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BREWER: --committee. I am Senator Tom Brewer. I represent the 43rd Legislative District of central and western Nebraska, and I serve as Chair of this committee. The committee will take up bills as they are posted on the agenda. And that order is LB1153, Senator-- Speaker Arch; LB1417 would be mine; and LB1327, that would be mine; LB1246, that would be mine. Traditionally, the people you don't like you put on the last day. No-- nothing personal, Mr. Speaker. So I guess that will tell you what I think of some of my bills. Today we are going to have this as your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your positions on the posted bills before us today. Committee members will come and go to hearings-- that's where they are now-- in some cases. They have bills to introduce in other committees. I know John Lowe was up first in Judiciary. I ask that you abide by the following procedures to better facilitate today's meeting: please silence or turn off cell phones or any electronic devices. When in-- it's time to testify-- and you guys are already all pre-- pre-positioned pretty well-- we ask that you move forward so we know who's up to-- next to testify. The chairs in the front rows are saved for that. The introducing senator will make the initial comments, followed by proponents, opponents, and those in the neutral. Closing remarks are reserved for the introducing senator. Let's see. I'm guessing by the number we got in this room we know we are going to be at the three-minute mark. All right. Let's go ahead and talk about procedures. If you are planning to speak today, be sure you have a green sheet filled out legibly. And be prepared to turn that in to the committee clerk when you come forward. No green sheet, no testifying. All right. If you want to record that you were here today and your position-- support, oppose, or neutral-- that's what the gold sheets are for. Let's see. We'll be using the light system today. It will-- you'll have three minutes. You'll have the green light for two, the amber for one, and then you'll get the red light. And if you keep going, whoever has the gavel will let you know to cease and desist. What we're going to do now is introduce senators on the committee, starting on my right with Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Rita Sanders, District 45: the Bellevue-Offutt community.

HUNT: Hi. I'm Megan Hunt, and I represent District 8 in the northern part of midtown Omaha.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee February 29, 2024

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BREWER: Julie Condon will be our committee clerk. And we have our Dick Clay-- Dick Clark replacement-- Laurie Holman will be that. And our committees-- or, our-- who do we got? Pages. Cameron, right?

CAMERON LEWIS: Mm-hmm.

BREWER: Cameron is a senior at UNL. He's from Omaha. Political science and history. All right. With that, we will move to our first bill of the day, which would be LB1153, Speaker Arch. Welcome to the Government Committee for my very last day as Chairman.

ARCH: Wow. Good afternoon, Senator Brewer, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. For the record, my name is John Arch, J-o-h-n A-r-c-h. I represent the 14th Legislative District in Sarpy County. I'm here this afternoon to introduce LB1153, which I think will probably be your shortest bill of the day. LB1153 is a cleanup bill that was brought to me by the Revisor's Office. It merely repeals obsolete language in statute referencing the Sesquicentennial Commission. The commission was established in 2014 to organize programs observing Nebraska's 150th anniversary of statehood. In 2017, the commission terminated on June 30, 2018, and LB1153 reflects the fact that by-- reflects that fact by eliminating references to it in statute. And that concludes my testimony. And I would try to answer any questions you might have.

BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All right. Questions for Mr. Speaker on his LB1153? Seeing none. You'll stick around for close?

ARCH: I will.

BREWER: All right. Thank you. We will begin with proponents to LB1153. OK. Do we have any opponents to LB1153? And, of course, anyone in the neutral? Then we'll walk him back to speak-- he's waiving that. I need to read in the fact that he has zero letters. That will close the hearing on LB1153. All right. And I'll pass that over to--

SANDERS: Welcome, Senator Brewer. I think this is your last time in front of the Government Committee as a senator. I'm sure we'll see you back.

BREWER: I doubt it. All right. Good afternoon, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government Committee. My name is Senator Tom Brewer.

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That's T-o-m B-r-e-w-e-r. And I represent Legislative District 43. I'm here to open on LB1417, which I brought at the request of Governor Pillen. This is a big bill. It covers over a hundred pages. It would take-- it makes dozens of changes of independent boards and commissions that the Legislature has created over the years. When you-- when you're trying to make changes across so many different groups, it, it takes time. And what you find out is change makes people riled up, concerned. I have championed many bills in my time here in the Legislature-- some with guns, some with public power, some with elections. Let's say that none of these have created or generated the number of calls and visits on a particular piece of legislation. When I introduced this bill at the request of the Governor, I think the best way to describe it is I kicked the hornet's nest. We have received from the very beginning a lot of almost nonstop calls from different groups concerned about what this bill does. But understand that I believe it is within the Governor's responsibilities to do exactly what he's trying to do with this bill. It's how you do it that we're trying to figure out what right looks like. He's trying to be a good manager of the money that the state taxpayers have given him. And, and that's the idea, I think, behind the bill. I think we have to operate Nebraska's government in a way that's very efficient. The Nebraska Constitution says the following in Article IV, Section 6: The supreme executive power shall be vested in the Governor, who shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed and the affairs of the state efficiently and economically be administered. All right. So with that kind of as a, as a backdrop, I understand that's what generated the desire to see some of the changes. I believe that LB1417 shows that Governor Pillen is working to do that very duty that we've given him in the constitution. But I also believe that we have, we have some work to do to develop ideas and make sure that what we want to do within the bill is manageable and reasonable. Four-- every four years, the Government Committee, our committee, proposes different changes and a report on the Nebraska boards and commissions. That report is supposed to include recommendations about eliminating and consolidating or updating all of these little government units that we have created over the years. This committee staff will continue to be working even through this interim to make sure that that monitoring of boards and commissions continues to be done and reports gathered. That will allow the next Legislature that's seated in January to thoughtfully go through and consider some of these ideas that are proposed, and possibly more

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changes. I believe that the Governor's Chief of Staff and other representatives will be testifying here to, to better clearly explain their ideas, their proposals, and maybe ideas on how we can make this bill a better bill. So with that, I will take any questions and then, obviously, stay here to close. But I'll also talk about those changes as part of the closing. So with that, I'll take any questions.

SANDERS: Are there any questions for Senator Brewer? Seeing none. Thank you.

BREWER: All right.

SANDERS: Proponents? Welcome to the Government Committee.

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Good afternoon, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Dave Lopez, D-a-v-e L-o-p-e-z. And I have the privilege to serve as Chief of Staff to Governor Jim Pillen. I testify today on behalf of the Governor in support of LB1417 and AM2739. The Governor and our team are grateful to Colonel Brewer for his leadership in so many areas over the years but specifically today on the urgent mission to shrink and streamline Nebraska's state government. Over the decades, the Legislature has created and the Governor has signed into law a great number of individual boards and commissions. The justifications for why each was created vary widely. Some were created to meet a new licensure or regulatory need. Some were created to promote industry while others were created to be advisory in support of the needs of a particular subset of our citizenry, including the disabled, minority groups, and students at different stages of their education, teachers, others. The list is virtually limitless. Virtually all of them require the Governor to fill their ranks, often meeting highly specific geographic, professional, experiential, and partisan qualifications to maintain balance. Many require that their appointees be confirmed by the Legislature, adding to the confirmations load that this body has to carry. Virtually none of them carry their own standalone sunset provisions or any mandatory mechanism for periodic review of their continued need or effectiveness beyond the four, four-year review cadence that Chairman Buer-- Brewer described in his opening. The result is that today, just to put it in context, we have in Nebraska 236 individual state government boards and commissions that we could count, comprising of 1,978 individual appointees across those boards.

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That is excessive by virtually any measure. And we believe it is time that we followed the lead of several of our fellow states, including Iowa, in seriously scrutinizing which of these units should be eliminated or their duties consolidated into other parts of government. This bill is what we hope will be the first step in an ongoing process of evaluating the effectiveness of, of our various boards and commissions. We recognize and expect that you may see fit to remove or defer several of the boards, boards currently in the bill. Indeed, with AM2739, introduced today, we have already withdrawn a number of the boards that were in-- included in the original bill based on the thoughtful feedback we received from stakeholders, advocates, industry groups, and board members themselves. Mindful of time, I'd be happy to elaborate-- elaborate as to how we compiled that list before you. With the amendment, what remains is still a powerful reduction in the size, scope, and duplication of state government activities. It would eliminate or consolidate over 40 boards and close to 400 appointments, delivering a meaningful reduction in state government. Before I conclude, I hasten to add that our inclusion of a border commission in this legislation should not remotely be viewed as a reflection on the importance of the constituency, industry, profession, or other subject matter that board represents. The Governor simply believes that not every one of these requires the existence of a standalone government board to promote their interests. With that in mind, we believe this is a tremendous start. We look forward to engaging with you to improve this list even more. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the staff in our office who's worked very hard over the last, really, five months or so to put this together, particularly Grant Latimer in PRO, and to the testifiers who will follow me and can focus on some of the more specific subject matter areas. So I appreciate the committee's time. And I'm happy to answer any questions.

SANDERS: Are there any questions for Mr. Lopez? Seeing none. I have one.

DAVE LOPEZ: Yes.

SANDERS: Could you just give us an idea and walk us through the appointment process or the process of finding someone to serve on a board or a commission?

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DAVE LOPEZ: Yeah. Great question, Senator Sanders. So we don't have an elaborate unit in the Governor's Office which is tasked with filling most of the appointees. It is a team effort. And by that, I mean we interact with a number of internal and external stakeholders. We, we, we lean on our, on our agencies a lot. We engage with senators. We try to engage with trusted advocates and stakeholders on the outside. In terms of the staff capacity in the office, it's really two people: me and a marvelous lady named Pat, who's been a pub-- state public servant for decades. It is-- it, it is an overwhelming process just due to the number. And that's, that's not a complaint, necessarily, but it goes to what we, what we hope will be the end state of this process, that the number is manageable enough that we can say with confidence that we can do a better job substantively in evaluating the sheer number of people who apply for different boards and commissions. And I'll refer-- Senator Hunt, you spent some time on the floor last year talking about with the, with the wave of carryover appointees, you know, asking some pretty fair questions about, where do they come from? How are they vetted? How are they brought to the Governor's Office? I can give you kind of two lanes of feedback. One is a confirmation of the-- of, of the concern, which is that, in some instances, there are just so many of them that, due to our limited bandwidth, we cannot devote the, the same amount of time to a member of some, you know, lower tier commission that might have a very important mission that we might to a Board of Regents appointment or the PSC or a U.S. Senate vacancy. But I guess I can provide some reassurance that that process-- you know, we do our level best in ensuring that we are first looking for people who meet the qualifications under the law, who are there out of a spirit of public service and mission. But ne-- you know, nevertheless, there, there is only so much bandwidth in, in, you know, an already pretty work-strapped office, so. I, I hope that helps answer the question, Senator Sanders. But it's a-- there is no formal process. We don't have any kind of-- we have an application portal through which everything from the U.S. Senate to the potato board runs through. So everybody submits the same form application, and we try to vet those as we get through. In terms of triaging, obviously the most important or time-sensitive ones-- which we have to determine on a, on a subjective basis-- are taken up first. And then we also try, just in my work with Pat, to manage the flow of the vacancies. Our general rule is if a board is not yet really flirting with quorum, we don't mind having them sort of at the, at the-- lower in the stack.

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But as someone's approaching quorum, we try to prioritize them so that they can continue to do their work.

SANDERS: Thank you. And, and then how, how did you get to the point to propose the ones that are being eliminated?

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you. Good question. So we've been talking about this really from the start in the Governor's time in office. We saw the idea of being utilized in other states and other legislatures. What we tried generally, Senator, is to take a thoughtful-in but easy-out approach. So a lot of conversations internally with our team and the Governor's staff. Lot of conversations with folks in our agencies. We asked members of the cabinet to be very intentional about evaluating, hey, what boards and commissions are attached to your agency-- because usually they are in some way-- and make recommendations for-- is-- has, has, has one board or another outlived its, its sort of useful purpose that was originally envisioned by the Legislature? Is it performing duties that could really be absorbed by some other board? So that's, that's one part of it. But then the easy-out part of it is-- and, and this has been what's kept us-- and Grant in particular-- very busy since the introduction of the ori-- of, of it-- of, of LB1417 in its original form is easy-out. You know, if stakeholders came to us and there's some aspect of that that we overlooked, the threshold for pulling it out of the bill was pretty low, so. And that's probably the approach we'd want to continue while still aiming at something that will result in a meaningful reduction in, in the number of the boards and commissions that we have, or consolidation of their duties and mission into another existing body that can continue that work.

