more than 161 units of mixed-income housing that have been developed since 2017. We also have under construction an additional 108 units of mixed-income housing and a smaller number of single-family homes that will be for sale for the first time. We also invest in community building, entrepreneurship access, and a neighborhood-based education pipeline through a partnership with Omaha Public Schools that we've had in place since 2015. In addition to the investments we're already making, Seventy Five North has more than 90 vacant lots and blighted homes along the North 30th Street corridor that are awaiting funding like what could be available through this opportunity to make their development or redevelopment possible. Many, many, many hands make this success, the success that's been experienced in Highlander possible, including bodies such as this, public, public dollars like those presented in the North Omaha Recovery Plan Act, and a community response to the needs of people in places that exist in Highlander, particularly those pertaining to the affordable housing crisis. And so Seventy Five North, in summary, is eager to support LB1024 and we look forward to being a leader in the plans being discussed today and the strategies that can transform lives of the families and individuals that live in north Omaha and I'm happy to answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Franklin. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you--

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** --for the work that you do and thanks for being here.

**CYDNEY FRANKLIN:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent.

**CARMEN TAPIO:** Good afternoon, Chairman Wayne, Vice Chair Hunt, and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Carmen Tapio, C-a-r-m-e-n, last name is Tapio, T-a-p-i-o, and it is my pleasure to sit before you today in strong support of LB1024. I'm an advocate for appropriating federal funds to the North Omaha Recovery Plan and I appreciate the Senators Wayne and McKinney for bringing this to committee. I am the chief executive officer of North and-- North End Teleservices and the founder of the company. We are a six-year-old company and we are the sixth-fastest growing company-- private company in Nebraska, according to the Inc. 5000 2021, and we are number 754 on the Inc. 5000 list of fastest-growing private companies in America. I appreciate your service and efforts in moving our region forward. I am a member of the board of directors of the North 24th Street Business

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Improvement District, incoming chair of the Greater Omaha Chamber, and a business person. We are a certified hub zone business, a woman-owned business, and a minority-owned business. We are a federal and state and commercial contractor with one-third of our employees holding security clearances. Nebraska is leading the nation on many levels and it is no small thanks to your efforts and your service and dedication to the greater good. There is, however, work that needs to be done. The devastating impact of COVID-19 throughout our communities, state, and our nation cannot be understated. The pandemic of the past two years-plus has had an overwhelmingly adverse effect on already marginalized communities, including north and south Omaha. The disproportionate and severe impact is widespread in health, business, unemployment, education, and so much more and it is very well documented. LB1024 and the North Omaha Recovery Plan is a vital step forward in helping the community begin to catch up and turn the corner while positioning the community to recover in a manner that helps lay the foundation for growth and contribution from this important area and region. The plan is comprehensive, it is multifaceted, it-- in its ability to address a broad range of health, business, safety, education, and housing needs in the community. We appreciate the funds that have already been identified for the north Omaha community. However, we respectfully ask that the significant work needed to begin recovering from the pandemic and truly spur revitalization be taken into further consideration as this bill is contemplated. The requested \$450 million identified in the proposal is appropriate to make the true impact necessary for substantial change. The streetscape modifications alone needed to make the North 24th Street corridor walkable, livable, attractive, and ready for multi-modal transportation and foundationally safe for people and business comes with the \$40 million required investment, which is a small investment when you consider the ROI it will bring to a community. My company, which is in the top 2 percent of employers nationally, is making a \$50 million investment in the heart of north Omaha on one of the most historically important blocks in an historically, historically important corridor in the community. I've attached copies of our conceptual renderings for your review. Our development will provide new corporate offices for my company, affordable housing, mixed retail, daycare, food service, and community spaces. We are doing so because we are a north Omaha, north Omaha, Nebraska-grown business. We believe in the economic contribution we are making and the potential for north Omaha as the next economy. Our economic impact to date is nearly \$170 million, roughly \$300,000 per job annually. We are not alone in our confidence. There are a substantial number of additional developments planned or already underway that, together with these

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funds, will change the community forever. An investment in north Omaha will make it a thriving place to live, work, and play and help in its ability to fully contribute to the vitality of our state. Our location and our employees, over 50 percent which live in a hub zone, are our greatest asset. The community is behind this bill and we are asking you to get behind the bill as well. We see the north Omaha region as an asset and believe a rising tide lifts all boats and we respectfully ask that you agree with the current need and the potential for the community by voting yes. Thank you for your consideration.

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**CARMEN TAPIO:** Happy to answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Tapio. Any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt, and thank you, Ms. Tapio, for being here. What is North End Teleservices?

**CARMEN TAPIO:** North End Teleservices is an outsource provider of contact center services and that could be phone chat or email. It, it is far beyond traditional telemarketing. We provide contracting to federal agencies and state agencies as well. As I mentioned, about one-third of our employees are security cleared and so it's very complex work that our employees do and it is kind of its own ecosystem for entry-level to advanced career positions.

**LOWE:** OK, thank you. You said you had some attachments and we just got the two pages, so if you can get those to us--

**CARMEN TAPIO:** Absolutely.

**LOWE:** --that would be wonderful.

**WAYNE:** You can just email us.

**LOWE:** Yeah, please.

**CARMEN TAPIO:** OK. Any other questions?

**HUNT:** Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Ms. Tapio.

**CARMEN TAPIO:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**WAYNE:** Carmen, we got them.



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**CARMEN TAPIO:** You got them, OK.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**AMANDA BREWER:** Thank you. Good afternoon, committee. My name is Amanda Brewer, A-m-a-n-d-a, Brewer, B-r-e-w-e-r. I'm honored to be the CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Omaha and we serve five counties, including Douglas and Sarpy Counties. I'm here today in support of LB1024. I've personally served this community through habitat for 23 years and I've seen a lot of changes. The impacts of COVID are multiplied. In addition to the disease negatively affecting the community itself, the increases in housing prices, both rental and ownership, are exponentially affecting a family's ability to have stable shelter. In addition, local families trying to buy a home are competing with investors, many from out of state, to purchase properties. The accessibility gap for first-time homebuyers has grown significantly due to COVID. This has a disproportionate effect on the people in east Omaha. Through Habitat Omaha, more than 1,200 people applied for home ownership last year. This morning, we opened our application process for the year and by 9:30 a.m., we had more than 1,000 people call to inquire about our program. The need is great. I will abbreviate my testimony since I've submitted via writing and there's a lot to testify, but Senator Wayne had asked nonprofit housing developers to talk about the capacity over the next four years. Habitat focuses on the stability that homeownership provides. In that life cycle of homeownership, there are various opportunities to have impact and habitat works to address all phases, which includes: mortgage readiness, that means helping get people ready for a mortgage and removing barriers; creation of individual development accounts to help families save for a down payment; building and renovating homes for homeownership; providing home repairs for existing homeowners; and lastly, ensuring that a family's largest asset, the home, has clear title and transfers properly from generation to generation. It's a hidden problem in the community and one of the reasons why we see so many abandoned properties because it didn't transfer properly to the next generation. Our capacity is as follows: through homeownership, we can serve 391 additional-- I'm sorry, 391 families from the years 2023 to 2026; critical home repair, 482 families; through helping with legal title clearing and estate planning, 1,400 families; and through mortgage readiness, 600 families. We also project that we could serve 300 families through creation of individual development accounts. I thank you for your work and your leadership and I can take any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you very much, Ms. Brewer. Any questions? Senator Blood.

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**BLOOD:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. Thank you for testifying. I just have a real quick question and it's a op-- it's your opinion I'm asking for.

**AMANDA BREWER:** OK.

**BLOOD:** So the more I hear about this bill and I-- when we talk about housing, the one message that keeps going on in my head-- and I need to know if this is, is what I'm hearing. It sounds like part of this project is going to help us build generational wealth within the north Omaha community. Would you say that that's accurate?

**AMANDA BREWER:** Yes, I think it's very accurate and that's part of the problem and the gener-- gentleman, Mr. Williams, talked about it very eloquently. Historically, access to capital wasn't available--

**BLOOD:** Right.

**AMANDA BREWER:** --equally between blacks and whites and, and therefore, it just-- the, the spread kept deepening. And the-- and one of the big ways to help equalize is through access to capital and homeownership and that does increase the opportunity for generational wealth.

**BLOOD:** Because we know if we increase the ability for people to have assets, that that increases their ability to have generational wealth, is that correct?

**AMANDA BREWER:** Yep, you got it.

**BLOOD:** All right, thank you.

**AMANDA BREWER:** Um-hum.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Blood. Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Vice Chair, and thank you for being here today and being part of Habitat for Humanity. You're with Habitat for Humanity for Omaha.

**AMANDA BREWER:** Correct.

**LOWE:** And you said you're going to build 334 homes in the next three years, basically?

**AMANDA BREWER:** Four years--

**LOWE:** Four years.

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**AMANDA BREWER:** --and build and renovate, yep.

**LOWE:** Build and renovate.

**AMANDA BREWER:** Yep, and Omaha includes-- we now include Sarpy County, Washington County, Burt County, and Cass County, but the focus of this will be Omaha.

**LOWE:** OK.

**AMANDA BREWER:** And Sarpy-- and also Sarpy County.

**LOWE:** All right. How much of this will be north Omaha? Do you have any idea?

**AMANDA BREWER:** The primary focus will be north Omaha, but we, we do have some projects in Sarpy County as well. And we're talking about our full capacity here, so my belief is creating homeownership-- affordable homeownership anywhere is good for the entire community, including north Omaha.

**LOWE:** All right. All right, thank you.

**AMANDA BREWER:** Uh-huh.

**HUNT:** Thanks, Senator Lowe. Seeing no other questions, thanks for being here today--

**AMANDA BREWER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** --Ms. Brewer. Welcome.

**SHERMAN WELLS:** Hey. So my name is Sherman Wells, S-h-e-r-m-a-n W-e-l-l-s, and I'm with U.N.T.A.M.E.D. When you talk about grassroots boots on the ground in north Omaha community with the youth, I'm one of many. I'm a proponent for LB1024 because for us, north Omaha is home. For us, north Omaha is our legacy and for us, this is where our young generation will grow up and prosper. So the \$450 million north Om-- the north Omaha plan that our senators have proposed is long overdue. I'm 45 years old and north Omaha's 24th Street Business District has looked the same and has the same dismal feeling of nothingness for decades. It's almost like it's on purpose to starve us financially and we all know with poverty comes crime, right? But wait, we don't want to assume that these conditions are created on purpose to continue the narrative about black communities in America. These federal funds that are designed to help this kind of poverty issue in

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communities hit the hardest by the pandemic should not turn around and be diverted to build prisons and lakes. What are we doing here, Nebraska? We have an entire impoverished community that has intentionally been neglected and left out of financial conversations for years and years, over and over again. So I ask the question again, is this done on purpose because we know with poverty comes crime? Is the Governor banking on that crime with this kind of poverty north Omaha is in and headed to to fill this new proposed prison? Nebraska has a chance to be a model of how America should be, standing up and uplifting its black communities impacted the most by the pandemic like north Omaha, like north Omaha has. All around the United States, cities where these same kind of conditions exist like the ones in north Omaha, the murder rate and the crime rates are high and on the rise and the education ratings are low and there is no hope. Without hope, there is no love. Without love, there is no future. So this is not us asking for a handout. This is us asking that these federal funds be used exactly what they are meant for and for the record, this is a notice to the state that Nebraska pertain-- particularly north Omaha is unified. And in the face of unprecedented challenges, the state of north Omaha is going to be resilient.

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**SHERMAN WELLS:** Any questions?

**HUNT:** Thank you so much. Any questions? Seeing none, thanks for being here today.

**SHERMAN WELLS:** Yeah.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Good afternoon, Vice Chair Hunt and to members of the committee. My name is Dr. Ralph Lassiter, R-a-l-p-h L-a-s-s-i-t-e-r. I currently serve as the pastor emeritus and elder of the Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, located on the corner of 24th and Ohio. I'm also a member of the North 24th Street Business Improvement District and I come before you today representing the North 24th Street BID, speaking on behalf and in support of this bill that has been brought forth by our two senators, Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney. The mission of the North 24th Street Business Improvement District is to enhance business development and we do so by supporting the development, the improvement, and the promotion and safety of the historic North 24th Street. And the North 24th Street Business Improvement District is one of the largest BIDs in the state of

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Nebraska. It's over two miles in length and it begins at Cuming Street, just south of Creighton University, and extends to Meredith Avenue, which is one block north of Ames Avenue. Within the North 24th Street BID are over 200 businesses, property owners, and nonprofit organizations, including habitat. I stand before you-- I'm a little taller than I am right now-- representing the North 24th Street BID in support of the North Omaha Recovery Plan, which is LB1024, again sponsored by our north Omaha senators, McKinney and Wayne. We do so because the North Omaha Recovery Plan, as has been spoken to by many of the testifiers today, it will address high rates of poverty, it will have an impact on unemployment rates, and will also have an impact on the deteriorated economic and physical conditions that are prevalent in north Omaha. You've also heard from those testifying on behalf of the impact on health that the north Omaha community has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and particularly has a-- has had a significant impact on the African American population. As business owners and property owners, we know that economic development in north Omaha will have a positive impact on all of Nebraska because it will generate additional state income through, through the income tax and, as has been mentioned before, jobs will be created. And we're not just talking about minimum-wage jobs, we're talking about jobs that will impact those individuals who are in the middle-income category. My yellow light has just come on, so I'm going to wrap up by just reminding you that there is an African proverb that says that every morning on a plain, an antelope wakes up and realizes it has to outrun the fastest lion or it will be eaten. At the same time, a lion wakes up and it realizes that it must outrun the slowest antelope or it will starve to death. Moral of that story is that when the sun rises, it's best that you get running. We're not on an African plain, but it is morning for us here in Nebraska and so I ask that you support this particular bill because it is time for us to make a change in north Omaha. Thank you. I'm open to any questions if you have any.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Dr. Lassiter. Any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Vice Chair, and thank you, Dr. Lassiter, for being here. What has been the problem of getting investment capital to come into north Omaha?

**RALPH LASSITER:** That's a very complex question and the answer is complex. Essentially, you're-- there's a need for seed capital. There is a need for those organizations that actually control capital to be willing to invest in north Omaha. You also have a variety of issues. For example, I would simply mention one; north Omaha, in many ways, is a food desert. And in order for grocers to locate in north Omaha,

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their business model requires a certain number of rooftops. Well, rooftops won't be filled if you don't have affordable, decent housing, nor will rooftops be filled if you do not have services such as grocery stores and drugstores. So it's, it's a situation where individuals and organizations have to be willing to take a chance on north Omaha and I believe that this particular bill will create an environment where organizations, enterprises would be much more likely to take a chance.

**LOWE:** All right--

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**LOWE:** --thank you.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Any other questions?

**HUNT:** Other questions? Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. Thank you for your testimony today.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Um-hum.

**BLOOD:** I want to build on the question from Senator Lowe because I just feel like we haven't gone deep enough and I want to get it on record. I mean-- historically, I mean, we don't have to go very far back just to World War II. Weren't veterans of color screwed over when it came to getting-- I'll use my terminology. You don't have to repeat those words. I just want to get it on record, isn't it historically, unfortunately, when it comes to professionals of color, entrepreneurs of color that they have traditionally been bypassed when somebody of equal or lesser qualifications that was not a person of color may have gotten a loan when you did not?

**RALPH LASSITER:** I think the testimony that has been presented up to this time basically supports that statement, Senator Blood. I will just share with you I've lived in Omaha for over 47 years. I and my wife applied-- should I say we went to see a home? I didn't know it at the time. It was in the Fairacres area.

**BLOOD:** Um-hum.

**RALPH LASSITER:** And when I made the appointment with the realtor, oh sure, Mr. Lassiter, come on out and let's take a look. And when I arrived, the comment was well, you may be more comfortable in a different part of the city, so.

**WAYNE:** [LAUGHTER] Sorry.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Yeah, that's--

**BLOOD:** I, I--

**RALPH LASSITER:** It's a laughing matter today. However--

**BLOOD:** I appreciate your honesty.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Yeah.

**BLOOD:** I just want to make sure we get it on record because people always seem so surprised when they hear this and it's like this, this is a systemic issue that's been going on for a very long time.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Correct and it has impacted business development, entrepreneurship, housing, health. And again, this bill gives us an opportunity to make a significant difference.

