

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

Health and Human Services Committee
March 31, 2014

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Health and Human Services met at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, March 31, 2014, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Kathy Campbell, Chairperson; Sue Crawford; and Mike Gloor. Senators absent: Bob Krist, Vice Chairperson; Tanya Cook; Sara Howard; and Dan Watermeier.

SENATOR CAMPBELL: We'll open the public hearing today of the Health and Human Services Committee. Today we will be hearing appointments to various advisory commissions and boards, gubernatorial appointments. And we are waiting for the first phone call in. Is that what you needed, Brennen? In attendance at today's hearings is Senator Kathy Campbell, Senator Mike Gloor, and Senator Sue Crawford, legal counsel, Michelle Chaffee, and the clerk, Brennen Miller. Good morning, Dr. Roop.
[CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS ROOP: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Am I saying that correctly, Doctor? Dr. Roop, am I pronouncing it correctly? [CONFIRMATION]

CHUCK HUBKA: I'll put it kind of in between everybody. Sir, are you still there?
[CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS ROOP: Yes, I am. [CONFIRMATION]

CHUCK HUBKA: Okay, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Doctor, I'm Kathy Campbell, and I serve the 25th Legislative District here in Lincoln and chair the Health and Human Services Committee. With me today is Senator Mike Gloor from Grand Island and Senator Sue Crawford from Omaha.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Bellevue. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Bellevue. I am sorry. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: That's okay. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And our legal counsel, Michelle Chaffee and our clerk. This is a reappointment to the Stem Cell Advisory Committee. Tell us a little bit about yourself, sir. [CONFIRMATION]

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DENNIS ROOP: I currently serve as the director of the Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Biology at the University of Colorado Medical School.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And you have served on the Stem Cell Advisory Committee how many years? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS ROOP: I guess this would be four years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. And we are really pleased to see that you are willing to continue to serve us. Do you have...is it one or two meetings a year?
[CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS ROOP: We have one conference call usually, and then we meet in person only once. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Has there been any surprises as you have served on the commission? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS ROOP: No, I think it's worked very well. We've had a good team of reviewers. We usually reach a consensus on the grants that we think, you know, have the best chance of succeeding. So it's actually been one reason for agreeing to serve again, has actually been, you know, educational for me. And also it's been pleasant to work with the other members of the team and also the staff there. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: At the...usually I would assume this is staffed by the Med Center. Or is it staffed by the health department? That's an interesting question. I'm not sure I know that, Doctor. Well, we are always so impressed with the appointees to this commission because you come with an extensive resume and certainly a background of expertise. I had to chuckle, I have to tell you, when I was looking at your resume because we've had a very interesting bill in the Nebraska Legislature this year with regard to tanning. And I noticed you're a professor of dermatology. So I thought that was very interesting that we have spent a lot of time on it in any case. Other questions from the senators for Dr. Roop this morning? We really don't have any questions this morning...any additional questions. We much appreciate your service, and we know that your schedule is very busy. So we appreciate your calling in this morning.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

