

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Appropriations Committee February 8, 2024

WISHART: OK. Well, welcome to the Appropriations Committee. My name is Anna Wishart, and I represent Legislative District 27, which is southwest Lincoln. I serve as Vice Chair of this committee. And we're going to start by having the members do self-introductions, starting with my far right.

ERDMAN: Steve Erdman, District 47.

LIPPINCOTT: Loren Lippincott, District 34.

VARGAS: Tony Vargas, District 7.

McDONNELL: Mike McDonnell, LD 5, south Omaha.

ARMENDARIZ: Christy Armendariz, District 18.

WISHART: Great. Assisting the committee today is Cori and our committee clerk-- Cori, our committee clerk, and fiscal analyst, Kenny Boggs. And our page today is Ella. If you are planning on testifying today, please fill out a green testifier sheet located on the south side-- excuse me-- on the side of the room and hand it to the page when you come to testify. If you will not be testifying but want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there are yellow sign-in sheets on the side of the room where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record after today's hearing. To better facilitate today's hearing, I ask that you abide by the following pro-- procedures: please silence your cell phones. When hearing bills, the order of testimony will be introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral, and closing. When we hear testimony regarding agencies, we will first hear from a representative of the agency, and then we will hear testimony from anyone who wishes to speak on the agency's budget request. When you come to testify, please spell your first and last name for the record before you testify. Be concise. We request that you limit your testimony to 5 minutes or less. Written material may be distributed to the committee members as exhibits only while testimony is being offered. Please hand them to the page for distribution when you come up to testify. If you have written testimony but do not have 12 copies, please raise your hand now so the page can make copies for you. And I will say as well, our committee, some members will be coming and going. That is because they may have other bills and other hearings that they need to get to. With that, we will begin today's hearing with the Agency 5, the Supreme Court. Welcome.

[AGENCY HEARINGS]

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WISHART: And that opens our hearing for LB864. Senator Dungan, welcome.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Vice Chair Wishart, members of the Appropriations Committee. Good afternoon. It's been a busy day for everybody, I think. My name is George Dungan, G-e-o-r-g-e D-u-n-g-a-n. I represent Legislative District 26, which is northeast Lincoln and I'm here today to introduce LB864. The intent of LB864 is to appropriate an additional \$600,000 to the Supreme Court from the General Fund for the next fiscal year. This additional funding will go to the Supreme Court to increase payments for interpreter services for the deaf and hard of hearing, as well as those that are unable to communicate in the English language. Up until recently, court interpreters had not seen a pay raise since the early 2000s. This lack of pay had resulted in many interpreters turning to private practice instead of taking cases within our judicial system. When we can't get an interpreter, cases get rescheduled, needlessly extending proceedings at great, great cost to the state, and also increasing the amount of time that individuals spend in custody, especially if they are pending any kind of clear sentencing. Earlier this session, we yet again heard Chief Justice Heavican in his State of the Judiciary speech, speak about the importance of court interpreters, stating last year and this year that our contract interpreters are hopefully, I'm sorry, that we need to ensure that we increase the amount of interpreters we have. And that's exactly what LB864 is going to do. To deviate from this briefly. You obviously heard earlier today from Chief Justice Heavican and the Supreme Court. I anticipate after I'm done speaking here you're going to hear yet again from Corey Steel. I want to highlight to you the necessity of what we're talking about here. I, as many of you know, practiced as an attorney for a number of years. I'm still a practicing attorney, and I often use court interpreters. Just 2 weeks ago, I had a gentleman that I was working with who spoke no English, who only spoke Vietnamese. And it was only because of the interpreter that I worked with that I was able to resolve his case and get it taken care of. These interpreters do incredibly difficult work, and I think you're going to hear from a couple of them here today about the nature of their work and why it's so important. They do simultaneous translation. They interpret very complicated legal things that are hard to even explain in English. They also have to interpret people like me who speak very fast and use a lot of idioms. It's very, very complicated. They absolutely work hard for their money. As you probably recall, last year we had a conversation in the Legislature about increasing the amount of money to the Supreme Court for their payments. Ultimately, we did amend into the budget, I believe,

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\$400,000 across the biennium for their pay. Unfortunately, that did not stay in the budget. After that happened, there was a work stoppage of the interpreters because they were unable to come to work for a period of time because they weren't getting paid enough and they literally couldn't make ends meet. So they had to take jobs elsewhere in other private sectors. I'm not being-- I'm not exaggerating when I say that that literally led to a stoppage of a number of cases in district courts and county courts around the state. It was a huge problem. After that happened, the Supreme Court did ultimately work with myself, the interpreters and a number of other people to find a way to temporarily increase the amount of pay they would get. It was not the full amount that the court interpreters were asking for, but it did increase it to a level that ultimately resulted in their ability to continue working. That amount of money that they increased, though, is not sustainable. Based on the budget the Supreme Court currently has and based on the funds that they utilize for other services, it is my fear and my genuinely held belief that if we don't allocate some additional money to the Supreme Court, that ultimately the interpreters' pay is going to revert back to the unworkable amount that it was before. And we're going to find ourselves in exactly the same problem. We talked about this last year. It was ultimately, I think, a very bipartisan vote to amend that into the budget. It was something that had a lot of support. So my hope here today is that we can underscore the importance of this. When you hear from those interpreters, hear from Corey Steel, and myself, when I say this is something we really should do and it's something we have to do. We have a statutory and constitutional obligation to provide these services, and we need to make sure that we are reimbursing the people who provide these services adequately. Happy to answer any questions at this time.

WISHART: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Any questions? Seeing none, will you be here to close?

DUNGAN: I will try. I have another bill, but I think it's not going to come up for a while.

WISHART: So we are going to start with proponents of LB864. Good afternoon.

KELLY VARGUEZ: My name is Kelly Varguez. It's spelled K-e-l-l-y V-a-r-g-u-e-z. And I'm here this afternoon to be-- yes, no relation. Similar pronunciation. I get that a lot. I'm here to express my hope that you will approve LB864 and grant the one-time cash infusion for the \$600,000 needed to carry on with the rate increase we earned after