**BLOOD:** Thank you.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thanks for coming today.

**RALPH LASSITER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent on economic impact.

**J. SHANNON:** My name is J. Shannon. J, my last name is S-h-a-n-n-o-n. I'm here representing the Malcolm X birth site development committee. I'll keep my comments fairly short. I'll say some things prayerfully that will remind us of who we are and what club we belong to first. And when I say that club, I mean, I'm referencing humanity. As people, we're all brothers and sisters in that way. And then as things begin to progress and either-- as we evolve in some cases or as we-- I would say split up, we begin to disaggregate ourselves into different cultures. We start to say one is this and one is that, but again, foundationally, we are a member of the same club. We all need air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, and we all would love to have wonderful families and raise them in a healthy environment. The reason why I'm talking about humane, humane or being human is because I represent someone that I consider to be one of the greatest humanitarians in American history. Malcolm X or Malcolm Little, from

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Nebraska's standpoint, represents a story of perseverance, endurance, and truth and I believe we can all definitely connect with that. And with that connected-- after we're connected with that, I think we can transcend those divisive things that separate us in different pockets and go right back to us being human beings. And perseverance, endurance, and truth is something that is worth fighting for, regardless of what lines we may have-- may not want to cross or lines we've drawn ourselves into. So LB1024 gives us a unique opportunity to put a stamp on the entire history of the United States as Nebraska as the birthright-- as the birth site, as one of its greatest humanitarians. Malcolm Little's story represents a story of perseverance because we know where he began, his humble beginnings. He represents the unspoken, the voiceless, the motherless and the fatherless. From that point of reference, it's a story of perseverance because of experience and his own situation. He found himself into-- found himself in a situation that he had to persevere and he had to endure. From that point, it became a story and a journey of truth. How do I get to the bottom of the situations I found myself in? And in that matter, how do I do what I can to ensure that no one else finds themselves in those same situations? I think we can all connect with that and I will candidly say that we have built monuments for less men, spent more money for causes that are not worth what I'm speaking of today. And we talk about economic development-- my yellow light is on. I got 30 seconds to talk real fast. This situation will bring tourism or opportunity for tourism greater than any other situation that we've been talking about. I was here for another hearing and I heard plans of wonderful basketball courts and things of that nature that will boost our economy, but there is nothing greater than for us to be proud and representing where we are from. That's Omaha, Nebraska, or Nebraska at large. Even though I proudly wear my red "N" wherever I am, it also brings me another twinkle in my eye and a pep in my step when I say I'm from Omaha, the birthplace of Malcolm X, Malcolm Little, and he represents the greatest story of human life that I've seen and I've heard. And he's from the mighty, mighty "O." It is our opportunity. I thank Mr. Wayne. I thank Mr. McKinney for giving us the opportunity to do so and put our stamp on the legacy of our great state from the Panhandle all the way to District 2. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Shannon.

**J. SHANNON:** Oh, any questions, I'm sorry.

**HUNT:** Any questions? Seeing no-- thanks for the work that you do.



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**J. SHANNON:** Um-hum.

**MICHAEL MARONEY:** Good afternoon, community members. First of all, let me thank Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney for their leadership in bringing forth LB1024. My name is Michael Maroney and it's M-i-c-h-a-e-l M-a-r-o-n-e-y, and I'm the president of the Omaha Economic Development Corporation. Omaha Economic Development Corporation has been around 45 years. We are what's considered a certified CDC. That's community development corporation, a federally certified CDC. And also we have a federally certified-- we are a certif-- federally certified CEDC, community economic development cooperation. Primarily, what we have been doing is affordable housing, job creation, and entrepreneurial development targeted specifically toward north Omaha. But what I want to mention-- talk about briefly, like I said, we were founded in 1977. In 1978, we retained a consultant to come in and look at our community, north Omaha, and we wanted to look at all those quality of life issues that impact any community. That's education, housing, jobs, health disparities, and we asked them to quantify what north Omaha's conditions were-- this is in 1978-- as compared to the rest of the city. They did that and then we used that kind of as a guide as we moved forward. In 2005, we decided let us take that 1978 study. We commissioned some experts from the University of Nebraska at Omaha to take that document, look at those same conditions that were quantified back in 1978 and which talked about the disparity between the African American community in north Omaha and the rest of the city. In every single condition, the disparity gap actually widened. It had gotten worse for the African American community. That led a lot of us to believe that although there were many organizations doing many good things, for some reason, we weren't making a difference. I have actually been working all my adult life in north Omaha and that's over 50 years. I have seen a lot of studies, some of them I've been a part of, and I can tell you from my position what was the problem. Came up with beautiful plans, plans wind up on shelves. The reason being there was no resources behind it and it was a combination of both no money and no political will, which was mentioned earlier. We now have an opportunity to help north Omaha come out-- we talk about being in the pandemic. North Omaha has been in the pandemic a lot longer than two years. Just want to say so hopefully you can get behind LB1024, advance it, and move it forward. And with that, I got my yellow light on. I don't want to go to red. I'll take any questions you have.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks so much--

**MICHAEL MARONEY:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** --for being here, Mr. Maroney. Welcome.

**WILLIE BARNEY:** Thank you, Senator. Just want to breathe this air for a minute. Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y. I appreciate Senator Wayne, Senator Hunt, all of the senators that are here and listening. And I agree, Senator Blood, I'm hoping that there will be more conversation today. I've worked the last 15 years, dedicated my life to helping and working with many of the folks behind you and some that have left and thousands of others that are outside of this, this room working to try to improve north Omaha. And this is a historic moment. I hope the senators in this room realize how historic this is. I don't think there's any other hearing that's going on in this entire 60 days that's more important than what we're doing right here today. And I say that because of what Mr. Maroney just talked about. When we started before the pandemic, the unemployment rate in north Omaha was 9 percent. That was the lowest that we were able to get it in the last 30 years. As a matter of fact, after all of the work that we've done together, what we realized was at 9 percent, it was the same unemployment rate that it was in the '60s when Dr. King went to Washington and marched all over the country to address unemployment with the March on Washington for jobs. So literally 50 years has gone by and we're talking about some of those same issues. The important piece of this is that you now have in your hands the opportunity to address this at the keyword that has been left out, scale. There are tons of great programs, initiatives, organizations doing work in the city, but we've never had the investment at the scale that's necessary. In 1968, the Kerner Commission came back and said unless you address the problems at the scale, you will create two Americas; you will have a black America and a white America. We have inherited that promise made back in 1968. That's what Nebraska is facing. We all talk about Dr. King and the I Have a Dream speech. The speech that I want to hit on today is what he called the other America. What he said was America, black people are living on an island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. Nebraska, at 1.8 percent unemployment rate, has an island of poverty in north and south Omaha right now. What I mean by that is you have the ability in your hands right now to take this to scale. We're not asking you to do all the workforce. The organizations, the people, the individuals that are in our community, they have rolled up their sleeves. When we have worked together, you've heard from the chief of police, we reduced gun violence by 74 percent. We increased graduation rates from 50 percent to 80 percent and then COVID hit us, the pandemic hit us. And so now we, as Senator Wayne said, we reversed back to where we were in 2008.

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But the critical piece is with this investment that Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney and I believe Senator Hunt has signed onto, this gives us finally the ability to take the investment to scale, which has never been done, nowhere in the United States, nowhere. But here we are in the center of the country. Omaha, the state of Nebraska has the opportunity right now to show the rest of the country that when we say qualified census tracts, there are 25 in our district, 25 of them. How can we utilize these dollars and directly, intentionally, on purpose, address those funds and take these solutions that we've identified to scale? I know that's a challenge to the Governor. I know it's a challenge possibly to other senators that are here, but we're encouraging you, as champions of this effort-- because you have this data. They're not all here to hear what you're hearing-- but we ask you to be the champions of this. Move this forward. This is a historic moment, not just for north Omaha. It's a historic moment for south Omaha. It's a historic moment and when these communities are economically benefited, it will add \$4 billion of economic activity to the region, which will dramatically impact the state. We greatly appreciate your time, your attention, and we're asking you to make this investment. The actual transformation plan-- and I'm wrapping up, Senator. The actual transformation plan asked for \$1.1 billion. So I don't want you to feel like \$450 million is too big. That's a portion of what it's going to take over the next four years to get us to where we need to be. I appreciate your time and I really would love to take any questions that you may have. Thank you, Senator Hunt. Thank you, Senator Wayne.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Barney. Any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Vice-- for being here. It's been stated that north Omaha has problems with education, with mental instability, with a few other things. This \$450 million will build some houses, will build infrastructure, will build the 24th Street project or whatever. Will it have any effect on those other issues, or is that a bigger problem--

**WILLIE BARNEY:** Yeah.

**LOWE:** --that we have?

**WILLIE BARNEY:** First of all, there's mental health wrapped into the plan. And then Commissioner Rogers mentioned, I believe the county is looking at \$40 to \$50 million to help address mental health, and there's more needed. But I appreciate the question, I really do, because the transformation plan that I mentioned at \$1.1 billion, it

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takes to-- into account that the state is going to do \$450 million. The school district through Dr. Logan has \$200 million that was allocated to them through the, through the funds that they have. So that's \$600 million. And so we're building up and what those other entities-- and she is specifically, with that work that they're doing at the school district and with all of those community partners, addressing the educational components from cradle-to-career pathways, academies, making sure that our youth have more opportunities. More money is needed, but as we looked at the comprehensive plan, what we love about what Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney are doing is they're driving the focus. This is a pro-business-- Nebraska says it's pro-business, this strategy is pro-business. It's about employment. It's about training the employees that need those jobs, creating entrepreneurship, reinforcing and building in those, in those districts and making sure people have a place to live. So this plan, specifically this component, is truly dealing with the economic issues that have been really left out for the last 50 years.

**LOWE:** The way you come up with \$650 million, that leaves about \$450 million short. Is that private investment or is that--

**WILLIE BARNEY:** Yeah.

**LOWE:** Where is that other money?

**WILLIE BARNEY:** I think it's a combination of the county, when they're looking at at least \$50 million, that will help specifically north and south Omaha with mental health. The city has identified, my understanding right now, there's \$15 million that will be allocated. There's another \$10 million, I believe, that will go into public spaces that could impact Malcolm X, will impact 24th and Lake, its public spaces. There is money that will go into housing. So if you look at the county and the, and the city, there could be another \$50-100 million added there. And yes, private entity now, this sets the environment now for private investment. So real estate firms, banks, other institutions. We, we, we're one of the ones that have that partnership with American National Bank. We have, even in the last year, have dollars coming in and deposits that then will be leveraged to help people buy homes and to start businesses. We're already doing it. And so, yes, 100 percent. I believe the state does 450, the city and the county help us get up to a higher level education system, adds in \$200 million. We're closer than we think if the state is able to deliver their piece. And so we're not asking the state to do it all. We're asking the state to do that \$450 million and

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then that will encourage private enterprise to finally make a bigger impact in north and south Omaha.

**LOWE:** Thank you.

**WILLIE BARNEY:** Thank you so much for the quest-- I really appreciate your questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Barney. Appreciate you being here.

**WILLIE BARNEY:** Thank you. Thank you for your time. Bless you.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**SHANNON SNOW:** Hi, I am Shannon Snow, executive director of the Omaha Municipal Land Bank. That's S-h-a-n-n-o-n S-n-o-w. Vice Chair Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LB1024. I often tell people, if you knew the Land Bank in 2019, you don't know the Land Bank today. Over the last two years, the Land Bank has undergone significant restructuring. During this process, we took a hard look at our mission and determined that economic development and building generational wealth are things that we are uniquely positioned to support. In April 2021, we modified our policies to prioritize the sale of property within the historically redlined areas to the residents of those areas. This prioritization gives residents equal consideration to efforts like affordable housing and community development when we are determining the final sale of our property. Each year, the Land Bank maintains approximately 350 properties, most of which are available for purchase. Currently, there are 202 buildable lots available, but only 75 are ready for development today. Our lots come with challenges. Significant grades, infrastructure availability, overgrown trees and crumbling historic foundations represent just a few issues that make construction complicated for even experienced developers. When this is combined with lending challenges, it becomes difficult to dispose of property to the owner-occupant buyer. The passing of the North Omaha Recovery Act will help us to ensure-- will help ensure that the Land Bank, our partners and community members have the resources available to convert these empty lots into affordable housing. Furthermore, the proposed tools will ensure the creation of safe, affordable housing stock is available to residents of north Omaha. The proposed holistic approach to affordable housing and home ownership will help ensure the Land Bank's vision for increasing generational wealth in north Omaha is achieved. That's all I have for you.

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**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Snow. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today.

**SHANNON SNOW:** Thanks.

**HUNT:** We're still on proponents who want to speak about economic impact. And after we get through them, just so you all know, we'll have proponents to talk about services, including employment, parks, demolition, repairs, crime and gang prevention. Then we'll have infrastructure and then we'll move on to opponent testimony. Just so everyone knows where we're at. Welcome.

**CANDICE PRICE:** Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Candice Price. That's C-a-n-d-i-c-e P-r-i-c-e. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to speak on this bill. I am a proponent of LB1024 and I'm speaking here today as a business owner, a small business owner in the north Omaha community. I live, work, own businesses and commercial property all in District 13. I've been able to see the impact from the pandemic through today. I am the co-owner of Home Team Model Sales, which I'm representing, which is an auto dealership; and Sapphire Grill, which is a food services business. I also most recently have served over this last year as the executive director of the GROW Nebraska Women's Business Center. So I work as an entrepreneur and literally each and every day, I work directly with entrepreneurs, those in business and those looking to go into business. In 2019, one of my companies had to shut down completely, Sapphire Grill. As soon as College World Series canceled, every event followed, and we needed to figure out what to do. Because we do own other businesses, thankfully, we were able to continue going forward. But I've watched those who had to close their doors. We have a building that's sitting empty right now that funding could assist in renovating in order to create more jobs. It's important that we talk about what some of these issues have caused underline. When you're trying to keep a business open, you may be making a decision over which bills you pay. That has hurt some of our community as far as credit. Now, how does that concern us? Well now they're further away from homeownership, they're further away from good transportation. And if you've never heard the expression, it's very expensive to be poor. It's very expensive to have low income and to be underserved. And you have an opportunity to impact that, to affect that. And I appreciate the time, energy and effort that's gone into this. I sincerely appreciate Senator McKinney and Senator Wayne for having the energy to do this when everyone is absolutely busy. But you understand the importance just by seeing who all is in this room. Further, I want to talk about just supporting this type of economic development, as you've already heard how it

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alleviates crime, lessening pressure on our law enforcement, but also other wraparound services. This community has come together. I don't know if you've ever seen partnership in this way that you're seeing in this room today and that we've seen over the last year in preparing for this North Omaha Recovery Plan, which is why I support it; it's been planned with intention. There have been numerous meetings that can't even be counted, I'm sure, at this point, just in order to be results-driven, continue to partner and continue to grow. And as you all are very well-aware, as you increase the revenue of small business owners, you increase the revenue of the state, which is what we would like to do to have that larger impact. I'm going to take off my small business hat at this point because I know you all very much understand that, and now I just want to talk to you as your neighbor. I'm a single parent. I've been a single mom for 20 years. My daughter is actually now older than I was when I had her. She's a graduate of Omaha North High School. Growing up without a dad and graduating from Omaha North, she's now a student majoring in civil engineering. She'll be returning here this summer to intern at HDR in Omaha. And I just want you to understand what the impact of supporting your small business owner, supporting this entrepreneurship landscape, what it does. I understand very well where I could have been as a teen mom, being 20 years old testifying in a capital murder trial because of the person that killed her father. But I'm here. I'm a business owner, I'm a property owner, and that's because of the north Omaha community supporting its entrepreneurs. I didn't leave the state when I had the opportunity to because of all of the possibility that's here. So I want you to understand on a personal level how this affects the community, how it affects the state, how it actually affects our nation. I'm very thankful for the chance to be here and I will relinquish the rest of my time.

**HUNT:** Thank you very much, Ms. Price. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, I just want to thank you for sharing your experience and your story. That matters a lot to us.