SANDERS: Thank you. Senator Hunt.

HUNT: Thank you, Madam Vice Chair. Thanks for being here, Dave. I appreciate the explanation regarding comments I was making last year in debate. I will say, full disclosure, I don't know if those were genuine questions or if at the time I might have just been taking time given what was going on last year. But--

DAVE LOPEZ: We took them, we took them-- we took the point no matter what.

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HUNT: I-- that is because you're good at your job, and that's a very good thing. Yeah. It's not unlikely that I was going, what could I talk about today, so. But I have an ignorant question, and I'm embarrassed to ask it. But about how many boards and commissions are there? Any, any ballpark?

DAVE LOPEZ: About 236.

HUNT: OK.

DAVE LOPEZ: And about 1,978 individual, individual appointees.

HUNT: Understood.

DAVE LOPEZ: And as I said in my opening, that's what we could count. And that is kind of scary that it's like, do we not know the exact number? We had our own record. I think the Legislature had its own compilation as well. It's imperfect. There really was not as clean of a system of tracking precisely what we had. We also leaned on the reports of this committee. But that's, that's the-- about the hardest number we could come up with.

HUNT: OK. I-- I'll just say for the record: I don't think that this is a bad goal. I'm eager to hear the testimony and look more at the comments that have been submitted so that we can, you know, come closer to our shared goal of reducing government waste while making sure that, like, the services and expertise that these commissions provide isn't lost to Nebraskans in a valuable way. But I, I appreciate your work on this. Thank you.

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you.

SANDERS: Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you so much-- Vice Chair?

SANDERS: Yeah. Vice Chair.

CONRAD: Yeah. Sorry. It's the end of the week. Vice Chair Sanders, Senator Sanders. Hi, Dave.

DAVE LOPEZ: Hello.

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CONRAD: Thank you so much for being here. And I apologize if you covered this in your opening. I was coming from another meeting. But I agree with Senator Hunt. And I understand what Senator Brewer and the Governor's Office is trying to do in this regard. I think it's a noble goal to take a big look at government and figure out what's working, what's not working, where there are gaps, perhaps, that need to be filled moving forward instead of just kind of continuing to do the things that we've always done because that's how we've always done them kind of thing. I appreciate and I understand the, the staff time, the resource time component for your office that you've explained well. I've had a chance to look at the fiscal note on this measure as well. And honestly, with this significant kind of rewrite or approach, I was expecting to see a larger fiscal note than what was reflected. And, and I understand every penny counts, but it's, like, eliminate all these boards and commissions and you save, like, \$500,000, which, of course, is a lot of money to you and I, but in the context of the state budget is modest at best. And then I know you can't trigger another official fiscal note until the amendment would advance. But do you or do other folks have a sense about what the cost savings might look like with the amendment? And if you don't, we can follow up afterwards. It's a highly technical question. But that was one thing that, that I wanted to, to just kind of get a better understanding of what's the dollars and cents on it.

DAVE LOPEZ: I don't. But if I could expand on the answer, though, because I think it's a good one. We, we have never really-- in all of the zillion conversations we've had internally about our purpose in doing this, we've never really thought about this as a fiscal blockbuster.

CONRAD: OK.

DAVE LOPEZ: I mean, yeah, half a \$1 million in the original form, that's, that's not nothing, but it, it is, it is budget dust. That said, you know, it, it, it goes back to sort of the substantive quality and, and streamlining-- I shouldn't say quality. It-- all of the people who serve in these commissions are high-quality people. They've stepped up for a reason. But if there's a way that we can, you know, have-- en-- en-- enhance the prestige or significance or prominence of a-- of consolidated bodies that can take more of these duties together, that, in all likelihood-- and I'm painting in generalities here--

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CONRAD: Of course.

DAVE LOPEZ: --but that, in all likelihood, will yield board and commission products that are probably doing a better job on the whole of delivering on whatever statutory mission the Legislature has tasked them with. So the fiscal part is fair. I probably would have expected the same thing as you, Senator. But I-- we, we've never really viewed it as we're doing this to save a ton of money. These are unpaid people.

CONRAD: Yeah.

DAVE LOPEZ: I think some-- mo-- some of them get expenses. I don't know that all of them even take them. So it's not a, it's not a fiscal-- it's not a major fiscal measure. It's an efficiency measure.

CONRAD: OK. Very good. That's very helpful. And then if you could also-- since it is such a significant project and very technical project as well, do you, do-- do you think that this is, is just probably the start of the conversation, or would you like to see the committee take action on this bill or components of this bill still this session?

DAVE LOPEZ: We'd love to. I mean, we-- you know, we've just the, the progress we, we've made since the original version and in the AM shows that-- I mean, we're in the game. We, we, we would absolutely live with a, with a, a reduction in scope of what's even in the AM. And I think the, you know, the testimony today will probably shine some light on that. We'd love to get that ball rolling. But we'd like that also to be a continuing conversation as we go forward, and hopefully on an annual basis to-- in, in, in complement to what this committee is already charged with doing every four years with the review of them, so.

CONRAD: Yeah. That makes good sense. And, you know, there's two final thoughts I'll, I'll just-- and I know we have a room full of people here and there's a lot of moving parts and we want to hear from all of them, and I know you do too. But I'm trying to also think through some of perhaps the additional benefits beyond the four corners of this bill or the bills that created some of these boards and commissions. You know, when I talk to constituents, I hear a lot about how interested people are in service on some of these boards to

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develop leadership skills to kind of start engagement maybe with state government that then perhaps leads to running for office or perhaps leads to a more significant professional engagement in child welfare or criminal justice or whatever it might be, that kind of this maybe was the entre point or the first point that kind of brought a really talented Nebraskan kind of into service in a different way. And I, I know perhaps there's other ways that we can meet some of those goals, but that's something that, that I've been thinking about as well because I, I think-- yeah. First blush, it seems like, oh, wow, that's a lot of people and a lot of commissions. But then I know that we get intangible benefits that sometimes are manyfold even beyond their, their service here because of this welcoming, kind of meaningful entry point for them. So I just want to give voice to that. And then the last piece would just be perhaps more messaging or optics. But I don't want to forget about it because I know this has been a flashpoint in previous discussions in state policy when there's been a move to eliminate boards and commissions. Sometimes it's for budgetary. Sometimes it's for efficiency. But say, for example, if there's a removal of the Racial Profiling Committee and those duties would be, you know, assumed by the Crime Commission, where it currently resides, it obviously could make a lot of people nervous to say, is Nebraska moving away from their commitment to end racial profiling? I think the answer is clear. None of us would want that, right? But just trying to make sure that there's clarity in, in kind of how we communicate, how that important work continues even if that organizational chart changes, so.

DAVE LOPEZ: Totally.

CONRAD: Yeah.

DAVE LOPEZ: Totally agree with the-- let me take both those points, actually. Last one first.

CONRAD: Yeah. And then I'm done. Yeah.

DAVE LOPEZ: Yeah. I mean, totally agree with that. And that's why, in many of these-- you know, in the chart that you have before you that-- the, the term says "terminate." But that's, of course, only the tip of the iceberg, as the story of most of them. In that, in that particular example, the mission of that committee would fold into a different body that, you know-- we have confidence, at least

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at a starting point, would be a logical home for it. But if we need to have a continued conversation as to, you know, hey, should it-- should this be one of the easy-out ones or do we need to think more intentionally about where that mission can be carried forward? We should. To your other point because-- I, I know the Governor agrees en-- entirely with what you said before about boards and commissions being a great entry point for people to serve. And the good news is, I think no matter what we wind up doing here, we're still going to have plenty of those opportunities. And to the point I made earlier, hopefully those are actually opportunities of even more prominence and significance because there will be somewhat fewer of them. But I, I, I think that this process, perhaps counterintuitively, counterintuitively, can only enhance your point about how significant these roles can be for people to serve in a advisory capacity.

CONRAD: Very good.

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you.

CONRAD: Thank you so much, Dave. Thank you, thank you, Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Senator Hunt.

HUNT: Thank you. I have one more quick question. This sheet that you passed out, that's just sort of this spreadsheet going through the different commissions and, and what the plan is with them, does this reflect the original bill or the amendment?

DAVE LOPEZ: No. This is the AM.

HUNT: OK. Great. Thank you.

DAVE LOPEZ: Yes.

HUNT: That's my other question.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Senator Lowe.

CONRAD: Hello.

LOWE: Hi.

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CONRAD: Hi.

LOWE: Has this hearing started yet? Sorry I'm late. And I don't know if this question has been asked yet or not. What's the process of, of, of appointing these boards?

DAVE LOPEZ: Yeah. So I'd, I'd, I'd provide the--

LOWE: Was that, was that already asked?

DAVE LOPEZ: It was.

LOWE: OK.

DAVE LOPEZ: I can provide the CliffsNotes, if you'd like. I mean, we, we basically engage as much as possible with our agency partners, with external stakeholders. But it is, it is a-- given the sheer number, Senator Lowe, and magnitude of boards and appointees that we-- that the Governor's Office is tasked with processing, we, we wind up having a fairly limited number of people in the office who can focus on them. So that's-- that is part of the impetus for examining how can we have a more manageable flow of appointees-- not just for our office. It's not just a workload thing for us. But also many of them then come to you for confirmation. So that's, that's along-- there is no formal-- other than the technical portal through which people can apply, we don't have a formal, you know, checklist or set of technical requirements. Most of those are set out in the individual statutes that govern each board or commission and what the geographic, political, experiential requirements they have to meet.

LOWE: Kind, kind of as the, as the commission was created, it's whatever the senator put in there at the time.

DAVE LOPEZ: And that's been, that's been part of the-- that's been part of the challenge-- and I haven't said this yet-- that the Legislature, as is inevitable, creates these boards and commissions one at a time over the decades, usually in response to some urgent need, some very real need. They just-- they overlap on top of each other after a while. And so you wind up having a lot of different commissions with a lot of different overlapping qualifications. And you can get in a position where it's pretty hard to find one person who is a banker in the 3rd District who's been in-- who's a Democrat or an Independent who is in some particular industry sector. That's

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where it-- you know, it can get-- I'm, I'm thinking of one particular board, but that's, that's where this can get very tricky to find, find and have somebody, you know, who's willing to serve and can and qualified who might live in another part of the state, so. Looking at that, that's probably a more-- it's probably a separate line of inquiry that we should, we should be doing on, on an individual board and commission basis. This is more focused on reducing the scope of them.

LOWE: All right. Thank you.

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you--

DAVE LOPEZ: Thank you.

SANDERS: --Mr. Lopez.

CONRAD: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other proponents?

CONRAD: Hello, Director.

SANDERS: Welcome.

JASON JACKSON: Thank you. Shall I begin?

SANDERS: Yes, please.

