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Transcriber's Office

Health and Human Services Committee
February 07, 2018

[LB770 LB1004 LB1041]

The Committee on Health and Human Services met at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 7, 2018, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB1041, LB1004, and LB770. Senators present: Merv Riepe, Chairperson; Steve Erdman, Vice Chairperson; Sue Crawford; Sara Howard; Mark Kolterman; Lou Ann Linehan; and Matt Williams. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR ERDMAN: Good afternoon. If I could have your attention, please. I am not Merv Riepe. Maybe you figured that out. Senator Riepe is introducing a bill and he will be here, I believe, later. I am Steve Erdman, I am the representative senator from the 47th District. I represent 10 counties in the Nebraska Panhandle. I serve as vice chairman of the committee, and so I'll be managing the committee until Senator Riepe gets back. Excuse me. We'll take up the bills today as they were posted on the wall. And so, as you've seen those when you came in, LB1041 will be first, LB1004 will be second, and the third bill will be LB770. So that will be the order of the sequence that we'll operate under. So we will take those bills as presented there. Call your attention to a couple of things we need to have you do. If you have a cell phone and it's not on silent or off, we'd ask you to do that. When it's your turn to testify, if you could make your way towards the front it would save us some time on that, so if you're going to testify, please make yourself available as easily as you can. The order of testimony today will be: the introducer, the proponents, opponents, neutral, and then the introducer will get a chance to close. Testifiers will sign in with the pink sheet, and if you would give that pink sheet to the clerk before you come to testify. And if you have handouts that need to be distributed, if you do not have ten of those, please raise your hand and the pages will get you copies made so you'll have ten handouts to do that with. When you sit down to testify, if you would please state your name and spell it for the record. Try to be as concise as you can in your testimony. We're going to operate under the light system today. You'll get six minutes on green, four minutes on yellow and, when the red light comes on, we'd ask you to try to wrap up your testimony as soon as you can. If you're not be testifying today and you want to have your testimony recorded, please fill out one of the white sheets--there's white sheets on each side as you came in. Fill these sheets out with pertinent information there, and these sign-in sheets will become exhibits and part of the permanent record. Did I say a five-minute clock?

KRISTEN STIFFLER: You said six.

SENATOR ERDMAN: I said six?

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Hmm.

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Did I say six?

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Yes.

SENATOR HOWARD: Got extra time.

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. Five minutes. Thank you. First mistake of this hour. Okay. So the sign-in sheets are there for you to have to fill out your name and the pertinent information, if you want to turn those in. If you have written testimony and, like I said, you don't have ten copies, please have them do it now, that the pages can do that. So Senator Kolterman will be a little late, I believe, so we'll start with self-introductions to my right.

SENATOR HOWARD: I'm Senator Sara Howard. I represent District 9 in midtown Omaha.

KRISTEN STIFFLER: Kristen Stiffler, legal counsel.

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Good afternoon. Senator Sue Crawford from District 45: eastern Sarpy County, Bellevue, and Offutt.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Matt Williams, Legislative District 36: Dawson, Custer, and the north portion of Buffalo Counties.

SENATOR LINEHAN: Lou Ann Linehan: Elkhorn, Valley and Waterloo in Douglas County-- District 39.

TYLER MAHOOD: Tyler Mahood, committee clerk.

SENATOR ERDMAN: And we have a couple of pages here to serve us today, and they've done a fine job in the past and I'm sure they will again today. So with that all taken care of...did I leave anything out? Okay. Senator Wishart, would you like to open on LB1041? Thank you for coming. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: The last time I was here, you were chairing this, as well. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Wow. Is that a good sign? [LB1041]

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SENATOR WISHART: Yes. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Hey, my bill came out, so yes. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Well, good afternoon, Vice Chairman Erdman and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Anna Wishart, A-n-n-a W-i-s-h-a-r-t, and I represent the great 27th District in west Lincoln. I introduced LB1041 in response to the 27 reports of investigation by the Office of the Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare, that found that 50 children who were state wards, placed in licensed facilities or placed in adoptive and guardian homes, experienced sexual abuse between July 2013 and October 2016. In my testimony, I will be reading and referencing parts of this report, and I would encourage the committee to read the full report, if you have not already. As tough as it is to get through, it is an important guideline to help us, as policymakers, determine how we can improve our child welfare system and the safety of the most vulnerable people in our state. Through this investigation, the OIG used these cases as a starting point in identifying systemic issues that hinder DHHS in the child welfare system's ability to appropriately prevent, and respond to, cases of child sexual abuse. The OIG made 18 recommendations to the department for system improvements. The department accepted 11 of these recommendations, and I want to thank the department for their effort to move forward on some of these recommendations. However, I feel that some of the recommendations not accepted by the department are still needed. LB1041 addresses Recommendation 15 from the OIG's report, that was rejected by the department. LB1041 requires the department to include a specific component of child sexual abuse prevention and foster and kinship training. And I would like to take a moment to read this specific section in the report, because it's very pertinent to why I introduced this legislation. So to obtain a foster care license, a licensee is required to complete 21 hours of training prior to licensure and 12 hours annually to renew their license. And just for the committee's background, my husband and I are licensed foster parents, so we went through this training about three years ago. The department may waive the licensing required training for relatives seeking approval to become foster parents. For most prospective foster parents, the training is contained in a curriculum called "Trauma Informed Parenting (sic--Partnering) for Safety and Performance (sic--Permanence)-Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting". I always felt this was a huge mouthful, but it's...we most commonly know, refer to it as MAPP. And another training is "Deciding Together." For relative and kinship placements--and this is really important to take note of--training is not required. However, the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association has prepared a voluntary training curriculum called The "Kinship Connection." Both programs discuss the additional needs of children that have been sexually abused prior to placement. Both training curricula contain guidance for foster parents on what to do when foster children make false sexual abuse allegations against them. And I think this is also key: this information, training

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on what parents should do if there are false allegations against them, while I agree that that should be part of it, this information is contrary to the research that indicates false sexual abuse allegations are rare. The training contains little to no information on the dynamics of child sexual abuse, appropriate boundaries, the elevated risk of sexual abuse for youth in foster care, recording sexual abuse, how to identify and respond to worrisome behavior that may indicate sexual abuse has occurred, and other important topics related to preventing sexual abuse of children in care. Training that focuses on how to prevent, recognize, and react to child sexual abuse, such as Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children program, which I believe the Child Advocacy Centers utilize, already exists and is occasionally offered in Nebraska as a volunteer training through the CACs. In 14...in 14 of the 37 child sexual abuse cases that the OIG reviewed in foster and adoptive homes, caregivers dismissed sexual abuse allegations that children made as false, or failed to report them to the authorities...in 14 of these cases. And that violates Nebraska law, which requires adults to report. One example that's outlined here is: a teenage girl told her foster mother that her foster father had fondled her. The foster mother never reported these allegations, and it was only after an investigation was started, based on a separate report, that the foster mother admitted that she had been told. So that's an example. So the recommendation that the OIG came forward with, again, was that DHHS ensure that accurate information on child sexual abuse, including prevention strategies, and appropriate reporting and training in the training it requires for foster and adoptive parents. This should include ensuring appropriate information, again, on child sexual abuse, and it should be included for kinship foster parents, as well. I don't think this should be exempted just because it's a relative placement. And if you read through this report, you'll see, as well, that there...that there were incidences of children who experienced sexual abuse within a relative and kinship placement. So I think this is an important training. So I just wanted to close, then, by saying child sexual abuse can haunt a survivor for their lifetime, increasing their risk of mental and physical health problems and involvement in risky behaviors, as well as negatively affecting their academic success and their lifetime earnings. Protecting the welfare of children in our state, I believe, is a priority of every member in this body, and so I hope that you will strongly consider supporting this legislation and working with me to get this passed this year. Thank you. I'd be happy to take any questions. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you very much, Senator. Any questions? Senator Crawford. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you, Senator Wishart, for bringing this bill and raising this issue. It's very helpful, also, to hear from your personal experience in the system about the training that you had and did not have. Is this Darkness to Light program that you mentioned...is it an example of an existing program that you think meets the standards you're trying to lay out? [LB1041]