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a significant amount of time without any such increase last year. You will hear from 2 other colleagues of mine here today who have different aspects of the job to discuss with you. But I wanted to mention during my moments with you a few of the misconceptions that I've come up against over the last year that this issue has been more at the forefront of people's minds. First of all, I get asked, well, why, why is there a shortage if we have so many bilingual Nebraskans? Can't anybody who speaks more than one language be an interpreter? And the fact of the matter is, is that it takes more than, than being bilingual to do the work that we do in the courtrooms, which is why it's such a limited number of people that are currently providing this service. Just, just like we don't assume that, you know, if I have a pilot's license to puddle jump across Nebraska, I could be a fighter pilot. We also can't assume that bilingual people automatically equal court interpreters. We, as Senator Dungan discussed, we undergo long hours of training and hard work to learn how to take in one message in one language, understand it, find equivalence, and say it in another language simultaneously. We can retain long portions of convoluted speech and render them in an opposite language accurately, precisely. We can read documents written in one language in a variety of registers of the language and ability levels, render them again faithfully in the opposite language. And all of that takes a long time to learn. And currently there's probably about 30 in Nebraska interpreters who regularly provide services. If 5% of Nebraskans speak a language other than English at home, that's about 100,000 people; 30 or so interpreters for those 100,000 people that could find themselves in court is a ratio of 1 interpreter to every 300 or so Nebraskans, which just illustrates the level of specialization that we have. And with specialization should come fair and commensurate wages, which is what LB864 would do. Another thing that I hear is, you know, you're just there for criminal defendants. These are lawbreakers. Why, why should we give any more money? And part of their answer to that question is, is because it's mandated in our country, we provide that service. But another part of the answer to that question is that we're not only providing services from English into other languages for defendants. We're there for civil litigants. We're there for parents of juveniles. We interpret for, for victims of crimes and for witnesses in trials. So there's a, a wide array of people that we serve. But then we also need to think about the fact that we don't just serve people who don't speak English. We also provide a bridge to communication for people who don't speak Arabic and Somali and Spanish and American Sign Language. So if you widen and realize that, well, we could potentially be serving any Nebraskan that would end up in the court system, our ratio and specialization is even more notable.

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There's only one interpreter for every 67,000 Nebraskas-- Nebraskans or so. So it's, it's significant. And then finally, I, I have heard people ask about whether, whether we're state employees. The reason that we are working towards \$75 rate is to restore the purchasing power that was set as a precedent back in 2004 when our rates were set. So we're not asking for higher than that, just the same purchasing power to go along with our specialization. And we're not court employees. Only about 3 people provide the service are employees of the state of Nebraska. The rest of us are small business owners. And so by approving LB864, you would be helping a number of small businesses in Nebraska be viable for a longer amount of time. Thank you so much.

WISHART: Thank you so much for being here. Any questions? Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Wishart. Thank you for coming. I noticed it says here that \$75 an hour rate, you take home about one third of that.

KELLY VARGUEZ: Um-hum.

ERDMAN: So how do you charge that rate-- when you're actually in court or when, when does your pay stop and when does it start?

KELLY VARGUEZ: We are guaranteed a 2-hour minimum. So if we come to the court for any reason, we know we'll take home a 2-hour minimum. And then we prorate it every, according to court rules after that, about every 15 minutes. And so at a daily rate for an interpreter, depending on the need, it could be as low as \$150 for a certified interpreter and less than that with different qualification levels. And the reason that we've gone with that model is because the needs fluctuate, the cases are flexible. And in order to preserve the integrity of the process, we need service providers that can adjust their schedule to the need.

ERDMAN: How many hours a week would you say the average interpreter works?

KELLY VARGUEZ: We don't normally measure it by, by hours. We definitely don't work a 40-hour workweek the way that most state employees do. I always count mine by appointments. So a full load for me would be 10 appointments a week, and I do-- normally am needed that much, if not going beyond the 10-- the 10 windows of payment per week.

ERDMAN: Do you get paid--

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KELLY VARGUEZ: But that's me. We have a really huge variety. You know, an interpreter of a recently arrived refugee population like Pashto, for example, may only be needed once a month for a few months while a case progresses through the court system. So there's a lot of variety in there.

ERDMAN: I would assume that there are some of these cases you have study to do at home--

KELLY VARGUEZ: Yes.

ERDMAN: --before you get there.

KELLY VARGUEZ: Yes.

ERDMAN: Are you paid for that?

KELLY VARGUEZ: No. That's part of the reason also that the precedent was set at \$50 back in '04, which now would equal \$85 to help interpreters offset the time investment in being prepared for our hearings.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

KELLY VARGUEZ: Thank you.

WISHART: Any other questions? Thank you for being here today.

KELLY VARGUEZ: Thank you.

WISHART: Additional proponents.

VLADIMIR BAZAN: Good afternoon, honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Vladimir Bazan, V-l-a-d-i-m-i-r, last name B-a-z-a-n. I live here in Lincoln, Nebraska. Nebraska has been my home for 24 years. 12 years ago, year 2012, I became a certified court interpreter for Spanish. I am also a former interpreter coordinator for the state. I was in charge of Hall County for 4 years, Lancaster County for almost 4 years. During my time as a coordinator, I experienced firsthand how difficult it is to find interpreters to cover all the cases that we have in the calendar. And even when we find interpreters to, to always be guessing if we actually found the best person for the job. It's very difficult. It's so difficult that I think the last person to get certified to be a court interpreter was in 2016. We do a very specialized job. It's very difficult. It's very mentally taxing. There's no application. There's

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no computer software that can replace us. Artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, it's no match for what we do. We, we cannot be replaced, at least not yet. I'm sure if we were, you would have been able to find a cheaper option. But we provide a very important service. And I think something that we need to think of is we provide equal, equal access. We guarantee due process. What we offer is a service that is vital for the-- to-- for the courts to be able to provide justice. It's a constitutional right. It's protected by the constitution. It's protected by the state constitution. This is not an issue of language. This is not an issue of immigration. This is an issue of how do we make that everyone is actually equal before the law? That's the state motto, right? So that's why we are here. That's why I'm here asking you to support LB864. As I mentioned before, for the time being, we cannot be replaced. We are professionals. We follow, professional code of ethics. We are officers of the court, and we behave as such. And your support is very important. Last, last year, July, July of last year, we finally got an increase in our rates after almost 20 years. Before that, and I experienced that myself, we were losing interpreters. The numbers were going down. I myself quit my job with the state, started offering my services in the private sector in the federal courts because they pay more. Finally, when we got an increase, we started getting new people. Finally, I saw new faces in the courtroom. And I'm afraid that if we cannot secure funding, the numbers are going to start going down again. And, and the Supreme Court and the courts and the state courts are going to-- are going to suffer because we won't have enough people to provide the vital services that we provide. Thank you very much and please support LB864.

LIPPINCOTT: Thank you.

WISHART: Thank you. Any questions, Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Wishart. So the rate is \$75 now. If we make this contribution, this appropriation, what will-- what is the rate then?

VLADIMIR BAZAN: We are not asking for increase. This is just so that we can--

ERDMAN: [INAUDIBLE]

VLADIMIR BAZAN: --maintain the raise that we got. Yes.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

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WISHART: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Additional proponents.