JASON JACKSON: Great. Well, good afternoon, Senator Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Jason Jackson, J-a-s-o-n J-a-c-k-s-o-n. I'm the director of the Department of Administrative Services and Chief HR Officer to the Governor. And it's a pleasure to be here this afternoon to testify in support of LB1417. I must say, before coming into the room, it hadn't occurred to me that this might be my last time in front of Colonel Brewer and this committee. And so six years as DAS director, I served with you as the chair of the Committee of Jurisdiction for DAS. It's been an absolute honor to serve with you. So I'm, I'm saddened that today might be the last time that I'm testifying in front of your committee. Thank you for all of your

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years of service, sir. LB1417 is a long overdue reorganization of Nebraska's state government. Mr. Lopez talked about the boards and commissions. If you add agencies into that, I believe the number is 284 agencies, boards, and commissions across the breadth of state government. And this bill would eliminate 43 of those. As an HR practitioner, when we look at organizational design science, one of the tools that we look at is called spans and layers. Your spans are your, like, vertical business units, independent lines of effort. If, like, we were a corporation, for example, your layers are the layers of hierarchy between the CEO and the frontline customer service representative. And what you generally want to do is you want to minimize your spans and minimize your layers because that increases accountability, decision-making response time, and customer service. And so I see this bill as very much in keeping with that organizational design principle. Basically, we're proposing to eliminate 43 of our vertical business units, which should be accretive to decision-making, constituent response, customer service, and overall accountability. Another organizational design science principle that I see at work in this bill is you want to generally-- when you're doing a reorganization in a large organization like Nebraska's state government or like a large corporation, you want to "affinitize" similar work and colocate work among teams that share the same customers. And I think Colonel Brewer and the stakeholders in the executive branch that worked on this bill should be complimented because I see that at work at the-- in this bill as well. The agencies that are subject to consolidation here often have overlapping missions. And duties are assigned to other teams that share the same customers. And then I'll conclude just by saying, from a DAS perspective-- as this committee knows, but for benefit of the record-- Administrative Services provides the back-office business operations to the whole of state government, and 284 customer agencies can be difficult to support and scale to meet their needs. And so when there's an opportunity to consolidate and, and reduce, that, that's helpful to us. That's payrolls. Those are real estate leases. Those are government contracts. Those are vehicle services, personnel services across the breadth of all of those agencies, boards, and commissions. And so we look, we look favorably at, at opportunities to consolidate. And I see my time is up, but if I might just have one more minute to say that I think this bill is also in keeping with some great recent collaboration between this committee, the legislative body, and the executive branch in general and, and

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Colonel Brewer's leadership. I go back to 2017 when we had LB339, which created the Department of Transportation by combining the Departments of Aeronautics and Roads. That same year, LB340 moved the Division of Veterans' Homes into the Department of Veterans' Affairs. And then in 2019, we-- the, the two branches partnered in LB302 to create the Department of Energy and Environment through the merger of the Departments of Energy and Environmental Quality, respectively. So I see this bill as very much in keeping to that recent tradition of collaboration between our respective branches. And with that, I'd be happy to conclude and answer any questions you may have.

SANDERS: Thank you, Director Jackson. Let me check to see if there are any questions. Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you so much, Vice Chair Sanders. Thank you, Director Jackson. You always provide truly helpful information to the committee and to the body in regards to the work before us. And I agree. That's the same spirit of cooperation and collaboration that should guide this-- thank you-- conversation. Quick question. And it occurred to me as you were visiting, and perhaps it's better directed to the Governor's Office-- and we can touch base afterwards if you don't know-- but I'm also wondering about sequencing with other big projects in state government. And we have expended a great deal of taxpayer funds to hire consultants to come in and downsize or rightsize or streamline or cut government, however you want to characterize that work. And that process is a bit opaque, and the results are yet to be understood or announced. So should this be part of that broader work? Do they need to work together? Do you have a timeline for when the consultants' work will be done on the other aspects of cutting government or those proposals? But I just-- I'm trying to understand the intersections between this measure and those processes.

JASON JACKSON: Yeah. Thank you for the question, Senator. I do think it's a thoughtful one. Unfortunately, I think--

CONRAD: Well, thank you.

JASON JACKSON: --it'll probably be--

CONRAD: So do I.

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Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee February 29, 2024

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JASON JACKSON: I wasn't, I wasn't attempting flattery, but I could see how it came across that way. No, I think-- unfortunately, I think that question would be probably better directed to the Policy Research Office than we will in the Budget Office team.

CONRAD: No problem.

JASON JACKSON: Yeah. I, I think they're closer to the work on both of these initiatives than I.

CONRAD: Very good. Thank you, Director. Thank you, Sh-- Chair.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Director Jackson.

JASON JACKSON: Thank you.

SANDERS: Any other proponents? Welcome to the Government Committee.

BO BOTELHO: Thank you. Good afternoon, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Bo Botelho, B-o B-o-t-e-l-h-o. Legal counsel for the Department of Health and Human Services. And I'm here to testify in support of LB14-- for LB1417, which will provide for more operational efficiencies within the department by reducing the number of boards and commissions which we collaborate with and administer. LB1417 positively impacts the department by reducing government bureaucracy and size. The bill will reduce the need for administrative support, report writing, and meeting attendance. In several of the instances, our directors are nonvoting members on some these committees, and we believe that their time could be better utilized providing services in, in meeting the needs of Nebraskans, and that we would respectfully request the committee advance the bill to General File. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions I can.

SANDERS: Thank you very much. 30 seconds, I think. [INAUDIBLE]. Are there any questions for Mr. Botelho? I see none. Thank you--

BO BOTELHO: Thank you.

SANDERS: --for your testimony.

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CONRAD: Thank you, Bo.

SANDERS: Are there any other proponents? Opponents? Welcome to the Government Committee.

MONIKA GROSS: Thank you, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Monika Gross, spelled M-o-n-i-k-a G-r-o-s-s. And I'm the executive director of the Foster Care Review Office. And I offer this testimony in opposition to LB1417 as originally written. The Foster Care Review Office is the independent state agency responsible for tracking children in out-of-home care in Nebraska and overseeing their safety, permanency, and well-being. The FCRO was created by the Legislature in 1982, and since then has used a process that includes case reviews by volunteer citizen review boards, data collection and analysis, and public reporting to bring transparency and accountability to the foster care review system. We also make recommendations on conditions and outcomes for Nebraska's children in out-of-home care to the courts and the Legislature. While we oppose LB1417 in its original form, we support AM2739 as it relates to the FCRO. We take no position on the remainder of the bill or the amendment. And I want to thank the Governor's Policy Research Office for listening to our concerns and working with us to remove the proposed changes to the FCRO's government-- governance structure from the original bill. I won't take up any more of your time. I, I did want to address your question about the fiscal note. Our agency did submit a fiscal note. But with this change, that would be rendered moot.

CONRAD: Very good. Thank you so much.

MONIKA GROSS: So I won't take up any more of your time today. We have a quarterly report due tomorrow, so I hope you all take the time to read through it and learn more about our foster care system in Nebraska. Thank you. And I'm happy to answer any other questions.

SANDERS: Thank you, Ms. Gross. Let me check. Are there any questions?

CONRAD: Thank you, Monika.

SANDERS: Seeing none. Thank you for what you do.

MONIKA GROSS: Thank you.

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SANDERS: Welcome to the Government-- Government and Military Committee. Good to see you again.

RONALD J. DUPELL: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Good afternoon, Chairman Brewer, honorable senators. I am Ronald J. Dupell, R-o-n-a-l-d J. D-u-p-e-l-l. And I'm a Vietnam combat veteran who has lived and traveled in 33 countries. I have and continue to be highly active in veteran service organizations that support programs for children in communities. My service to children in communities includes 16 years of service on the Foster Care Review Board, examining over 1,200 cases of children in foster care; 16 years mentoring children in the Tom Osborne TeamMates Program; and 8 years as a court-appointed special advocate for abused and neglected children. Nebraska law precludes me from identifying the many instances of system failures that beg for improvement and additional oversight. The many instances of system failures that beg-- excuse me. I apologize. I have many years advocating changing of Nebraska laws that, with little question, will improve the effectiveness of this system. There is ample evidence of the plight of children in foster care by multiple organizations, and one example is thepolicycircle.org, which briefs "The Failures and Future of the U.S. Foster Care System." A copy of that report is attached to my testimony. It's a great overview, and I urge you all to read it. Another example is the 2009 study commissioned by the Legislature on the guardian ad litem system in Nebraska. That study, conducted by the National Coun-- Association of Counsel for Children was highly critical of how guardian ad litem were being utilized within the system to protect children. Despite the many success stories of good outcomes in the foster care system, the system is fraught with far too many egregious system failures that warrant continued and expanded review of the status in children in foster care. When a state exercises its authority and duty to protect children from abuse and neglect by removing them from the-- their home, it assumes a responsibility to be the surrogate parents and provide the heightened care and attention that children so vitally need who have been abused and ne-- neglected. For those reasons, oversight organizations such as the Nebraska Foster Care Review Office were developed to ensure that children did not languish in or be further traumatized in foster care. In addition to its duty to intervene in court cases, the Foster Care Review Office often communicates informally with state agencies to provide attention to shortfalls in case management. It is my view

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that the independent responsibility and duties of the Foster Care Review Office need further expansion rather than mitigating its ability to statutorily advocate for children in foster care. When state agencies are provided oversight and assistance in each child's case, it reduces the length of time in foster care, reduce costs to taxpayers, and improves the desired outcomes of children becoming successful citizens despite the trauma they have experienced. With a highly motivated volunteer force, a--

SANDERS: Yes. I'll allow it. You only have a few more lines. Thank you.

RONALD J. DUPELL: With a highly motivated volunteer force, a healthy, independent, and unimpeded oversight capacity improves outcomes and offers hope to children becoming successful citizens. That volunteer force has significant impact on the outcomes of children in foster care and greatly reduces costs of oversight. Any attempt to impede the duties of the Foster Care Review Office impacts the morale of its significant volunteer force. I urge each of you to not only reject the muzzling of the foster care review system in Nebraska today, but prevent it in the future. I also urge you to consider improving its independent oversight to attain more effective outcomes, reduce impacts on children, and reduce expenses to taxpayers. Although time limits my testimony, I hope you have questions for me to answer.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony.

RONALD J. DUPELL: Thank you.

SANDERS: Check to see if there are any questions for you. Yes, Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you, Vice Chair. And thank you, Ronald. Good to see you. I just wanted to note for the record that you and I have had the chance to talk many times about your service in this regard and, of course, your service to our country as well. And I appreciate your passionate advocacy in, in sharing this information with the committee. But I know how seriously you take your role in this regard. I know how important it is to you and to the families that you're working with who find themselves system-involved. And, and it's good to hear from the front-- front lines about how some of

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these, these boards and commissions work. So I just want to say thanks.

RONALD J. DUPELL: Thank you for that feedback, Senator. To me, you, you have an agency that can help reduce costs, reduce costs of children in foster care. We spend many millions of dollars each month, and I'm sure the folks in Health and Human Services can give a more preci-- precise accounting of that. But there's many opportunities to succeed and improve the efficiency of government.

CONRAD: Very good. Thank you.

RONALD J. DUPELL: Thank you.

SANDERS: Seeing no other questions. Thank you, Mr. Dupell. Good to see you again.

RONALD J. DUPELL: You too. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you for your service.

RONALD J. DUPELL: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other opponents, please?

KODY MOFFATT: Thank you, Vice Chair Sanders.

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Welcome.

KODY MOFFATT: I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dr. Kody Moffatt, K-o-d-y M-o-f-f-a-t-t. I'm a physician with significant practice in brain injury. I'm employed by Children's Nebraska and UNMC and have additional faculty appointment at Creighton University. I am testifying today on behalf of myself and the Nebraska Medical Association. I'm not speaking on behalf of my employers. And you'll be pleased to know this will take much-- less than three minutes to do. I currently serve as the vice chair of the Brain Injury Oversight Committee, and I stand today in opposition of LB1417, specifically to page 44, lines 15 and 16, terminating the Brain Injury Oversight Committee, which I'll call the BIOC. The BIOC was created in 2019 as part of Nebraska Revised Statute 71-3704. This law established the Brain Injury Assistance Program. The law also appropriates \$500,000 per year for the purpose of resource

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facilitation for Nebraskans suffering from brain injury, including veterans. In 71-3704, the BIOC is charged with providing the financial oversight for the Brain Injury Assistance Program, including developing the criteria, evaluating applicants, determining expenditures, and reviewing the results of the expenditures associated with the program. LB1417 would terminate the BIOC. But importantly, it would not terminate the Brain Injury Assistance Program or the annual \$500,000 appropriation. Simply removing the BIOC eliminates all oversight for the program and would likely halt the current work of the Brain Injury Assistance Program established by the Unicameral. There are minimal other state expenses associated with the BIOC. Currently, there are three state employees who serve as members of the committee. Their duties consist of attending four meetings a year, each lasting two hours or less, for a maximum of eight hours per year per state employee. There are no other expenses incurred. These minimal expenses ensure the funds appropriated by the Legislature are put to their best use in the effort to help Nebraskans suffering from brain injury. I'm including two reports from the vendor, which the BIOC reviewed last month, which highlight and clarify some of the work that this mostly volunteer committee does for the state. Thank you for your time and attention. And I'm glad to answer any questions either now or offline later.

SANDERS: Thank you, Dr. Moffatt, for your testimony. Right on time too. That was pretty good.

KODY MOFFATT: Took longer than I expected.