**CANDICE PRICE:** Thank you very much.

**HUNT:** So thank you. Next proponent on economic impact.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Chairman Wayne and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, I am Teresa Hunter, T-e-r-e-s-a, Hunter, H-u-n-t-e-r, and I

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serve as executive director and CEO of Family Housing Advisory Services, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that's certified by HUD to provide housing counseling services. And then Omaha 100, which is a CDFI, or community development financial institution, that's certified by the Department of the Treasury to provide economic opportunities in low-income communities. And although I provided you information about the organizations, I think I want to just talk a moment, just because Senator Blood had brought forth some things that made me think about some things I experienced myself. And one is I've been at this organization for 27 years, and I thought we were doing a really good job of getting people to come in for homeownership education. And then, like last year, 119 people purchased their homes. And it can take up to ten years or whatever, we work with people wherever they are to help them get acclimated to homeownership. But as you spoke to, you know, how the cycle works, I had an opportunity to speak with a lady a few years ago, and she shared with me that she had seen some signs in yards that said Prudential, and she knew about Prudential insurance. And she said, all these houses have insurance? And she said, Teresa, it never occurred to me that you could actually buy a house or sell a house. The concept was totally foreign to her. She did not know it existed. And it really, really made me think-- it actually blew my mind. And I thought, wow, so what actually happened is people who look like me were historically denied the opportunity to even say, well, we didn't even need to get the information, right, because we couldn't even do it. We couldn't purchase a home. And so I thought, wow. So her ancestors missed the memo. They couldn't pass it down to the next generation, who couldn't pass it down to the next generation. So we still have people who don't even know that homeownership is a way to build assets. They're paying the payment every month anyway, right? So they might as well be getting some investment back in and building equity. So that really occurred to me and I thought, we really have to do even more than I thought we were doing with our, our services. But the other thing that happened is that, was that in college, I had gone back home and my parents had paid off their home and they had gotten their deed and I was reading it. And when I got to the part that said Negroes were not supposed to have purchased the house that we lived in, I thought, woah. And I mean, shut the front door, right? In my lifetime, I knew that this had happened historically, but right here, we're seeing that this is still-- I mean, it was unenforceable, obviously, but this is still something that we can see today and we still see the impacts of it. So I'm just happy that these senators have gotten together to look at a neighborhood that-- and that's where I live, right here in this zone, LB1024, where we're looking at how we can make a change. And so to me,



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this is so significant because of the disinvestment that happened for so many years. And it wasn't by choice that people live in poverty, but it was by historical design, laws and practices that were in place forever that made that difference. And now it's an opportunity to make that change. And so I ask for your support of this bill. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Hunter. Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. Thank you for your testimony. Again, I'm just asking a question of clarification. So if I hear you correctly, you're saying that just like with the cycle of violence, we need tools to help people that are stuck in the cycle of poverty?

**TERESA HUNTER:** Absolutely. And just because, like I said, there are people who don't even-- you don't know what you don't know.

**BLOOD:** Right.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Right? And so you're living beyond your means because you don't even realize that if I just convert the same payment that I'm making every month, I can possibly be building some equity. I can possibly have something to help my children go to college in the future. So really, it's just, it's a matter, just as you're saying, if we're able to make these changes and make these differences, then hopefully down the road, we'll have more people that can participate in the American dream and can help to build the resources for the future.

**BLOOD:** And restart the generational wealth that we know that other generations have had the ability to utilize.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Amen.

**BLOOD:** Thank you.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Um-hum.

**HUNT:** Seeing no other questions, thanks for being here today.

**TERESA HUNTER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Invite up the next proponent on economic impact. Welcome.

**JERMAINE JONES:** Good afternoon. My name is Jermaine Jones, J-e-r-m-a-i-n-e J-o-n-e-s. I have the privilege to serve as the chief career navigation officer for Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands,

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where I manage our scholarship internship program. This past year, we've awarded over 61 students over \$400,000 in scholarships. Out of those 61 students, 54 of those attend schools between state of Nebraska and Iowa. And that leads into my point. We partner heavily with the Empowerment Network and each summer as a partner with Empowerment Network, we have over a hundred 14- and 15-year-olds who participate in the Step-Up program, which is a summer employment program that has gone year-round recently in the past couple of years. And every summer when we start to talk about the plans for Step-Up, we say, well can we expand and can we do this and can we do that? And every summer, Willie Barney, the president of Empowerment Network says: If we have more funding. If we can get more funding, then we can do more. So that leads me to my next point of my, of my own personal experiences. My son has participated in the Step-Up program for the past three years. He started at 14 years old and now he's 17. Just in the past month and this past summer, as a 16-year-old, he was able to participate in an internship during the summer at the UNMC Department of Pediatrics. And more of these experiences and exposures for our young people is vital. A topic that is near and dear in my heart as I, as I manage our scholarship and internship program at the Boys and Girls Clubs, is keeping our talent within the state lines of Nebraska. Many, many years ago-- my father is 78 years old and many years ago as a young man, he moved from Scooba, Mississippi, up north to find opportunities. And in the past 20 years of my life, I've seen more of my friends, colleagues move south for opportunities. And it is so many-- it bothers me that I lose a lot of close friends to the south, where in their mind they have more opportunities to prosper, build businesses, find support. Black or brown folks are thriving in these cities down south. But I want to keep our talent home, and it's partnerships with Step-Up that provides exposure to our young people. Imagine a 14, 15, 16-year-old being exposed to the business community, First National Bank, American National Bank, Union Pacific, UNMC, the great healthcare systems that we have here, and then building that relationship and rapport with those individuals and then those businesses then reaching back out as they finished their post-secondary training and then offering opportunities of employment to those individuals. It costs a lot less for us as a state to retain that-- those skills and that talent within the state of Nebraska. So I live it. So, you know, I manage our program that, our scholarship program to keep our talent home. Even though I want my son out of my house when he graduates from high school, it would be, it would be nice if he could stay home and stay in Nebraska. Because him, just like many others, I believe, have a lot to offer our state. And it's programs like Step-Up and many other programs through the Empowerment

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Network that provides these opportunities. So our young people in north Omaha know that, that having a vibrant career professionally, entrepreneurship, getting an education can happen right here in the state of, in state of Nebraska and also in our community in north Omaha.

**HUNT:** Thank you so much. Any questions? Seeing none, appreciate--

**JERMAINE JONES:** Appreciate it.

**HUNT:** --your testimony today. Welcome.

**TAMMY GREEN:** Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Tammy Green, T-a-m-m-y G-r-e-e-n. I'm the director of workforce and IT innovation for Metropolitan Community College. Even though we may not be mentioned in the bid-- or in the bill, we are a strong partner in our community. Metropolitan Community College testifies in support of LB1024. MCC has long invested in the communities that we serve, and the north-- and Omaha communities of north Omaha and south Omaha are no exception to that. We recently invested over \$240 million in the state-of-the-art training facilities and have invested heavily in providing training to employment opportunities for individuals and families who work full-time at one or more low-wage jobs. Many of the students we serve have a high school diploma, a solid work ethic, a growing family and they have dreams for the future. However, often students need support to complete these trainings, as many individuals who are living paycheck to paycheck found themselves continuing to struggle to get by and still trying to answer the same questions. How do you find time to gain new job skills? How do you pay rent during job training, especially if your job doesn't offer time off for that advanced training? If you had to quit your second job to make time for training, how would you replace that income? These are the kinds of challenges facing low-wage earners, motivated people who want to make a better life for themselves and their families. Despite the availability of free job trainings, which we have lots of those, prospective trainees often cannot avail themselves of the opportunity without putting their families and their finances at risk. Basically, they need to keep a roof over their head, and they need to feed their families. And the very resource from the very tool that can help bridge people out of poverty and by the use of education and training programs are, are somebody else's dream. MCC has the support and educational systems in place to partner with the organizations that will really be impacted by, by LB1024. The bill will support many of the individuals going through training into employment opportunities. This year, MCC's Workforce Innovation Division served over 6,500

students through workforce training programs. Ninety percent of those individuals were employed and all of them at livable wages. That is a far cry from the \$10, \$12 an hour jobs that many of our people in our communities are earning. It's done in several ways. One of them is the support to pay for training programs. MCC's GAP program, career scholarships and Pell programs can assist with the cost of technical training. Two, MCC also has career skills coaches. They're ready to work with north Omaha partners to ensure students and participants have the support they need to successfully complete the trainings, but that can't be done on just MCC alone. It takes the entire community to make this happen. We work with over 320 business partners that are ready to employ individuals who are skilled and who are ready for those jobs, and we focus on high-wage, high-skill and high-demand jobs. Some of the training programs may involve a two-year associate's degree, leading to more advanced bachelor's or master's degree programs in a lot of our partnerships. And a lot of our training programs are short-term credential programs that lead immediately into sustainable wages. MCC also offers the workforce-forward initiative that provides \$16 an hour in grants to help supplement an individual's time off. We need the opportunity to connect to people. One of the things to focus on as well is transportation. Where are the jobs in Omaha? We need to focus on advanced opportunities in our north Omaha and our south Omaha areas, but also businesses are building out in further west areas. We need to also solve transportation and those needs so that people can actually get to the jobs that are paying a livable wage. Thank you for your time.

**HUNT:** Thank you so much. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Next proponent if you want to speak about economic impact. Welcome.

**SCOTT HENDERSON:** Thank you. Scott Henderson, S-c-o-t-t H-e-n-d-e-r-s-o-n. I'm here representing the private sector of investors and venture funds through the entity NMotion, incorporated and the national company Gener8tor. We're here to-- I'm here to speak in support of LB1024 just as I did for LB450 around the iHub bill. And I think it's important for us to understand we inherited this present tense. But the future is a policy choice. Lived experience matters. My grandmother was born in Chadron and my great grandmother died in Scribner. I was born in Lincoln and four generations of Hendersons lived in north Omaha, in John A. Creighton Boulevard. And four generations in south Omaha, Polish family Novacek [PHONETIC] in the packing plants. I moved away 20 years ago and I worked in the Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and Boston ecosystems around tech startup and in entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem

building. Every city has seen the same thing that we saw here with the past policy decisions that created the present, and that was the fact that we cut off roots. If we live on the prairie, we understand that the prairie plants are 70 percent roots. That's why they're vibrant and resilient. But when you cut the roots and they don't get the sustenance, it's hard to thrive. They barely stay alive. So really, what we're here talking about is capacity and potential building, unlocking potential. For the past year and a half since returning, I've helped invest in ten companies putting ten, ten-- putting \$1 million, half of it coming from Invest Nebraska and half from the private sector. I've helped accelerate five additional companies. Five of those 15 companies were black-founder-led companies. I've worked side by side with them, I understand the lived experiences that they have and how it's different than mine. I understand the fact that the stats speak for themselves: 2.6 percent of black and brown founders get venture capital across the country. We as a company are intentional in what we do and we help, we've helped-- 42 percent of our founders are black and brown founders. Twenty percent of the funds go to the Midwest, 82 percent of our focus is in the Midwest; 2.3 go to women founders nationally. The work that we do is 33 percent. And then women of color is only less than 1 percent. We actually hit 17 percent. Why? Because we go out and we actually intentionally reach into communities where there are people with great talent and potential and desire, but they don't have any awareness of what's possible and where they could draw from, where their root structures can draw from it. I can say here, having worked in the, in the community of north Omaha intentionally for the last year and a half, there is no doubt in my mind with the investment that could be made through this bill that you're going to unlock an amazing potential, because it's also going to attract more people in the private sector who will see the unmet potential and how much more problems that, that folks in this community can see and solve. So really, it's down to access to relationships, and it takes a long-term commitment. Silicon Valley was created over 80 years ago and it's layers over time. Boulder, same thing; Austin, same thing. We make an investment now, you're going to help stimulate the root structures in communities. And you've seen today, I wasn't planning to come here. I was watching the livestream and I said, I got to get there because of the amount of community leaders that are here saying, we don't want a handout, we just want opportunity. We want root stimulation. We want dignity to fend for ourselves and to develop economic impact in their own communities so it can lighten the burden in all of the areas that you see from a social service perspective when you don't have economic opportunity. So I'll close with what I started with. We did not

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inherit the past. We inherited the past policy decisions. And you sit here today, you can create the future. Because the future is a policy choice. I'll take your questions.

**HUNT:** Thanks very much. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Welcome.

**YOLANDA BARNEY:** Good afternoon. I'm Yolanda Barney, Y-o-l-a-n-d-a B-a-r-n-e-y, and I'm here today as a business owner in the historic 24th and Lake district in north Omaha. We have created and expanded four businesses during the past 17 years in Omaha and in 2019, we invested and launched an event center and restaurant on 24th and Lake. And just as we were hitting our stride and building the business, COVID-19 hit the community and we were forced to shut down. All of our events and that we had booked and all of our own activities and events that we had planned had to be canceled. Because we weren't in business for a full year before COVID struck, we were not eligible for many of the programs that were available for the small businesses. After a year of being closed, we started to reopen the center slowly, and the community has been very supportive of the opening. But with the spikes in COVID now, that has actually also caused some issues with some of our business meetings and events that we had set up. With the investments outlined in the North Omaha Recovery Plan, funding will be available to help businesses like ours. We see great opportunity in north Omaha. We can build strong businesses and a thriving community. The support is extremely important. I'm not only here just representing our businesses, but I'm here representing over 300 businesses that we've worked with over the last nine years. And those businesses have consistently told us that they need access to credited capital, technical assistance in the areas of accounting, technology, legal advice, banking relationships, sales and marketing. We've worked together with our partners and through a joint venture with American National Bank to launch the Carver Legacy Center, which is located around 24th and Lake. It's a black-owned financial institution and accelerator to address those needs. The-- this bill creates funding to support hubs, which will be held very similar to what would be held into the Carver Legacy Center, and we're developing that and with loans to invest in these businesses. Many of these entrepreneurs have been impacted at the same or greater level as we have. The North Omaha Recovery Plan can help make sure we don't lose our businesses. These businesses represent all sectors and categories. With strategic investments, access to capital and credit, technical assistance, they can be successful and create good-paying jobs in our community. That's what we will make north Omaha. That's what will make north Omaha a strong community. Thank you for your time.

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**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Barney.

**YOLANDA BARNEY:** Any questions?

**HUNT:** Any questions? Seeing none, thanks for your testimony today. I'd like to see a show of hands. The different categories we have that we're kind of separating these into, we have economic impact, which we're on now, services and infrastructure. How many people are here to testify about economic impact still and haven't already? OK, services? OK, infrastructure? Awesome. Thank you.

**LEO LOUIS:** Good day. Leo Louis, L-e-o L-o-u-i-s, and before I tell you-- I'm a human, but before I tell you how important I am, I want to first say how important you all are. You guys make serious judgments and serious decisions every day, and we appreciate you all for that, and definitely appreciate your position. And knowing how important your work is, I think that it goes unstated that you guys are great listeners and you deserve thanks, and thank you for being patient and listening to all this testimony all the time and do it a lot. I serve as the board president of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, an organization who represents and teaches about the most important and most famous historical figure probably known to America, if we really were to put it into real context. He represents resilience, he represents strength, he represents integrity and all the things that we brag about being American values. And so the story of Malcolm is kind of interesting because Malcolm was ignorant of who he was. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and shortly after that, the Great Depression fell on his family. He suffered all of the socioeconomic circumstances that you see plaguing black communities all across the Americas today. His mother was a single mother of seven. She was on social services. They were going through the Great Depression. The family had to eat dandelions to survive, and eventually he dropped out of school because he didn't see a way or a path to real economic success or just success in general. So he hit the streets, became a vagrant, he became a so-called criminal and ended up being incarcerated. And in that process of incarceration, he found purpose. He found value in himself, got out and became the man we know of as Malcolm X, who was outspoken and advocated for the rights of blacks during the time where blacks were suffering the most turbulent times in American history. So what the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation does is we try to educate individuals on Malcolm and his story. But when we try to do that, what we find is that a lot of young people are very ignorant of who they are. They're very ignorant of the importance of you all. They have no clue. They have no clue the decisions you made five years ago were gun laws that probably would incarcerate them for five years. They had no

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clue that the decisions that you all made were the reason why they couldn't have a health clinic in their community or the reason why they do have a health clinic in their community. They were ignorant of the fact that their school was either funded or not funded based on the decision that was made in this room. And so you have an opportunity to change that, so that their ignorance of themselves and their ignorance of their existence is no longer defined by their socioeconomic circumstance. Many of us fail to realize that we define ourselves by our environment, so when we walk outside and our environment treats us a certain way, that's how we view ourselves. And that's how many young people today view themselves. So many in north Omaha walk outside and they see broken sidewalks, they see dilapidated parks, buildings, lack of infrastructure, teachers who quit out of their schools because they say they don't want to do it anymore. This is what they experience. So they define themselves as the social deviants and they begin to act that way. And then they end up in the criminal justice system, et cetera, et cetera. We know the story. So at the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, what we intend to do is give them value of themselves. The same thing that Malcolm found, a history and an identity so that they will have pride in themselves, which ultimately translates to pride in their community. And then they have a will and a desire to change the circumstance of their community. And in doing so, when they change the circumstance of their community, then they change the environment so the future generations then have opportunity to be better. So what I'm here to do is simply just remind you that you have an opportunity through this bill to offer value through the decision that you make, which would change the infrastructure and change the environment so individuals define themselves differently in north Omaha. I'm Leo, and I thank you for your time. I'm open for any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Next proponent. Welcome.