TAGHREED TRINDLE: Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Legislature. My name is Taghreed Trindle, T-a-g-h-r-e-e-d, last name, T-r-i-n-d-l-e. I am a court interpreter in the Arabic language for the state and the federal courts based in Omaha, Nebraska. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time and your attention in this matter. I am grateful for this opportunity to address you today and hoping you will lend your support to LB864. I started my career as an interpreter when I was 23 years old, when U.S. military forces arrived in my home country of Iraq. After living so long under an oppressive regime, I was optimistic for an opportunity of-- at freedom and a life of hope. For 4 years, I accompanied U.S. military forces on oftentimes dangerous missions as they sought to bring liberty and stability to Baghdad. As an interpreter, I served as the linguistic and cultural link between these young men and women and my countrymen, who they sought to assist. I'm extremely proud of my time with them and the mission that I was a part of. Eventually, I was lucky enough to meet my husband, a soldier, now a law enforcement officer, who brought me to the United States and the great state of Nebraska. Gaining my American citizenship is one of the happiest moments of my life. I'm proud to say that 17 years later I have a wonderful family and we are glad to call Nebraska home. To me, America, the promise of liberty, a component of that liberty is equal access to justice and representation before the law. As a court interpreter, I am happy to say that I am a crucial component of said access and representation. For an ever-increasing immigrant population who often don't speak English, court interpreter bridge the language gap, ensuring that all non-English speakers are able to navigate a sometimes complex legal system. However, for the-- for some time now, that access has suffered. Our wages have been stagnant, which has meant that as some progressed, more and more interpreters have sought to supplement their income elsewhere. It's sad because the men and women I work with feel strongly about justice, equality and fairness. They want desperately to be a part of our legal system, a system that is the envy of the entire civilized world. However, these same men and women have an obligation to provide for their families and to put food on the table. LB864 ensures that we have adequate funding to recruit qualified interpreters capable of meeting the demands of judges, attorneys, court staff and clients. LB864 means that interpreters are provided a living wage by keeping pace with economic demands, something that has not seen change since 2004. LB864 means that the best interpreters will seek work as court interpreters in our community rather than

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taking their talents to other employers. And when the best interpreters are working to ensure equal access to justice for all, our democracy and all of its citizens are better off. Thank you for your time. This has been a great honor.

WISHART: Thank you so much for being here.

TAGHREED TRINDLE: My pleasure.

WISHART: Any questions? Well, thank you.

TAGHREED TRINDLE: Yes, ma'am.

WISHART: Additional proponents. Good afternoon. Good to see you again.

COREY STEEL: Good afternoon. Good to see you all again. My name is Corey Steel, C-o-r-e-y S-t-e-e-l, and I'm the Nebraska State Court Administrator. I talked to you earlier in my testimony on our judicial branch budget regarding this is one of the areas that we have asked for increased funding for the past couple of years. I want to reiterate, this is a constitutional mandate, a statutory mandate that this Legislature put into effect 100 years ago. We celebrated that this year. It's a Department of Justice oversight issue. This is not a program or a service that we want or need, or this would make the court operations smoother or better. It is a mandated, needed service, as you heard, for access to justice for these individuals that cannot speak another language. It is crucial part of doing the business and the operational functions of the court. It's just one of those business operational things that we must fund. I urge each and every one of you to talk to your local judges. When interpreters walked out for 2 weeks last year in July or in June, before we were able to somehow figure out a way to fund the additional increases, not what they wanted, not what I wanted, but we came to a compromise with Senator Dungan's help, I received letters, emails, phone calls from judges across the state saying you have to do something. We cannot operate court without these essential individuals in our courtroom. As the Chief Justice stated, 69 different languages last year, 69 different languages. Last year, I testified in front of this committee that we were going to expend our \$1.4 million budget. This year, this fiscal year, we were at \$2.1 million. I was right. This current fiscal year, our estimations are we will be at \$2.6 million for interpreter services. We've increased efficiencies within the interpreter program. We have done block scheduling where with our county courts we sat either 2 or 4 hours different days of weeks and that's where predominantly our Spanish speaking is our largest portion. So when we

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block those schedules for, for 2 hours or 4 hours, we know we have an interpreter there for that 2 hours. So those cases are all set at that time. That's a more efficient way than having an interpreter come back 3 or 4 different times throughout the day. We instituted a new line-- new online education orientation program to attract more interpreters. We had 24 inter-- soon to be or those that want to be interpreters in our orientation class over-- just a little over 2 weeks ago. We used to have 3 or 4 individuals in those year in and year out. We had 24 when we moved that to an online. It's the most we've had in any class in over 5 years. So increasing the pool has been a priority of ours. We've also reached out after last year's testimony, thank you to Senator Armendariz, with the medical institutions that provide interpreter services. We've linked with them and providing resources back and forth and been able to attract some of the medical interpreters to come over and be-- and get certified. It's a different language, right? Medical interpretation is different than court interpretation, just different languages in, in the words. But getting them certified so that they can expand as well. We have reached out to and partnered with some of the schools and universities to put interpreter orientation within the curriculum for those individuals that are either come into the United States non-English speaking and have now-- are in the universities or community members to come in and enroll in those as well. So we're trying to increase that pool. We're looking for ways that we can provide and expand the services we have. We've also looked at what other and how other ways can we provide interpreter services within our court systems. We utilize remote services as much as we can, telephonic and through video. But again, there are mandates that we can't in every-- at every point in time have video interpretation. It must be in person. It must be there. So we're also looking at ways we can expand that. Again, when I-- when, when interpreters walked out and we sat at the table, we agreed we needed to continue and get the \$600,000 this year just to be sustainable. And as I've talked about before with our budget, this is an ongoing expense. It's an ongoing increasing expense as I've highlighted. It's not a one-time. It's not carryover that we can influx this one year and everything will be fine into the future. These are ongoing expenses for the judicial branch that we must provide. They're services we must provide. And I want to thank the interpreters that have come in today for their testimony and thank them for their partnership throughout these trying times over the last couple of years. With that, I'll answer any questions you may have.

WISHART: Well, thank you again for being here. Any questions from the committee? OK. I have a couple. You spoke about the potential if we do

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not provide interpreter-- in-person interpreter services, to utilize-- to you-- to lose just-- some of the justice funding. What's the price tag that we are looking at potentially losing?

COREY STEEL: You know, I'd have to get with the Crime Commission as they receive a lot of the Department of Justice funding for the state as the-- they're the-- they're the state agency that administers all the federal funding. But when you're in violation of a DOJ regulation, it affects all of your DOJ funding for the state.

WISHART: If you could get us with that number is, I think that would be helpful. And then I've heard multiple times today that the \$600,000 is a one-time ask. Why not be asking for a base increase since this is an ongoing expense?

COREY STEEL: Well, in our budget proposal for the judicial branch, there was the \$600,000 base increase request. And as Senator Dungan and I met earlier prior to the legislative session, we thought we probably need to tackle this both ways. I'm going to ask for it in my budget. And if you're going to introduce a piece of legislation, that would be-- that would be good, too, so that we have both things out there and let this committee determine how you want to move forward. And so Senator Dungan said, well, it's one fiscal year. And it's a mid biennium. So he put it in for one year, I believe, with the hopes that then we would roll that into our base budget if you approve the bill or, my hope would be you would approve it in our budget.

WISHART: And so just to be clear, approving \$600,000, as you requested in the budget, would be to meet what the current obligation is in terms of what was the, the agreement that was come to with the interpreters.