SANDERS: Let me check to see. Are there any questions? I see none. Thank you very much for your testimony.

KODY MOFFATT: Thank you all for your time.

CONRAD: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Are there any other opponents? Good afternoon. Welcome to Government Committee.

SARAH HELVEY: Good afternoon. Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator and members of the committee. My name is Sarah Helvey. It's S-a-r-a-h; last name, H-e-l-v-e-y. And I'm a staff attorney and director of the Child Welfare Program at Nebraska Appleseed, which is a nonprofit

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public interest advocacy organization that fights for justice and opportunity for all Nebraskans. I'm testifying today on behalf of Nebraska Appleseed, but I have been a member of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee, Bridge to Independence, or B2I, since its creation in 2013. Over the ten years of the B2I program-- which provides extended services and support to young people who age out of Nebraska's foster care system-- the advisory committee has provided an important oversight role through data review and stakeholder recommendations to the Legislature and to the Department of Health and Human Services. As a result, the B2I Program has improved outcomes for this population which is otherwise at a higher risk of unemployment, incarceration, and homelessness. The B2I Advisory Committee not only has a strong track record of supporting the existing B2I Program, but is needed moving forward. Last session, the Legislature passed LB50, which-- among other things-- expanded B2I to a subset of young people with juvenile justice experience in order to similarly improve outcomes for that population. That portion of LB50 goes into effect in January 2015 [SIC], and the ongoing input and expertise of the B2I Advisory Committee is needed more than ever to ensure that that program continues to meet its intended goals. Finally, I want to note that the advisory committee is additionally helpful because it provides recommendations from advocates with lived experience in the system, giving them an important seat at the table, to Senator Conrad's point, as well as stakeholders actually working in and with the child welfare system. Having experience with lived services and academic experience providing input is valuable to the Legislature and the state in ensuring system, systems and laws-- like the newly passed LB50-- work in the way they are supposed to according to a diverse panel of experts. I also want to note that we oppose the elimination of the Foster Care Reimbursement Rates Committee under the Children's Commission, and also had concerns about the change in the structure to the Foster Care Review Office, but are satisfied with how those are addressed in the proposed amendment. And I'm happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

SANDERS: Got it all in plus some. Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions for Ms. Helvey? I see none. Thank you for coming in this afternoon.

SARAH HELVEY: Thank you.

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SANDERS: Any other opposition? Welcome to the Government Committee.

JOE MILLER: Thank you, Vice Chair-- Senator Sanders and thank you to the committee, Government and Military Affairs Committee. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Joe Miller, J-o-e M-i-l-l-e-r. I am here to represent the Nebraska Medical Association and the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians in opposition of LB1417. Specifically, these groups oppose Section 46 of the bill, which would terminate the Primary Care Investment Council on July 1, 2025. The Primary Care Investment Council was created with the passage of LB863 in 2022. The Primary Care Investment Council seeks to measure the current health care spending in our state to evaluate and use health care dollars more efficiently while improving health care outcomes in Nebraska. The pandemic showed that Nebraska-- showed Nebraska that primary care services are essential, primary care services are the foundation for health care, and the key to keeping our citizens healthier. Primary care visits comprise 54% of all appointments. Underinvestment in primary care stifles our ability to prevent disease and change chronic conditions, and it contributes greatly to rising health care costs. The Primary Care Council has the potential to save Nebraska millions, probably tens and hundreds of millions, of dollars in health care spending from reducing Medicaid expenditures to lowering health insurance premiums for Nebraska businesses and families. Results from other states that have undertaken this kind of analysis have achieved such results. In addition to reducing health care spending, the initiative will produce better health outcomes for our citizens. It is important to note that the Primary Care Investment Council does not receive general funds or other cash funds to operate. It is funded through private means. The Primary Care Council, Nebraska's insurance and medical industries agreed to come together and coordinate this effort to evaluate Nebraska's health care spending. Nebraska needs to take an intentional look at proven ways to reduce health care costs while improving patient care. This council needs more time to evaluate and provide those solutions to the state. It was mentioned by Senator Brewer that we want to manage money well and that we want to have a sunset by Mr. Lopez. We do have a sunset. But it's not '25. And so I want to thank you for your time-- listening to our concerns. And I'd answer any questions.

SANDERS: OK. Thank you very much for your testimony. Is it "Dr. Miller?"

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JOE MILLER: Dr. J-- Dr. Joe Miller, yes.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony, Doctor. Are there any questions?

CONRAD: I have one.

SANDERS: I see none. Thanks for coming out.

CONRAD: I have one.

SANDERS: Oh, you do. Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you, Vice Chair. Thank you, Dr. Miller, for being here. And I'm eager to learn more about the work of this council and some of the potential benefits that you were extolling because I, I, I just wasn't very familiar with it. So I'm grateful for the hearing to have the opportunity to, to learn more about these aspects of state government. But could you distill perhaps more specifically how the work of this council translates into taxpayer savings or into reduced health care costs? Because I just-- I'm sorry. I wasn't quite grasping how-- what the connection was directly.

JOE MILLER: Increasing primary care has been shown in multiple states.

CONRAD: Right.

JOE MILLER: The first to do this was Rhode Island, where, over a five-year period, spent \$18 million more in primary care and saved \$130 million.

CONRAD: OK. I think I got it now.

JOE MILLER: And, and so by increasing moneys to go into care coordination, behavioral health, clinical pharmacy, things that we can circle around that patient, we can keep them out of the hospital and out of the emergency room and therefore decrease cost. Decreasing ER and decreasing hospitalizations makes a huge difference. And we know that if we can have a plan to do that for the state, it would help Medicaid greatly and the other insurances also.

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CONRAD: Yes. I un-- I understand. Could that kind of collaboration happen without a platform in state government amongst the different stakeholder groups or health care entities-- I'm thinking your professional associations, hospital associations, et cetera?

JOE MILLER: They're all supposed to be part of this.

CONRAD: OK.

JOE MILLER: The problem is you get into antitrust issues and other sharing of information issues. If it's a governmental agency, you take away those antitrust issues.

CONRAD: Interesting.

JOE MILLER: And we, we have brought all the different players-- insurance, the hospital association, primary care, specialty care, the department-- or, the, the, public health groups. There's-- and, if we can do that, behavioral health-- to try to look at, how do we provide better care for the whole state? I, I really know that this can-- I've worked within organizations myself that we have done this.

CONRAD: Very good. Thank you so much, Doctor. Thank you, Vice Chair.

SANDERS: Thank you. Are there any other questions? Dr. Mill-- I do have a question.

JOE MILLER: Yes.

SANDERS: Was the Nebraska Medical Association or-- the group responsible-- I think-- going to go back maybe 20 years-- of no smoking in public places and advocating for healthy lungs and healthy--

JOE MILLER: Yeah. There have been multiple things that we have been advocating for along the health-- both, both organizations are-- part of their statement, mission statement is to prov-- improve the health of all Nebraskans-- from both of those groups. And, and when you look at the things that we can do on a preventive side, instead of paying all the back side costs, it makes so much more sense to put money up front and keep people healthy than to pay for them after they are not healthy.

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SANDERS: Correct. And thank you for that. I appreciate it.

JOE MILLER: OK.

SANDERS: Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for coming out this afternoon.

CONRAD: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other opposition? Welcome to the Government Committee.

SARA CROOK: Thank you. Good afternoon. Thanks to the senators of the Government Committee. My name is Sara Crook, S-a-r-a C-r-o-o-k. My testimony today is to explain the role of Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission and to encourage you to oppose the combining of this commission with other commissions as proposed in LB1417. Currently, I serve as the chair of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission, succeeding the infamous Ron Hull. The Hall of Fame was initially created by the State Legislature in 1961. Statute was revised in 1998. It assigns the commission with the responsibility to select one individual to represent the best of Nebraska in the Hall of Fame with the busts in this beautiful building. This is a five-year process that begins with nominations, typically numbering in the range of 15 to 20 each cycle. It requires extensive reading of the nomination packets containing-- regularly containing books and other in-depth materials. We then meet to accept the names of those who meet the minimum requirements of the statute regarding the process, and then that is followed with public hearings. These hearings are conducted in each of the three congressional districts across the state. And they're conducted in the evening and lasting hours each. Those in the public are able to testify at each of these hearings. In fact, in some cases, they come to all three hearings. After this, the commissioners reconvene. Often, we have actually met in this room in-- here in the Capitol-- where the commissioners identify their top choices by detailing their reasonings for such selections. And finally, again we meet a final time to take the decisive vote. Once the individual is selected, we form a subcommittee working with the Nebraska Arts Council to develop a request for a proposal from sculptors to create actual bust that will reside here in the Capitol. The commission then has the final public vote on the acceptance of the selector of the sculptor. We meet with the sculptor-- sometimes

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more than once-- we've been going through that process just here recently-- to accept the final rendition of that bust. The final aspect is then we do work with the Capitol Commission to schedule the induction ceremony, which is coming up on May 22 of this year. It is worth noting that the Hall of Fame Commission strives to provide equitable assess-- access to Nebraskans from all across the state to be able to participate should they wish. Given this responsibility and the specific nature of our legislatively assigned task, I ask that you oppose assigning this important duty to a much larger combined body that includes architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and state officials, talented though they may be. The work of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission is deeply important and designed to utilize the specific citizen expertise of Nebraskans, just like our Legislature. We have vetted, time-tested processes within the commission that has yielded an impressive slate of Hall of Famers to tell our collective story. Thank you for your attention to my testimony. And I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

SANDERS: Thank you, Ms. Crook. I will check. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Thanks for coming out. Thank you for your testimony. Any other opposition? Welcome to the Government Committee.

CAMERON ELLISON: Thank you, Senator Sanders. And good afternoon, Senators and members of the committee. My name is Cameron Ellison. I'm, I'm the-- it's C-a-m-e-r-o-n E-l-l-i-s-o-n. I'm currently vice chair on the Nebraska State Licensure Board for Hearing Instrument Specialists. And I'm basically here to provide a statement in our opposition for the passing of LB1417. For several decades, the hearing instrument dispensers and fitters of Nebraska have represented a dedicated group of individuals whose life profession and calling has been to serve the hearing-impaired residents of the state of Nebraska. The hearing instrument dispensers and fitters are required to be licensed to practice hearing aid dispensing and are the only group required to do so in order to provide exacting and high-quality care to this hearing-impaired demographic, mostly are which-- are senior citizens. Many hearing instrument dispensers and fitters are also board-certified and exam-formulated with the highest standards by the Neba-- National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences to assure those seeking services that are dealing with individuals who adhere to the highest education and pro-- professional standards. Our

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licensed professionals are determined to remain autonomous and continue to have our group fairly represented. We do not feel the passing of LB1417 will accomplish this. The Nebraska Hearing Instrument Dispensers and Fitters Licensure Board has historically been represented by various members, including hearing instrument dispensers and fitters, ear, nose, and throat physicians, and members of the public. This is the only way to obtain unbiased and fair governing for our licensed group. The hearing-impaired remain underserved, most notably in, in the rural areas of-- outside the metro areas in Nebraska. Many-- many hearing instrument dispensers and fitters are serving those areas, live in those areas, and are dedicated to providing services to all Nebraskans. We resp-- we ask respectively that you please consider the implications of passing this bill and allow more time for interested parties to present their information as to why this is not a good bill to pass. With that, I can leave it open to any questions you might have.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Ellison, for your testimony. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Thank you for coming out.

CAMERON ELLISON: OK. Thank you.

SANDERS: Any other opposition? Welcome to the Government Committee.