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DENNIS ROOP: Okay, thank you. Goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Bye. Good morning, Dr. Morris. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Yes, good morning. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Good morning. I'm Kathy Campbell and I serve as the senator from the 25th Legislative District and chair the Health and Human Services Committee. And we're very pleased to have you on a call this morning. Also in the room with me is Senator Mike Gloor from Grand Island and Senator Sue Crawford from Bellevue, our legal counsel, Michelle Chaffee, and our clerk, Brennen Miller. And we will not keep you long, Dr. Morris, because yours is a reappointment to the Stem Cell Research Commission. Would you tell us a little bit about yourself? [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Yes, I received my Ph.D. from Syracuse University in 1981, and I studied cell kinetics of epidermal hyperplastic growth induced by root-healing abrasion and by a chemical tumor promoter. And I learned a lot about cell turnover in the epidermis that directed my feature work which I began as a post-doc with Tom Slaga and Sue Fischer at Ridge National Lab to try to identify the stem cell population that the cell kinetic behavior of epidermal cells that I saw as a graduate student made me think that there were stem cells in the epidermis. And this was back in the '80s and people weren't even thinking about stem cells in the epidermis at the time. So I continued that line of work with many sort of subareas. I began my independent career at the University of Texas, M.D. Anderson Science Park in Smithville, Texas, and then moved...had several moves including a recent...recently at Columbia University in the Department of Dermatology and Pathology. And then in 2008, I moved to the Hormel Institute, University of Minnesota in Austin, Minnesota. And we have done some really, really, really interesting studies. We did indeed identify a stem cell population in the hair follicles and showed they were stem cells by in vitro and in vivo methods that my lab was instrumental in developing. And then now we have a major focus on the role of bone marrow cells in skin tumor development, and this is...we're just submitting our first paper today to Nature Communications. And we're really excited about this because it shows that, you know, not only are the stem cells, the hair follicle stem cells involved in tumor development, also we found the previously unrecognized systemic contribution to the tumors in that there are...these bone marrow cells come in and actually appear to become epithelial cells. So we're really, really excited about this work. And I published a number of papers, peer-reviewed papers. I guess it's about...somewhere between 45 and 50 right now. And then book chapters, I contributed to...this past week Dermatology in General Medicine, I was invited to write a chapter for that. That's like the number one dermatology type of book in the country these days. And I've been funded with only a lapse of a few months since 1987, that's with...it's with national funding from the National Cancer Institute or from NIAMS and additionally have had some industry

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money, largely from Proctor and Gamble and Johnson and Johnson. So I have really been blessed with a really challenging and interesting career, and I hope that I will be able to assist in advancing the careers of young investigators. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Dr. Morris, what has been the most surprising thing to you as you've served on the committee? [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Well, you know, the grants have been really good. That's what...I didn't really know what to expect, but I really enjoyed working with the other members of the committee. And I guess it's seeing how work that we reviewed has gone on to papers so quickly and gone on to larger funding. I think that's the most rewarding thing that...part of my job. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: How many do you review annually? [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Typically, it's been around 15. That number seems to come up. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, we had...prior to your phone call, we visited with Dr. Roop. And he also indicated that he very much enjoyed the dialogue and exchange with the members of the committee. So I would imagine that is an energizing experience given all of your just excellent credentials. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Well, I just really like seeing...I guess, you know, it's just I really like doing science an awful lot. And it's just very rewarding to see projects get going and then, you know, expand into something larger. It's just a real privilege to be part of that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Senator Gloor. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you, Doctor. This is Senator Gloor. I'd be remiss if I didn't say that you had me won when I saw that you were associated with the University of Minnesota. I'm an alum. I did my graduate studies up there. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Oh. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: And to show that we're always learning, I didn't realize the Hormel Institute was in Austin. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Yes, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Except it makes sense that it would be down there I guess. But I had no idea that there was an academic center down in that part of Minnesota.

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[CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Yes, we're a small institute right now, but we're having our groundbreaking ceremony for our new building which will double our research space at the end of May. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: I'm assuming that Hormel continues to be a great supporter. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Well, we do receive money from the Hormel Foundation. It's not through the food company, it's through their foundation. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Sure, sure. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: And then our...the investigators, the lab chiefs here receive funding from various NIH institutes, and we're required to bring in NIH funds. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Well, thank you for your commitment and participation in our committee. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Oh, it's a privilege to be part of it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Dr. Morris, for joining us today. And that will conclude our phone call. And we very much appreciate your willingness to serve on the committee. We know that you are an extremely busy person. So this is much appreciated by the state of Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: All right, well, it's an honor to be part of this. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. Have a great day, Dr. Morris, and thank you again. Goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

REBECCA MORRIS: Okay, thank you. Goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Dr. Spangrude. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Yes, this is Dr. Spangrude calling. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: This is Kathy Campbell, and I serve the 25th Legislative District in Lincoln. And with me today is Senator Mike Gloor from Grand Island and Senator Sue Crawford from Bellevue, our legal counsel, Michelle Chaffee, and our clerk, Brennen Miller. And we much appreciate your taking time from your schedule to call in today. We