COREY STEEL: Correct. So when we met in July, the interpreters, and Senator Dungan and I made a commitment to them for one year that I will increase the funding up to \$75. And I outlined that in my original testimony, certified went from \$50 to \$75; registered, \$35 to \$60; non-certified, \$35 to \$50, those staggered increases for one year. I could only commit to that for one year until this June 30 of this year. If we did not, and we're not able to seek funding, the \$600,000 for ongoing, I'm going to have to readjust the budget, and those may be reduced and decreased back to the original funding. Because as you can see, it's not the fact that the expenditures are continuing to grow just because we're paying interpreters more. It's continuing to grow because the need is greater than it was the year previous. We continue and new languages. I just approved the bill less

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than a week ago for a trial in Nebraska where we had to fly in 2 interpreters, 1 from California, 1 from Minnesota for a 2-day trial. It was a child custody proceeding that they had to be in person. It's mandated. So the court-- it was a child custody, and they were going to be here for 2 days. We pay for all their flight. We pay for their hotel. We pay a per diem for them to be here, and then they get their hourly rate as well. Those bills are anywhere from \$5,000 to \$6,000 that, again, we must pay. I can't tell the court, we can't fly them interpreters in. We can't do that. There's nobody in Nebraska that speaks and is certified to speak that language.

WISHART: OK. Thank you. Any final questions? OK. Seeing none, thank you.

COREY STEEL: Thank you.

WISHART: Additional proponents.

DYLAN SEVERINO: Good afternoon, Vice Chairwoman Wishart and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Dylan Severino. That's D-y-l-a-n S-e-v-e-r-i-n-o. I'm here on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska, and I'm here in support of LB864. I've heard a lot of our concerns and points made already, so I'll keep this brief. The ACLU fights for the right for everyone to access courts and to fully participate in legal proceedings, no matter what a person's proficiency in English is. As, as, as others have pointed out, Nebraska law requires that, quote, In any proceeding, the presiding judge shall appoint an interpreter to assist any person unable to communicate the English language for preparation and trial of his or her case, end quote. The-- this law is a necessity in a multilingual state. As the Department of Justice summarized very nicely in a memo entitled Language Access in State Courts, quote, Interpretation and translation are essential to providing meaningful access to the courts and to maintaining the integrity of our justice system. Court cases are often highly structured, stressful experiences requiring specialized terminology. Without careful attention to providing effective language services, many people will face a judicial process that places unfair and unconstitutional burdens on their ability to fully participate in proceedings. At the same time, relying on uninterpreted-- uninterpreted or poorly-interpreted testimony from witnesses who are not proficient in English or from improperly translated documents will hinder the court's ability to determine the facts and dispense justice, end quote. It is a legal requirement and a logistical necessity for the Supreme Court of Nebraska to have access to interpreters to properly adjudicate cases where anyone playing a role

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in the trial has a limited English proficiency. Maintaining the funds needed to achieve this adequate interpretation will keep us in line with our state motto, Equality Before the Law. For these reasons, the ACLU of Nebraska expresses gratitude to Senator Dungan for introducing LB864 and urges the committee to advance this legislation to the floor. Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

WISHART: Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here.

DYLAN SEVERINO: Thank you.

WISHART: Any additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents to LB864? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral? Seeing none, Senator Dungan, would you like to close?

DUNGAN: Yes, briefly. Thank you again, members of the Appropriation Committee. I want to just take a moment to thank the interpreters that were here today for their incredibly hard work. I also want to make sure I take a moment to thank Corey Steel from the courts. We've all been working really hard on this. I think you can tell from his testimony that this was an ongoing conversation that we had during the interim. It's been at the top of my agenda for, really, the entire time I've been in the Legislature, because it's really an important issue. So I appreciate them coming in. I think the courts have done a really amazing job of trying to come up with ways to save money. You know, Corey Steel talking about putting people into blocks and finding ways to consolidate, utilizing online services like Zoom to try to get people present. That, that really is helpful. But I can tell you that if we don't at least maintain the amount of interpreters that we have, if not increase, even with those solutions, it's not tenable. This Vietnamese gentleman I was speaking about earlier, when I was in court with him, the only Vietnamese interpreter available couldn't be there in person because she was stretched too thin and she had to be in another courthouse that same day in another county. So what she was doing actually is Zooming into our courtroom. So what happens is you're sitting in the courtroom like this in a Zoom screen with anybody who's Zoomed in. My gentleman that I'm sitting there with, who doesn't speak a lick of English, is out in the hallway, and I have to find a way to tell him to come in because I thought the interpreter was going to be there. I realized our interpreter was going to be on Zoom. So we ultimately had me get him out of the courtroom. We went upstairs to a conference room. I pulled out my phone. I logged on to Zoom to the Zoom call in the courtroom. The judge put us in a breakout room, and then I sat there with a phone between us while I talked to

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my client and tried to explain incredibly complex legal matters on what was really, frankly, not a very good connection. And ultimately we worked it out. But this took so much more time than it would have been if the interpreter had just been there in person being able to simultaneously translate, which I know they try to be and oftentimes are. But because we have a dearth of interpreters available, it's simply not always an option. So while I think it's important that we utilize these services like online services, it's really a stopgap; it's not the answer. The answer is trying to find ways to maintain the interpreters we have and find a way to get more of them. We're not asking today for an increase in salary. All we're asking for is the money to maintain what's currently been given. And I think that's crucial to making sure we fulfill our constitutional obligation. So I would appreciate your support of LB864 and can answer any final questions you might have.

WISHART: Thank you, Senator. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

DUNGAN: Thank you.

WISHART: And we do have 11 position comments, proponents; 0 opponents; and 0 in the neutral. So that closes the hearing for LB864. And that opens our hearing for LB1225. Senator McKinney, welcome.

McKINNEY: How you all doing?

WISHART: Good.

McKINNEY: You're ready?

WISHART: We're ready.

McKINNEY: Good evening, Vice-Chair Wishart and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Terrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y. I represent District 11 in the Legislature, which is north Omaha. Today I am presenting LB1225, which will appropriate funds to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. In recent years, communities across Nebraska, particularly in Omaha, have faced numerous challenges, ranging from economic downturns to social unrest and natural disasters. In times of crisis, families often bear the brunt of the impact facing heightened stress, financial instability, and emotional turmoil. Recognizing the critical role of local entities in supporting families during these trying times, it is imperative to appropriate funds to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to provide assistance to these entities. LB1225 explores the significance of such funding allocation,