ROXANN ELLISON: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senators, committee members, committee Chair, ladies and gentlemen, and interested parties. My name is Roxann Ellison, R-o-x-a-n-n E-l-l-i-s-o-n. I am a board-certified hearing instrument specialist and hold license 440 as a hearing instrument dispenser and fitter in the state of Nebraska. I am the ethics committee chair for the Nebraska Hearing Society. As a historical fact, my aunt, Laverne Almquist, held license 1 for our profession and was a tireless supporter of implementing education and then licensure to ensure exacting standards with practical experience and education so the hearing-impaired in the state of Nebraska were assured ethical, knowledgeable, and safe hearing aid fittings. I might add that the licensure board for our profession requires 24 hours of continuing education every two years to renew our licenses. And that licensure be-- board helps set forth the curriculum for this education. Also note: licensure board members receive no compensation whatsoever, other than mileage for attending meetings. As hearing instrument dispensers, we're originally the only group licensed to fit hearing aids, and other hearing care groups were not allowed to

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fit hearing aids by their professional restrictions. Audiologists have recently been exempted from obtaining a hearing instrument dispensing and fitting license in order to fit hearing aids, although some do hold dual licensure by their option. Our licensed professionals-- hearing instruments, dispensers, and fitters-- are determined to remain autonomous to continue to have our group fairly represented. We do not feel LB1417's intent to change our licensure board or other existing boards pertaining to us is in the best interest of the hearing-impaired of the state of Nebraska. The board for hearing instrument specialists, as Cameron had alluded to, has been represented by hearing instrument specialists, here-- ear, nose, and throat physicians, and members of the public. This is the only way to obtain unbiased and fair governing of our licensed group. Other states have implemented such changes similar to LB1417 with disastrous results. It is the opinion of myself and others in my profession that enacting LB1417 would open the floodgates to other issues that could not only damage the availability of options for the hearing-impaired in the state of Nebraska, but has the potential of damaging or potentially eliminating hearing in-- instrument dispensers and fitters as a profession. I respect-- respectfully ask and request that you please consider the implications of passing this bill and allow more time for interested, interested parties to present their information as to why this is not a good law to pass. I also wanted to add that hearing-impairment is classified as a handicapped, a handicapped group. Hearing-impaired people are a handicapped group. And many of these people are also senior citizens. I think some of you present may have had experience with hearing loss and fitting-- the fitting of hearing aids. So you know firsthand how important access is to licensed professionals and for yourself-- as-- for yourself and for other Nebraskans. I, I guess I would like to add also that I have had 38 years in this industry. I'm a second generation hearing instrument dispenser and fitter. And as I stated, my aunt was one of the leaders in obtaining licensure for our profession, which included exacting standards of education and expertise and professionalism and ethics. My son, who spoke before me, is third generation of our family to serve an underserved hearing-impaired public, many of which are senior citizens and also, I might add, veterans. So if any of you would have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

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SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Ellison. I will check to see if there are any questions from the senators. Seeing none. Thank you for coming in today and your testimony.

ROXANN ELLISON: Thank you.

SANDERS: Welcome to the Government Committee.

DAVID WELLSANDT: Hello. My name's David Wellsandt, D-a-v-i-d W-e-l-l-s-a-n-d-t. I am a real estate appraiser. I've been practicing for over 20 years. And I'm here in opposition to LB1417, particularly a little section at the front that would merge the Abstracters Board with the Real Property Appraiser Board. I understand a couple of the goals of the, of the bill are to reduce savings, look at efficiency with the state. Obviously, we all, all favor that. But this is not going to make very much savings. It's also to reduce the number of nominations. And it's not going to make a big difference there. But the, the real issue is that we're trying to merge two groups that don't really do the same thing. They both relate to real estate, but that's kind of where it stops. You know, I don't, I don't understand what an abstracter does day in and day out. I would not know how to evaluate their practices and, and say whether they're conducting themselves properly or not. And conversely, they're not really in a position to evaluate appraisers. I started my career in mortgage lending. And after a couple years working in a real estate office seeing appraisals, I still didn't understand really what, what went into valuation properly and professionally. So we're in a spot here where we're trying to merge two boards that don't really overlap in a way that maybe-- it, it would seem that they would. I visited with several appraisers. I visited with several lenders, real estate agents, and title personnel. At best, one title personnel said that they were indifferent, and everyone else has expressed opposition to this. The real crux of this comes down to what appraisers really do for the state, and that is that they-- the Real Property Appraiser Board oversees the licensing of the appraisers in the state. And the reason that's so critical is that without having licensed and certified appraisers, we can't have bank loans, credit lo-- credit union loans, and our real estate market would really, really suffer. I-- to kind of close out here, I have a quote. This is David Wood, director of Financial Markets and Community Investment, U.S. General Accounting Office. And he commented about the appraisal subcommittee that oversees the Real Property Appraiser Board, saying: Subcommittee

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officials stated that the only mechanism available under Title 11 for effective state compliance is to decertify a state, which would prohibit all licensed or certified appraisers from that state from performing appraisals in conjunction with federally related transactions and have a devastating effect on the real estate markets and financial institutions within that state. So what I'm trying to convey-- convey here is that we are dealing with something that could have significant ramifications. So let's kind of step back and let these two boards do what they do best-- oversee their respective groups-- and look for efficiencies maybe in the, the operations of the, the support staff or the facilities that they have. But let the personnel that know how to regulate themselves maintain that. Thank you. And I-- open to any questions that you may have.

SANDERS: Thank you very much for your question, Mr.-- is it Wellsend [PHONETIC]?

DAVID WELLSANDT: Wellsandt.

SANDERS: Wellsandt. Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the senators? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

DAVID WELLSANDT: Thank you.

SANDERS: Welcome to the Government Committee.

TOM LAGING: Thank you. I'm Tom Laging, T-o-m L-a-g-i-n-g. And I'm here in opposition to LB1417. I'm a professor-- or, a, a emeritus professor, that is, of urban design and architecture-- 46 years doing that. I'm an author of the Capitol Environs study, coauthor, which is the basis of the Capitol Environs Commission, which is mentioned in LB1417 as being reorganized in some way. And I find that to be unnecessary. Right now, the commission operates pretty well, and the state doesn't contribute a whole lot to it-- to members. The commission itself is fundamentally driven by the city so that-- there are four members from-- appointed by the mayor and two by the Governor. Well, the city does the, the majority of the work. They provide the staff, the place to meet. They analyze stuff from a panning-- planning perspective. They offer staff support. It's fundamentally a city committee that the state has an interest in. The basis of this is that all capitol buildings have environs. They have areas around them. Many of them have campuses. And we don't have a

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campus, so we need to work very carefully with the city to ensure this monument, this beautiful monument that's universally loved by all the architects and a lot of Nebraskans, has a place that's situated beautifully within the city of Lincoln. So that's our objective. And so far, we've come a ways in history. The, the fragment of city and state hasn't solved a lot of problems, although there have been environmental issues that have gone forward. But I think we've achieved quite a bit, including the mall, which is recently done. I spent maybe six different studies on the mall before we got to where we are, where we are, the Lincoln Mall-- there's, three buildings there, four buildings. We've looked at all these things and studied the zoning and the height restrictions. It's a, it's a positive thing for both the city and the state to have some kind of connection. Right now, the city's taking the major brunt of the expenses. So I don't think it's a state expense. What else? Any questions?

SANDERS: Thank you very much for your testimony. Let me check to see if there are any questions. Are there any questions from the committee?

CONRAD: Thank you so much.

SANDERS: Thank you, Dr. Tom-- last name again?

TOM LAGING: Laging.

SANDERS: Laging.

TOM LAGING: L-a-g-i-n-g. It's, it's not a Dr. It's a--

SANDERS: Doctor of architect or--

TOM LAGING: We don't have doctors.

SANDERS: Thank you very much.

TOM LAGING: We're just plain architects. We go out there and draw lines.

SANDERS: OK. Thank you very much. Appreciate your testimony. Welcome to the Government Committee.

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HALEY WAGGONER: Hello. Good afternoon.

CONRAD: Hi, Haley.

HALEY WAGGONER: Hi. My name is Haley Waggoner, H-a-l-e-y W-a-g-g-o-n-e-r. And I'm here representing Special Olympics Nebraska to testify in a post-- and oppose the-- Section 80 of LB1417. This section proposes to eliminate the Advisory Committee on Development Disabilities. Having served as a former member of the Development Disabilities Council, I can assist-- I can attest that it is critical to have a advisory group working alongside them to oversee and address the needs of the state council effectively. I am here to request the Advisory Committee on Development Disabilities be allowed to continue its important work. We are opposed to the bill as it was introduced. However, we acknowledge the proponents' coners-- consideration of our concerns. We appreciate that the discussed amendment no longer contains the changes we oppose. We encourage the committee to adopt the proposed amendment. Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to speak to you today.

SANDERS: Thank you very much, Haley Waggoner.

HALEY WAGGONER: Yes.

SANDERS: Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions? Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you so much, Vice Chair. And Haley, thank you so much for being here today and for your continued, consistent, strong advocacy on behalf of Special Olympics and Nebraskans with developmental disabilities. And it's always great to see you. And you always do a, a really, really good job. So I just wanted to say thank you and then see how the Polar Plunge went. Did you jump in?

HALEY WAGGONER: I did not jump in.

CONRAD: OK. All right. All right. OK. All right. Well, I'm going to have it on my calendar for next year, but.

HALEY WAGGONER: All right. Sounds good.

CONRAD: Thank you very much.

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HALEY WAGGONER: Thank you.

CONRAD: Thanks.

SANDERS: Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you. And thank you, Haley, for being here. Could you please tell me and everybody else what sports you participate in in the Special Olympics and how well you did?

HALEY WAGGONER: So I play tennis, basketball, and golf and basketball. But my favorite is tennis. And so I recently went to the USA Games in 2022 in Florida. And I got two silver medals at the highest level.

LOWE: Wonderful. Congratulations.

HALEY WAGGONER: Thank you.

SANDERS: Seeing no other questions. Thank you very much. Congratulations. And thank you for your testimony.

HALEY WAGGONER: Thank you.

CONRAD: Hi, Bob.

BOB RIPLEY: Hello there.

SANDERS: Welcome to the Government Committee.

BOB RIPLEY: Thank you. Thank you. Madam Chair and-- Chairwoman and members of the Government Committee. My name is Bob Ripley, B-o-b R-i-p-l-e-y. I'm a resident of Lincoln and a-- and the former administrator of the Office of the Capitol Commission. I am here today-- and I appear in opposition to LB1417 with specific reference to two commissions, one that Professor Laging spoke about a moment ago, and to altering the structure of these: one being the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission and the other the Nebraska Capitol Commission. Today I also represent the State Board of the American Institute of Architects who asked me to speak on their, their behalf because they had a unanimous vote of opposing this bill as well, specifically with regard to these two commissions. Individually, I am not a big government person-- I never have been-- nor am I opposed to

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evaluating government institutions to meeting their statutory responsibilities even to the point of sunseting them out of existence. I think that's a very appropriate function for state government, and I always have. However, I, I concur with previous testimony from Professor Laging opposing the dismantling or dis-- or, or, the reconfiguring of these two commissions, the Capitol Commission and the Environs Commission, because their functions serve their missions extremely well and have for many, many years. They have-- they not only perform their functions very well, but all of their membership is voluntary. The professor said the city is the primary driver of the environs. That's very true because they do land use planning and design standards, which are not the purview of state government. They are municipalities' responsibility, and therefore there are more appointed-- members appointed by the mayor than there are by the Governor-- two by the Governor. Capitol Environs Commission was established 36 years ago. And the Capitol Commission was rewritten as it stands now 20 years ago. And these two, two commissions have different geographic functions. One has to do with state funding-- and that's the Capitol Commission. And I have a handout that I would ask for distribution here. And there are two documents in this that address issues of the Capitol Commission. The first is, when you see this list, the Capitol Commission has, over the last 14 years-- as this list will show you-- has been responsible for over \$200 million of expenditure on the Capitol. And that is something that requires, in my personal opinion-- with 40 years of experience in state government-- considerable oversight. The Capitol Commission today is-- has all three branches in place on it, whereas the original Capitol Commission created over a hundred years ago, had only an executive branch function. So I think the fact that it is all three branches there and the membership being what it is serves the state very well. I see my time is running very short. I would close by saying that the people who serve on the Capitol Commission are architects, engineers, as was mentioned earlier, business people, bankers, and so on. And they're the ones who oversee the expenditure of this considerable amount of money on preserving the Capitol. And I think that kind of oversight is very, very necessary to maintain. And the other commission is largely city-run, and there's virtually-- other than two members of the Capitol Commission, get per diem for transportation. There's no cost or overhead to the state for either of these. And the function they perform happens year in and year out. It isn't something you kind of do for a while, put it off. It happens

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routinely. And so I ask that the Capitol Commission and the Environs Commission should be excluded from this because of the quality of work they've done. And if you'd like a tour some time for me to show you what they've achieved in their time of existence, I'd be happy to volunteer.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Ripley. And thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? Senator Aguilar.