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will not keep you long. It's just a general way for us to get to know you and a little bit about the Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee. So Dr. Spangrude, tell us a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Great. Well, I am...you should do this by video, then you could see me. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: We'll have to look at that. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Okay. Well, I'm a professor of medicine and I'm a laboratory-based researcher. So what that means is that I don't have clinical duties, I just work in laboratories. And my laboratory work is focused on how blood develops. And so there's a stem cell that is in the blood in the bone marrow. And that stem cell is responsible for maintaining all of the different blood cell types. And so my studies focus on how those stem cells differentiate to give rise to different blood cells. And in particular, I'm interested in the lymphocyte lineages, the T and B lymphocytes which are a big part of the immune system. I trained as an immunologist. I got my Ph.D. from the University of Utah in 1984. And then I worked in stem cell biology fields at Stanford University, also at the Hall Institute in Australia for about six years and then established an independent laboratory initially with the National Institutes of Health laboratories where I was for five years. And then in 1994, I came to the University of Utah and I've been here as a researcher ever since. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. As you have served on the committee--as you're a reappointment we should indicate--tell us what you think has been the greatest surprise to you in serving on the advisory committee. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Well, to me, I guess I'm a biological scientist. And to me, what has been surprising is how much high-quality bioengineering is going on, and this is particularly out of the Lincoln campus, UNL. So I was surprised to see bioengineering applications consistently coming in of high quality. And so I was always interested in seeing what sorts of outcomes there would be from those bioengineering projects. And secondly, the very high-quality cell biology and genetics that's been happening at the Medical Center in Omaha is very not surprising, but it's great to see. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. And we know that you meet via the phone one meeting and then in person. And two of your colleagues we've already visited with this morning, Dr. Morris and Dr. Roop. And both of them talked about very much enjoying the discussion and dialogue among all of you who serve. And I'm sure that would be the same for you. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Yeah. I enjoy the colleagues. And there was another member, Brad from Tennessee I think he was from. He was a wonderful colleague, although he

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stepped down a few years ago. And so we haven't seen him for the last few meetings. But yes, it's been really enjoyable to meet Dennis and to meet Rebecca, yeah.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: In your research, you've spent a great amount of time at the University of Utah. Do they have a lot of independent laboratories and studies such as yours? [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Yes. There is a cadre of researchers who are developmental biologists. And so they are interested in mainly model organisms and how they develop. And so they study flies, worms, and zebrafish as model systems for development. And so it's a way that we can understand how embryos develop. But for stem cell research, we focus on adult stem cells. And so our research fits in nicely because it complements all of the developmental biology that is already here. One thing I would say though is that the state of Nebraska has been a trendsetter in moving ahead with using state funding to fund basic biomedical research. And that's really a key that I think every other state in the Union has to pay attention to. And if you look at California, they have the regenerative medicine initiative funded by the taxpayers that has paid about \$3 billion for stem cell research in the state of California. That makes California a major leader in that field. And I think Nebraska is moving in the same direction. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: We certainly were not a part of that effort in the Nebraska Legislature as we have term limits. And all of that came before our service. But I do remember the articles in the paper about how important this could be for the future of research. And I agree with you. I don't think many Nebraskans even realize what trail they blazed and setting the future of research in this area. So thank you for making that comment. Any questions from the senators this morning? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: This is Senator Gloor. Years ago I was graduate student at the University of Utah. And they've done an incredible job over the decades keeping track of me for fund-raising purposes. But as a result of that, I obviously get exposed to the school of medicine and some of the research that goes on with the University of Utah. Certainly, it's a hidden gem within the United States. And I don't think people understand the level of research and the quality of medicine practiced there. And so I'm pleased that you continue to be involved in this process. It certainly speaks well for the quality of individuals we bring to this. Also, I'm guessing you're a native Montanan. And if you were...did your studies at the University of Montana, certainly you have to be a fly fisherman. And can't we figure out a way on behalf of fly fisherman everywhere to use stem cell research to get trout to rise? Isn't there...? [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: (Laugh) Yeah, that would be an important goal for us strive towards. Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, perhaps that could be put on the table for another day's research. Dr. Spangrude, we really appreciate you taking time to visit with us today. This is mainly for us to get to meet you via the phone and to express our gratitude for your willingness to continue service to this great effort and the state of Nebraska. So thank you very, very much. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Well, thank you all for taking the time to talk with me today. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. You have a great day and goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