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the mechanism through which it can be executed, and the rationale for targeting qualified census tracts in Omaha. The Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice plays a pivotal role in promoting public safety and enhancing the effectiveness of criminal justice by providing financial assistance to local entities to the-- through the Nebraska Victim Advocacy Program administered by the Crime Commission. The commission can leverage its resources to support families facing crisis. These local entities, including community organizations, shelters, and counseling services, are often on the front lines, providing crucial assistance to individuals and families in need. However, limited resource-- limited resources can hinder the ability of these entities to meet the growing demand for their services, particularly in areas with high poverty levels and crime. Omaha, like many urban centers, grapples with concentrated pockets of disadvantage-- disadvantages where families are disproportionately affected by crisis. By focusing the distribute-- the distribution of funds on qualified census tracts in Omaha, policymakers can effectively target areas with the-- with the most acute need for assistance. This approach ensures that, that resources are allocated where they are needed the most, maximizing their impact on vulnerable families. Moreover, by chan-- by channeling funds through the Nebraska Victim Advocacy Program, the Commission can ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation process. Entities seeking funds must meet specified criteria and demonstrate their capacity to effectively support families during crisis. This rigorous evaluation process safeguards against any perceived misuse of funds and ensures that resources are directed towards initiatives with the greatest potential to make a positive impact and difference in the lives of families. Investing in and supporting families during crisis yields numerous benefits for individuals and communities and society as a whole. By providing timely assistance and resources, local entities can help families navigate challenging circumstances, mitigate the long-term impact of crisis, and promote resiliency. Strong support of families are the cornerstone of thriving communities and, and by empowering them through times of need, we lay the foundation for a more resil-- resilient and equitable society. In conclusion, appropriating funds to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to support local entities to assist families during crisis is a proved investment in the well-being of just communities in general across Nebraska. By target-- by targeting qualified census tracts in Omaha, we can ensure that resources are directed to areas with the greatest need and impact, though, through the Nebraska Victim Advocacy Program. And I brought this bill because it honestly is something that I've always thought about, even before coming into office, I always

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wondered why when families go through crisis, they have a hard time getting help. And I've seen in my whole life where-- and not just-- and I know we mentioned gun violence, but not even just with gun violence. A family member dies unexpectedly and you have families scraping up dollars, trying to figure out what they're going to do. And a lot of those families end up going in debt just trying to bury a family member or trying to help a family member. And it's nowhere for them to go, especially if the family member is the victim of a crime. Whether it's gun violence or domestic violence or anything like that, it's a hard time. And a lot of these services have limited resources, and they really don't have the resources to help these families. And when a lot of these crises happen, you see them trying to pull resources together to try to help these, these families out. And I speak to these people and they're like, man, I don't know what to do with so much need. And once people see that this, this entity is helping people, they start getting flooded with calls or messages or emails like, hey, I need help too. But they are already tapped out of like, hey, I don't have it. And that's why I brought the bill, because I think as a state, I think we should try to do something. I don't think \$2.5 million is a lot. I think we probably could do more, but I think it's something. And I think-- and I know you all probably-- people are probably tired of me bringing it up, but I think an investment of \$2.5 million avoid us having to expand that prison that's being built in 10 years because we start helping our families at the time of crisis. And if we address that trauma then, it doesn't lead to that kid dealing with trauma through their childhood, through their teenage years and then adult years, and then they end up in the system. So I think it's a much-needed investment for the state and open myself up for questions.

WISHART: Thank you, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: No problem.

WISHART: Any questions? Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Senator. Thank you for being here. The census tract, explain that a little bit. You just have 1 or 2 or what--

McKINNEY: Qualified census tracts.

DORN: --or is it income levels with that census tract or what? How did you come about with the census tract?

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McKINNEY: I came up with that because that's the best way to kind of target areas in, in, in the state. That's how we targeted the areas through LB1024 and LB531. It's-- I forget the exact amount of qualified census tracts, but it's a good-- it's a good amount in north south Omaha. And there's also others across the state as well.

DORN: It's all-- it's-- so it's all of those. It's not just limited to the specific area in one of our cities, yeah.

McKINNEY: In the bill, it's limited to Omaha, but there's other qualified census tracts across the state. Yeah.

DORN: But this bill here is limited to Omaha.

McKINNEY: Yes.

DORN: OK.

McKINNEY: Yeah.

WISHART: OK. Seeing no other questions, Senator, are you going to stay here to close?

McKINNEY: Yes, I will.

WISHART: OK. Great.

McKINNEY: Thank you.

WISHART: OK. We will now open up the hearing for proponents for LB1225. Welcome.

TAMIKA MEASE: My name is Tamika Mease and that's T-a-m-i-k-a M-e-a-s-e.

WISHART: OK, Tamika, go ahead and get started.

TAMIKA MEASE: Thank you. Today I am here representing North Omaha Community Partnership. We are a dedicated nonprofit organization that provides cruso-- crucial support to families affected by gun violence, gang violence, domestic violence and suicide, youth suicide within our community. We humbly request that you and your esteemed colleagues on the committee give your full support to advance LB1225. Part of our organization's mission is to facilitate crisis assistance to, to those in dire need. We endeavor to offer a lifeline through services like emergency shelter relocation, assistance with permanent housing, funeral planning, including financial support for funerals, and

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crucial funeral security to maintain public safety during sensitive times. Our proactive engagement with families and our efforts to de-escalate potential conflicts help to ensure that these events pass with dignity and peace. Furthermore, we collaborate closely with the Omaha Police Department and specifically the gang unit, fostering a level of communication and transparency that is essential for maintaining a discreet law enforcement presence during victims' funerals. Such cooperation allows the Omaha Police Department to operate covertly, preserving the delicate relationship between law enforcement and our community. Our wraparound services, including the Bridge the Gap Mental Health Program, food assistance, utilities assistance, and our Diapers and Wipes program are designed to support families beyond the immediate crisis, addressing long-term well-being and stability. LB1225 is pivotal to organizations like ours, as it will enable us to enhance and expand our services. The bill's passage would not only be a testament to Nebraska's commitment to community support, but also an investment in the safety and health of its citizens. By advancing this bill, you will have the power to positively affect count-- countless lives, assisting us in our mission to create a safer, healthier, and more resilient community. We respectfully urge the committee to recognize the significance of this bill, and to take a stand for the families and individuals who rely on organizations like North Omaha Community Partnership for support in their most challenging moments. Thank you for considering this request, and we are hopeful that your support-- for your support and look forward to the positive outcomes that LB1225 will bring. And I'm open to any questions.

WISHART: Well, thank you for being here today and everything you do for your community.

TAMIKA MEASE: Thank you.

WISHART: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

TAMIKA MEASE: All right. Thank you.

WISHART: Additional proponents. Welcome.

STEVE CERVENY: Thank you. It's good to be here. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Steve Cerveney, S-t-e-v-e C-e-r-v-e-n-y. I'm a deputy chief with the Omaha Police Department, and I really appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today and speak with you, Senators of the Appropriations Committee. The Omaha Police Department supports LB1225. Many times victims of violent crime need some financial

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assistance, along with helpful wraparound services and occasionally the ability to relocate, taking themselves out of volatile situations that may continue to repeat a violent cycle if help is not available. This measure goes a long way in assisting victims to become whole again after experiencing a traumatic, violent incident. We believe this bill provides a meaningful, comprehensive approach. We as a police department understand the value for every individual to be healthy, whole and happy in the communities we serve to lead a safe, productive life which enables every individual, individual to contribute, contribute their value in the neighborhoods where they live and thrive. One of the pillars of our mission as a law enforcement agency is community outreach. Cultivating and building relationships throughout the community is impactful and vital, critical to success. We support and understand the value of community outreach programs like this, which is why we support it wholeheartedly. One example of a community outreach group that would benefit from this measure and continue to provide critical resources to victims and their families is the NOCP which you just heard from, the North Omaha Community Partnership group, made up of tremendous individuals. Tamika Mease, I know her personally, and I've seen the work that she does, and it's phenomenal. She's, she's a true strong leader, boots on the ground, on the front lines, helping these individuals. They do tremendous work, providing wraparound services for victims of violent crime and their families. Their efforts have been very valuable to help restore peace and safety within communities who have been adversely affected by violent crime. One example Tamika mentioned was their assistance at funerals, where sometimes there is the potential threat of violence to continue. And they've done a tremendous job helping us keep peace and safety. So we, the Omaha Police Department, wanted to be here today and support Senator McKinney's bill. Thank you.