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SENATOR WISHART: This is an example that, again, was brought up by the OIG as an example of a program that's evidence-based. Again, it's something that the Child Advocacy Centers, I believe, used. So I do think that this would be a program that the department could utilize. And I do want to, just in...speak a little bit to the fiscal note. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Okay. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: I do see that there is a one-time expense for developing the program. Again, there are already programs that exist within the state that, I think, could be utilized. And again, just as...from my experience as a foster parent, we have a certain amount of hours every year that we need to show, in terms of education on different topics. And a lot of those are not...we don't have a specific requirement of a training. So again, this would fit into allowing...this would be something I would take, as a foster parent, if...again, if the department had this requirement. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: So you anticipated my follow-up question already, and answered it great. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Yeah. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Anyone else? Senator Williams. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Vice Chairman Erdman. And thank you, Senator Wishart, for being here and bringing this. And I don't know if you want to answer this, or try to, but if someone else could, following you, I would like to have a little more discussion on the training that is waived, and who that is waived for, and what that specific training is, and then how this fits in to that, so I am clear on that. And I don't know if you want to discuss that further, or if... [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Well, I can start sort of broadly. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: And then I know Julie Rogers is here today. [LB1041]

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SENATOR WILLIAMS: Yeah. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: So she can talk more in depth about it. But in terms of kinship and relative placements, most training is waived for them, which is always... [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Right. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: ...it's...I understand the concern of not wanting to reduce the amount of families that are willing to step up to take on a foster kid but, when you really think about it, when you have a family...when I went through the foster care system as somebody who, you know, we...my husband and I talked a lot about it, and then we went through--I believe it was ten weeks of pretty significant training. In terms of relative and kinship placements, a lot of times that family member is called out of the blue, and it is not something they talked in depth about really wanting to do, but they will absolutely take on that family member and have them placed with them. But I think, in those circumstances, additional training really is necessary, and so, especially when we have a report showing that there were sexual abuse cases within kinship and relative placements, I think it's very important, then, that we have training requirements, regardless of whether you're foster or adoptive parents, or whether you're a kinship or relative placement. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Help me, and maybe Ms. Rogers can help me when she's up here with this, too. On page 3 of the bill, line 27, where it talks about the department can issue a waiver for licensing standard not related to children's safety. So we're making a distinction that sexual abuse is not related to child safety or...I'm missing the point there. You're going to be able to help me with that, aren't you? [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Um-hum. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Yeah. Julie... [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Yeah, Julie will be able to help. I mean from... [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: I want to be sure. You know, I guess I'm partly saying I'm not sure why some of this isn't covered with that exclusion right there already, with the children's safety. [LB1041]

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SENATOR WISHART: Because I believe that that's the way that, when you're reading children's safety, that means a background check and a home check. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay, okay. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: But no additional training, in terms of education, required. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Proponents? [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: And I will be here to close... [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Very good. [LB1041]

SENATOR WISHART: ...if needed. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for coming. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: (Exhibit 1) Thank you. Senator Erdman and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, for the record my name is Julie Rogers, J-u-l-i-e R-o-g-e-r-s, and I serve as your Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare. As was mentioned, our investigation identified 50 child victims of sexual abuse. Of these victims, 37 were abused in a foster, adoptive, or guardian home. Adoptive and guardian homes identified in the investigation had served as foster care placements for youth prior to becoming a permanent home for them. Foster or adoptive parents or guardians were responsible for sexually abusing 22 of the children. For 15 children, other youth or other adults in the foster or adoptive home were responsible. These 37 cases included in our report are certainly not the only incidences of sexual abuse that have occurred in Nebraska foster homes. In the United States, research estimates that youth living without either parent, including foster care, are ten times more likely to be sexually abused than youth living with both parents. This is consistent with research from other countries, which indicates that youth in foster care are at a higher risk for child sexual abuse than the general population. We found that, in many instances of the cases included in our report, foster parents

were ill-equipped to protect children and often failed to respond appropriately when sexual abuse allegations were made. In 14 of the 37 child sexual abuse cases that we reviewed in foster and adoptive homes, caregivers dismissed sexual abuse allegations that children made as false, and failed to report them to the authorities, a violation of Nebraska law, as mentioned. Nebraska currently uses national models for foster parent training curricula: "Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence-Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting" and "Deciding Together," again as mentioned. Although these training programs are widely used across the nation, they lack important information on preventing child sexual abuse in foster care settings. No training is provided on minimizing opportunity for abuse to occur, the heightened risk for sexual abuse in foster care settings, or establishing and discussing appropriate boundaries with children. Both training curricula contain guidance for foster parents on what to do when foster children make false sexual abuse allegations against them. The training suggests that foster children make allegations to gain attention or to get people in trouble. This information is contrary to research that indicates false sexual abuse allegations by children are rare, occurring in only 4-8 percent of the cases. Emphasizing response to false allegations encourages foster parents to minimize and ignore real cases of sexual abuse and could contribute to the failure to report sexual abuse that we repeatedly found in our investigation. Attached to my testimony are excerpts from our report of investigation, including the full recommendation that we made to DHHS on foster parent training and their response. As you can see, DHHS believes its current training program, when paired with our recommendation to better educate youth in the system, is adequate. We disagree. Educating foster parents themselves on sexual abuse prevention is key to ensuring that youth in state care are safe, and that swift and appropriate action is taken when any concerns do arise. Revisions and additions to foster parent training included in LB1041 are essential. And to the kinship waiver, the safety precautions is that the relative or kinship care that a child will be placed in, they have to submit to a background check and pass the background check before children can be placed with them. And then, I believe they have to complete a home study and pass the home study within a certain amount of time, but training is waived for that group of people. But I believe that they are encouraged to go through training and to become licensed foster parents, if they wish. And I'm happy to answer any other questions you might have. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Questions? Senator Howard. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you for visiting with us today. Can you talk about what is it, what the home study is, what's a part of a home study? [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: So a home study is an addition to a background check. It's making sure that the home is physically able to accommodate the children placed in that home, whether that's enough bedrooms or just that the home is adequate. And then it's also a lot of details on the

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family and the caregivers, who's part of that family, other children in the family, and that sort of thing. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: So it doesn't have any questions or training as a part of the home study. It doesn't have any training as a part of the home study, and it doesn't have anything to do with sexual abuse or knowledge of how you would handle a sexual abuse allegation. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Right, not that I know of. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: No. Okay. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: I believe...I think the training part is what the system relies on to educate foster parents on what they do if there's abuse or neglect allegation, calling the hotline in every case. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: But I don't believe...well, in our review of the curriculum, it's not specific to sexual abuse in the training, but that wouldn't come out in the home study. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Right. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: That's part of the training. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Perfect, thank you. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Um-hum. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Williams. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you, Julie, for being here. In your testimony, you seemed to indicate to me, and I'd like to have you expand on this, that certainly we have the case, the issue of the waived training. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Um-hum. [LB1041]