**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** Good afternoon, on the verge of evening. Chairman Wayne, Vice Chair Hunt, senators, normally I do these kind of pitches in front of studios, but today you are going to be my executive producers. How are you doing, Senator Lowe? It's good to see you.

**LOWE:** Good to see you.

**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** We shared a beer.

**LOWE:** Not, not from not the same--



**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** Not from the same glass. It's COVID. So anyway, I'm Randy J. Goodwin, R-a-n-d-y J. G-o-o-d-w-i-n, I'm a native of Omaha. I was a Kappa Sig down here in Lincoln, veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and I've lived in Los Angeles for the past 28 years. Twenty-five of those, I've been a working actor, the top one percent, and a filmmaker for the past ten. Got a couple of numbers for you, 141. You know what that number represents? The number of Nebraskans who have made it in Hollywood and who are very recognizable, and I'm grateful to be one of those. How about 135,838? That's the number of Nebraskans who have left Nebraska looking to make it in Hollywood and have done at least one job in Hollywood that's recorded. Seven out of nine is the number of graduates from the Johnny Carson School who leave Nebraska for Hollywood. And we all know Gabrielle Union, right? She's currently shooting a movie, The Inspection, in Mississippi. Producer Kristin Hahn is producing a movie, Hail Mary, with Jennifer Aniston, and they're shooting in Atlanta. Mark Johannes, who recently worked with NBC's hit show, The Blacklist, created by Nebraska's own Jon Bokenkamp, shoots in New York. And fellow Creighton Prep alum Bob Wiltfong is known for It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, which shoots where, anybody? Philadelphia. More importantly, not here. And that's the problem. The economic development potential, as well as the ability to inspire and promote dreams, is more important than the actual filmmaking itself, if you ask me. The dying hopes of the young people in north Omaha, south Omaha alone is not only heartbreaking, but it's dangerous because it leaves kids without dreams, to fall into that which will make them want to feel a part of something, anything. And we know where that leads, right? This last week, I've heard people talk about mental health for young people. Suicides, suicide attempts-- this isn't in there. This just came to mind-- and incarceration. What I do for a living promotes a healthy self-image, confidence, work ethic, camaraderie, a major economic boost, self-sustainability and major bragging rights. Because who wouldn't want to visit a state where major films and TV shows are shot, especially a place that showcases its famous Nebraskans, which we need to do more of because there are tons of us in Hollywood, not here. We leave here. We're losing our young people, which are our future workforce, right? We're losing them to places like Georgia, Louisiana, Ohio, and not to mention LA and Canada because the door is closing on dreams that probably all of you in this room have had at one time or another. You've seen a commercial, you've seen a movie, you've seen a TV show and you go, I could probably write a better script than that. That guy's not very good, I can probably do better than that. Oh, I can direct better than her. And if you ask your children, your grandchildren, your neighbors, nieces, nephew, if they want to be on a

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TV show or in a movie or in a play, I guarantee you, I'll bet you all a thousand dollars that eight out of ten of them-- ten of them say yes and the other two are lying. Look, I vowed to become successful in Hollywood and bring it back to Nebraska. I vowed to never let another eight-year-old kid let a dream die because no one came back to show him the way, because I was that kid. But thank God that I made it. I did it on my own, I knew no one out there. But I'm here in order for my team and I to be effective, we need you to help us make the chicken. Colonel Sanders didn't make KFC restaurants first. He made and sold great chicken, and we need to make and sell great films and TV shows from here, because we're doing it everywhere else. I'm tired of making money for Atlanta and New Orleans and New Mexico and Canada. I make money where I shoot, but I'm making money for them as well. We can do it here. Everywhere I am, everywhere I'm on, I'm on set and I'm looking at these places. I see the red light. I see these places and I'm standing there going, we have this in Nebraska. We have this in Nebraska. Why aren't we doing it there? And every set that I'm on, there's someone from Nebraska who works on it: crew, actors, directors, producers. We are shovel-ready because I've been coming back for 17 years--

**HUNT:** Mr. Goodwin, can you wrap up your final thoughts?

**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** Yes. We are shovel-ready. I've been coming back for 17 years building on this thing, hooking up the right people. We are ready to go. And in the words of Tom Cruise in Jerry Maguire, "Help me help you." Help me help Nebraska. Thank you. Are there any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** When are we going to share a beer again?

**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** Whenever you want. I'm staying in Lincoln for the rest of the day just to see some other people and we can go over to Capital Cigar Lounge if you want.

**HUNT:** Any questions from the committee?

**RANDY J. GOODWIN:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Seeing none, thank you so much for being here.

**JAMIE VESAY:** I get to follow the good-looking actor. Good afternoon, senators, committee. My name is Jamie Vesay, spelled J-a-m-i-e V-e-s-a-y. I'm here in support of LB1024 and any grant for nonprofits related to filmmaking, education and motion picture engagement in north Omaha. I am a location scout and manager and producer for

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commercial filmmaking. I am a professional film worker living in Nebraska. I've worked in the film industry for 30 years and I'm an advocate for living-wage jobs from making motion pictures here in Nebraska. Movies made with name actors get the exciting headlines. I get it. It's pretty cool. What I would like to make you aware of is a segment of production economics and jobs which are created from the production of television commercials. I speak a lot of large-budget regional and national spots. I have personally worked on over 800 of them. Last fall, I was working on a project which filmed scenes in north Omaha at the Bryant Center. We collaborated with Saint Benedict the Moor Church and the Archdiocese. Once again, the discussion came up about the lack of diversity on our crew and how maybe there should be an active recruiting and education offered, especially for urban youth interested in filmmaking. I agreed, and I brought this up years ago, but I equally wish we had more paying gigs for new film workers. A Catch-22 here to making Nebraska more active in film production is the invaluable training received when working on a large-scale set. Because too few of these projects are filmed here, there's not enough on-set work available. Young people have any interest as a career or even students from UNL's film school will then move to a busier film market to seek work. Nebraska needs a stronger local industry to collaborate with educational platforms and vice versa. When big projects do happen here, whether locally generated or the production chooses to come here for varied-- variety of reasons, the look of land or the project has Nebraska ties, there's positive economic impact. Vendors are used, food and lodging are needed and jobs are created. Productions hire local filmmakers and the next generation is presented that unique and priceless opportunity of experience working on a set. I encourage you to consider any shovel-ready project and nonprofit grant related to filmmaking. I would welcome any in-person meeting another day to offer my industry experience and business acumen as a point of reference on specifics about Nebraska's production industry. Thank you for your time and interest. I'll gladly accept your questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Jamie. Thanks for being here. Any questions from the committee? If this bill passes, do you think any-- how, how would this bill passing impact north Omaha? Do you think any of the film projects that could possibly be funded could impact north Omaha?

**JAMIE VESAY:** I would, I would go back to supporting Randy's project, projects like that that are shovel-ready that build on infrastructure. It starts with the education, the infrastructure then comes. The new jobs come, creating the jobs, and then more business comes, and it all is one big, great circle. I want to promote filming in all of

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Nebraska, but in Omaha, specifically, filming more in places like north Omaha and south Omaha.

**HUNT:** I do too. I hate it when I'm watching like a really good movie on Netflix. And at the end, it's like thanks to the, you know, some other state department of film and tourism. And I'm like, why does everybody get everything filmed except Nebraska?

**JAMIE VESAY:** Well, just a little, a little point on that, you know, there's, there's economic impact on the back end too. Like, for instance, it's movie tourism. You know, you get one location, one iconic location in one movie.

**HUNT:** Yeah.

**JAMIE VESAY:** I don't know, like a baseball field in Iowa.

**HUNT:** Um-hum.

**JAMIE VESAY:** People will still go there 30 years later. So--

**HUNT:** We always talk about the Papillion High in Election, you know? Anyway, thank you so much for being here.

**JAMIE VESAY:** Thank you for everybody being engaged and listening.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Next proponent.

**TIM CLARK:** Hi, my name is Tim Clark, T-i-m, Clark, C-l-a-r-k. I'm here to support LB1024. I'm an artist, and so I think it's, it's, it's awesome to follow these actors and filmmakers. And I'm here to really, you know, as, as an artist and looking at the economic impact of really this type of legislation and what it can do for north Omaha, I would say in terms of art, culture, entertainment, music, live venues has a place, a strong place. If I was to theme this opportunity, that's in front of us being an artist that I am, I would really take a, take a little, little page from the late Michael Jackson: This is it. This is an unbelievable opportunity that we have, and when we look at-- I spent some years working with the Chamber of Commerce and we had a promotional video that promoted the Greater Omaha area. And one of the things that was coined in that video was a saying, it was like, Omaha is a unfinished symphony. And I would say if I would try to paraphrase and change that a little bit, north Omaha-- I wouldn't say a symphony, I would say a great jazz band or R&B band without the bass player. It's time that we shore-up the foundation, and we can do that through the arts and culture and celebrating our natural inheritance.

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The legacy of, of one of the only African American art forms: jazz music. When you think about the significance of what that did and how it played on the corner of 24th and Lake Street-- you know, there is a lot of folks that couldn't be here. But when you think about small businesses, places like the Strut, places like the Dino's Place. You have events-- we had Native Omaha Days, 20,000 people in attendance. This is in north Omaha. It's a seven-day event. Estimated impact: over \$10 million. Christmas-- oh, the yellow light is on already, I'm not even close. I should have been an invited figure, Senator Wayne. Christmas in the Village, 5,000 people; First Fridays, it goes on and on of freedom entertainment. So, you know, in terms of just summarizing and closing, this is it. I was just so moved sitting in the back in terms of hearing the testimonies and, and looking at this is an opportunity for the state of Nebraska to do right by a community that has been neglected for so many years. And it's not a handout, it's about partnering and a hand-up. So with that, thank you so much. I'll take questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you very much. And thank you for sticking to the time. Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** I normally don't ask questions, but I know you came here specifically to talk about the economic impact on small-venue locations. And so I want to make sure you get that on the record of the people in the crowds, the people who couldn't go and play and the number of artists and the number of bars who lost revenue. Not just bars, but event centers, small ones.

**TIM CLARK:** Absolutely. So, so when, when, when we look at that first event, I named some of these events. And because-- we know in terms of the impact that COVID had on cancelation. But when you think about artists, the lack of income and venues not being able to pay artists at a market rate value because they can't, because you set prices based on what? The fee for the artists, production, marketing. And so what this bill will do is help subsidize to allow for some of these small-- like Johnny-- Johnny T's, Dino's Place, Jesse's, the Elk's, the list go on. And then events, the same with events. You have one of a significant event in north Omaha that celebrates Juneteenth. And to keep that event affordable with the national artists that they bring in, we got to figure out a way to subsidize. These are businesses. They're not wanting a handout, they're wanting a relief to help subsidize their ability to bring in artists that will attract customers that will come in and patronize these levels of events. And so that's, you know, part-- and I appreciate that added time because that's exactly what I really wanted to express to you, that we have

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an-- we know in terms of just it's set to be about \$3 billion in the state of Nebraska as far as our contribution to arts and production. So art and entertainment is a viable economic strategy. Look, you know, we're not-- we're not going to reinvent the wheel. There's examples out there. Look what's happening in the Haymarket in Lincoln, Blackstone in Omaha, Benson community; it's been led by art, culture and entertainment. We owe it to north Omaha for that opportunity. So they-- when you think about it as a state, what are we looking for? We're looking for ways to stimulate more revenues so we can do more good for this state. Why leave north Omaha out of the game? We-- let's help get them, put them in the game so they too can stimulate the kind of tax revenues that we all can benefit from. And I really-- I tell you, this is courageous and I do want to recognize Senator Wayne and McKinney for just the courage to go big, because that's what it's going to take is we have to go big. Thank you so much.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, appreciate you being here.

**TIM CLARK:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**DWAYNE HAWKINS:** Good afternoon. Dwayne Hawkins, D-w-a-y-n-e H-a-w-k-i-n-s. I am born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, raised my children in Omaha, Nebraska. Senator Wayne, you might not know, but a fellow graduate of Omaha Northwest High School, proud to say. And I pastor currently Antioch Baptist Church in Omaha, and I lead the New Era Baptist State Convention of Nebraska, Incorporated, one of, if not the largest grassroots African American association in the state of Nebraska. We directly serve in our membership thousands weekly and directly through not only our services to our membership, but within the community, tens of thousands weekly. In many instances, we are one of the few institutions in our community that those we directly serve place their trust in. One of the things that excites me about LB1024, of which I am in full support of, is its acknowledgment, recognition and inclusion of the role of the faith community, and in particular, the local church. In addition to the services that we already provide directly to the membership and to the community, one of the unique roles that we provide to the community is that of a connector. As I stated, as one of the institutions that our members and community place a high level of trust in, we are well-suited to be the connectors to the membership and to the community to all of these wonderful services that you've heard of throughout the rest of today and others that you have not served. And so I just want to just

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publicly commend Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney for their foresight in bridging the gap and recognizing those that are uniquely situated to be able to connect people to services. And that's one of the things that I haven't heard of today that I wanted to particularly give notice to. And then also, I think the other thing that I'd state in these last few seconds, is to acknowledge the support that this bill can provide directly to the carers of the souls whose increased capacity to care for people within their congregations and community has skyrocketed, as well as other first responders that directly serve those who are hurting and suffering. This bill can provide tremendous capacity for us to do all of these things, and I fully support it, encourage you to do the same.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Pastor Hawkins. Are there any questions? Thank you for being here today.

**DWAYNE HAWKINS:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Do we have any other proponents on economic impact? OK. And then we have services and then infrastructure.

**JAMIE BERGLUND:** Hi, good afternoon. My name is Jamie Berglund, spelled J-a-m-i-e B-e-r-g-l-u-n-d, and I'm the executive director of Spark. We're a relatively new community development organization in the Omaha area that focuses its efforts in the east end of town. But while we're new, we have team members with really significant, deep relationships in the community and connections. And it's from our organization's perspective that I'd love to come and talk about our work. So we support emerging developers of color in a variety of different ways through the work that we do. And I think that's where, while this quality-- the quantity of investment from the North Omaha Recovery Act will bring, you know, significant resources to the community at \$450 million, who does the development and how the development is done is just as equally important in the community. So with our developer academy, for example, we've had 42 graduates that have come through our program over the last year with three different cohorts, 98 percent of which are women and people of color, many of which are women of color. And it's been extremely rewarding and gratifying to see the leadership of them as they step forward in their development projects and look to make an impact in the community. At the same time, we've also been building a loan fund to provide financing and gap financing sources to support real estate development in, in east Omaha, and we've actually issued two loans to-- both to developers of color in the north Omaha community. So the, the who part is really important. And then the how part, you know, a scale of this magnitude,

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if not done thoughtfully and with partnership and engagement from the community, can result in further displacement, like what we saw with Highway 75 that came into the community and other challenges that, that have happened. And so to see the leadership that has come forth in this room, the leadership of you as senators, Senator Wayne, Senator McKinney and your relationships in the community and how that engagement happens and how the leadership comes forth from the community to put this plan together and to lead the development, is really important to our organization and to our work in the investment that we make through our different redevelopment initiatives. I just want to also add one other little piece. One of the initiatives that our organization is facilitating right now came through the leadership of one of our team members, Manny [PHONETIC] Cook, who created, during his time with the city, an initiative called the Forever North Redevelopment Study, which is a housing and transportation study looking at the North 24th corridor. And just within a quarter mile of 24th Street, going east and west from Ames to Cuming, there's over 100, nearly 100 acres of vacant land that is available for development. And so when we think about the capacity-building work that we do through our developer academy, the lending program that we have in place, and then those opportunities and the engagement that we have in the community and the the intentional process that will take to move forward with development, there is need, there is demand and there is opportunity for investment in the community. So we support this bill and would encourage you to work together to make it happen. And I'm here to answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Berglund. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony today.