GERALD SPANGRUDE: Thank you very much. Bye, bye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Good morning, Denise. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Good morning. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Denise, this is Kathy Campbell, and I serve as the Chair for the Health and Human Services Committee and represent the 25th Legislative District. With me today is Senator Mike Gloor from Grand Island, Senator Sue Crawford from Bellevue, our legal counsel, and our clerk. And we much appreciate you taking time from your schedule to visit with us a little today. You are reappointment to the Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board. So tell us just a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Okay. Thank you for this opportunity. Last time I met with you all I was the director of children services at Lutheran Family Services. But two years ago, I changed jobs. I am now with CityMatCH. That is a national organization that is in Omaha and represents maternal child health issues actually across the country. So I now have this...I'm the director of programs for CityMatCH. So I have this amazing opportunity now to work closely with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, CDC, and local health departments across the country. So I've...for example, today I'm actually...right now, I'm sitting in the lobby on Georgetown University at the Maternal and Child Health Library. We're doing some partnerships. So it just gives me amazing access to, you know, like the latest, the greatest evidence-based information that I'm able to actually bring back when I...you know, in the committee, when we're meeting as a board we're talking about what some good evidence-based stuff is out there or what's working, what's not working. So that's what I'm currently doing. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: That...so you have had a change even from when you might have turned in the application, correct? [CONFIRMATION]

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DENISE PECHA: Right, right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, congratulations. It sounds like a great opportunity for you. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Thank you. And actually our board...we have a member of our board is in Omaha. Mary Balluff works with the local health department. So we stay grounded in the fact that we are a sponsored program under the University of Nebraska Medical Center. So we're very grounded with work happening, you know, in Nebraska and also have the national connections with all of the research going on, evidence-based programs. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: What has been the greatest surprise to you as you've served on the Child Abuse Prevention Board? [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: I think what...I don't...surprise is the best word but maybe initially. We spent a lot of time the last few years really kind of getting a better structure in place. I think there had been structure and then it had kind of lapsed. So the last few years have really been about trying to put a schedule into place to make the work more efficient. So for all of the local grantees that are part of them and the child abuse prevention activities across the state, that they're all...if it's clear what the expectations are time lines. And then (inaudible) sometimes it felt like we were chasing, trying to catch up. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. As you have watched some of the programs, have you seen...probably what do you think are a couple of the most exciting ideas that you've seen come from the grantees? [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: You know, I like the interest. It's hard that the...there's starting to be some consistency with some of what folks are doing. But yet with...individualizing it for their communities. So this is an evidence-based initiative that we know works. And then we're tweaking it to what it needs to look like in our community. And the way communities are figuring out how to work with and sustain things like PIWI, PCIT, those are kind of that two generational approaches that we know to be very effective with addressing child abuse and working in child abuse prevention. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. Questions? Senator Crawford. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Hello, Denise. And thank you so much for serving. You mentioned you're just...you're still getting...that the initial issue was trying to get things to work more efficiently. And I just wondered if in your experience, is there anything that you feel you would need from us to help that process work better? [CONFIRMATION]

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DENISE PECHA: That's a very valid question. I don't think so now. I think initially a couple years ago there was some reach out and you all were helpful with answering some questions that needed to be clarified. But it feels...and the feedback we're getting is it does seem to be smoother now, and everybody is more aware of what needs to be done when. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Excellent. And I'm glad that you did reach out because one of the reasons that we also meet with everyone is to make sure that that invitation is very clear, that we're always here to hear if there are concerns or if we need to be involved in any way to help. We appreciate that opportunity. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Oh, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: We appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Any other questions, Senators? Denise, we won't keep you today since you're a reappointment. We obviously have reviewed all of your experience, and we are so appreciative of your willingness to continue serving on the board. I am amazed at the volunteer effort that is given in the state of Nebraska to these commissions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Should we explain to her what happens next? [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Thanks. There is great passion. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Oh, yes, you may...yes, we...Senator Gloor reminded me, the committee will forward your name to the floor for a full vote of the Legislature and, you know, you don't need to do anything in addition to that. We would expect a very favorable vote given that your past service on the Child Abuse Prevention Board. So Denise, if there's at any time--Senator Crawford is exactly right--that you feel we need to hear from you, do not hesitate to give us a call. [CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: Okay. Thank you so much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Thanks, and have a great day. Goodbye, Denise.
[CONFIRMATION]