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SENATOR WILLIAMS: But then I think you're bringing into question the training that's being used generally anyway... [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Yes. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: ...that we're currently using two different curricula that are used widely nationally, but neither one of them meets the level that you would like to see. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: That's correct. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Is there...are there training curricula available that would? [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: We did not go that far in our analysis of training curricula. When we make...the way we do our recommendations is to recommend that, for...in this, that they have a component of that, and then the Children and Family Services, they would be the experts at analyzing different curricula and what fits in with their TIPS-MAPP model, for example, or "Deciding Together." So we don't... [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: I just wanted to be sure that we were understanding that the current curricula is not deemed satisfactory by the...by your office. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: That's right. And I called the creators of the TIPS-MAPP, those that have created that training and who train on that, and had a conversation about exactly what is in that training, besides reading through the training. I personally have not gone through the training. And we did talk about there is a lack of, for example, prevention--sexual abuse prevention in foster care settings. They do...the same organization does have a more specific training for foster parents on taking victims of sexual abuse into their home, but it's not part of the general training. [LB1041]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Senator Howard, I'm sorry. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: That's okay. What was the department's reasoning behind not accepting the recommendation? [LB1041]

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JULIE ROGERS: They said that they already train foster parents on things like calling the hotline and abuse and what to do if someone is alleging abuse and neglect, and then sexual abuse would fall under that. That's my understanding... [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: ...that their position was that they already...it's already covered in the training that they offer. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay, thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Crawford. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you for being here and sharing your testimony, and for all your work in paying attention to these cases and helping us think about the systematic issues. So I think I heard you say in our existing training... [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Um-hum. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...is the...is there clear information about calling the hotline in every incidence? Is that...is what to do in a case when it...after it occurs... [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Um-hum. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...a part of the training? [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: It's mandatory. I think of it as a mandatory reporter sort of training. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: And so I believe the mandatory reporter requirements are gone over. I'm not sure how much it's emphasized or how that... [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: ...exactly... [LB1041]

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SENATOR CRAWFORD: But not prevention, to prevent... [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Right. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...incidents from happening first (inaudible). [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Well, especially with sexual abuse, in particular. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, thank you. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Um-hum. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? I looked at you this time. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you. [LB1041]

JULIE ROGERS: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? Thank you for coming. [LB1041]

BECCA BRUNE: (Exhibit 2) Hello, Senator Erdman and senators of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Becca Brune, B-e-c-c-a B-r-u-n-e, and I am here on behalf of Nebraska Appleseed, to testify in support of LB1041. LB1041 would address the recommendation, as you heard, from the Inspector General, about Health and Human Services, including a component of sexual abuse prevention in their foster and adoptive parent training. We believe, and we've seen this from the report, that child sexual abuse remains a problem in our state and in our state's foster care system. And in my position at Nebraska Appleseed, I work with many young people who have, unfortunately, experienced trauma, including sexual abuse, during their time in foster care. And we saw this in the reported 50 cases that occurred between 2013 and 2016. And 37 of those occurring while the young people were in foster, adoptive, or guardian homes. So the training detailed in the bill would better prepare foster and adoptive parents to identify, protect, and report child sexual abuse. And, while the department has rejected the recommendation because they said it is already addressed, we agree with the senator and the Inspector General that, from what we can review, it is also not comprehensive enough and not uniformly trained on by agencies across the state. So from our experience working with

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implementation of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, we believe that having statute to guide training standards promotes a higher quality of training and helps it to be uniformly trained on across the state. And we saw this with the trainings around sex trafficking and the reasonable and prudent parent standard. And we also agree with the senator and Inspector General that the cost of the fiscal note might be excessive, because there are existing trainings through Lutheran Family Services, the Child Advocacy Centers, which the senator also mentioned, that could potentially be used and drawn on while developing a training. LB1041 is an important step in ensuring our foster care system is one of zero tolerance for child sexual abuse, and in ensuring foster and kinship placements throughout the state are adequately trained to prevent, identify, and report incidences of sexual abuse. So we would like to thank Senator Wishart and the committee for your efforts on behalf of Nebraska's children, and respectfully ask that you vote to advance LB1041. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony today. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you. [LB1041]

BECCA BRUNE: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Good afternoon, Senator, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Timothy Wempen, T-i-m-o-t-h-y W-e-m-p-e-n. I am here on behalf of the LB1041, for supported. I feel...I am a former foster youth, and I'm...currently worked with a bunch of youth this weekend that have been in the foster care system. And we decided that this bill is one of importance to us. The main thing we like in it is that the training would include reacting to any sign or disclosure of sexual abuse appropriately. We feel that it is an issue within the foster care system and it needs to be addressed in the training. And I would be glad to answer any questions. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for coming, for your testimony. Any questions? Senator Howard. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you for visiting with us today. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: So are you...have you aged out of our system then? [LB1041]

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TIMOTHY WEMPEN: I was actually transferred to the juvenile justice system because the issues with my sexual trauma was not addressed, and I decided to act out inappropriately. So my sexual reporting was taken...was not taken into consideration and dismissed without any regards. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Oh, okay. And that was when you were in and out of home placement? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Yes. I was taken from my family when I was six years old and was never placed back. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Here in Nebraska? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Yes, in the state of Nebraska. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. And what are you up to now? Are you in school? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: I am currently trying to get my GED, and I work with the advocacy committee here in Lincoln, Project Everlast, to advocate on bills that I think are important to juveniles in the system. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: One or both of them? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Both foster care and juvenile justice. [LB1041]

SENATOR HOWARD: That's awesome. We're really glad that you came and talked to us today. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Crawford. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And again, I echo those sentiments; thank you. I appreciate you coming in and talking about your experience and sharing your experience with us. In your conversations with other former foster youth, were there any particular parts of the training that you thought were really important, in terms of preventing or

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recognizing or reacting, things that you saw that you wish...I wish, you know, that the people in the system would be trained on to prevent things that have happened to us? [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: We didn't specifically go over any current trainings. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Um-hum. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: What there is...we do know there is trainings for sexual abuse and...but we just feel they need to include more instruction on recognizing the signs of sexual abuse and reacting appropriate to these reports from juveniles and young adults in out-of-home placements, to the authorities and them being taken seriously. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Okay. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: A lot of cases are, unfortunately, dismissed right away because of either they don't have time or the people don't feel that they're true. Instead of looking into them, they just like to dismiss them. [LB1041]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: That's very helpful; thank you. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Thank you for coming. [LB1041]

TIMOTHY WEMPEN: Thank you. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? Anyone else in favor? Any in opposition? Any testimony in opposition? How about neutral testimony? Seeing none, Tyler, do you have any letters? [LB1041]

TYLER MAHOOD: (Exhibits 3 and 4) Yes, I have a letter, signed by Juliet Summers of Voices for Children in Nebraska, in support; and Ivy Svoboda of the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers, in support. [LB1041]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Tyler. Senator Wishart, do you care to close? Senator Wishart waives closing. That closes the hearing on LB1041. We'll now move to LB1004. Senator