**STAN ODENTHAL:** Good afternoon. Happy Tuesday. My name is Stan Odenthal. It's S-t-a-n O-d-e-n-t-h-a-l. Glad I spelled that correctly. I am the director of business relations for Heartland Workforce Solutions, and we are here in full support of LB1024. And I'm going to talk a little bit about jobs as well as unemployment, and so that's what I'm going to focus on. As I mentioned with Heartland Workforce Solutions, we're kind of a unique organization. We are a nonprofit. We're a convener of community resources for workforce development. We're also the officially designated workforce development area for the three-county area of Washington, Douglas and Sarpy Counties. We've chosen to place our American Job Center in the heart of north Omaha, at 5-- at 57th and Ames. We've also recently expanded and added a full-time person at Seventy Five North as well. And the reason why we put people in those locations is that's the hardest-hit areas of Omaha, both historically as well as now. And so as a workforce



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development area, you know, as the name suggests, we connect people with jobs. We receive federal funding, and a pretty good amount of federal funding in order to make those connections and put people into job training programs. And so what are we seeing through our doors at Heartland Workforce Solutions? You know, you've heard a lot about the low unemployment rate, but I can tell you on a daily basis, it's not uncommon to see upwards of over 100 people walk through our doors, active job seekers looking for employment, and that's in conjunction with the pandemic and trying to offer more virtual services. We're seeing-- still seeing that influx of individuals coming in. And it's not all individuals who are unemployed, but it's also those that are underemployed, those that are working multiple jobs, those that want better employment. We recently hosted a job fair on January 12th, where we asked employers to, to guarantee that there were jobs available above \$40K because so often we get caught in that cycle of looking at only entry-level positions. What we found was a fantastic turnout, a lot of people looking for better jobs. They may have been in that \$12 to \$15 an hour wage right now, but they had the skill set to make \$20-plus an hour. With greater commitment to workforce development through some of the initiatives of this plan, we foresee a lot of great growth. And I want to touch on two, two areas within the plan that I think will really help things. One is the investment in entrepreneurship. We are falling so far behind in north Omaha and in Nebraska in general compared to other states. You look at what southern Nevada is doing with their entrepreneurship initiatives, they are having such a big impact with small businesses. I meet with small businesses on a, on a regular basis that tell me that they're at that point of trying to make the decision of keeping the business open or going to work for someone else. I have one of those meetings on my calendar tomorrow as well that I'm trying to think through how I'm going to address that, that conversation. Additionally, you know, looking at coworking space, business incubators, north Omaha is lacking compared to not only the rest of the state, but also other places of similar size around the country. I'd also like to put a plug in for the childcare side of things with this plan. That's one of those vicious cycles where childcare wages are so low that oftentimes those childcare providers struggle to keep people and to stay in business. And then what happens is individuals-- if those childcare prices go up, individuals choose to stay home. And those, those are the individuals that are missing from the low unemployment rate as well, those that have taken themselves out of the labor force. So with that, I'll end and say that we're in full support of this bill.

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**HUNT:** Thank you for your testimony. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being here. Any other proponents on economic impact? Welcome, Senator Vargas.

**WAYNE:** I'm sorry, Senator Vargas. If I had known, I'd have had you to open up with us, because I did mention south Omaha being a part of this now. So I do apologize.

**VARGAS:** My name is-- am I good?

**HUNT:** Yep.

**VARGAS:** My name is Tony Vargas, T-o-n-y V-a-r-g-a-s. No need to apologize. I just wanted to make sure to come in and test-- I've never testified on a bill as an individual, and this is my first time doing that. So I appreciate you all. And I'll say this, I do want to have a couple of things I wanted to state, and-- but I'm going to go a little bit off the cuff here, which is, look, I'm in support of LB1024, and here are the reasons why. I don't-- I'm happy to represent downtown and south Omaha. And obviously, there-- this is focusing on qualified census tracts. And you know, I've been in the Legislature the same amount of time as Senator Wayne, where we've been trying to continue to prioritize funds into the highest-need communities across the state. And I don't think this is any less. But the reason I wanted to testify, honestly, is we often don't have these conversations around not only-- and you've heard a lot of people talk about north and south Omaha benefit, benefiting from this, but in particular, that north Omaha. Look, there's a need for continued collaboration and solidarity when we're talking about the hardest-hit communities across the state of Nebraska. And in particular, amidst this pandemic, north and south Omaha have been hit some of the hardest. When you look at the numbers, when we look at unemployment, underemployment, we look at COVID-19 hit in terms of testing and cases, it's very, very clear that our communities have been hit the hardest. And I wanted to come in solidarity and support LB1024. I want to make sure that we are looking at the hardest-hit communities are getting the economic recovery. That's not just my language. That's also the guidance from the Feds and the Department of Treasury. And as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I'll be working to make sure that we're getting as many dollars as possible to communities that fit that guidance because that is our job and that is our purview. So I just wanted to thank Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney. I also have a bill that I'll be working on, and it's in collaboration with this. But in terms of solidarity, this is to make sure that we're really focusing on the communities that have been hit the hardest and historically have been hit the

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hardest. And I just appreciate you and thank you for giving me the time.

**HUNT:** Thanks, Senator Vargas. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being here.

**VARGAS:** Thank you very much.

**HUNT:** Any more proponents on economic impact? We can move to services, services and infrastructure both. Let's just get it all up here. We're experimenting with this format a little bit, so learning as we go. Welcome.

**TERESA NEGRON:** Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Thank you, Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney, for putting this bill forward. I speak to you today as a proponent for LB1024. My name is-- can you hear me, first?

**HUNT:** Yes.

**TERESA NEGRON:** OK, then I'm going to keep speaking. My name is Teresa Negron, T-e-r-e-s-a, my last name is N-e-g-r-o-n. I am the executive director of U Turn, which is a nonprofit organization in north Omaha. We work with the highest-risk individuals of being involved in gun violence, as well as we have a program that works with women who have been victimized by domestic and intimate partner violence, as well as sex trafficking. We accomplish our goals by using credible messengers, and they are trained in mediation of conflict. We utilize "secure violence" global health model, which is an evidence-based model. We have a team and staff who are street outreach staff. They go out in the community. They're meeting people where they are, face-to-face. We also have people that work in the schools. We are an organization that works in the area that has the highest concentration of gang-- gang and gun violence and that's from data provided by the Omaha Police Department. Our participants are voluntary. We have people who actually volunteer to be part of our program. They want out of the lifestyle. We also have-- our organization works with mediation, where we mediate conflict from OPS from things that occur in the, in the street. And we go to the hospitals when a shooting happens. That-- the reason we go there is to try to get ahead of any potential retaliation. I wanted to point out a couple of things. A lot of people talk about mental health, poverty, economic development. All of those things impact violence, they impact gun violence, they impact the participants that we work with. We sat down with these participants that are in our program and we have a conversation with them before

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they sign up to be participants. They give us what we call a risk reduction plan. That plan says what's preventing me from being successful in turning my life around, what's stopping me from doing this. And these things that 9-- over 95 percent of our participants talk about they can't get a job, having a job. We look at the mental health of our participants. We work with many partners in the community that provide mental health services. So I wanted to make sure that I pointed out those things because it's, it's needed to understand. This is not me talking. These are participants that are telling us this information, and I'm just here as a voice to make sure that their voice is heard. I also wanted to point out COVID-19-- I'll be very brief. COVID-19 hit the community hard, especially the community when it comes to violence. It showed everybody that when you shut down programs, which they-- everything was shut down, that violence goes up. There's no outlet. So I urge you to, to please fund this LB1024 because of the fact that it has impacted and it will impact so many different programs and allow us to be able to stay ahead of the situation. Thank you for your time.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Negrón.

**TERESA NEGRÓN:** Are there any questions?

**HUNT:** Questions?

**TERESA NEGRÓN:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**ALFONSO VACA-LUBISCHER:** How's it going?

**HUNT:** Welcome.

**ALFONSO VACA-LUBISCHER:** Thank you. Hello, my name is Alfonso Vaca-Lubischer, A-l-f-o-n-s-o, last name, V as in Victor-a-c-a-L-u-b-i-s-c-h-e-r. Dear Senator Wayne and members of the Urban Affairs Committee, I am the research coordinator for Voices for Children. And on behalf of my organization, I have come in full support of LB1024. All of our children deserve every opportunity to thrive regardless of the circumstances they are born in. I think as Nebraskans and Americans, we believe that. But unfortunately in Nebraska right now, access to opportunity is often determined by zip code of where a child is born and lives. Voices for Children supports LB1024 because it would be a historic investment in a community that we have underinvested in for many years. I am a numbers guy and this is why-- and as you probably are tired of hearing numbers, but I

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brought a couple of numbers here with me today. In Nebraska, there are 68 qualified census tracts, short for-- QCT, for short, and as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Of those, 24 are located in north Omaha, which I broadly defined as north of Dodge Street, east of 72nd and south of I-680. Around two-thirds of the population of north Omaha lives in a QCT. That is 70,000 people, of which 20,000 are children. Despite the accounting-- accounting for only 5 percent of Nebraska's population, African Americans make up 41 percent of north, north, Omaha's QCTs, so disproportionately made up by African Americans. The median household income in these census tracts is \$35,760. That is almost half of the rest of the state. Both the unemployment rate and the poverty rate are both-- they are about three times higher than the state averages. Now, something remarkable about these numbers is that these numbers are made up with data collected before the pandemic. So when we talk about when the pandemic-- that, that this community has been going through pandemic-like outcomes, before the pandemic, these numbers show that this is true. And these statistics have both historic implications and influence on future outcomes. All of the redlined neighborhoods in north Omaha, where African Americans were denied federally backed mortgages until 1969, are all located in QCTs. Today, a person born in a redlined neighborhood in north Omaha is expected to live around eight years less than somebody born elsewhere in the state. As my colleague Paul Feilmann described, there's a 20-year gap in Douglas County alone. Somebody in-- there's a census tract in north Omaha where somebody born there is expected to live around 67 years, compared to 87 years a couple of minutes away. An important thing to-- sorry, so while this is really important-- I'm just, I'm just improvising here for a second here-- is that something that I heard a lot is this an incredible opportunity to get a lot of resources into the community, right, and invested. But in order to be completely effective, it has to be paired with other initiatives, right, that, that reform our juvenile justice system and our child welfare system concurrently. Because it's taking years, it's almost centuries, right, to get to the point that we are in in terms of redlining and discrimination and segregation. And it's going to take so much, not just investment, but time to get our kids back in line and close those, those gaps that we see today. But in the meantime, we have to get our kids back on track, and so we need to get rid of those barriers. So we, Voices for Children, want to support again this bill and thank you so much for your time. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

**HUNT:** Thank you very much. Any questions? Thanks for being here today.

**ALFONSO VACA-LUBISCHER:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent. Welcome.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Thank you for having me. Good afternoon, Senator McKinney, Senator Wayne. And everybody else, it is a pleasure to meet you here, Urban Affairs Committee. I'm a little nervous, but it's my first time doing this. Never imagined I would be in this position. But, you know, I'm humbled by the fact that just listening to everybody, I could say out of everybody here, I'm probably the only foreigner. I've lived in the U.S. proudly for 23 years.

**HUNT:** Could I have you state and spell your name for the record, too?

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Sorry, yes. My name is Marlon, first name spelled M-a-r-l-o-n, last name, Okereke, O-k-e-r-e-k-e, live at 5624 North 52nd Street and I'm an entrepreneur. I'm a realtor by profession with Better Homes and Gardens, and I'm also representing the Omaha International sports-- Omaha International Soccer League. And speaking on the infrastructure side, one of the things that I would say as far as my contribution here is just the privilege of living in Nebraska. Like a friend of mine, Candice was just recently up here. She had opportunities to leave Nebraska, but just like her, I was able to see the potential here. Part of being a realtor and as-- and my involvement in real estate for the last couple of years has been able to travel. You know, coming from a different world and traveling and seeing the world, I feel like there's some opportunities here with the industry too and, you know, the surrounding metro area to provide something in the infrastructure side that LB1024, with your support, could help accommodate. And just to go forward into this, with the Omaha International Soccer League, so we're going to have a multipurpose facility. It's going to be indoors, outdoor. It's also a residential soccer and academic facility with our partners. So we have three partners based overseas in Portugal, Holland and London. And the game of soccer, because of the global game, that's something we're going to help introduce here, providing a world-class facility that LB1024 could help support. The facility we're looking to build is about a mile away from the Eppley Airport, Nebraska's largest airport. It's also about 1.1 miles away from downtown so it's a very attractive area for us to seek partnerships, collaborations to continue to build and support this program. We're looking to have about 100 kids within the first four years of this bill, and we're building with RDG architects, as well as Blair Freeman as far as the construction piece. And we're looking to have, in the next two years after that build, another hundred kids that we're going to host in this facility as

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well. Some of the areas that we, we feel like it can-- you know, everything is short-term, so we're going to have a facility that's going to enhance long-term youth sports and cover the unmet needs here. With that, True Soccer as well as other sports. You know, we're talking about indoor athletics, swimming, volleyball, basketball. So we're going to definitely try and meet a lot of unmet needs here, establishing this residential academy, as well as a public-accessible multisports complex as well, so.

**HUNT:** Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thanks, Vice Chair, and thank you for being here.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Thank you.

**LOWE:** Your English is very good. Where did you come from?

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Nigeria, sir.

**LOWE:** Nigeria.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Yes, sir.

**LOWE:** I wish I could speak Nigerian as well as you speak English. You've done well.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Yes, sir.

**LOWE:** That's it.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today.

**MARLON OKEREKE:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thanks for your testimony. Next proponent. Any other proponents of LB1024.

**WAYNE:** Generally, or--

**HUNT:** Yeah, generally, any proponents.

**WAYNE:** Well, you can come up then Terrell-- then we'll have Terrell close out if there's no opponents. Oh, neutral.

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**WILLIE BARNEY:** Yes, Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y, just first of all want to say thank you to Urban Affairs. Senators, thank you for your time. I know this has been a long day, but I hope you sense the significance of what just happened today. From the mayor's office to the county commissioners to police department chief, we have the union from the police department, intervention specialists, housing, small businesses. I appreciate Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney for taking this forward. I appreciate and hope that the senators here will sign on to this bill officially and take it forward. This is a truly historic moment. I really do hope you sense that. The community is united behind this. North Omaha is united. I appreciate Senator Vargas coming and, and the work that you're doing to tie south Omaha together. We understand as we look at the map, there are other census tracts around the state that are also in similar positions at a smaller level. But the work that Senator Wayne and Senator McKinney have done can be modeled and, and replicated in those areas as well. But this is truly significant. One of the things I didn't get a chance to say when I was here earlier is in addition to the King-- Dr. King's work around this and where he ended up around supporting black businesses, employment, education, housing, A.V. Sorensen, one of the most influential leaders in the history of Omaha and the state, he also in '68, when he was leaving office, he said: Unless we tackle this and make investments at scale, we'll be dealing with these same issues. So he talked about investments at scale. There's a book, if anybody is interested, where he talked about these very same issues in 1968 before he left office, and it was about investing in employment and bless-- and investing in business, housing and education, as you said, Senator. So I appreciate your time. We greatly appreciate the consideration. And again, we're not asking the state senate to do it all, we're not asking the state to do it all. We have rolled up our sleeves for 15 years. And as Michael Maroney said, others have been in this game for 40 years, but they've never had this level of investment to help close these gaps. Our kids are counting on it. And the other thing that's critically important about this legislation is evidence-based programs. You've heard from groups that have proven examples of what they have done within used funds intentionally and purposely to make a difference. And so we're asking for your support and partnership to move this forward. It's meaningful for the entire state. So thank you, Senator Wayne. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Thank you for your leadership and being bold enough to put this package on the table. It is a part of what we need to move things forward. So thank you so much.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Barney. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.