BOB RIPLEY: Yes, sir.

AGUILAR: Yes. Thank you for being here--

BOB RIPLEY: You bet.

AGUILAR: --Mr. Ripley. I have to ask this one question. The Rotunda Column Stabilization Project. Were they unstable at one time?

BOB RIPLEY: Let me-- I, I, I-- if you want to take a look, it's right outside the west Chamber door. The column as you face the Chamber from the Rotunda, the column on the left has a large patch in the back. And it was there from the time the building was originally constructed. And we found it and examined it and wanted to make sure that there was no movement in it and there was no possibility that a piece of marble might fall out. And that's what that work involved. And there's-- there are a lot of studies, and the studies were proposed to us at one cost. And usually, the consultants hit that cost right on the number. If it's construction, we can sometimes be under what was originally appropriated for a particular project. But it has been-- the column is safe. That much we were able to determine. And since it's right out-- since it's right outside your door, we wanted to make sure that was the case.

AGUILAR: Thank you.

SANDERS: Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you. And I think you're safe. You sit down in front with me. So how is the Capitol construction go-- construction going?

BOB RIPLEY: Well, since I've been retired for not quite a year, I see it as going very well. I talk to the former staff pretty routinely, and they are on schedule and they're within the budget, which we've

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done pretty much through this. There had to be an adjustment done for the budget because of COVID. But they're-- we're in the mid-- they're in the, in the midst of phase four. And to my knowledge, they're on schedule to start phase five, which is the tower, the fifth and final phase. That's due to commence as of January of this coming year. So work has progressed very well. There was one small project that, that I think will have some impact on the tower work, and that has to do with the fifth floor project, which is a new project. It's a beautiful overlook area. It has the opportunity for exhibitions and educational opportunity for the over 30,000 schoolkids that come on tour to the building every year. So there's really a potential for greater improvement once fifth and final phase is completed. I'm, I'm anxious to come here, assuming I survive, anxious to come here when the project is complete to see all the various pieces put in place. It's great to see the building coming back and being back on its feet starting our next hundred years, because we're just now completing the first 100.

LOWE: I, I figured since you're no longer involved, you would be the man in the know.

BOB RIPLEY: Well, those who do it every day really know what they're talking about. I have a little bit of speculation, but a lot of optimism because they were people I worked with for a very long time. And they're very, very capable.

LOWE: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for being here today.

BOB RIPLEY: Thank you for your time and thank you for your sacrifice working in the Unicameral. It is a sacrifice, believe me. For somebody who's been around here for 40 years, I can testify to it. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Welcome to the Government Committee.

BEN WELSCH: Thank you, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name's Ben Welsch, B-e-n W-e-l-s-c-h. I'm here today to speak in opposition to LB1417 on behalf of the Nebraska State Education Association. I am

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also a member of the Nebraska Council of Teacher Education Committee that LB1417 would eliminate. The NCTE Committee is an advisory committee to our State Board of Education, and it's essential that our advisory committee continue to advocate for our certificated teachers all across the state. We advise the State Board through suggested changes for rules and regulations of our Nebraska teacher certification systems. This bill's intent to create, eliminate, terminate, and transfer duties of memberships and boards would eliminate and thereby remove NCTE's essential input and recommendations from education indru-- industry experts on certification, program approval, rules, and regulations. If LB1417 would go into effect, it would essentially take away the local control of all the participating groups from across the state who work every day in helping new educators and advancing the careers of current educators in the state. The people who should be involved in the decision-making on how teachers get certificated should be the teachers themselves, the institutions who train them, and the school administrators who hire them. The current system we have for each group-- teachers, higher ed, ESU representatives, and school administrators selecting participants from all over the state for State Board approval-- is a system that is working well and will continue to keep our education experts at the table. This unique challenge of the teacher shortage has demanded that we come together as a committee to balance the legislative and education procedural rules to enhance the teaching profession statewide. The NCTE Committee has been leading the way in reviewing and revising the rules and regulations that are helping to alleviate our current teacher shortage. We have continued to find solutions for these challenges by offering alternative pathways and eliminating barriers for teachers whose certificates are from out of state, need additional endorsements, or have expired. Taking away the ability of our advisory committee of education experts would be detrimental to maintaining high-quality educators in our schools. Maintaining these high education standards through our role and regulatory processes are the core of weight-- of what makes our Nebraska schools so successful. LB1417 would do away with the Nebraska Council of Teacher Education, and we ask that you not advance it out of committee. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Boy, right on time. Are there any questions?
Senator Aguilar.

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AGUILAR: Yeah. In your, in your work, do you see a solution to the teacher shortage?

BEN WELSCH: There's probably not just a one-size-fits-all, but I think any time you can take the existing group of all of our educators, whether they be new, middle career, or end career or retired, we need subs. We need, you know, higher es-- education institutions that are bringing more teachers in. And then some of our teachers that maybe have-- had ex-- expiring teaching certificates, how do we get them back in to kind of fill it? So again, any time we find a barrier or some obstacle where, you know, somebody made a rule, you know, 20, 30 years ago and we still have to, you know, apply that to our current teachers, is there ways we can eliminate those things to get those teachers back into education right now? And we are actually able to do some of those things currently with the rules that we've done from Rule '20-21, '22-24.

AGUILAR: Thank you. Thank you for what you do.

SANDERS: See oth-- no other questions. Thank you for your testimony. Welcome to the Government Committee.

TIFFANY ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Tiffany Armstrong, spelled T-i-f-f-a-n-y A-r-m-s-t-r-o-n-g. I am here today because I am a member of the Brain Injury Oversight Committee, representing individuals with brain injuries. I am also a certified Rehabilitation Registered Nurse and Certified Brain Injury Specialist, and have worked professionally with individuals with brain injuries and their families for over 18 years. I am testifying on behalf of myself to ask you to oppose LB1417. On page 44, lines 15 and 16, LB1417 proposes to eliminate the Brain Injury Oversight Committee that is currently in Nebraska Statue. The Brain Injury Oversight Committee serves an important role in Nebraska by helping to ensure the Brain Injury Assistance Act is carried out with the intended purpose to improve services and supports for individuals with brain injuries and their families. The BIOC is comprised of a variety of brain injury stakeholders who are volunteers, with the exception of three state agency staff members. This committee oversees that BI Assistance Act funds are granted only to sources who keep in mind the best interest of individuals with brain injuries and are focused on seven specified priorities. The

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BIOC is efficient in serving this purpose by only needing to meet for two hours four times a year, thus not incurring any extra or unnecessary financial expenses. In the last six months of 2023, 239 unique people were served by resource facilitation through current BI Assistance Act funds. 23 brain injury 101 trainings were provided to 513 professionals across the state. Follow-up is offered to individuals with reported brain injuries who receive brain injury registry letters. Public awareness and community outreach is occurring to better serve individuals with brain injuries. 144 individuals were screened with six different agencies to look at the prevalence of brain injury and study the outcomes in Nebraska. And this just reflects one six-month period of time. Nebraska is making progress and improving the services and supports offered in our state for individuals with brain injury and their families because the Brain Injury Oversight Committee ensures the BI Assistance Act funds are appropriately awarded. As an individual with a brain injury and a professional who serves individuals with brain injuries, I would not want another entity to disperse the BI Assistance Act funds that support individuals with brain injuries if they do not have the knowledge and expertise that a group of brain injury stakeholders possess. The Brain Injury Oversight Committee must remain in place so Nebraska can continue its progress in serving its citizens with brain injury. I urge the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee to join me in opposing LB1477 [SIC]. Thank you. And I can answer any questions you might have.

SANDERS: Thank you. Let me check to see if we have any questions. See none. Thank you for your testimony.

TIFFANY ARMSTRONG: Thank you.

SANDERS: Much appreciated. Opposition? Welcome to the Government Committee.

BRAD MEURRENS: Thank you. And good afternoon, Senator Sanders and members of the committee. For the record, my name's Brad, B-r-a-d; Meurrens, M-e-u-r-r-e-n-s. And I am the public policy director at Disability Rights Nebraska. We are the designated protection and advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Nebraska. And I'm here in opposition to LB1417. The bill as currently written terminates committees that provide guidance from field experts and advocates about the direction and operation of the state's disability

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services and systems-- in particular, the Developmental Disability Advisory Committee and the Brain Injury Oversight Committee. Terminating these committees also eliminates opportunities for families and individuals with div-- disabilities to provide their lived experience directly so to strengthen Nebraska's ability and its obligation to meet the needs of its citizens with disabilities. The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council advises the state on funding and delivery of services, including oversight, to make sure persons who are committed under the DD Cust-- Court-Ordered Custody Act receive the least restrictive treatment; overseeing design and implementation of quality management and improvement plans; assisting, providing feedback, and guiding the implementation of the Family Support Program. Additionally, the Division of Developmental Disabilities informs this advisory committee of any changes so that they-- that committee can respond to those changes at least 30 days in advance. The advisory committee also is required to have 50%-- at least 51% of their members be persons with disabilities and their family members. The Brain Injury Oversight Committee-- to extend on what was said earlier-- has, again, significant oversight and direction responsibilities, creating criteria for expenditures, and it represents the interests of individuals with a brain injury and their families through advocacy, education, training, rehabilitation, research, and prevention. This committee currently has one family member or a person with disa-- with a brain injury and two individuals themselves in addition to brain injury service providers, advocates, and pertinent state agency representatives. The bill as currently written squelches the voices of people with disabilities, brain injuries, and their families whose lived experiences are instrumental to system reforms which will improve the lives of Nebraskans with disabilities. We are opposed to this bill as currently written and suggest the bill be amended to retain these committees and any others that directly affect persons with disabilities in Nebraska. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

SANDERS: Well done. Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions for Mr. Meurrens? I see none.

BRAD MEURRENS: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you again. Welcome to the Government Committee.

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KRISTEN LARSEN: Hello. Good afternoon. Senators, my name is Kristen Larsen. That's spelled K-r-i-s-t-e-n L-a-r-s-e-n. And I'm here on behalf of the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities to testify in opposition of LB1417. Although the council is appointed by the Governor and administrated by DHHS, the council operates independently. Our comments do not necessarily reflect the views of the Governor's administration or the department. We're a federally mandated independent council comprised of individuals with developmental disabilities, community providers, and agency reps who advocate for systems change and quality services. And when necessary, we take a nonpartisan approach to in-- provide information on legislation that will impact people with DD. We do not support LB1417's initial intention on terminating the Governor's Advisory Committee on Developmental Disabilities. This committee was established under state statute in April 1994. It should not be confused with NCDD. Each entity serves a unique and critically important purpose. The Governor's Advisory Committee on DD's purpose is to serve as the stakeholder voice and group that advises the department on the review-- and status of the DD system outcomes, strategies, goals, and other prescriptive areas that you heard Mr. Meurrens refer to. There are specific representatives, including the NCDD, Disability Rights Nebraska, our Munroe-Meyer Institute, UCEDD, a state advocacy organization, and those 15 others who are people with lived experience. They're family members or people themselves who have DD. Comments shared from the current administration a few weeks ago indicated that the transparency and advising of the department can be done in a nonstatutory, manditated-- mandated way through existing groups and committees. We were also informed that the Governor's DD Advisory Committee is also seen somewhat as a duplication of NCDD, and we think it's really important to clarify how we're different. So as noted above, I mentioned that we're federally mandated. We were created in-- by-- from-- with the DD Act in 1970. So every state and territory has a state DD council. And the DD Act specifies that we have at least 60% of council members that have to be individuals or family members with DD. But we also have specific federal agency representatives on that council. That includes folks like Special Education, Nebraska VR, Medicaid, Maternal Child Health, and other additional members are also required. So this broad collection or membership oversees all areas in developmental disabilities' life, whereas the Governor's DD Advisory Committee really specifically narrows in on those specific

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HCBS services in the state. And so we look at things like child care, education, early intervention, transportation. But they're very focused on those DD services. We are not a duplication of service. They really do need to be engaged because they provide that additional oversight to make sure that there is real good transparency. No other entity does this, and I just use this as an opportunity to educate how we're different. We are different. We have different specific purposes. And it's really important to keep folks with lived experience at the table so that they can provide good, concrete feedback.