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Bolz. I don't see Senator Bolz. Oh, there she is. Okay. Good afternoon, Senator. [LB1041
LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Good afternoon. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thanks for coming. The floor is yours. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: (Exhibits 1 and 2) Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Kate Bolz; that's K-a-t-e B-o-l-z, for the record. And I'm here today to talk about the Aging and Disability Resource Center Act. ADRCs were established as a pilot program in 2015, with the help of a number of the folks on this committee, and I'm thankful for that. They have since helped thousands of individuals, senior citizens and individuals with disabilities, as well as their families, navigate the various services and support systems available to them in the state and to make good decisions that help them stay in their homes and communities. I'm further happy to report that the support of this program has helped people stay in their communities, saving an estimated \$4.5 million by diverting them from higher levels of care. So by ensuring that folks can have home care or respite care, they have avoided higher-level nursing facility of care, and I think that's wonderful. The bill would permanently establish aging and disability resource centers, establish...eliminate references to previous...the previous demonstration project, and enumerate some requirements for programming collaboration between aging and disability partners that were some lessons learned in the pilot initiative. The realization that someone you love will need additional supports or services to stay in the community can feel overwhelming, especially after an overwhelming or emotional event, such as an accident. Many people don't know what services are available or where to turn for help or how to choose those services in a cost-effective way. As the baby boomer generation ages, we will have more demand for such services in Nebraska. The Legislature's planning committee reports that a number of...the number of persons age 65 and older will grow from 246,000 in 2010 to 323,000 in 2020, which is a 31 percent increase. Without support navigating these systems, well-intended advocates frequently use the most expensive forms of care, including institutional care such as nursing homes or extended hospitalization, which can cause people to quickly extend their resources. Providing the right service at the right time for the right person not only helps people stay in their homes and communities and maximize their personal resources, it also helps to control state expenditures. ADRCs are designed to help make sure that those good choices happen. ADRCs are identified as evidence-based programs by the Administration for Community Living. They raise visibility and availability of the full range of available options, provide objective information and advice, counseling and assistance, empower people to make informed decisions about their long-term services and supports, and help people access both public and private programs. ADRCs offer four tiers of service: basic information, information and referral, Options Counseling, and Enhanced Options Counseling. And others who testify today can provide information about how those programs work in more detail. The demonstration projects

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were required to collect data through June of 2018. Year one data suggests that ADRCs, specifically the Options Counseling, are providing significant cost avoidance. Evaluation also includes a significant number of positive outcomes for individuals. And ADRCs No Wrong Door model of connecting individuals and caregivers directly to resources provides a more seamless service delivery system and helps manage and tamp down on bureaucracy and navigating our existing systems. The ADRC pilot project has been a successful demonstration, partnership, and collaboration. While people with disabilities have represented only about one quarter of the contracts served through the pilot project, both disability and aging partners have continued to work together to develop strategies to reach consumers and their caregivers. I'd also like to add that the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is working on a long-term care redesign plan, and envisioning what the future of long-term services and supports might look like in our state. And I'm sure, as members of the Health and Human Services Committee, you have discussed that and been briefed about it. The ADRCs and this No Wrong Door model is an essential part of making sure that the long-term care redesign initiatives can be successful by making sure that the front door leads people to the right services and systems, and helps us to keep the traffic flow moving, as well as address costs in the system. So following my testimony, you'll hear from a variety of stakeholders, so I will...I'll try to wrap it up. But I do want to draw your note...your attention to the fiscal note. The fiscal note is a little bit different than anyone I've worked with in my time as a state senator, just because of a little bit of a difference between where the state budget is at and where this bill is at. There were \$925,000 in existing funds that were sort of included in the state budget this year, and it's my understanding...and I don't want to speak for the department, but it was an understanding that I took away that the department had intended that for the use of the aging and disability resource centers. That's not the full amount of the project. The full amount of the project, we would need an additional \$476,000. So we can talk about that in more depth, but I encourage you to review both the Legislative Fiscal Office fiscal note and the department's fiscal note, which outlines some of those details and, as a colleague on the Appropriations Committee and the committee to working with the Health and Human Services Committee, to try to put those resources together and continue this very important project. So I'll leave it there, and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Williams. [LB1004]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you, Senator Bolz, for being here. So if I'm understanding this correctly, this was originally passed as a pilot program--I'll use that term. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. [LB1004]

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SENATOR WILLIAMS: And now we're running to the end of that. How many other states offer this same kind of program? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum, that's a great question, and the answer is most, if not all. We were one of the last states, and I can't tell you for sure whether it's 44, 45, 46. But most other states do have this kind of initiative. [LB1004]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: And are they funding it the same way generally, as far as your knowledge is, as we're attempting to fund it here? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. Sure. You know, most other states think of it as a part of their long-term services and support system, think of it as a front door to these public systems. To my knowledge--and there may be experts behind me that can speak in greater detail--to my knowledge they've really stayed away from a user fee type model, because the end goal is not only to help people use their resources well and find the right places for themselves, but it's also cost avoidance within a state system. So I think most departments of health and human services think of it as part of their mission. [LB1004]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Senator Crawford. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you, Senator Bolz, for bringing this testimony. In the process of having the pilot plan, was there anything that you've learned from the pilot, that is reflected in this bill, that extends the program? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. Yeah, that's a great question. The first was learning...or takeaway was that we need to be more clear and, I guess, I would say prescriptive... [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: ...in terms of the relationship between the aging partners and the disability partners, to make sure that everyone has a voice, everyone has their skills and expertise leveraged and used to their maximum ability, and that we're not duplicating services or referring individuals to folks that don't have the greatest expertise when another organization has

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developed that expertise. So I think the language which is in this bill builds upon the previous language to clarify that the aging and disability resource centers will subcontract formally with the disability partners. There were a couple of other lessons learned. One thing is really positive, and that is we can leverage more federal funds than we have been so far. And the impact of those federal funds...I'll try to boil it down. But if we're able to fund the aging and disability resource centers at the level contemplated in the bill, the additional federal funds should allow us to keep up with growth over time. So making this investment now should be very helpful in terms of sustainability in the future. And really, it's a matter of matching funds and identifying which funds can be appropriately matched by the federal government. So I would say those were the two major takeaways. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: And the bill, as drafted now, would allow us to access these matching funds in the future. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum, yeah. So I thought I had some numbers on that. I can get them to you. But the federal matching funds will fall into place in future years, because just in these past couple of years have we figured out how to do that most effectively. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Great, thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Yeah. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Senator Howard. [LB1004]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. Because of our current fiscal constraints, would you consider an extension of the pilot instead of going statewide? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. That's...it's a great question. The aging and disability resource centers, the pilot language prescribed that there would be three centers and three different projects, and that's how we get things started. [LB1004]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: The stakeholders who applied for those grants decided to do that in a combined way, and so we actually do have, more or less, statewide coverage. There are a couple places that don't have full statewide coverage. So I'm not sure that we would be able to continue protecting all the progress that we've made while still pulling...while pulling back or calling it a pilot again. [LB1004]