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**WILLIE BARNEY:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Any other proponents of LB1094 [SIC] in any way, shape or form? Seeing none, we'll move on to opponents of LB1024. Opponents? Seeing none, is there anyone who would like to testify in a neutral capacity? Welcome.

**ERIN FEICHTINGER:** Vice Chair Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee, my name is Dr. Erin Feichtinger, E-r-i-n F-e-i-c-h-t-i-n-g-e-r, and I'm the director of advocacy and policy at Together, a social service organization in Omaha addressing the economic, food and housing security needs of our community. I'm here today in the neutral capacity to provide information on the specific housing needs of north Omaha that you will find hopefully valuable in your discussions of this bill. As part of a grant from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, my research partner, Pierce Greenberg of Creighton University's social science data lab, and I evaluated the city of Omaha's emergency rental assistance distribution for 2021. Our full analysis is not yet complete, academics being what they are, but we have pulled data from Omaha's 2021 emergency rental assistance distribution, as well as data on evictions and on code violations for today's hearing. Between April and September 2021, Omaha distributed a little over \$23 million in ERA funds. You will see in the attached maps and tables that north Omaha Legislative Districts 11 and 13 accounted for nearly 39 percent of emergency rental assistance distributed in Omaha from April 16 to September 30, 2021. Eligibility for emergency rental assistance funds is contingent upon proof of financial impact from COVID, so the disproportionately high percentage of ERA funds in these areas speaks to the disproportionate impact of-- from COVID felt by these communities, compared to the relatively low distribution in communities that are typically wealthier, more racially and ethnically homogeneous, such as Legislative Districts 39, 31, 4, 12 and 18. These same communities that would be disproportionately impacted by COVID were experiencing more concentrated and severe housing issues such as evictions and code violations before 2020, trends that would just be exacerbated by COVID. Senator McKinney's district received 25.7 percent of Omaha's rental assistance funds, accounted for 25.7 percent of housing code violations and made up 20.8 percent of evictions from 2011 to 2020. Senator Wayne's district accounted for 13.2 percent of ERA funds, 10.5 percent of housing code violations and 9.23 percent of evictions. Senator Hunt's district accounted for 9.54 percent of evictions, 11.1 percent of code violations and 9.1 percent of ERA funds. The housing issues in north Omaha are well-known and well-documented even before COVID. We heard from testifiers to that fact. Omaha's Affirmatively

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Furthering Fair Housing Study completed in 2016 showed that citizens living in racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, or RECAPs, experienced a disproportionately high rate of serious housing issues, including a severe cost burden, unsafe housing and a lack of access to employment center based on the location of their housing. The majority of RECAPs are located in north Omaha qualified census tracts. Other information from Omaha's ERA distribution that you may find helpful, of the households receiving ERA funds, 58.1 percent identified as black or African American, 75.6 percent of ERA recipients were female heads of households and 43.9 percent of households receiving ERA had an income less than 30 percent of the area median income; 20 percent between 30 and 50 percent AMI and 10.3 percent between 50 to 80 percent AMI. And I am happy to answer any questions that you may have, but the maps are colorful and for your perusal.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Dr. Feichtinger. Any questions from the committee? Thank you. I appreciated those statistics.

**ERIN FEICHTINGER:** I can always get you more, if anyone needs any. Just let me know.

**HUNT:** Thanks, girl. Any other neutral testifiers?

**ERIC GERRARD:** Good evening, Vice Chairwoman Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Eric Gerrard, that is E-r-i-c, last name is G-e-r-r-a-r-d. I'm here in a neutral capacity today on behalf of the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, otherwise known as NIFA. I will admit it's a little uncomfortable to be neutral after the inspiring testimony today. Two reasons, the first and probably foremost reason is, as Senator Wayne has made it known, his preference is for state agencies or those similar to testify in a neutral capacity. NIFA is a state inter-- instrumentality, which puts us close in that category so that is one of the reasons you find me here in a neutral capacity. The second reason, and it's, it's laid out in the first two paragraphs by our executive director Shannon Harner, and so I'll read those: I write today to support housing in Nebraska's urban core and to encourage use of ARPA funds for housing, including homeless prevention and infrastructure in qualified census tracts. Because there are many worthy housing-related uses of ARPA funding and NIFA's interest is in providing useful data to our policymakers, my testimony is neutral relating to the specific amounts allocated in this bill. We trust the Legislature will fully review and vet all potential ARPA funding bills to determine an equitable distribution of the funds. Just in full disclosure to the committee, we plan on doing

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that on other ARPA housing-related bills, and by we, I mean NIFA. The last point I'd make is we tried to include as much data as possible, but I did a poor job printing these. So as you're reading through, it's tiny, and so I will share with the committee these documents via email so that you have a better look at the data, because it's nearly impossible to read. So that, that's my fault, and I apologize about that. I said it before, but if there's anything we can provide for the committee committee's specific to data related to LB1024 or other housing-related needs, we would be happy to do that. And with that, I will close my neutral testimony. Thank you to Senator Wayne, Senator McKinney for introducing LB1024.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Gerrard. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**ERIC GERRARD:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Any other neutral testimony? Seeing none, I'll invite Senator McKinney to close. And again, this isn't typical, but just because of the scope of the bill, I guess, we're going to do this.

**McKINNEY:** Yeah, thank you again. And I want to say thank you to everybody that came out and supported LB1024. Today for me has been great to see so many people from the community come down and testify about the importance and the need for LB1024 to pass because of what was expressed through all the comments today. You know, when you talk about a community that has lacked adequate resources for my lifetime, the need is ever more important. And now that we have access to some resources, I think we should do all that we can to make sure those resources gets to the community. This day is tough for me because today is the day I lost my best friend about nine years ago. And I was driving down and I was like, what do I think about or what do I say? And you know, one of my promises to myself and to him since he passed was to do all I can to be a better person and try to improve our community. And that is why, you know, I came to the Legislature and why I've always tried to put economics first to improve the environment for the community, to prevent another young man or young woman from losing their life so early. And that's why it's important to me. It's not just about me being able to go back to the community and saying, we've got this money. It's just-- it's about changing lives and making sure another kid doesn't fall through the crack, because, you know, I've been so familiar with it. When I visit the prisons and I look at those individuals inside, I think about what if they had an opportunity and the resources to avoid ending up in this situation? And I would encourage you all to, you know, support this bill. And once it hits the floor, support it as well. It's very

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important, not only for north Omaha, but for our state. You know, we're the state that our motto is "The Good Life," but we have to make sure that the good life is for all Nebraskans and not just a portion. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator McKinney. Questions? Seeing none, Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** Thank you, Chairwoman Hunt. The first thing I learned my freshman year here, it was General Affairs-- I think, Senator Lowe, you were on that committee with me-- is there are no really rules to being a Chair. You can kind of do what you want. There was a senator who was, anyway, Chair of that committee, who did everything a little differently. Everything we do in here is by kind of tradition, but we broke a little tradition today and I appreciate the committee because honestly, this is the first time-- I'm not going to tear up, but I probably will-- the first time in my political career, I feel pressure. And that's interesting because my first year we had felon voting rights and we voted it out of committee, and it got vetoed. And we even tried to override, and some of the people fell off, but getting it out of committee, out of that particular committee at that time, seemed impossible. It's back on the floor this year. It got voted out of committee again. And there was another time where kind of this place caught me in awe and that was to remove slavery from our constitution. And everybody, even people I thought wouldn't vote for it, it was 48-0 and we just missed somebody. And I remember looking over at Precious, who was crying on the side and me just like, wow, because that was a symbolic gesture to our community that we recognize the past and we're not going to let the tentacles of slavery and tentacles of discrimination hold us back. And this is an opportunity to put something, not just symbolically, but into action. And I know Willie took breaths not to-- Mr. Barney took breaths not to just catch his breath, but you have the same way, and you didn't want to tear up. Because never before have we seen the kind of collaboration and alignment just within north Omaha. I mean, a year ago, you probably wouldn't find me and Willie talking toget-- talking to each other, just to be perfectly honest. I was down here introducing bills he didn't like. But when ARPA came out and we started talking about it, there was a strong sense of community that we have to get behind it. I mean, hell, the police chief and OPOA support one of your bills you cosponsored, Terrell. Senator McKinney, that's never happened in the year you've been down here. But that's how important it is. And I think what makes this opportunity different than any other opportunity we've had before is Senator McKinney and I have recognized you cannot social program your way out of this. The economic development has to

be the driving force, that jobs are the driving force. Because when jobs are the driving force, there is disposable income that creates less stress in your household, that allows you to spend time with your children and go watch a movie. That keeps you on a, on a, on a certain schedule because you have to get up and go to work every day so you're not out late having drinks or doing something you're not supposed to do. When you focusing on jobs and opportunity, you allow this community to not only recover from COVID, but emerge more vibrant and resilient than it's ever had before. And what you heard about this particular bill and this plan is we have four businesses who are ready to move in, create over 200 jobs in this area. We have a film production, and he got excited and didn't tell you, but it was actually halted and that's why he was here. And he wants to reengage that shovel-ready project back in north Omaha. We already have from the private sector \$15 million raised on one corridor, and that's 30th Street. 24th Street with Carmen Tapio has already put in another \$20 to \$30 million. So the private sector is stepping up. The reason you had a couple of venture capitals and entrepreneurs here is the one thing that we are lacking in our community is entrepreneur-- entrepreneurship or the ability to create jobs. And so part of what our plan calls for is creating a mecca around-- and that's why Senator, Senator McKinney's iHub bill is so important about creating a mecca around entrepreneurship and technology. And what we've learned from Wisconsin, who created a badger fund, that if we could put in \$10 million, the private sector will leverage another \$80-100 million to support these venture capitalists and to support these individuals. We see it right now in western Nebraska with Nebraska-- Invest Nebraska. So it's there, the models are there. This plan is not something that I came up with and Senator McKinney came up with. We're just looking at the best and the brightest programs, not just throughout Nebraska, but throughout the state [SIC]. And if we can leverage the private sector, if we can leverage the city, the county and the state, this will fundamentally transform north Omaha. So the pressure that I feel is because I have to figure out how we seize this opportunity. Senator McKinney and I have to figure out how we seize this opportunity. We both come down here around the same time, I don't know why we don't carpool, but we call each other as we're driving down here to have a conference call about who are we going to talk to today about the north Omaha plan? Every day. We leave here, we talk about the north Omaha plan. Because this has never lined up before. So this isn't just about a bill or just about-- this is about an opportunity to fundamentally change. All the people we lost, and that's why it's so important. If we can change this, if Chief Schmaderer's testimony

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can't-- doesn't mean anything, he said: If we can change this, he'd rather have a thousand jobs. This plan gives us 250. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. Any questions from the committee?  
Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Sorry to drag this on even further, but Senator Wayne, thanks for bringing LB1024. You're here for two more years. Do you plan on going back to north Omaha and being an entrepreneur that you have been in the past?

**WAYNE:** Yeah, actually, I've actually-- I just-- by Sunday, I have to be out of my law office because we're changing our focus and we're, we're going to focus on startup companies and we're going to help provide them with the resources to be a startup company. That's what's needed in north Omaha. And when we look at Atlanta and we look at other places where that's happening, it's attorneys, accountants and people who can strategize who are getting together to figure out that's how we really grow, grow business and grow, grow north Omaha. So that's-- yeah, I'm going to go back and we're going to, we're going to focus in on that.

**LOWE:** And devil's advocate here: we've dumped tons of money into programs and poured tons of money into, into everything else. We're working at dumping tons of money into water. What, what's the percentage, do you think, that if we do this \$450 million into north Omaha, what's the chance of success? It's better than if you don't, I'm sure.

**WAYNE:** No, that's a, that's a great question. The-- on the business side of things, there, there are going to be failures. And when I, when I say that, it's because we are going to provide loans and grants to businesses who normally can't go to a typical bank. And that's why we're partnering with the banks. I mean, the bankers have never testified on, on one of my bills, I'm positive, because we're looking at the opportunity to buy down their risk and make those loans. But the overall plan of success, if I had to put a percentage on it, I think it's in the high 85 percent. Because we're not-- and this is part of the reason why we, this bill-- thank you for asking that. This is part of the reason why we set up this committee, it's because we can't keep doing things the same way. And there's nothing against DED and there's nothing against DHHS, but they're an agency who just give out grants. And when the grants are gone, they're gone. We are a committee who are going to make sure we hold people accountable. We have money set aside for administration of grants and the supports. So

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it's a different completely ball game because we are looking at targeted programs and we came out with over 32 targeted programs where they're already successful and we want to bring them to scale. So it isn't like we're going to go out and create a brand new program. So let's take the housing program. I'm already leveraging what the city is doing. I'm just increasing it to scale to provide more services. And that's already been successful for the last [INAUDIBLE] 30 years. But they only get so much money in their budget from the federal government and city budget to do it. And now that if we're going to build new homes in this block, we've got to bring the other home up, and they already have the program to do it. So we're just going to leverage it. So I think it's very highly successful because we're leveraging current programs that are successful. Sorry for the long answer. I was trying to think about it.

**LOWE:** No, that's, that's quite all right. And by doing this-- education has been a problem in north Omaha. Do you think that by creating a better downtown, better housing, you can get better teachers and better education there or--

**WAYNE:** Yes.

**LOWE:** OK.

**WAYNE:** And the answer is income-- unfortunately, income has been one of the number one indicators of overall aggregate successful data for education. So let's take PIE who wants to come in. They are a professional engineering firm. Those are higher-skilled jobs, and they want to live next to where they, where, where they work. And so that's why we're looking at housing around that area, too. So when you create that, you create-- there's an old thing, old saying, if you see it, you can, you can achieve it. And right now, as Louis-- Louis, Louis said, you step out in your community and you don't see that, so you don't ever think about it. You don't ever-- you don't know about it. You don't know about how to run a business if you never seen anybody or talked to anybody about running a business. You don't know that math is important because everybody in your-- maybe just works a production job, so you don't know that you can become an engineer. So part of it, our belief is we've tried the social programs. We tried the other way, but we haven't tried in north Omaha is do business, just do businesses. Create businesses and see the after effect of the businesses.

**LOWE:** All right, thank you very much.

**WAYNE:** Yeah.

**HUNT:** Any other questions? Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** There's a question that's been turning over in my head all afternoon.

**WAYNE:** I know, I see you keep looking up after everybody. [LAUGHTER]

**ARCH:** And I don't even know if this is the right way to look at it. But we, we have an issue with-- we, in the state of Nebraska, not just that area, but the state of Nebraska needs employees, good employees. With the-- we, everywhere you turn, everybody wants to hire and find good employees. Have you ever run any numbers that says if we were able to lower the unemployment rate in north Omaha to a state average say, how many, how many additional employees would that bring into the workforce?

**WAYNE:** There was a study done a couple of years ago that if we were to lower that-- so there's 70,000 people in the, in the census tracts we're looking at. They're at 12 percent. So if you lower that down, you talking 7,000 to 1,000 [SIC] people ready to go immediately. But that has a multiplier effect that they always put in the chamber stuff. There's a multiplier effect. So we would, we would be able to create anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 additional scalable people who can, who can actually work and go out in the workforce. In fact, one of the programs, and I believe one of our goals for one of them, is to scalable move people from underemployment to higher employment. And right now, they're doing about 100, 150 a year with the capacity to do a 1,000. And on the backside of that, there's business partners like Blue Cross Blue Shield and others that we've already engaged who are saying, if you can scale them, we'll hire them. So that's been the critical linking piece, is that you're going to a cohort of 10 or 20. And if we can double that, triple that, the jobs are there. So people are there, we just don't, we don't have a connection yet, and that's what we're trying to do. And that's why iHub is so important, is we're trying to connect all that.

**ARCH:** Thank you. That's helpful.

**HUNT:** Any other questions? I see none. Thank you, Senator Wayne. Before I close the hearing, we have a lot of letters that were sent in support from Rose Godinez of ACLU of Nebraska; Shelina Williams; Jillian Dean, National Association of Social Workers; Carliss Miller; Jamie Cook; Sean Kelley with Creighton University; Lynne Elwood;



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Jasmine Harris; Daniel Russell with Stand For Schools; Omaha City Council members Juanita Johnson, Pete Festersen, Vinny Palermo and Danny Begley; Carol Windrum; Sandra Black; Mayor Jean Stothert, city of Omaha; Pete Festersen, CHI Health; Teresa Hunter, Family Housing Services Omaha 100, Incorporated. And no letters in opposition. And with that, I'll close the hearing on LB1024 and we'll move to LB842, introduced by Senator Brewer.