WISHART: Well, thank you for being here and for your service.

STEVE CERVENY: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

WISHART: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Additional proponents.

DAN MARTIN: Hi. My name is Dan Martin, M-a-r-t-i-n. I am the vice president of the Omaha Police Officers Association. I didn't prepare a speech here, but I wanted you to know that we have worked with Ms. Mease on several occasions involving violent crimes in north Omaha, homicides, and there is a huge gap in what is needed as far as services after something traumatic in a crime or a murder. And it seems like Ms. Mease is always there, wrapping her arms around the

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family, coordinating with our officers, the police department and the gang unit, and providing what is really needed. There's a lot of expenses that come with the death of someone tragically and unexpectedly. There's not a lot of services for those types of things immediately, and part of the grieving process, and being able to close that part of your life involves the funeral and the expenses that come with it. They're not-- they're not free. That's just one part of the, the system, the process. I've had many discussions with Senator McKinney and, and Ms. Mease and discussions with other community leaders at Omaha 360 and other places. And I think this funding is so important that we offer it to people that can't afford it and, and to help them bridge the gap monetarily. So I, I, I just wanted to get on the record what the Omaha Police Officers Association that we 100% support Senator McKinney and Mrs. Mease's goals in the community. It goes a long way. So any questions?

WISHART: Well, thank you for being here. And thank you for your service.

DAN MARTIN: Thank you.

WISHART: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Additional proponents. Welcome.

JAMES HUNTER: Good afternoon. My name is James Hunter, J-a-m-e-s H-u-n-t-e-r. Thank you for having this opportunity to speak on behalf of LB225 [SIC] in support of this-- of this bill. I represent YouTurn, which is a community violence prevention program in Omaha. And our executive director has prepared a statement that she would like for me to share. The executive director of YouTurn community violence prevention organization, our platform is the evidence-based cure violence global health model, used nationally and internationally to address violence. Males and African-Americans are affected by violence and negative health and social outcomes, injuries and homicides, incarceration-- in concentration, and the community is economically impacted. When funding is available in areas impacted by violence, organizations such as YouTurn has a positive impact on violence. YouTurn utilizes an outreach case management program staffed with individuals with similar lived experiences to engage those at highest risk of being victimized or impacted by violence. We call them Credible Messengers. Data from our last evaluation shows the impact case management when using Credible Messengers. This data is from 2020 to 2021 shows 12,207 hours of case management by case managers to 77.2% of YouTurn participants would reach out to their case managers before a conflict escalated, and 100 community conflicts mediated that

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could have escalated into gun violence. There were 100 firearm inci--incidents prevented which would have caused injury or death, resulting in a case-- in a cost savings of \$70 million to \$100 million. One shooting with injury costs \$703,000. One homicide costs \$1 million. This data is composed by Doctor Sasse and Wheatfield [PHONETIC] of the University of Nebraska. Based on this data, it is vital to have funding available to support this work because of the funding helps expand the footprint of the work and the impact. We've been doing this work in Omaha for a little over 8 years. We've provided wraparound services to families impacted by violence. I'm a pastor in north Omaha, and I've conducted many funerals for individuals and families that were impacted by gun violence and seeing the need at that point in time and then not having the resources to help them with the things that they need to help bury, to just help them because of the traumatization of the loss of a loved one. And we've done everything we could, used the, the resources that we've had to help them. But this bill will help us and other agencies and organizations to do more for those that are impacted greatly by violence in our community. We support this bill that Senator McKinney is presenting, and we hope that you would consider it very strongly. Thank you very much.

WISHART: Thank you. Thank you for being here and for the work you do for your community.

JAMES HUNTER: Thank you.

WISHART: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

JAMES HUNTER: Thank you.

WISHART: Additional proponents.

NADIA SPURLOCK: Hi, I'm going to be reading a collective letter of support for LB1225 and North Omaha Community Partnership. We, the undersigned individuals--

WISHART: I'm so sorry to interrupt you, but we would love to get your name.

NADIA SPURLOCK: Oh, sorry.

WISHART: No, you're fine.

NADIA SPURLOCK: Nadia Spurlock.

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WISHART: And will you spell that for us?

NADIA SPURLOCK: N-a-d-i-a S-p-u-r-l-o-c-k.

WISHART: Thank you.

NADIA SPURLOCK: We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, write to express our wholehearted support for LB1225. The devastating impact of gun violence reverberates throughout our communities, leaving families shattered and communities damaged from the aftermath. Each loss of life represents a profound loss to our community and society, and the ripple effects of such tragedies are immeasurable. In the wake of these acts of violence, the north Omaha community has been extremely fortunate to consistently have North Omaha Community Partnership to look to for providing timely and effective crisis intervention services to fulfill the immediate and long-term emotional, psychological, and practical needs of these families are outlined in the bill. To support LB1225 is to support crisis intervention and healing through the wraparound services North Omaha Community Partnership offers, including but not limited to their rental assistance program, their Diaper and Wipes program, their Bridge the Gap Mental Health Program, and their emergency pantry and clothing services. To support LB1225 is to support violence prevention due to temporary and permanent relocation assistance the North Omaha Community Partnership provides, the culturally competent security North Omaha Community Partnership coordinates to be enforced at high-profile funeral services, and the mediations North Omaha Community Partnership undertakes to assist in alleviating core conflicts in the community. Finally, to support LB1225 is to support communities experiencing violence, as well as the organizations doing the work to address these situations on a daily basis. This aspect of violence intervention and prevention is very necessary. These resources and your vote are vital to the effective continuation of this work. The following organizations and individuals support this statement and North Omaha Community Partnership: North Omaha Collective; Hope of Glory Church; ENCOMPASS Omaha; Omaha Together One Community; Bridge Family Resource Connector; Church on Purpose; Center for Holistic Development; the Empowerment Network; Code Z Outreach; Bethesda Temple SDA; One Omaha; the Omaha Black Police Officers Association; the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Greater Omaha Chapter; Heart Ministry Center; Karla Dush, director of Community Connections-- Corrections, excuse me; Creighton University School of Law affiliation provided for identification purposes only; and Christopher T. Rodgers, Douglas County Commissioner. Thank you.

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WISHART: Thank you for being here today. Any questions? Thank you.

NADIA SPURLOCK: Thank you.