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SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: I think protecting the progress made so far makes more sense, frankly. So it may be a challenge to figure out how to come up with the remaining \$476,000 that's really needed to keep the program going. But I think, of all the things that are in front of us--and trust me, I've heard a lot of them--this is one that's really worth our extra attention. [LB1004]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator, I have a couple questions. So how many of these sites were there? How many of these were there? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: So there were three applications but all of the area agencies on aging except for one participated. So there are people in almost every community across the state that we could turn to. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: And what was the funding for that, do you remember about that? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: It was General Funds. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: General Fund? How much was it, do you know? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: I don't have the original fiscal note in front of me but I can share that with you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So what happens if this goes away? Will the agency, the area agency office, aging office, pick up the difference or how will that happen? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: I really don't think they have the capacity to do so. They have other statutorily prescribed responsibilities. They may be able to use the lessons learned and still be able to respond to questions. But I think the service of greatest value, and others behind me can speak in more detail, but is the Options Counseling and the Enhanced Options Counseling, in other words, really sitting down with a family and saying here's how much money you have in retirement, here are your options, here's how you can get something that's subsidized. That level of work I don't think the area agency on aging could provide in an ongoing way without these additional funds. I also don't think the area agency on aging...area agencies on aging could

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continue to serve the disability population, and so certainly the statewide independent living centers and other resources are available to folks. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: But this No Wrong Door "figure out the right service for the right person at the right time" strategy will be much more diffuse, much more catch-as-catch-can if we don't fund this, continue to fund this laudable project. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Do you have any idea how many employees are involved in this? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: You know, that would be a great question for one of the folks coming behind me... [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: ...because I'm not sure now the area agencies on aging have split apart responsibilities. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So area agencies on aging are by districts? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: By region. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: By region? How many is there, do you know? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: How many? There are eight? [LB1004]

_____ : Eight. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Eight. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Senator Howard. [LB1004]

SENATOR HOWARD: What's the federal match? [LB1004]

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SENATOR BOLZ: It varies depending on the administrative costs that are expended, so it's a matching requirement based on the administrative draw down. And as I was mentioning earlier, one of the takeaways is that the process for doing that has been put into place over the course of the pilot and we should be able to draw down more and more over time, but it's that administrative match like you see in other programs. [LB1004]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay, thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Thank you, Senator Bolz. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Proponents? Thank you for coming. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: (Exhibit 3) Good afternoon. My name is Connie Cooper, C-o-n-n-i-e C-o-o-p-e-r, the director of the Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging in Norfolk, but I'm here on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Area Agencies on Aging. I'm here in support of LB1004. As Senator said, in 2015, the Nebraska Legislature approved LB320, which created three demonstration projects with the aging and disability resource centers, or also known as the ADRC, through June 2018. The area agencies on aging combined efforts so that the entire state could receive ADRC services. The ADRC demonstration project also had agreements with five disability organizations in this process. The ADRC provides services for people, older adults that are 60 years of age and older, persons of any age with disabilities, family members, caregivers, advocates, and providers. The demonstration project allowed us to develop an ADRC in which we provided information and assistance. This included a warm call and/or follow-up to see if the person received the information and assistance they were seeking. It also included Options Counseling. This is an in-depth decision support helping people make carefully decisions on the pros and cons of options and make those decisions for the short term as well as long term. And also it provided us opportunity to identify unmet needs, and for us the demonstration project noted financial assistance, as well as housing, as the top unmet needs. An ADRC is a No Wrong Door philosophy. The goal is to enhance the existing infrastructure by creating single points of entry at the local level. It also is to increase consumer access to information and services for long-term care in a comprehensive and a cost-effective manner. It is for Nebraskans to make informed decisions about their long-term care. In this project, in 2017, ADRC Options counselors averaged serving approximately 750 individuals each month. Attached is this information for you from the last quarter on referrals that we made from the ADRC. The ADRC made over 1,500 referrals to organizations for services and supports. Note that 56 percent of those referrals are to nongovernmental agencies. We also provide surveys that are distributed to Options Counseling and information assistance consumers each month. The survey comments

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included: "I was in a crisis and they took a tremendous load off of me. I couldn't have done it without them." "The Options Counselor helped me get a plan and," also, "calm me down...a very good experience...very helpful. I will call again and I am also now aware of the resources available" to help. And also, "This is an amazing community resource for those in our community that are disabled and their families." One family member contacted an ADRC regarding care for their father. He was showing signs of dementia and needing more care and assistance. Some of the siblings--it was a large family--thought he could remain at home. Some of the siblings thought he needed more care and needed to go into an assisted living and nursing facility. The Options counselor met with that family and their father to discuss his care, the short-term as well as long-term care options. For him, the long-term care meant supportive services in his home. The long-term care plan had that family looking, with our assistance, for veterans services. The area agencies on aging are working with Senator Bolz now on the language concerning contracting with the lead disability organizations, and also submissions of plans to the department. The purpose of the ADRC demonstration project was to evaluate the feasibility of establishing ADRCs statewide. We have shown it is successful in our state through the evaluation, the surveys, and consumer contacts. We thank Senator Bolz for her support and we ask that you support LB1004 to continue our work as an ADRC. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Senator Linehan.
[LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Vice Chairman Erdman. So thank you very much for your testimony. This is very helpful. So you said that every...the counselors were serving up to 170...excuse me, 750 people per month? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So how many counselors has this program, how many...I think that...
[LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: The area agencies, there's seven of them in the state, Options counselors.
[LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So statewide it's seven? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Seven, um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: And they mostly office in the center for aging? Is that... [LB1004]

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CONNIE COOPER: In the area agencies on aging offices, yes. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So do you have a number of the number of people who have been served in the last 12 months? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: In the last 12 months? Well, about... [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Or whatever number you have, give me. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Seven hundred and fifty times 12,... [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: ...around 9,000-ish. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. So this 750 is all seven of them. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Per month, yes, yes, correct. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Okay. All right. Thank you. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Yep. Sorry. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: No, no, that's good. Thank you very much for that. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Crawford. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you for being here today and thank you for your testimony and your work with our folks who need this assistance. So when you're talking about working with Senator Bolz on the submission of plans to the department, is that a part of trying to make this initiative a part of the long-term care redesign plan or is that something different when you're talking about submitting that? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: A little bit something different. Part of our concern is meeting the time line to get some of the things that's in the bill done before the July 1 because the demonstration

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project of LB320 ends June 30. So there's just that little bit of concern can we get everything done by that time line. So we'll be working with her,... [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Okay. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: ...with some amendments if needed or what she recommends we do. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Excellent. All right, thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Anyone else? I have a couple questions. So how many people work in this, in the ADRCs? Do you know how many people are involved? How many are involved in your organization? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: My area agency on aging, I have a total of 32 staff, total of 32 staff. My...I have one Options counselor through the ADRC. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. And there's eight regions and seven have joined and there's... [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Correct. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: One hasn't? Which one hasn't? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: The West Central Area Agency on Aging in North Platte. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: What are they doing there? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: What we've done, because we wanted to make sure that the whole state was receiving these services, two of the other area agencies have worked together to make sure that that area is also being addressed and those services are handled there, so. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So if we remove the temporary status, then they'll be eligible to join? [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Correct, yep. [LB1004]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Yeah. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you. Anything else? Thank you for your testimony. [LB1004]

CONNIE COOPER: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Other proponents? Thank you for coming. [LB1004]