**LOWE:** I hope he doesn't have as many testifiers.

**HUNT:** Welcome, Colonel Brewer.

**LOWE:** We may not have a midnight snack.

**ARCH:** I didn't bring my sleeping bag.

**BREWER:** Thank you, Vice Chair Hunt. It throws me off when he's in the chair there, temptation. Thank you for the chance to open on LB842. My name is Tom Brewer, that's T-o-m B-r-e-w-e-r. I represent the 43rd Legislative District, which is 13 counties-- sorry, 11 counties of western Nebraska. I'm here today to open on LB842, which is a bill that opens up the Civic and Community Center Financing Act, the CCCFA. It's created a grant program for cities and villages. If your town wants to build a community center, you can apply to a Department of Economic Development for a grant. Depending on the size of your town and other things in the application, it is possible to get a grant to help with these projects. This bill would allow, again, would allow the tribal governments to apply for a grant under the CCCFA. Tribal communities are a little bit different than cities and towns. We have tribal lands that are a patchwork of tribal and nontribal owners. For that reason, this bill would not apply the same, the same in location that tribal governments are established that are able to use the CCCFA application normally. This bill would allow tribal economic development corporations to apply on behalf of the tribal government for the grant. There will be testifiers that will follow me, and we can get into more details if you want. Understand that we've, we've talked with Lynn Rex and there might be some tightening up that we need to do. We're fully ready to, to adjust as necessary to do that. The CCCFA has been working in our villages and towns. All we're trying to do here is to open it up for the tribes. I think this would just be one more tool for our tribal communities. This bill is not a guarantee of any grant, it would simply allow them to apply. Thank you, and I'll take any questions.

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**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Brewer. Any questions from the committee?  
Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Do you have-- I'm not familiar with this grant funding mechanism. Do you happen to know how-- is it oversubscribed, undersubscribed on a, on a regular basis? Do we have enough funding in the-- in it to handle more applications?

**BREWER:** You know, that is a great question. Let's look at this. Between now and close, I will do research, but it may be that Lynn Rex might know that.

**ARCH:** OK.

**BREWER:** But in the meantime, I will, I will get you an answer. This, you know, is kind of a unique situation, and I'll give an example. In Winnebago, you can have an area of the town that is on the reservation and part of the town that's not; owned by just regular, regular folks that are not tribal members or it's not on tribal property. So again, we're kind of in a, a unique situation and that's what we're trying to fill here.

**ARCH:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Arch. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Are you going to stay to close?

**BREWER:** I will.

**HUNT:** All right. The first proponent for LB842.

**KENT ROBERT:** Good evening, Senator Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Kent Rogert, K-e-n-t R-o-g-e-r-t, and I'm here to testify in support of LB842 on behalf of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. We-- first of all, we want to thank Senator Brewer and his office for working with us to get this bill to you guys so we can maybe look at some development opportunities up by, up in Niobrara where our tribal offices are. I'm going to tell you a quick, quick story, and it's a personal one. Because of this grant program, actually, we put this grant program in here when I was in the Legislature, so I was helped-- it was a nice thing to start with. But in my hometown of Tekamah, where I still spend a lot of time, we had-- like 200 other little towns in Nebraska, we have a World War II-era auditorium that's the center of all civic fund stuff. Well, it needed a massive amount of upgrading, updating and we weren't going to-- we weren't having a ton of luck raising the funds to do so because they

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all said, well, raise some funds and then we'll match it. We applied and received a grant from this program as our foundation funding. And then we were able to go to some other funders and get some foundation donations. We got a naming rights donation, and we now have a beautiful million-dollar auditorium in our 2-- 2,000-person town. It's all upgraded and ready to go, and it should be there for another hundred years. So what the Ponca Tribe is looking to do, if you remember during your debate during the last session, Senator Brewer brought forth a resolution that encouraged and thanked the Peabody Museum and Harvard University to bring back Chief Standing Bear's tomahawk. And that, along with several other artifacts, are-- well, the tomahawk is on its way. The artifacts they have now are in a museum up on the, up on their, their land up in Niobrara. It's about a-- it's a room inside of an old building that is not climate controlled. It doesn't have any security per se, and we've got boxes of stuff in there, regalia and archives and that type of thing. And they have planned-- and it's detailed in this sheet of paper that came to you-- they've planned construction of a new museum at the cost of \$8.4 million to highlight and the Ponca-- the Ponca values and all their, all their stuff. So if we change this law with this bill-- and we appreciate the League of Municipalities and Ms. Rex for working with us on that-- we could-- the Poncas could apply, I mean, there's no guarantee they're going to get it, but they can apply for this fund and start their-- start their foundation funding and go to some other folks who had said, we'll match what you raise. So that's where we're going to-- that's what we're hoping to do to get started there. Senator Arch, this is a turnback tax, so I think Ms. Rex can come and tell you that when the arenas were empty last year, and the last-- and the year before that, there's not much money in there. But if you look at the list, my email goes off pretty hard and heavy. The CHI Center, Pinnacle Bank Arena, the others, they're all got almost weekly concerts going on scheduled moving up, so the money would be back in there. Happy to answer any questions if I can.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Rogert. Any questions? No? OK, thank you.

**KENT ROBERT:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent of LB842.

**LYNN REX:** Vice Chair Hunt, members of the committee, my name is Lynn Rex, L-y-n-n R-e-x, representing the League of Nebraska Municipalities. And first of all, I want to thank you for taking time this evening to listen to this important bill. The league does support it. We are looking forward to working with your committee counsel and

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also Dick Clark to maybe tighten up the language. I would like to give you a little bit of an overview. This is a little bit difficult, at least for me to read, but this is in from the annual report that DED provides to the, the Legislature on an annual basis. And this is from 2020, not 2021, because that report is not in yet. But just to give you a highlight, the overview is this, because the numbers don't exactly coincide. But, for example, in talking to DED and updating that language today in terms of how much went out of this fund, obviously huge differences. So in FY '19-20, roughly \$3.7 million went out of this fund, the CCCFF. And I'll give you a little bit of background about that in just a moment. In FY '20-21, \$168,000. And why would that be? Obviously, COVID, the arenas couldn't have events and that sort of thing. And they don't have the numbers projected for FY '21-22. So the backdrop to this is this is one of the most important programs for municipalities across the state of Nebraska. We do support the ability of tribes to have access to this and to compete for these funds. Back in the day when it was called the Qwest Center, when soon to be called the Qwest Center. The only way in which the Qwest Center was able to get the votes to get that passed is because Senators Ashford and Landis put together coalition and said, you know, we're going to give some funding to other parts of the state so the Kearneys and other areas in this state could also have a funding source for their community-type centers. So with that, 70 percent of throwback sales tax goes to Omaha, Lincoln and Ralston to pay off bonds. In Omaha, 10 percent of that actually has to go to certain designated areas in Omaha. But for example, with Pinnacle Bank and with the Ralston Arena, 70 percent of the throwback sales tax goes back to pay off bonds. The 30 percent is what goes into the CCCFF. There's one exception and that was LB39 passed last year by Senator Lindstrom for certain types of creative districts for a one-time-only-type proposition of about \$3 million. And we're also putting in a bill to deal with creative districts because we really appreciated your work, Senator, on that issue. So in any event, this fund has fluctuated up and down rather dramatically. And in answer to your question, and just in looking at this handout, you can just see the little stars, the red stars, the blue stars, where it's gone. And this is just in the, in the 2020 cycle. And I'm going to read just one little paragraph of it. This is the 2020 program year. Municipalities requested a total of \$8,813,598.50 in CCCFF funding during the 2020 program. DED awarded 21 of those applications at the requested amount and one for a partial amount. This is the fifth consecutive year a partial award has been issued due to limited available funding. So in any event, it's just, it's fluctuated rather dramatically. That being said, I think it's a, it's an exciting opportunity for the state of

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Nebraska, certainly for the Ponca Tribe, but for all of us to have Standing Bear's tomahawk come back to this state. And so we're looking forward to seeing how that competes with the other grants coming in. I would submit to you it's going to be at least more than a year or two before that fund builds up enough to be significant. Last year, they only awarded planning grants because, frankly, there just wasn't the funding there. With that, let me just suggest to you too that if you look on page 2, starting on line 30, the definition of tribal government-- and this is where we look forward to working with the committee and committee counsel on this, along with Dick Clark and Senator Brewer-- Tribal government means the officially recognized government of any tribe-- Indian tribe, nation, and then it goes on. We would probably go on just to say located in the state and recognized as an Indian tribe by the state. One of the things that concerns us, because it's so different with municipalities, is the term includes any economic development corporation owned by or chartered by a tribal government. So in chatting with Senator Brewer and his staff, basically what they're saying is if-- for example, let's take the Ponca Tribe. Whether it's the Ponca Tribe or their economic development corporation, which apparently they can have-- well, I need to stop. I'm sorry.

**HUNT:** Feel free to finish your thought.

**LYNN REX:** OK. They need to-- OK, so they need to have-- that they can have an ownership interest, a shareholder interest in that. Municipalities don't have shareholder interest in-- nor can they or should they-- in economic development districts. The Kearney Economic Development District does not have-- city of Kearney doesn't have a shareholder interest in that, whereas Dick Clark was explaining to me that indeed, that can happen with tribes. So just tightening this up so that it's one grant per tribe, I don't know how else to say that, despite which organization might apply on their behalf.

**HUNT:** OK.

**LYNN REX:** And you'll notice that the threshold on page 3, line 15 is the same as the primary class and those thresholds change based on the amount of money that's there. So we're looking forward to these arenas thriving. And this would be a very important program and has been for municipalities all across the state of Nebraska. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Ms. Rex. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you.

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**LYNN REX:** Thank you very much and thanks to Senator Brewer. We look forward to working with all of you. Thank you and thanks to Kent Rogert too.

**HUNT:** The next proponent for LB842. Seeing none, nobody? Any opponents to LB842? Seeing none, anybody wish to offer neutral testimony? Seeing none, Senator Brewer, welcome back.

**BREWER:** Thank you. It's good to be back. All right, so wrap it up real quick. Just remember that the bill would not guarantee any grants. All it does is give them the ability to apply for the grant. And as you heard, there may not be funds available, but at least this gives them options. With that, any questions you have?

**HUNT:** All right, thank you. Any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thanks, Vice Chair, and thanks, Senator Brewer for bringing LB842. Would, like, the Ho-Chunk be able to qualify for this grant?

**BREWER:** Well, again, it will depend on the situation with their particular community and who owns what. And so we'd have to almost do it tribe by tribe in Nebraska. You know, a lot of reservations are more of a set piece and, and what's in there is all within the reservation. Nebraska is a little bit different in that each of these communities are kind of diced up and, and it's kind of unique to each. What I can do is get you a map. I've got a map of each of the reservations and the towns within and what's in and what's out of it and that might help to kind of show it to you.

**LOWE:** I think I have that map.

**BREWER:** OK.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** You ought to check out my LB11-- LB1117. It's in Revenue. It's the Community Development Assistance Act, and what I'm trying to do is open it up to Omaha areas, but it actually, I think it's extremely blighted or something, ERAs. But it's another financing tool that you probably [INAUDIBLE] a conversation about where [INAUDIBLE] a little bit different, but the concept is the same.

**BREWER:** All right. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. Any other questions? Seeing none, we have no letters for the record on LB842. And with that, we'll close

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the hearing on LB842. Thank you. Next, we'll move on to Senator Wayne's LB1253.

**WAYNE:** Which one am I doing?

**HUNT:** LB1253. Want to just do them all at once?

**WAYNE:** I asked her, I asked her, I asked her if we could do a joint meeting, just constantly are too far apart. Good afternoon, Vice Chairwoman Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. We will only be taking written testimony for the rest of the way out, if anybody is here. [LAUGHTER] While much of the focus on ARPA, ARPA funds have been the big, big chunks of stuff that we've been talking about on the floor and everybody else, there is some other programs that actually Senator Arch will probably know about because he attached it today on a bill. There's-- so in ARPA, they also have some other grant opportunities and other funding opportunities. One such program is the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. Am I on the right bill? I am. It provides \$10 billion in payments to states, territories and tribal governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education and health monitoring to include more remote options in response to COVID-19 public health emergency. I introduced 12-- LB1253 to ensure that the state applies for these funds. You'll notice a common theme about making sure the state applies for funds, and to ensure that the funds were direct-- directed in a way to assist the communities that need it the most. As introduced, LB1253 would have the DED department apply for the grants under the capital-- Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. The department actually applied to receive the funds in December, but the-- so committee members should have a copy of the, of the amendment in your materials. AM1695 would strike the language requiring the department to apply for the funds, but under LB1253, any funds received from the Coronavirus Capital Project Fund would have to be allocated to a multipurpose community facilities located within a federally qualified census tract. One half of those funds would be allocated to facilities located in the city of metropolitan class, and one half of-- would be all-- the other half would be located to facilities located in the city of a primary class. This bill would prohibit, prohibit these grants from being given directly to any political subdivision or be used for broadband infrastructure projects. I could explain real quick on the broadband. We should not use any ARPA funds at all for broadband, and I'll tell you why. Part of the infrastructure bill that we-- just was passed, we are going to receive as a state over \$550

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million in broadband, totally separate. So we should not use a dime for broadband in this state because we're going to have more money. And if you talked to Senator Friesen, that will probably be able to build out by the time they have to. So it's probably going to happen at the federal level, is they're going to come back and give everybody extensions because you just can't even get the material. So when it comes to any funds, and I would even say general funds right now, I don't know if it's a wise use for us to do broadband. Not because broadband is not important, it is. We just got a lot of money coming in for broadband. The reason we picked the metropolitan area, it wasn't because I represent the metropolitan area, it's just that it has the most significant need. The reason we didn't have political subdivision is because we're trying to give it directly to community members who own buildings or are planning on building buildings for access to the communities. Now it is true in the city of Omaha, they have many community centers, but there are other places that are doing those type of things like Culxr House and other nonprofits who can benefit from building out community space. So that was the thought process. I am open to any amendments, and I will-- say yield the rest of my time, but I don't have any time. It's getting late.

**HUNT:** Thanks, Senator Wayne. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for your introduction. First proponent on LB1253. Welcome.

**JACK CHELOHA:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Jack Cheloha, that's spelled J-a-c-k, last name is C-h-e-l-o-h-a. I'm the lobbyist for the city of Omaha and I want to testify in favor of LB1253 this afternoon. Thank you very much. I think this is an important bill for your committee to hear today on the heels of LB1024. And even though they're different pools of money, they both would be advantageous and transformational for the community. Sometimes what's good for not only a community can be good for the city, can be good for the county, can be good for the state as a whole. For those reasons, that's why we think LB1253 is a good bill. One thing I need to study a little more, and I was interested to hear Senator Wayne's explanation, was excluding the political subdivisions. I have to study that a little more. At some points, as he mentioned, we do have a lot of community centers that we own and operate within the city of Omaha for the benefit of our citizens. And maybe there's still an opportunity for some public-private partnerships, or sometimes you need that oversight by a political subdivision. So I'll leave that up to the committee to talk about and think about whether you want to exclude political subdivisions or somehow have them involved as some type of partners.



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But nevertheless, we think it's a good bill and we think your committee should look at it favorably. And I support LB1253 this afternoon. I'd try to answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. Cheloha. Any questions? Seeing none, thanks for your testimony.

**JACK CHELOHA:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent for LB1253.

**ERIC GERRARD:** Good evening, Vice Chairwoman Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Eric Gerrard. That's E-r-i-c, last name is G-e-r-r-a-r-d. I am here on behalf of the city of Lincoln in support of LB1253. I'm here for the same reasons that Jack just testified to for the city of Omaha. As Senator Wayne laid out in Section 2(b) of the original bill, cities of the primary class, it directs the department to use one half for facilities within cities as the primary class. I think this whole committee knows that, that right now is just the city of Lincoln. And so as a policy matter, anytime we have that opportunity within a bill, I think we testify in support. Similar to what Mr. Cheloha said, if there's an opportunity, and I heard Senator Wayne say he's open to amendments, if funding can be directed to political subdivisions, I think as the city of Lincoln, we could put that to good use with some of our existing recreational centers and perhaps even libraries, I think, would fit. I can think of all but one in Lincoln, I think, would, would fit in the qualified census tracts. With that, I will close my testimony and reiterate the city of Lincoln's support on LB1253. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. Any other proponents for LB1253? Seeing none, any opponents?