WISHART: Additional proponents. Welcome.

Y'SHALL DAVIS: Thank you. Hello, everyone. I am Y'Shall Davis. Y'Shall is spelled Y-'-S-h-a-l-l, Davis, D-a-v-i-s. And I am a proponent of LB1225. And I urge the committee to advance it, because it would appropriate \$2.5 million to serve a disenfranchised suffering community. This money is a need, and it has nothing to do with greed. Wealth inequity and inappropriate behavior going unnoticed are the 2 most fundamental problems leading up to violent crimes in our communities of color. Wealth inequity that comes directly from a system designed to have populations of the haves and the have nots. Inappropriate behavior that stems from hundreds of years of oppression, outright disrespect and abuse. When I hear folks discussing this black on black crime that exists in north Omaha, other communities across the nation, the first thing I think is duh. You know, people are like, where does it come from? Why is it happening? Well, it's a direct ramification that came out of physical slavery, and it still persists today because there's no atonement for the mishandling of this population. Has anyone heard of generational trauma that comes from historical trauma? Well, if you haven't, recent scientific advances in the study of epigenetics and psychology show more and more clearly how traumatic experiences shaped the lives of not only the people who experience them, but also their children and children's children. Blacks, historically speaking, were taught to hate themselves during physical slavery. They were forced to beat and kill one another. And I'm unaware of another group of people treated like this for hundreds of years. Are you? I just don't know of another group. In Nebraska, black people are 17 times as likely to die by gun homicides as white people, compared to 10 times nationwide. The impact of violence is beyond just physical injury. It affects the mental and emotional well-being and creates social and financial strain for the victims and their families. NOCP, North Omaha Community Partnership, is a new, but it's a trusted nonprofit in north Omaha that has shown up for this community in a big way with so few resources. They promote crime prevention, conflict resolution, suicide prevention, and crisis intervention. They offer community resources such as crisis assistance, food pantries, household cleaning supplies, and community feeds. NOCP is the only organization that I know of in Omaha that offers everything that this bill wants to support. And people have mentioned wraparound services related to relocation assistance. I'm aware of a lot of young men in north Omaha who needed relocation

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assistance and couldn't get it, and now they're the LWOP population in the penitentiaries. So something else I like about this organization is that they advocate and they celebrate the individuals from the community who are excelling, despite the many traps set for them, will allow their annual events. Tamika Mease, the ED of the NOCP, is a professional with more than enough lived experience to address the ills festering in our community. The jails are already overpopulated, the mental health centers are few. This community is in dire need of help. So I ask that you allow the \$2.5 million to come to the community if you want fewer deaths, fewer jail sentences, healthier families that create healthier communities. So I'm here to ask that you give us a fighting chance in north Omaha and those other tracts that were mentioned so we can, you know, reduce this overpopulated penitentiary system that you all have where the numbers are just ludicrous and no one's really taking into consideration what's happening in these communities, why gun violence is so prevalent. Mass incarceration has dismantled the black family in north Omaha. Men are missing from the homes. You don't have men in the house. You don't have big brothers. You don't even have little brothers because now all the juveniles are locked up. When I look at my son's population, the kids he went to school with, I mean, if you guys would collect data on these children, the majority of them end up dead or in jail. And I-- and I don't really blame that on the youth as much as I blame it on the leadership. It's like something has to happen in this city to correct what has gone unnoticed and ignored. I mean, and I think a lot of people don't care about it because it's not affecting your families. And if it were affecting your family, maybe, you know, somebody would think to do something creative. So I'm glad that Senator McKinney proposed this \$2.5 million to address these issues. I've witnessed families have to spend \$10,000 to \$15,000 on funeral services, money that they were trying to save for their family, maybe for someone to go to college. But instead, someone got shot. Then the money had to go to funeral services. Now, this whole fam-- that's all the money that family had, period. I'm done. Thank you..

CLEMENTS: Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

Y'SHALL DAVIS: I appreciate it, thank you for listening.

CLEMENTS: I apologize for being gone so long. I had a bill that went long in another committee.

DOVER: I guess.

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CLEMENTS: And are there other proponents for LB1225? Welcome.

LYN'ASIA VALENTINE: Hi. Thank you. My name is Lyn'Asia Valentine, spelled L-y-n A-s-i-a, Valentine spelled V-a-l-e-n-t-i-n-e. OK. So I'm here testifying on behalf of LB1225. Things I've seen that leads me to be in full support of this bill are the works of North Omaha Community Partnership. I've witnessed crisis interventions, emergency food assistance, funeral assistance and essentially wraparound services offered to those in need. To be more specific. I've seen families suffering from gun violence being placed into emergency shelters due to their homes not only no longer being safe, but due to their homes being crime scenes from the loss of their loved one. I've seen funerals be planned. I've seen families stress over funeral costs, and I've watched their faces as that stressor slowly drift away. I've seen mothers pick up diapers to also leave with food for those same children who were hungry. I've seen mothers come in for coats for their children who were uprooted from their homes in order to get away from domestic abuse. I've seen events for Christmas gifts that offered a sense of belonging and a hot meal. I've seen community engagement on a large-- in a support and inspiring skill. I've seen general-- genuine mental health support and resources be given. I've seen lives be saved through divine intervention. So again, I say I'm in full support of LB1225 and I look forward to what is to continue and what is to come next. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent, please. Welcome.

O'SHAY HEARD: Hello. My name is O'Shay Heard, spelled O-s-h-a-y H-e-a-r-d. I'm here in support of LB1225. I've been volunteering for North Omaha Community Partnership for a while. I've seen them stop violence. I've seen them help with-- I'm sorry. I've seen them help with pretty much a lot throughout the community. I've seen groundwork. I've seen the charity work. I have seen Tamika Mease literally cook plates to fund her organization and to help the community. And I've seen them help with utilities and people with-- who has their-- has things cut off and things of that nature. I've seen them help with funerals. I've seen them stop violence at funerals that was going to happen. I actually helped with a lot of that stuff. And I'm in full support of the bill and hopefully you guys make a good decision.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent, please. Are there any other proponents wanting to testify? Seeing none-- or there is one. Are you a proponent?

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BRYAN RILEY: Yes, I am.

CLEMENTS: Welcome.