BRAD MEURRENS: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon, Senator Erdman and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Brad, B-r-a-d, Meurrens, M-e-u-r-r-e-n-s, and I am the public policy director for Disability Rights Nebraska, the designated protection and advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Nebraska. I'm here today in strong support of LB1004. I'll be brief. Disability is a natural part of the human experience. Aging and disability present significant life changes that affect not only the individual but often their families as well. This is often, such as the case with my family, not a situation that many individuals in our families plan for, and is a situation that often requires individuals and/or families to possess a wealth of information or to navigate and access public health and service systems. Individuals and families can feel overwhelmed as aging occurs and/or disability becomes present, and they are going to have many questions about what to do, what is available, what are the options, and how to put things in motion. Simply put, they need help and information. This is especially important for those individuals who have an aging or a disability-related need but have no family, friends, or advocates who can help them figure it out. Having a singular place to get that help or information is critical rather than have individuals and families fend for themselves and figure it out on their own. That's the purpose of the ADRCs and that's why we support the change from a demonstration project, as is proposed in LB1004. Senator Linehan, I think the numbers that you were looking for would be on page 2 of my testimony in the bullet points there as well. This is coming from the year two evaluation report that was done earlier this year and says that the ADRCs had 12,198 contacts from 6,329 different individuals between July 1, 2016, September 30, 2017. They had 895 contacts and 341 different people ages 18-60, so I think that gives you a...could give you a good sense of how, what the extent of the need and response was by the ADRCs. And with that, I would suggest that the committee advance the legislation. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1004]

BRAD MEURRENS: Thank you. [LB1004]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Next proponent. Thanks for coming. [LB1004]

KENT ROBERT: (Exhibit 5) Good afternoon, Senator Erdman, members of the HHS Committee. My name is Kent Rogert, K-e-n-t R-o-g-e-r-t. I'm here today representing a company called Trilogy Integrated Resources. So the ADRCs, for...just to remind some of you of why they showed up in...a few years ago, AARP put out some ratings of long-term services and supports on a scorecard. And out of 51 states and the District of Columbia, Nebraska ranked 50th. So Senator Bolz put together what was called the Aging Nebraskans Task Force and put together a lot of really good legislation that helped those with aging and disabilities, those types of things. And this is one of the great successes that came out of there. What I handed you is the nerdy version of it. Trilogy put together the Network of Care, and these are a couple of screen shots. And so if you go to the AAAs or if you look up in the corner of the first page, you see that that's a Nebraska DHHS Web site kick. So if you go there looking for some services, it kicks you over to the Network of Care where all services available for those with disabilities and those in aging services are in one place at the same time. And I can tell you that it's working. I...my folks sent me some information that only computer geeks can understand, so he had to run me through it. But what I can tell you, that there was 150,000 page views from 71,000 people in 2017, so people are going to these sites and they're checking out to find out where these services are. And I just reiterate. Senator Bolz mentioned that we've saved \$4.5 million in cost savings by helping individuals avoid higher cost for nursing home placements earlier than they normally would. And if you think about it, if you're able to do this stuff on the computer versus calling in, let's say a phone call costs you \$15-30 per call, if you figure it takes a half-hour or an hour, depending on what you're paying, so this is a great way to make those services available to people at a lower cost. They know where to get them. What else did I want to talk about? So we're also seeing high proportions of visits to success, meaning that many, if not almost all, service providers in the state are also using the site to be...make themselves available for those who need the services. Senator Williams, you had a question of who all has these. I can't tell you that answer for sure, but I can tell you with Trilogy we're in 713...we have 713 sites in 27 states in 637 counties. So at least our network is being used in over half the country, in a lot of places, so, and we can see that both ends are there. The people who are providing the service are on the site and the people who are looking for the service are getting to where they need to go. And really one of the things that this can really do is our long-term care service system cannot be sustainable at the current rates of Medicaid reimbursement. And if people are going into nursing homes and assisted livings after they've already expended all their resources, then we're already on Medicaid and it's causing more problems. So what the ADRCs and the Network of Care can do is help people stay at home longer, get services they need, use, you know, use their resources wisely, in the most cost-effective manner, so that the system is way more sustainable for a lot longer. I'd be happy to try and answer any questions you might have. [LB1004]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Must have done a good job. [LB1004]

KENT ROBERT: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you. Any other proponents? Thank you for coming today. [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: (Exhibit 6) Good afternoon, Senator Erdman, members of the committee. My name is Jordan Rasmussen, J-o-r-d-a-n R-a-s-m-u-s-s-e-n. I'm a policy associate with the Center for Rural Affairs. Rural America and the nation as a whole has entered a significant demographic change. Rural Nebraska counties are no different and that trend...that they have followed that trend with a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65. As of 2014, 18 percent of residents in rural counties were 65 years of age or older, compared to 11.5 percent in Nebraska's urban counties. For the 47 percent of Nebraskans of retirement age who currently live in rural counties and the wave of those who enter retirement after them, the Aging and Disabilities Resource Centers are a critical asset and resource to both the individual and the community as this population ages...looks to age safely and healthily in their homes and rural communities. Older Nebraskans have expressed a preference to remain in their communities and the state as they age. The Nebraska Rural Poll found that 40 percent of residents polled in the 50-64 age demographic did not have intentions of moving. This preference increased to 62 percent for those Nebraskans of retirement age. The decision of where to retire for all groups surveyed was driven by a desire to be close to family, proximity to healthcare services and facilities, and the cost-of-living factors. The infrastructure and societal structures which making living and aging in rural places distinct can also at times make it more challenging. In general, rural residents must travel further for healthcare or basics like grocery shopping, have access to fewer services, and participate in more dangerous occupations and recreational activities. As people age, these once-nondescript inconveniences can prove to be barriers to successful aging in place. Limited social and financial resources can also narrow rural elders' choice in where they live down to two options: often remaining in their home, which they can no longer manage; or skilled nursing care facilities. There's a way to get them more options. According to the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, on average, across the nation there are 50 beds in nursing facilities for every 1,000 residents. In rural communities, that number jumps to 62 beds, 35 percent more than in urban settings. When there's more beds, there are more people that make use of them. This can be a detriment to the individual, the care system, and the state, as it is estimated that the care of one in two residents in Nebraska nursing homes are covered by Medicaid. As annual rates for skilled nursing care and the growth in the aging population is considered, this could prove to be extremely costly for the state of Nebraska in the decades to come. Nebraska's ADRC exists to expand options for elders and their families to help them navigate the resources available that will allow them to remain in their homes and

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communities. By providing a hub for elders and their caregivers to navigate and identify available resources via Web site, phone, hot line, or in-person consultations, the ADRC helps people identify the right resources at the right time. This No Wrong Door approach is intended to alleviate some of the challenges of navigating multiple and disconnected services for seniors and their families and it has served rural Nebraskans well. The Center for Rural Affairs asks that the Legislature fully implement and provide the necessary resources for Nebraska's aging and disability resource centers to further support and help build out the continuum of care and services that is needed for our aging population across the state and especially in our rural communities. Thank you, and welcome any questions you might have. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any questions? Senator Linehan. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Erdman. Thank you very much for being here. [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: Yes. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So I have a question. How does this, especially in rural areas, how do people...first, how would they access this? How do they know to who to call? [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: That's...and I'm sure there are some experts behind me that can explain that, the marketing of the program, in more detail. But there is the aging...area agencies on aging serve as a front door as well. There's also a Web site that's pretty robust and that people can access. That's, I think, especially helpful for kind of those folks that fall in that gap generation that may be at home taking care of their families but then also having an aging parent, and so helping them being able to navigate those resources from afar. So there's a variety of ways that you might find out about it and probably additional marketing that could be done, too, to improve. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you. That's very helpful. So part of the purpose, which seems very worthy to me, is trying to make sure people don't run out of money quicker than they may ultimately run out of money. So there's not an income level when people access these services? [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: Not to my understanding, no, there is not. So it's...the ADRC is that front line and so then they can help navigate and direct you towards the right resource, whether that be, you know, looking at SNAP assistance or a home-improvement piece. And so the ADRC doesn't necessarily work through that financial piece, is my understanding. Again, don't