DENISE PECHA: You too. Bye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Okay. Liz, we've got one more. Then our next person is on the Foster Care Advisory Committee and is a reappointment from North Platte, Sandra

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Kruback. Does she go by Sandy, Liz? [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Yeah, it's Sandy. I think she's joining by phone.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Yes, she is. Good morning, Sandy. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Yes, good morning, Senator. How are you today?
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: I'm very good. This is Kathy Campbell and I serve as the Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: With me today also is Senator Mike Gloor from Grand Island and Senator Sue Crawford from Bellevue, our legal counsel, Michelle and our clerk, Brennen. And we are delighted to have you on the phone and much appreciate your service on the Foster Care Advisory Committee. I ask...one of your colleagues is in the room for the board. Liz Neeley is here for her hearing. And she indicated that you have served on the local board in North Platte. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Yes, I serve on two local boards in North Platte. The second one is a fairly recent addition. I began I think four, maybe five years ago with it. The other one is 18 years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Oh, my gosh. Well, tell us a little bit about yourself and your interests. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: I have three teenage grandchildren. My husband and I both have been retired now for a number of years, managing to keep busy and out of trouble. I appreciate all of the efforts that the Foster Care Review Office does in the interest of children. And I'm happy that I can support them in that effort. I like to read, sew. I play piano and organ for church once in a while. You know, I'm just really glad that you considered and recommended my application this time. Thank you very much.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, you know, Sandy, we're just talking about that. That this is the strangest appointment process because we gather the names, and we forward them to the Governor who then selects and appoints and sends them back to us for a hearing of the very people that we've submitted. So we decided that by the time you get to the floor of the Legislature, you're just super-duper appointed. And it...
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SANDRA KRUBACK: You feel like you've been three times anointed or something, right? I agree. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Absolutely. But it is great to have someone from a local board because I've had the privilege of sitting in on several local boards. And you just have...you're very grateful for all of you who take the time to review all of the materials and look what's in the best interest of children. I was just amazed at the amount of work and effort that goes into those local boards. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: It can be a great deal of effort, but it is as you say, very rewarding. Our local review specialists are quite good and easy to work with. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, you've had quite a year because the five of you have had to start up sort of a new process, a new organization. Has there been any great surprise to you in this effort? [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: No. I knew it was going to be an effort because we really were starting from the ground. The other four members on the committee have been wonderful to work with. And they're very forward thinking and able to implement ideas and thoughts that have gotten us this far. I think the five of us together are a pretty good team. And then of course having Kim Hawekotte in our director's position has really helped us a great deal. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Yes, I can image. She spent some time in our office talking to us about what is happening with the Foster Care Advisory Committee and her work. And she's a very impressive person. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Yes, she is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Questions from...oh, sorry, Sandy. Go ahead. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Nope, that's fine. Go ahead. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Questions from the senators? Sandy, we don't have a lot of questions today. Our effort was really just to get to know you. We've obviously seen all of your credentials that you've turned in. We just appreciate your taking the time to do this and to represent a local board and for all of your volunteer work in your community. You have given a lot to North Platte. And I'm sure it's appreciated. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Well, thank you, Senator. It's going to be an interesting three

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years. I'm looking forward to it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Excellent. Well, Sandy, have a great day. And we'll let you go for today. So goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