BRYAN RILEY: Hi, guys. How are you guys? My name is Bryan Riley, B-r-y-a-n R-i-l-e-y. I am here in support of Senator McKinney's bill. I'm actually the owner and founder of Riley Protection Group, the security company that provides services to funerals. So I serve right next to Tamika Mease. I just kind of-- I didn't prepare anything, so I'm just kind of speaking from the heart. And I watched families crumble over caskets. I watched people lose their hearts, lose their minds. And I watched Tamika take on that challenge. That's major to me due to the fact that there isn't anything else like it. I, I spoke with the police chief a while ago, and asked him, why don't we have something like that for upticks in violence and things like that? And he just had no guidance. But I prayed over the years, and then something like this come up, it's just crazy. So I'm in full support of it. As one of the individuals came up here and he said that-- he spoke on Credible Messengers. I'm a Credible Messenger. I'm also one of those ones that from lived experience can take what I learned in the streets and apply it to what I do in my job. That's what makes me so special at what I do. There is a major threat, when you're talking about these funerals, for retaliation. And my approach to the job is, is, is to just kind of get in front of it and disrupt it as I have a relationship with both sides. She is-- Tamika Mease has put me in a-- in the-- in the craziest position to where I feel like I found a little-- a lot more purpose because not only am I serving on my security in my security company, but I'm doing other outreach work. I have a, not an organization, but a new company, not a new company, a new position in my company coming called Violence Interrupters. Due to the fact that everything that Tamika Mease and 360 has dealt with over the years with violence at football games, basketball games and, SeptemberFest, whatever you can think of just to get in front of the violence. I just want to be a part of the solution. So what I've seen from community-- Omaha Community Partnership has been amazing. And I really feel like that, you know, it's just a no-brainer that she should be allocated funds for what she does. And I'm just-- I'm just here for support of her and for support of 360 and I think you guys should take it into consideration so.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Are there questions? Senator Dover.

DOVER: Yeah. What, what do you think the top cause is that, that causes the-- causes the violence to flare up? What, what are the main

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reasons, I mean, the top-- some of the main reasons you see that happen?

BRYAN RILEY: Say that one more time.

DOVER: What are the-- what are the main reasons, like, you see violence flare up? Like where else do you have somebody shooting somebody or those kind of things?

BRYAN RILEY: Some of this stuff, like her wraparound services, it's just-- it's deeper than the just the gang intelligence-- the gang intelligence part, the intervention part. I think some of this stuff, when it happens, it just-- it happens and it, it spikes pretty fast. But the, the cause of it, I think the lady that came before this, Y'Shall, she was up here and she said a lot of this stuff is generational. You know, some of this stuff is just people running into each other after not seeing each other for a while. That could be what it is. A lot of it's just gun and gang violence, you know? And we, we all got a special approach and being intentional when it comes to serving these individuals. So to answer your question, I think that was-- that was-- that was a curveball throw at me a little bit. But violence, I think-- I think everybody will agree violence can happen anywhere. It happens everywhere. It's just how do you address it? You know, what's in place for-- to stop it from even-- from going further? And organizations like community-- Omaha Community Partnership and the, the partnerships that she has, like myself and others in the community, we can get in front of that stuff. We have very unique relationships with these individuals that are on the streets committing these acts. So we know how to get in front of it and stop it so we don't have further assaults. And that's also working with OPD and, and just, just all around collaboration.

DOVER: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent. Anyone else? Welcome.

JAMILA EAVES: Hello. My name is Jamila Eaves, J-a-m-i-l-a E-a-v-e-s. I am here in full support of LB1225. As I have been a member of the, well, a volunteer with the NOCP, and I have seen life-changing things happen, a lot of moving pieces to the puzzle. As I've grown up in north Omaha and the community, I haven't seen the resources like I have with the North Omaha Community Partnership. Also, I went through a family crisis and North Omaha computer-- Community Partnership was in my corner. If she could have done more, she would have. But with

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the limited resources, she did all she can do. So just being there and being present, I am in full support of this bill and the magnitude of what it will bring to the community.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for coming.

JAMILA EAVES: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

NICKA JOHNSON: Good afternoon. Hi, everybody. My name is Nicka Johnson. That is N-i-c-k-a, Johnson, J-o-h-n-s-o-n. Honorable members of the hearing committee, I stand before you today to advocate for LB1225, which appropriate funds to the Nebraska Commission of Law Enforcement Criminal Justice. This bill is not just crucial for the effective functioning of our law enforcement and systems, but also present opportunity to address systematic issues that impacts our communities on a day-to-day. In supporting this bill, I urge the allocation of resources to the program within the community and those in the community. Me personally, I grew up in a fatherless home with a single parent, teenage pregnancy at the age of 16, and I was able to overcome that. There's a lot of people that look like me that may not have made it out, and a lot of that is because of the hands of generation trauma, generational type of generation that, you know, people are constantly in survival mode. Within that, you know, I have had so many families incarcerated, I've seen a lot of violence and a lot of lack of resources that people have. I myself own a company called Budget to Success that helps bridge the economic gap by teaching the importance of financial literacy. And within that, I see it on a day-to-day basis of a lot of people not having funds of may need to be relocated. If there is a funeral, you know, you gotta have a fish dinner at the local social hall. You are advocating for GoFundMes just because funds are short. And within that is you can't even properly breathe and you can't even properly grieve in that process because money is limited within that. So within that, I just wanted to come up and show my support and how imperative it is to recognize, you know, in supporting LB1225 and together how we can be able to pave the way for more equitable and prosperous futures for all Nebraskans. Therefore, I wholeheartedly endorse LB1225 and urge the passing of the betterment of our state. And thank you for your consideration. And at this time, want to open up for any questions.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee?

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NICKA JOHNSON: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Next proponent. Last call for proponents. Seeing none, is there anyone in opposition? Seeing none, anyone here in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, Senator McKinney, you may close.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Chair Clements and members of the Appropriation Committee. As I said in my opening, I brought LB1225 because I saw a need. And I've honestly, I've seen the need my whole life when it comes to time of-- times of crisis and families not having the resources and, you know, entities in the community not necessarily having the resources to help those families. And I think it's a-- I don't even look at it as an investment. I look at it as us as a body and us as a state doing our part in assisting Nebraska families in a time of need. I think in, in, in assisting those families, we start to address those generational traumas that have gone unchecked, I believe, for, for forever and has caused, for example, our prison overcrowding crisis. I think if we in the '90s began to address generational trauma, I don't think we'd have a prison overcrowding crisis. I really don't think so. I think that's why we're building and spending \$350 million to build a prison, because we haven't addressed generational trauma. I don't think this is the only thing that we need to do, but I think it's part of the solution to address, you know, the trauma. And I think no family should be standing on the side of a corner with a sign saying, help us; we need to pay for this funeral because, because nobody wants to go through that. I wouldn't want-- I don't want my family to. And I know nobody wants their family to be standing on the side of a corner with a bucket saying, help us pay for my uncle or my dad's funeral or help us; come get your car washed so we could pay for his funeral. Or for, for-- another example is there was a mother who kept getting her house shot up and she had to be relocated. And luckily, Ms. Mease was able to help get her relocated to Lincoln. And since then, her son has been going to school and not getting in trouble. And he's been on track since he's been in Lincoln. And that's just an example of what we could do. And that's why I brought it. It's not about an investment. I think it's just trying to do the right thing and trying to address trauma as best as possible to try to make sure we help as many people as possible. I think we spend a lot of money on unnecessary things every year. I think this is one bill that I think we could spend some money to really help people, and that's why I brought it. And I open myself up to any questions. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you, Senator.

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McKINNEY: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: We have position comments for the record on LB1225. Proponents, there are 7; opponents, 1; neutral, 0. That concludes the hearing for LB1225. And it concludes this for today. And Revenue had 6 more bills.