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understand all the details of that, but they serve at that front line and then can help direct you to the right location. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So I'm thinking more...I assume thousands of Nebraskans who are aging that have never in their lives accessed any kind of help,... [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: Yes. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: ...governmental help, but now they are now in a situation where their kids have moved away and they can't go to the grocery store and they can't...but they have money but they don't want to go to a home. So how do...how does this program, especially because there's...they were in rural Nebraska, all over, right? So how does...how do those people access this program, or is there any outreach to those particular people? [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: I can't speak to the specific details. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: That's okay. Maybe some... [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: But I think there are a number of folks that will come behind me that will be able to answer that in more detail. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay, thank you very much. [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: Okay. Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Thank you very much. [LB1004]

JORDAN RASMUSSEN: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? Thank you for coming today. [LB1004]

SUZAN DeCAMP: (Exhibits 7, 8, 9, and 10) Good afternoon, Vice Chair Erdman and members of the committee. My name is Suzan DeCamp, S-u-z-a-n D-e-C-a-m-p, and I'm here testifying today in support of LB1004 on behalf of AARP Nebraska and the Nebraska Caregiver Coalition. I am an owner of an abstract and title business and an AARP volunteer. AARP strongly supports LB1004, a bill that would make permanent the vital services and programs of the aging and disability resource centers. The ADRC program brings Nebraska one step closer to meeting the

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Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' vision of creating a person-centered, community-based environment that promotes independence and dignity for individuals of all ages by providing access to information and one-on-one counseling to assist consumers and their caregivers in exploring a full range of long-term support options. As we move closer and closer to the implementation of long-term care, managed care in our state, it is critical that we continue to improve and perfect the already-established ADRC system before we move ahead with managed care programs. LB1004 would do this. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the older adult population is rapidly increasing. In Nebraska, there will be 375,811 individuals age 65 and older by 2030. This will be a 54 percent increase from 2010. The Census Bureau also shows us there are about 60,000 adults in Nebraska residing in communities who have difficulty living independently. AARP's Public Policy Institute released an updated 2017 State Long-Term Services and Supports Scorecard at the end of last year. The scorecard was developed to assess long-term services and supports for older adults, people with physical disabilities, and family caregivers by providing data to benchmark performance, measure progress, and identify areas for improvement. Nebraska currently ranks 15th overall in comparison with the other states. However, it's important to note that Nebraska is 26th on effective transitions, 22nd in affordability and access, 20th in choice of setting and provider, and 21st for support for family caregivers. While we are showing improvement, the scorecard shows that needs for states, and namely Nebraska, to accelerate care improvements for older adults and people with disabilities. In order to get to the top, we have to continue to strategically plan for the aging population across the main sectors of health, housing, transportation, and family care giving. Nebraska has good programs and services in place. We have committed families who helped loved ones continue to live as independently as possible. But we also realize that there are caregivers, particularly those who are new to care giving, who need help and don't know where to turn to find it. According to AARP's Public Policy Institute 2015 report, 195,000 family caregivers provided 182 million hours of care, resulting in an estimated \$2.5 billion of care to their parents, spouses, partners, and other adult loved ones in 2013. It is critical that these caregivers and their family members have ongoing access to the services that the ADRCs provide. Nebraska has proven this program works. Our state and communities need it, and our aging population and their caregivers deserve it. Making the ADRCs permanent promotes the right care at the right time, and allows those that want to remain independent to age in place. The older baby boomers will reach the age of 80 by 2026. We will begin to see a dramatic increase in the demand for long-term care that will trickle down for decades. We need to be preparing for 2026 and beyond today. A key part of that preparation is making the ADRC programs a permanent fixture in our state. We believe that the passage of LB1004 will build on the successful initiatives that have already taken place. It will continue to improve access to community-based care, make our long-term care system more efficient, and benefit people who need the services, their caregivers, and the taxpayers. AARP strongly supports LB1004 and we encourage the committee to advance it to General File. In addition to the testimony presented here, I am also submitting letters of support on behalf of Nebraska Health Care Association,

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Immanuel Pathways, and individuals Tim Potter and Michael Davis. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB1004]

SUZAN DeCAMP: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? Thank you for coming. [LB1004]

CLAYTON FREEMAN: (Exhibit 11 and 12) Thank you. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Clayton Freeman, C-l-a-y-t-o-n F-r-e-e-m-a-n, and I serve as the director of programs and public policy for the Alzheimer's Association. Aging and disability resource centers help seniors and individuals with disabilities and their family members access to services, ability to make sound decisions, to find reliable service providers, and meet complex needs, to help them stay in their communities and avoid the higher costs of levels of care. Alzheimer's disease is the most expensive disease in America. Services provided by the ADRCs are critical for families facing Alzheimer's or related dementias. Alzheimer's puts a tremendous strain on families and the healthcare system. Without support navigating these systems, well-intended advocates frequently use the most expensive forms of care, including institutional care, nursing homes, or extended hospitalization, and can cause a person or a family to quickly exhaust their resources. Providing the right service at the right time for the right person not only helps people stay in their homes and communities, it also helps control expenditures. Appropriate respite support, for example, provided at the right time, can prevent families the strain that so often overcomes them, or the need for crisis intervention. A former U.S. Surgeon General called Alzheimer's the most under-recognized threat to public health in the 21st century. There are currently 33,000 individuals living with Alzheimer's in Nebraska, supported by 82,000 caregivers. By 2025, these numbers will rise by 21 percent. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in our state. Alzheimer's caregivers face what we call the 36-hour day and need help navigating through a disease process that can span eight to ten years and beyond. One outstanding example of services provided by the ADRC is the Options Counseling Program that provides intermediate services for those who may have multiple needs that require assistance from several agencies, resulting in a standardized written plan that identifies the individual's person-centered goals and the action steps necessary to meet their goals. A family facing Alzheimer's needs this program. So many of our constituents live in very rural counties of our state where access to healthcare services are limited. Having access to an ADRC, especially in the early stages of the disease, can significantly enhance the quality of their life, both for the individual with the disease and their caregiver. The Alzheimer's Association in Nebraska today reaches less than 1 percent of those 65 years and older with Alzheimer's or dementia. With the funding of the ADRCs, we can increase

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our reach, identify those in need of service, and direct them to the ADRC for immediate assistance. We need the ADRCs now more than ever. We hear so often from our constituents: We do not know what services are available, to whom to turn for help, or where to start. The ADRCs are a place to start. The Alzheimer's Association supports full funding of the ADRCs and urges the passing of LB1004. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? Senator Crawford. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you for being here today and for your work with the Alzheimer's Association. Could you talk just a little bit about how you currently work with the ADRCs? [LB1004]