**MICHELLE WEBER:** Good evening. My name is Michelle Weber, M-i-c-h-e-l-l-e W-e-b-e-r. I'm testifying in opposition to LB1253 on behalf of the Nebraska Economic Developers Association. NEDA is a statewide association of professional economic developers and opposes LB1253, which, as you've heard, would designate Omaha and Lincoln as the sole recipients of the approximately \$128 million of capital construction ARPA funds for which the state has applied. As a statewide economic development organization, NEDA urges that the funds be distributed to eligible participants statewide, and we would also urge that consideration of broadband construction projects as we know that those are very important to economic development, and we understand there to be some delay that the state may experience in

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receiving the broadband funding from the infrastructure bill. LB1253 is a restrictive earmark, and for those reasons, we would oppose passage. Thanks for your consideration.

**HUNT:** Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, thanks. Next opponent for LB1253. Welcome.

**TIP O'NEILL:** Thank you. Vice Chairperson Hunt, members of the Urban Affairs Committee, my name is Tip O'Neill, spelled T-i-p O'-N-e-i-l-l. I'm the president of the Nebraska Telecommunications Association. The NTA is a trade association that represents the majority of companies that provide landline, voice and broadband telecommunication services to Nebraskans across the state. Our companies have made substantial investments in Nebraska and serve significant numbers of customers and employ many of our citizens. We oppose the introduced version of LB1253. The Capital Projects Fund was part of the American Rescue Plan Act and is found in Section 604 of that act. The fund allows for investment in high-quality broadband infrastructure, as well as other connectivity, infrastructure, devices and equipment. In fact, broadband infrastructure projects are presumptively eligible for funds from the program. LB1253 provides that the Department of Economic Development shall apply for grants, which we know that Senator Wayne introduced an amendment to take care of that issue, and use the money for multipurpose community facilities in metropolitan, primary-class cities. The bill specifically prohibits the use of the grant money for broadband infrastructure projects. We believe this is inconsistent with the purposes of the ARPA Capital Projects Fund. It is estimated that Nebraska will need about \$1.2 billion to serve all the citizens of the state with high-speed internet services. The ARPA Capital Projects Fund, in addition to other federal programs and state and company investments, will be needed to provide those services. For those reasons, we oppose LB1253. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Mr. O'Neill. Any questions? Thanks for being here.

**TIP O'NEILL:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Any other opponents to LB1253? Seeing none, anyone neutral? Seeing none, we have no letters for the record. Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** I will close quickly. I was just asked to clarify. We are only talking about the corona cap-- Coronavirus Capital Fund Projects. That would be the only thing that would be limited. So I don't want there to be anything else. And just to be transparent, we're-- we got to

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position ourselves. And so what I mean by that is we have a whole bunch of ARPA dollars. There's budget proposals to put a lot out in western Nebraska. And so by limiting it to Omaha and Lincoln, I'm having the conversation of where all this money is going. And that's all that was. As far as the idea of nonprofits to the city of Omaha, there are a lot of nonprofits who rent out places like the ice skating rink. And so my thought was because they also got coronavirus dollars, both Lincoln and Omaha, I was trying to get them out because we got to have that conversation about where the money goes. So you can call it a placeholder bill if you want to make yourself feel better, but it was more to figure out what was all going on with ARPA dollars. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. And that will close our hearing on LB1253. Next, we'll move on to LB915 and Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** Good afternoon, Vice Chair-- Chairwoman Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. We are going to shorten this up a lot. So in 2020, the Legislature passed LB866, which included Senator Vargas' bill for a middle-income workforce housing. Nevertheless, we provided grants and what we saw on the grant applications is many of them saying that they would build only one or two homes a year rather than use all the dollars they were, I don't know, stretching out over four to five years. So all this does is basically say that wasn't the intent. The intent of this was to make sure that if we give you grant dollars, you build affordable housing. And so it says the nonprofit organization previously received a grant under the act, the same organization shall not apply for an additional grant unless they expended 75 percent of the funds of the previous grant. It should be known that Governor Ricketts has proposed in his budget \$25 million of ARPA funds would go into workforce housing. There has been an increase in doc stamp, which goes into the trust fund. And so what I'm trying to do is send a message to make sure that we're actually using the funds to build housing and not sit on them. Throughout this bill, you'll hear somebody testify of some of the problems in how he wrote the bill as far as limitations. And I thought we fixed that, but we'll go back and look. So I would be willing to add those type of amendments to, to move this bill forward. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. Any questions? Seeing none, seems like everybody fully gets it. Any proponents of LB915? Proponents? Any opponents? Anyone neutral?

**JAMIE BERGLUND:** I will also make this quick. I have the opportunity-- I'm sorry. My name is Jamie Berglund, spelled J-a-m-i-e

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B-e-r-g-l-u-n-d. I'm the executive director of Spark. We're a community development organization in Omaha, and we have been a recipient of a Middle Income Workforce Housing Fund grant. I've had the opportunity to connect with Senator Wayne about this and appreciate the work that him and Senator Vargas did to get this into place. I would just like to encourage some consideration around the increase in the amount that an individual nonprofit can apply for. Currently, the way the program is set up is you can apply for no more than \$1 million in funding. I would love to see two or three or four times that, or potentially even no limit as to how much you can apply for because it requires a match. And we really successfully and quickly were able to pull together a match from 11 different funding sources in the Omaha area, but it took a lot of collaboration and coordination, which I'm not opposed to, that is the foundation of our organization's work. But if-- in an effort to get the dollars together and get them expended, I would just like to encourage the, the increase in the amount because there's only a select few organizations in the Omaha area that actually do housing development. Our organization actually doesn't do housing development. We provide financing to real estate developers, emerging developers, many of them, to develop in the community. And so some organizations use their funds to fully finance the housing of their development. We're using ours as a gap source so that we can leverage more private debt to make deals happen. So I would say the increase piece, and then I had one other point that I forgot, and that's all. So thank you so much. Any questions?

**HUNT:** No rush. Don't rush out of here. Do you guys have any questions? If you, if you come up with what you were going to say--

**JAMIE BERGLUND:** OK.

**HUNT:** --feel free to email us.

**JAMIE BERGLUND:** No problem.

**HUNT:** Thank you. Anyone else neutral on LB915?

**CAROL BODEEN:** I will also try to be brief. Good evening, Vice Chair Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Carol Bodeen, C-a-r-o-l B-o-d-e-e-n. I'm the director of policy and outreach for the Nebraska Housing Developers Association. Our address is 3883 Normal Boulevard Suite 102 in Lincoln, Nebraska. And I'm here today to testify in a neutral position on LB915. The Nebraska Housing Developers Association is a membership organization with over 70

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members from across the state. Our mission is to champion affordable housing. We do this by supporting statewide renter and homebuyer education programs, offering assistance to affordable housing developers, and by advocating for policies that support safe and affordable housing is our goal that Nebraskans of every income have the cornerstone foundation of a healthy and affordable home. Our members include nonprofit and for-profit developers, nonprofit organizations that provide housing services, government agencies and economic development organizations. Our organization has not taken a position on LB915 as a whole, thus, my testimony in neutral position. We appreciate Senator Wayne bringing on AM1666, which proposes to transfer \$30 million from the General Fund to the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Fund, providing matching grants to nonprofit development organizations administering local workforce housing investment funds, to invest in Nebraska's older urban neighborhoods and majority-minority communities in Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy Counties. It is our suggestion that consideration be given to further amend LB915 to provide that a non-devel-- nonprofit development organization which has previously received a grant or grants under the Middle Income Workforce Housing Investment Act, shall not be eligible for an additional grant under the act unless the organiz-- organization has expended at least 50 percent of the funds from such previous grant or grants, rather than the proposed 75 percent of funds from previous grants. Just suggesting the slight change in that. There have been many delays in construction projects throughout the state regarding supply chain issues and that type of thing, and so we thought that that might be a valid suggestion. Thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions from the committee.

**HUNT:** Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today.

**CAROL BODEEN:** OK, thank you very much.

**HUNT:** Anyone else wishing to testify on LB915? Seeing none, Senator Wayne, you're invited to close. We have no letters for the record.

**WAYNE:** I'll be real quick and just say that actually, it goes back to LB1024. The reason why we want the special committee is because we actually want to pull all these nonprofits in and figure out what's actually buildable instead of going through the middle income housing where we just grant individual-- we want to pull them all in and say-- and that's why we asked everybody who testified earlier, is to say, how many buildable lots do you have? Because we want to get the real number and we want to price it out of RFI, followed by RFQ and

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hopefully have collaboration among the different nonprofits, but to actually build and coordinate it with the community. And I'm not blaming DED, they're just not charged with that. They're just charged with giving out grants. So that's, that's the little difference between why this committee is important. Other than that, nope.

**HUNT:** All right. Questions? Seeing none, oh--

**ARCH:** I have a question.

**HUNT:** --go ahead, Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Why don't you just get DED to give the grants to that sub-- subentity?

**WAYNE:** Oh, that's a deep question because there's a constitutional problem with that.

**ARCH:** Oh, well, we don't want to [INAUDIBLE].

**WAYNE:** Yeah. So any time that-- actually it's part of the boards and commissions problem too. Any time you have-- there has to be a demarcation point between the executive branch and legislative branch. And if you comingle them, you have a problem. So that's why you need to community-- not community, the turnback tax, there are people-- like Senator McKinney is a nonvoting member and so is Senator Vargas because--

**ARCH:** Nonvoting.

**WAYNE:** --they're-- yeah, because it's a constitutional issue. Even though it hasn't been to court on it, it just makes us feel uncomfortable, so.

**ARCH:** Thanks.

**HUNT:** Any other questions? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on LB915 and we'll move on to Senator Wayne's LB974.

**WAYNE:** Good afternoon, Vice Chairwoman Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha or northeast Douglas County. I waited to say this. Take note that if you have a lot of money in the beginning, the people who will typically oppose your bill later on that same day won't testify in opposition. Just wanted to point that out. This bill actually is because when we passed the

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inland port authority last year, we noticed the debate, some worker compensation issues that could arise. And so similar concerns were raised from the Department of Labor regarding unemployment insurance payments underneath the employment security law. So this is really just a cleanup bill to make sure it all works together. We had the same thing with the regional transit in 2019, where there was a little bit of concern. So this just mirrors the language of the port authority to clarify and make sure all that workers' comp stuff is taken care of. I had a whole testimony, but I'll send it out to you guys later, if you're really concerned. But it's just-- that's all we're doing. We are-- yeah, I'm tired.

**HUNT:** All right, any questions? Seeing none--

**WAYNE:** I will waive closing.

**HUNT:** --first proponent for LB974. Welcome.

**JOHN ALBIN:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Wayne, cochair-- or Vice Chair Hunt. My name is John Albin, Commissioner of Labor, and I'm appearing here before you today as commissioner in support of LB974. And I wanted to thank Senator Wayne for introducing this legislation as it addresses an unemployment insurance benefit conformity issue. Last session, Senator Wayne introduced LB156, as he referenced. During the passage of the bill and AM223, it inadvertently created a conformity issue in all employers of the state are subject to Nebraska Employment Security Law and are required to pay unemployment contributions in support of the Unemployment Trust Fund, but AM223 had appeared to exempt port authorities from coverage. The unemployment insurance benefit is a federal-state partnership. If the state's law and implementation of the unemployment program conforms to federal requirements, the federal government will fund the state program and its employers entitled to large [INAUDIBLE] tax credit. The annual administrative costs of the programs are approximately \$15 million per year, and the tax credit is worth an estimated \$400 million per year for Nebraska employers. Senator Wayne worked, worked with the department to address this issue in LB156. During these discussions, it was discussed the language in AM223 was similar to the language that currently existed in 14-1810 and 18-819. LB974 properly amends the language to remove the existing conformity issue. And just one side note, it's important to note that while the law itself creates a conformity issue, currently in practice, all the affected entities affected by this bill are participating in the unemployment program, which means there is no fiscal impact because they're already complying. The change in LB974 aligns a law of the current

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unemployment practice and removes the conformity issue and that concludes my testimony. Happy to answer any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Secretary Evnen [SIC]. Are there any questions? Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you very much, Vice Chair. And John, good, good to see you here. Do you realize that Senator Wayne has LB975, which would have made it impossible for you to testify in favor of this. You would have had to testify in neutral. Would it be hard for you to testify that way on this bill?

**JOHN ALBIN:** Let's just say when we have a conformity issue up within a bill, we think that it's important for us to take a stand for or against the bill. And so consistent with that, we're appearing here today. But I do recognize a little bit of the irony of testifying in support of this particular bill.

**LOWE:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Senator Lowe. Nothing gets past you. Any other questions?

**WAYNE:** I even asked him to come.

**HUNT:** Seeing none, thank you, Secretary Albin. Any other proponents for LB974?

**SEAN KELLEY:** Good evening, Vice Chair Hunt and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. My name is Sean Kelly, S-e-a-n K-e-l-l-y, appearing on behalf of Metro Area Transit as their registered lobbyist. We are the entity that this bill impacts and I am just here to let you know we are OK with that. This bill is just getting us in conformity. With that, I'm happy to take any questions.

**HUNT:** Any questions? Seeing none, thanks for your testimony.

**SEAN KELLEY:** Thank you.

**HUNT:** Next proponent. Any other proponents for LB974. Seeing none, any opponents? Anyone neutral?

**WAYNE:** Thank you for being neutral.

**JILL SCHROEDER:** Members of the Urban Affairs Committee, thank you very much. I'm Jill Schroeder, J-i-l-l S-c-h-r--o-e-d-e-r, and I'm the



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administrator of the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court. Mindful of of LB975, I am appearing today in a neutral capacity, although the background information I have for you is to let you know this would impact our funding. So LB974, as people have talked about, it's that assessment language and the relevance of the assessment language to the workers' compensation piece of this is that if these entities would choose to be self-insured, the court regulates those entities and we collect assessments. Relevant to today's discussion, there are three different types of assessments that we collect. The first one I will call the cash fund assessment and that is an assessment that's made against self-insured employers, insurers and risk management pools. That cash fund assessment is split between a general fund portion and a cash fund portion that comes to the court to help fund our operations. The Workers' Compensation Court is an independent court. We are funded through assessments from self-insurers and insured employers and those risk management pools. This cash fund has made it such that we haven't required any general fund money for our operations since 1996. So it may be helpful to you to know that in fiscal year 2021, the self-insurance portion of the cash fund assessment was divided, with approximately \$2.1 million going to the general fund and approximately \$1 million-plus coming to the Workers' Compensation Cash Fund. So that's one type of assessment. The second one is for the, for the Vocational Rehabilitation Trust Fund. That's an assessment that's made only when the fund dips to a certain level. And then once it dips, then there is the assessment that's made against self-insured employers and insurers. The portion of it that came from self-insurers when the assessment was most recently made in 2020 was 1.63-- \$1.163 million that went into that fund from self-insurers. So that's an important amount. That amount is used to help retrain Nebraska workers who are injured while working. And the third type of assessment that's made is whenever a self-insurer applies to be self-insured in Nebraska or when they renew their application, there is an assessment that is up to \$2,000 that is set in recent years that has been \$2,000. And in fiscal year 2020, the court collected \$72,000 to assist with the operations of that program. So for all of those reasons, that is the background information as to the type of assessments that would be made if these entities under the Transit Authority Act or the Regional Metropolitan Transit, Transit Authority Act would choose to be self-insured. That's the impact it would have upon the court. So with that, I will take any questions.

**HUNT:** Thank you very much. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, appreciate you being here.

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**JILL SCHROEDER:** Thank you very much for your time, particularly on a long day for you.

**HUNT:** Any other neutral testifiers on LB974? Seeing none, Senator Wayne waives closing and that will close our hearing on LB974. We have no letters for the record and that will our close our hearings for the day.