SANDERS: Perfect.

KRISTEN LARSEN: And I made it.

SANDERS: Thank you very much for your testimony. Let me check if there are any questions from the committee. I see none. Thank you very much.

KRISTEN LARSEN: Thank you.

SANDERS: Any other opposition?

CONRAD: Hi, Jeff.

JEFF SEARCY: Hi.

CONRAD: Good to see you.

SANDERS: Welcome to the Government Committee.

JEFF SEARCY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senators. And thank you for this opportunity to be before you this afternoon. My name is Jeff Searcy. That's J-e-f-f S-e-a-r-c-y. And I come before you this afternoon to voice concern and oppose LB1417, which would be terminating the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission. I've had the opportunity, the honor to serve as chair of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission for many years at the pleasure of four different Nebraska Governors. And I'm very proud of the accomplishments that the commission has had over the decades. We all enjoy-- the crown jewel of those being the redevelopment of Nebraska's Centennial Mall, which took well over a decade. In fact, if truth be told, maybe more like, almost a couple of decades to get that done, but. As that was a

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beautiful spot in 1967 with the centennial of Nebraska, it, kind of took some, some wear, and the Legislature and others stepped up to help make that a reality, but through many, many meetings and months and efforts to have that come to fruition. And so some of you remember, I'm sure, the Sesquicentennial Spectacular 2017 on Centennial Mall. And that was just another example of the cooperation with the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission and others that made that happen. And so even the unveiling of the Standing Bear sculpture on Centennial Mall was just a real joy to see and a real honor for our state. And so that happened through many monthly meetings of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission. The commission-- just as a point of additional clarification-- seven total members: five that are appointed by the mayor of Lincoln, and then two that are gubernatorially appointed. And they've worked-- they work with a lot of dedication to protect and enhance the environs surrounding the great State Capitol of Nebraska and our iconic views and vistas. And so potentially, LB1417 could have a very negative effect on what-- and I heard-- Senator Conrad, you, you mentioned about the, the bringing people into more of a kind of ownership of their efforts inside of these different boards and commissions. And I have to say, that's what my experience was. And I'm very proud of all of the efforts that our different commissions-- but in particular, the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission-- has had through the years. And so, with respect to Senator Brewer and to Governor Pillen, I urge not to move LB1417 out of committee. And I'm grateful for this opportunity to be here today.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony and insights. Let me check to see if there are any questions for you.

JEFF SEARCY: Thank you.

SANDERS: I see none. Again, thank you for being out here today--

JEFF SEARCY: Thank you.

SANDERS: --Mr. Searcy. Are there any other opposition? Anyone opposing? Anyone in the neutral? Oh, it's a race.

GREG HOLLOWAY: Good afternoon.

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SANDERS: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Government and Military Committee.

GREG HOLLOWAY: I am Greg Holloway, G-r-e-g H-o-l-l-o-w-a-y. I am the current chair for the Nebraska Veteran's Council and also the cochair for the Nebraska Veterans' Home Board. I've been on the board for about 15 years, and maybe more because I was on a while back before then, when it was called the Board of Inquiry and Review. So I'm one of the old guys around here. As a matter of fact, I've actually been preparing myself pretty much all week to oppose this bill until the-- AM2739 came out and-- which would kind of shut me up. But I would be neglecting my duties not to thank Senator Brewer, Governor Pillen, and his administration into-- to, to looking back into how our board works and seeing that we are very efficient, a viable piece of to-- our board is a good board. That's all there is to it. We take care of our veterans and make sure their dependents are taken good care of, so. I was ready for the fight-- today-- actually, 19-- 56 years ago on February 29, 1968, my first day, boots on the ground, Vietnam. So I was ready for a fight today, if I had one-- had to have one. But I'm glad I don't have to. And I know the Senator would be very sad on his last day if he didn't have to listen to me at least one more time. So I thank this committee for everything they're doing, and I thank you to make sure AM2739 is taken care of so we don't have to worry about the Veterans' Home Board. We're a good board. I'll continue to serve under it as long as the-- or, my state commander dictates that I am representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Well, actually, I've-- I represent everybody pretty much, so. Thanks a lot again.

SANDERS: Thank you for your test--

GREG HOLLOWAY: Any questions? I'll answer them.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony. I think-- and we got some hands up. Senator Aguilar.

AGUILAR: No question. I just want to say, thank you for your service.

GREG HOLLOWAY: You're more than welcome. It's-- I appreciate everybody-- what everybody does here. I, I appreciate your service to our state of Nebraska, all you senators. You guys got a lot of hard work. I know when you're elected, you think this is going to be fun.

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But, but after the first day, you're thinking, what, what am I doing here? Same thing as when I got off the airplane in Vietnam. What did I volunteer for? You know? So.

SANDERS: Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you. I also don't have a question, but welcome home.

GREG HOLLOWAY: Thank you. Thank you very much. It's nice to be here. All right.

SANDERS: Commander Holloway, thank you for your testimony and your insight and your service.

GREG HOLLOWAY: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Are there any other neutral? Top that one.

JERRY STILMOCK: Yeah, that's-- what a wonderful anniversary for him to be able to see. Madam Vice Chair, members of the committee. My name is Jerry Stilmock, J-e-r-r-y S-t-i-l-m-o-c-k. Testifying on behalf of my clients at Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association and Nebraska Fire Chiefs Association. Only respect to Section 44(3). It's at page 50. We fared a little bit better this time in the Critical Incident Stress Management Act. The last time-- I don't know-- four, six, eight years ago when the, the review of commissions came up, that particular legislation, I understand, mistakenly obliterated the entire act and all the service that occurs through the critical incident stress management team. That act was created in 1991. There are four major agencies of the state that come in and supply stress management tools and techniques and debriefings for-- particularly in my case-- for the volunteer first responders of the state. Those four agencies: Health and Human Services, State Fire Marshal, State Patrol, and NEMA. For unreason-- reasons unknown to me and to my membership, the State Fire Marshal's Office is intended to be removed by this legislation. And for that part, we were bifurcated in our testimony. Yes, we're glad that it's being retained-- it-- the CISM Act. But we're very concerned about the proposed removal of the State Fire Marshal's Office from this cognitive team that does such a tremendous job. The-- particularly for the volunteer first responders, of whom I'm, I'm proud to represent. You know, the larger career-based unions, they have the ability, the wherewithal in the

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metropolitan and primary city of Lincoln and-- or, of Omaha and Lincoln, respectively. There are staff, as I understand-- or they'd be able to contract for a particular mental health awareness and recon after, after an event. But so much before, during, and after that we've learned through the military, sir, and Senator Brewer, that resiliency training in the forefront and then during and after the event is so critical. So they, they helped mitigate the impact to the event, accelerate recovery, and then identify the third area re-- identify what other areas might be helpful to that recovering-- or, that person that witnessed what they did. Horrifying stories that I can only re-- re-- repeat hearsay, which I will not attempt nor give credence to of what, what my members have shared with me-- a father in, in sheer distress and, and other terrible, terrible incidents. I'd ask you to consider my comments and those on behalf of the over 9,000 members that we represent in-- as you review and comb through this legislation. Thank you for considering my comments.

SANDERS: Thank you, Jerry Stilmock.

JERRY STILMOCK: Yes, ma'am.

SANDERS: I will check to see-- are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

JERRY STILMOCK: Thank you all. Good day.

SANDERS: Any other in the neutral?

SHANNON BLACK: Good afterm-- good afternoon, Vice Chairman--

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Welcome.

SHANNON BLACK: --Chairwoman, sorry-- and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Dr. Shannon Black, S-h-a-n-n-o-n; Black, B-l-a-c-k. And I am the costatewide clinical director for the Critical Incident Stress Management Program. I'm here to testify in a neutral position on LB1417, which will clean up statutory language for the Critical Incident Stress Management Program. The Critical Incident Stress Management Program, or CISM, has been providing services to Nebraska first responders for over 33 years. CISM provides education, prevention, stress-coping techniques, and helps mitigate the effects of stress and negative emotional reactions that may interfere with Nebraska first responders

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being able to function in their role. This crisis support service is, is provided to all first responder, responders, which include law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services, Corrections, hospitals, emergency management personnel, and dispatchers. I would like to recommend amendments to some of the language in the CISM sections of this bill. Section 40, starting on page 47, amends 71-7102, Section 5 to read "State Correctional employees." I would like to recommend the removal of the word "State" before "Correctional employees." The CISM Program feels this limits the service to only state of Nebraska Corre-- employed Correctional employees rather than all Correctional employees statewide. In Section 40, page 48, the bill amends 71-7106 regarding the structure of the Interagency Management Committee. In this section, the Nebraska Fire Marshal's Office has been com-- has been removed, and the ref-- reference to the Fire Marshal in 71-7108, Section 3 is completely removed. The Fire Marshal's Office has been an active and crucial resource for the CISM Program for the past 33 years. In fact, it was former Nebraska State Fire Marshal Wallace Barnett who was instrumental in the creation of the CISM Program in 1987. The Fire Marshal's Office is the direct link to all fire departments within the state, and it is an avenue to ensure materials and education are sent to these first responders. Removal of the Fire Marshal's Office would be a disservice to the CISM Program and all Nebraska fire departments. On behalf of the CISM Program, I would like to recommend these changes be made. And req-- respectfully request that the committee advance the bill to General File. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. And I'd be happy to answer any questions.

SANDERS: Thank you, Dr. Black. Let's see if there is any questions from the committee. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

SHANNON BLACK: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there any other-- OK. Welcome to the Government Committee.

TYLER KOHTZ: Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity, committee members, to speak on behalf of the Nebraska Real Property Appraiser Board. My name is Tyler Kohtz, T-y-l-e-r K-o-h-t-z. I'm the director for the board. The, the board was established in 1991 to

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carry out the requirements of Title 11 of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989. The board itself enforces and administers the Real Property Appraiser Act and Appraisal Management Company Registration Act. I submitted an online comment for LB1417, and, and my, my comments now are more specific to AM2739. The first thing I'd like to say is I'd like to thank the-- Governor Pillen and his Policy and Research Office for working with the board to address its concerns in LB1417. Although the board would prefer to continue its focus solely on the appraiser business community, it understands that Governor Pillen and his drive to ensure the government operates in the most efficient and effective manner possible. As mentioned in my written statement, the board shares that exact same goal, and the board's past performance supports that position. Really, it's up to the committee, the, the Legislature, and the Governor to determine if making these changes is in the best interest of, of the appraiser community or the citizens of Nebraska as a whole. But as, as for the board is concerned, it remains neutral and, and would like to let you know that it, it would move forward as directed and operate with the same quality and commitment it does today. So does anybody have any questions? More, more than anything, I want to make myself available for questions.

SANDERS: Thank you very much. Are there any questions?

CONRAD: We're friends from back home.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony--

TYLER KOHTZ: Thank you.

SANDERS: --and coming out today. Appreciate it.

CONRAD: Thanks, Tyler. Good to see you.

SANDERS: Neutral? Welcome to the Government Committee.