SANDRA KRUBACK: Thank you, Senator. Goodbye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Bye. Okay, Liz, you're next. Thanks for coming over. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Yeah, thanks for invitation. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: I said to Michelle, she said, well, Liz is right across the street. So she said she'd just walk over and talk to us. So... [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Yeah. Calling in seemed kind of...I'm just a half-block away. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: We're glad you didn't blow away. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Yeah, that's really nice. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: So you've heard all the introductions, so we don't need to go through that again. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Correct. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Tell us a little bit about yourself, Liz. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: I have a Ph.D. in sociology, and I've done a lot of applied research. I started my career at the University of Nebraska's Public Policy Center primarily working on justice system reform with a focus on surveying minority populations, indigent populations, and juvenile populations. In 2010, I left the university to start my own consulting company in which I primarily did the same work working for state supreme courts, bar associations, counties, evaluating the effectiveness of their programs such as pretrial release, diversion, indigent defense systems, things like that. In November of 2013, I've taken a new position. I'm the new executive director at the Nebraska State Bar Association. And so I was selected as the data person for the Foster Care Review Office. So I don't come with a background of having served on a local board, but I do think that the current composition of the Foster Care Advisory group really complements each other well. I think it was very well thought of to structure it in that way with having local board representation because the issues across the state are very different. The boards operate differently and having that perspective has been

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very helpful for our committee. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Are we making progress? [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: We are making progress. I think from...the child welfare system answer to that question, we've identified a number of very positive trends in the last few years through the Foster Care Review Advisory annual and quarterly reports. But as an organization, I'm very pleased with the new direction. I attribute a lot of that to Kim Hawekotte, our new executive director. I think that for the previous, I think it was 28 years or so, the Foster Care Review Office had kind of a standard set of data that it collected and reported on year after year. And the thing that I am most pleased with is our ability...we have reassessed what information we need to be collecting in light of all of the reform that's happened in child welfare so that we can be more responsive with our quarterly reports. And so I'm very pleased at the fact that we're addressing new issues. We're trying to be more responsive to the Legislature, to the trends that we're seeing and I think more collaborative in working with other agencies to make sure that the data is accurate and meaningful. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Senator Crawford. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Yeah, thank you. And I appreciate your data work. It's so important for us... [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Thanks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...to have that evidence and information as we see what's happening. So you said that that's been, you know, a key part of the work and that you're seeing progress. So I was just curious if there's any particular measure that stands out to you, measure or trend that stands out to you as an important sign of that progress. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Right. I think I'd just touch on two things. One is total number of youth entering the child welfare system. The last two or three years we've seen a pretty sharp decline in the number of children entering the child welfare system which we see as a positive trend. Something that the Foster Care Review Office has been kind of focused in on over the past year, however, is the length of time that children spend and then the reentry rate. So for some children, you know, once they're in, they're in for over a year, close to two years. We did a special report on children that were in the child welfare system for two or three years. The other thing that we've been kind of homing in on is the reentry rate. So you were removed from the home. And then we thought things were going well. You were placed back within the home only to be subsequently removed again, and really understanding what barriers and issues lead to the youth being re-removed from the home so that we can identify the underlying issue the first

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time so we don't have to continually remove youth from the home. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: How are we doing with the transition of juvenile justice to Probation? [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: I would defer to Kim probably, for a more complete answer. I think that Probation Administration has been extremely willing to work with us. I do know that there's been some delays in terms of you know, how the data will come to the Foster Care Review Office. But I sense a real willingness on both parties to really make that system work. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Good, good, because we have the amendment I think to LB464 on the agenda. I don't know if we'll get to it today, but I know they've spent a lot of time trying to figure out the financial aspects... [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: ...of it. And that will continue to be a problem in the sense of: How much money does the department need, and how much money does Probation need? [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Sure. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: That type of thing. Other questions from the senators? Liz, we just really appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: I know you've been here several times and testified and to have your expertise...(phone ringing) Oh, somebody is calling in. To have your expertise on this has just been excellent. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: I know Kim has commented to me that she's very appreciative that you are there. So thanks for your willingness to serve again. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And I'm sure we're going to see you testify many times over here. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: I'm sure you will. Yeah, all right. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR CAMPBELL: And congratulations on your new direction with the state bar. That's exciting. [CONFIRMATION]

ELIZABETH NEELEY: Thanks, all right. Have a great day. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And you too. That concludes our hearings for the day for the gubernatorial appointments. [CONFIRMATION]