FELICIA NELSEN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Sanders and members of the committee. My name is Felicia Nelsen, F-e-l-i-c-i-a N-e-l-s-e-n. And I'm testifying today in my role as the exec-- as an executive committee member of the Nebraska Children's Commission, or "the Commission." The commission is neutral on LB1417 because it would eliminate three statutory committees from the Nebraska Children's Commission while maintaining the task under the larger

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Children's Commission. It's recommended that language be added to the bill to include the sections that govern these committees to ensure the duties remain in statute. These sections are further explained in the handouts I've provided. The commission was created in 2012 to serve as a leadership forum for collaboration on child welfare and juvenile justice reform. Over the years, the commission has taken on more responsibility through legislation and is now the parent body to five statutory committees, including the Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Committee, the Bridge to Independence Committee, the Alternative Response Advisory Committee, that would all sunset in July of 2025 if LB1417 were to advance. Though these committees have successfully influenced change, there is still work to do. The Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Committee continues to be the only body with a foster care rate methodology that provides foster care reimbursement rate recommendations to the Legislature and Health and Human Services. This year, LB1392 was introduced to increase the responsibilities of this committee by including the evaluation of all provider rates. The Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee has successfully advocated to include tribal and probation youth in the extended foster care program administered by HHS and continues to find ways to help the young adults avoid the "cliff effect" once they no longer are enrolled in the program, as well as finding alternative supports to youth who did not currently qualify for Bridge to Independence services. The Alternative Response Advisory Committee has determined increased oversight and resources to families are needed-- to families are needed for this service to be effective, and recently submitted a special report to the Health and Human Services Committee outlining recommendations that can prevent families from entering other child welfare system. Terminating these committees in July 2025 puts the recommendations provided to the Legislature from these committees at risk. Prior to AM2739, LB1417 would have changed the relationship the commission has with the Foster Care Review Office, or FCRO, by requiring the Children's Commission to appoint both the FCRO executive director and the five members of the Foster Care Advisory Committee. Currently, the commission's staff are supervised by the FCRO executive director, and the commission members are appointed by the Governor. By putting this power within the commission, a different set of Governor appointees become responsible for appointing the executive director and the advisory committee while removing legislative engagement in appointing leadership for the FCRO, eliminating its ability to provide independent oversight

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over HHS, the courts, and probation. The commission appreciates the consideration to remove this section from the original bill. So thank you again, Chairperson, and the Govern-- and this committee for the opportunity to share about LB1417 and the impact it's going to have on the Children's Commission. And I'd welcome the opportunity to try to answer any questions if you have any.

SANDERS: Thank you, Ms. Nelsen. We will check to see if there are any questions.

FELICIA NELSEN: All right.

SANDERS: See none.

FELICIA NELSEN: All right.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony today.

CONRAD: Well done. Thank you.

SANDERS: Any others in the neutral? Welcome to the Government Committee.

HEATHER SCHMIDT: Thank you. My name's Heather Schmidt, H-e-a-t-h-e-r S-c-h-m-i-d-t. I am a proponent of Section 3 in this bill. I think it makes sense to consolidate and diversify. You know, do you see regular reports from all these boards and commissions? I've been waiting for approval for a, a commission appointment that I applied for. And it's obviously an enormous responsibility to fill all these positions. With unfilled positions, the purpose for the boards isn't getting done with fidelity anyway. Consolidating and streamlining these boards should help with transparency and communication, allowing them to build better relationships between the regular citizens and both the legislative and executive branches of our government. It may also help better define where and how resources would be more impactful. Overall, I'm for clearing the table in favor of more relevant and efficient government. And I am concerned with so many different boards and commissions that it might, in some cases, dilute the ability of our elected representatives to hear their constituents' individual voices. Anything that can be done to remove barriers between us and our elected representatives or between our elected representatives and their intentions will be very welcome. Any questions?

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SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony.

CONRAD: Well done.

SANDERS: Are there any questions? See none. Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Schmidt.

HEATHER SCHMIDT: All right. Thank you. Have a good afternoon.

SANDERS: Thank you. You too. Are there any others in the neutral? Senator Brewer, you're welcome to close. Is he still--

CONRAD: He's here.

SANDERS: He's-- oh, there.

BREWER: OK. I'm going to need you to do some handouts. One each. OK. You're going to be getting some handouts, and what they're going to have is one will be a chart that's colored-- and you'll have red, yellow, and then white lines in it. The other page will be a standalone page, which-- if I can keep on reading to you here. What these are are commissions. If you had the time to read through the amendment, which I've read through and tabbed. Unfortunately, you haven't had the time to do that. But if you did, you'd see that the following commissions were removed from the bill. Otherwise, they're-- that's what the AM's doing. So those that would continue would be the Nebraska Capitol Commission, Nebraska State Capitol Environs Commission, the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission, Education Service Unit Coordinating Council, the Foster Care Advisory Committee, the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Veterans' Home Board, Veterans' Advisory Commission, State Board of Examiners and Land Surveyors, and the Board of Architects-- Engineers and Architects. So if you would have time to go through the, the big bill-- and, and let's just back up a little. Remember: so it is the last day you can draft bills. So the time basically had expired for that. But, but because the bill is at the request of the Governor, I get a King's X on the deal. And-- so the rather large bill was brought to me-- and I should have read it in detail and memorized it before I turned it in to the Clerk, but I didn't. And there was a lot of things in there that, as I said earlier, caused a number of people to be very, very angry with me. And I usually can find reasons to make people angry with me without needing help, but I appreciate that

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the Governor did help. So what we have done with the amendment is went and looked at those committees, commissions, and, and boards that basically said, listen, we serve a purpose and we, we want to continue to do what we're doing. Through all this, we've been able to, I think, come up with the, the ones that really need to stay and the ones that we can consolidate. So if you look, the yellow is consolidation; red are the ones that are on this list I just read you; and then the white ones, of course, are the ones that would be going by the wayside. So here, here's what I'd like to do. We don't have everybody here from the committee today. We'll do an Exec in the future. But what we need is some time to digest this. So what I'm asking is, take the AM, take the, the two sheets. You can go through and do like I did and tab them so you got them as a reference. Take the testimony from today. We'll have an Exec and we'll talk about where we are with, with those that have testified, with what we know now, and what you're seeing on those handouts. Are we close enough to exec the, the bill out? And that's the decision we're going to have to make on this. You know, I, I think the Governor has come a long ways toward figuring out which of these boards are really valuable and which ones may not serve a purpose. And ultimately, that was the idea behind the bill. We're getting a little late in the game in making this all come together, but I think we can if, if we got the right information to do that. But we're going to have to have those that aren't here do a little studying. And the ones that are here, make a decision on what you think. So anyway, I'll take any questions.

SANDERS: Senator Brewer, thank you. I know this took a lot of time. And some of these commissions, as, as all of us review this, can be very personal to us. And-- so I'm looking for a way to measure this. So some critical measurements of how we can go about the ones that are personal or emotional, not just to us, but to many of the phone calls we received as well.

BREWER: Well, I need to go back and look at some of my notes and calls received. I think most of-- we took all the testimony today-- and we take a lot of phone calls. We looked at the ones that are on that list that are either being consolidated to where they're still going to be able to function in a capacity or the ones that are being left as is. I think we're pretty close.

SANDERS: OK.

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BREWER: But that's kind of what we probably need to do our homework on before we-- before the next Exec.

SANDERS: OK. Appreciate it. Are there any questions for Senator Brewer? Seeing none. I think we'll do our homework.

BREWER: All right. I--

SANDERS: Thank you.

BREWER: I'll go back to work with the next bill.

SANDERS: Thank you very much.

AGUILAR: Senator Brewer to open on LB1327.

BREWER: Thank you, Senator Aguilar, members of the Government Committee. My name is Senator Tom Brewer. That's T-o-m B-r-e-w-e-r. I represent the 43rd Legislative District. This bill opens a section of the statute relating to the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosures Commission. It does not make any changes of substance to NDAC-- NADC. This bill was introduced simply as a shell bill. With that, I will be available for any questions.

AGUILAR: Seeing none. Thank you. Are there any proponents for this? LB1327. Are there any opponents for LB1327? How about neutral testimony? Senator Brewer to close.

BREWER: Now I'll waive close.

AGUILAR: Senator Brewer waives closing. He's welcome to open on LB1246.

BREWER: Thank you, Senator Aguilar and members of the Government Committee. My name is Senator Tom Brewer. That's T-o-m B-r-e-w-e-r. And I represent Legislative District 43. This bill opens a section of the statute relating to the powers of county government. It does not actually do anything to change powers. This bill is an example of what you get when you ask for advisers for a, a Government Committee shell bill. I just introduced the bill to have a vehicle if needed. And with that, I will take any questions.

AGUILAR: Senator Conrad.

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CONRAD: Thank you so much, Senator Aguilar. Senator Brewer, I know this is a shell bill, but this is our last day of Government Committee and your last day, perhaps, as presiding as Chair unless we can quickly change that term limits thing in time. But I know not everybody could be here this afternoon. But if they were, they would join a well-deserved chorus of gratitude for your service to our country and our state and in this institution and-- it's, it's immeasurable how much your perspective has enriched public policy in Nebraska. And, and I know that we're all-- we're really grateful to, to serve with you in this role. So thank you.

BREWER: Thank you. It has been an honor to serve for eight years.

AGUILAR: Any further questions? Senator Lowe.

CONRAD: Aguilar's having none of it.

LOWE: He wants to get out of here. Do you think maybe you should have told the director of the Accountability and Disclosure it was a shell bill before he showed up?

BREWER: Did he show up?

CONRAD: They don't take anything for granted.

LOWE: He, he just left.

BREWER: Oh. Well. Yeah. Might've share-- maybe just shared that with him, but. Oops.

LOWE: Senator Brewer, thank you for the eight years that we've been on this committee together. It's, it's been a pleasure, and, and you've led it well.

BREWER: Thank you, John. Appreciate all your help.

LOWE: It's been an honor. I was just in Judiciary Committee to introduce my last bill, and it was tough because Senator Wayne gave me a rose for my, my last bill.

BREWER: I climbed Kilimanjaro and I didn't get a rose.

LOWE: I have an empty can for you if you would like an empty can.

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CONRAD: A roast or a rose?

LOWE: Rose.

CONRAD: Aw. Good.

AGUILAR: Any further questions? Seeing none. Will you be here to close?

BREWER: I think I'll waive the close.

AGUILAR: OK. While he's waiving, I will report that there was one written testimony. It was an o-- one opponent. And that's all.

BREWER: An opponent for the shell bill?

CONRAD: And his name was Dick Clark.

LOWE: [INAUDIBLE] testify.

AGUILAR: Yes, you may.

LAURIE HOLMAN: [INAUDIBLE] proponents.

AGUILAR: I-- did I not ask for proponents?

LOWE: Uh-uh.

AGUILAR: I'm sorry.

***TANYA ENCALADA CRUZ:** This sounds like a bill to do let county law enforcement do whatever, wherever.

JON CANNON: Oh. I'm, I'm neutral. I'll wait for neutral. Oh.

AGUILAR: I think you're the only one here.

LOWE: [INAUDIBLE] to go back to the bill now.

AGUILAR: Welcome.

JON CANNON: Thank you, Vice Chair Aguilar, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. Good afternoon. My name is Jon Cannon, J-o-n C-a-n-n-o-n. I'm the executive director of the

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Nebraska Association of County Officials, also known as NACO. Here to testify today in proud neutral position on LB1246. In our office, we call this a beige alert. Or-- we, we know this is a shell bill. And when we saw it, how-- it, it does implicate county government. That's the one-liner. And so, of course, that attracts our attention. And I-- there's, there's nothing more I can say about the actual substance of the bill since there is no substance to it. But I do appreciate the fact this is Senator Brewer's last bill, and I thought it would be a-- I would be remiss if I did not testify on the last bill that he introduces in committee. So I appreciate the partnership with Senator Brewer over the years. And I'm happy to take any questions that you may have.

AGUILAR: Any questions? Seeing none.

LOWE: What are you going to do without us?

JON CANNON: What's that?

LOWE: What are you do without Brewer and I?

JON CANNON: We'll have plot a, a-- the, the appropriate reaction, sir.

LOWE: Life will be easier.

AGUILAR: Senator Brewer to close.

LOWE: He waived.

BREWER: All right. I said I waived, but I kind of owe it to the committee. This year has been the most pleasant year. And I think John will agree with me that we've had hard years and easy years-- no, they've mostly been hard. But this committee has been a pleasant group to work with this year. We've got a lot done. If you look, we pushed a lot of stuff early. Today, some of that went across the finish line. And I know sometimes I'm a nag, but if you look-- I think we're blessed to have a really good committee clerk, Julie. And, and Dick.

LOWE: And a really good substitute.

BREWER: Yeah. We've got a great substitute.

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SANDERS: Could you tell Dick for us?

CONRAD: We'll give him a clap in abstentia.

AGUILAR: I have no complaints about the legal counsel.

BREWER: But, but Dick does hustle to try and get things positioned and make sure that it's timely and make sure that, that we get a chance to get our bills there early. And, and I think you'll-- when you really see-- I think as soon as Monday, we're going to see LB43 up. So a lot of our work is going to start coming up and, and, and we'll look back on it and glad that we hustled early on because I think we'll have a lot of success. But it has been truly an honor to work with you guys. And I will have nothing but pleasant memories. So thank you.

SANDERS: I would say it's been my honor and everyone else here. So thank you.

BREWER: All right--