CLAYTON FREEMAN: Well, we refer to them all the time. One of our big partners are the area agencies on aging. And since those are across the state, we rely on them a great deal. For example, I was talking to my...one of my staff members in Kearney who said, Clay, be sure to tell them, if they ask, it's making a difference in Kearney, Nebraska. So the ADRCs are part of that area agency on aging network. They're our partners and we refer to them all the time. So when someone calls us we say reach out to your agency on aging, the ADRC, so they're our partners. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Thank you, Sir. [LB1004]

CLAYTON FREEMAN: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other proponents? Anyone else in favor of the bill? How about opponents, opposition? Any neutral testimony today? Senator Bolz. Do you have any letters, Tyler? [LB1004]

TYLER MAHOOD: (Exhibits 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) Yes, I have. All of the following letters are in support: Peggy Reisher of the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska; Jeremy Hohlen of LeadingAge Nebraska; Kathy Kay of the League of Human Dignity; Kelly Keller of the National Association of Social Workers-Nebraska Chapter; Kristin Mayleben-Flott of the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities; Douglas Bauch on behalf of himself; Duane Polzien on behalf of himself; and Michael Walsh on behalf of himself. [LB1004]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Tyler. Senator Bolz. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Thank you. I just wanted to briefly answer some of the questions that I think were asked by the committee. The first is there are, in terms of staff, there are seven Options counselors, but we have also contracted with an outside evaluator who has helped implement best practices, figure out the federal draw down, etcetera. And of course there's the administrators through the Department of Health and Human Services' Unit on Aging, so I would describe all of those folks as part of the team. And I'm not sure. I don't want to read into anyone's comments, but the natural follow-up question is the fiscal note, of course, covers that staff, but it also covers the cost of the phone system, which includes georouting so people get connected to the right person, the software that keeps up the underlying infrastructure, the survey management, and then the marketing services which you heard referenced. If there's any part that I wish we could invest more in-- this is a pretty bare-bones budget--if there's anything that we should invest more in, it is the marketing. We've got \$80,000 put into this budget proposal for that piece. They did sort of a push when the ADRCs first got started of TV and radio ads and, of course, print materials and word of mouth, and they haven't been able to sustain it at that level, and so I think that's something that we could do more of as the program grows and matures. I also heard a question about eligibility and who can come in the door and how that's responded to because the idea is really that it's a no-wrong-door approach. Anyone and everyone can come in and get the counseling, but I wanted to be clear that that information and referral, that access to expertise, that assistance, that's invaluable. But once you get to the point where you might actually be making some decisions about access to services, that's the point where you might use your own retirement funds to pay for respite or access free chore services through the area agency on aging. So I think that's part of the program philosophy. Last thing is just I wanted to recognize all the people in this room who have just done an incredible amount of work to get this up and running. Many of them are sitting in the second row and they are the type of folks who do it because they love the work and I'm sure they're probably a little bit abashed that I'm even pointing them out. (Laugh) But I think that they are just wonderful and they have put so much heart into this project. And I think even though we're in difficult budget times, it's the sort of thing that we need to continue our commitment to. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any questions? Senator Crawford. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Erdman. And thank you, Senator Bolz, for testimony and for all your work pulling this network together. The bill itself makes the program network permanent. If I understood you correctly earlier, you said we've already been able to have statewide access as it is. So this then is establishing that permanently at a similar level to what we have now, or is it increasing that level? [LB1004]

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SENATOR BOLZ: It's maintaining the level that we have now. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Um-hum, um-hum. And can you speak just a little bit about how this does interface with the planning for long-term care redesign? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Sure, sure. So the long-term care redesign report, which many of you have maybe reviewed, they have what they call foundational initiatives, things that they think they need to do first before we can get to a point where we're talking about, say, managed care for the long-term services and support system. And this No Wrong Door is a part of what they kind of refer to as those foundational changes. Another example of the foundational changes, that they think there should be some consolidation and more collaboration among some of the agencies that are administering the different programs and waivers. And so I think those two foundational recommendations work really well together because the idea is that we're leveraging existing resources, collaborating, communicating, using what we have first. And I think that this is in line with the vision established by the redesign report to say let's get our house in order so that we can be more successful when we do get to those places where we're innovating or implementing managed care or moving to the next phase of long-term care in our state. [LB1004]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: You're welcome. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Senator Linehan. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Erdman, and thank you, Senator Bolz, very much. I just have a couple of questions and they're...I don't know if you have them right off the top of your head. Do you know what the kind of training that...because these counselors, this is a big job, so the kind of training they have. And then the other thought I had or question I had, is there any effort for medical professionals, be it doctors, nurses, when people are leaving hospitals to connect, an effort especially in the rural areas that they connect them to these services? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Yeah. Those are really good questions. The first is that there are two consultants, and I don't know if they're here with us today--if they're not here, I'm sure they're watching remotely--Mary O'Hare and Lloya Fritz, who have been hired as consultants and contractors to help us get the program up and running. And over the period of the project so far, they have done continuing education, you know, ranging from inviting speakers in to having the evaluator present about best practices. The other thing that they've done that they deserve an

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incredible amount of credit for is they've developed a variety of stakeholder and advisory councils. And there are a number of different ways that they've put that together, but there's an advisory council that sort of says here's what we're thinking coming from our expertise in this field or that field, but also those stakeholder councils which say we're a part of the system and we want to provide feedback to you, and those do include medical professionals. Christopher Kelly, who you heard read across as a supporter, is an academic expert at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in gerontology, so they've done a laudable job of connecting to the community. [LB1004]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Um-hum. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Senator Bolz, I have a couple. On the front page, it talks about "repeal the original sections" and "declare an emergency." So do you have a priority for this bill? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: I'm working on it. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay, so what happens if we don't get this passed? [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: I mean, unfortunately, a lot of the progress that has been made so far will go fallow. We'll lose ground. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: And it's, if I may just... [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Go ahead. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: It's a challenge that I found as a policymaker because if we're using government resources we want proof of concept. We want to know that these things are best practices and that they work; and if they don't work, they should, in fact, sunset. But in the case such as the aging and disability resource center, I think we have proven the essential role of this function. The timing is unfortunate because I think everybody in this room, including the Unit on Aging, everyone from the Unit on Aging to the evaluator to the ADRC...to the area agencies on

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aging to the families who have done everything they can for their family members, have done their part to make this successful. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Any other questions? Thank you so much. [LB1004]

SENATOR BOLZ: Thank you. [LB1004]

SENATOR ERDMAN: That will conclude the hearing on LB1004. I'll turn the hearing back over to the very capable Chairman, Senator Riepe. [LB1004]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you, Senator Erdman, and thank you for chairing in my absence. I am Merv Riepe. I represent District 12, which is Omaha, Millard, and Ralston. And I had the pleasure of opening a bill of mine across the hall, which is on one of my pet things, which is healthcare reform. And this was on direct primary care. So but now I have returned. And, Senator McCollister, we're going to ask you to share with us and open on LB770. [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: (Exhibits 1 and 2) Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe and members of the committee. I'm John, J-o-h-n, McCollister, M-c-C-o-l-l-i-s-t-e-r, and I represent District 20 in Omaha. Everyone agrees that when people work hard, they should be able to get ahead, and there should be no barriers to taking a raise or getting a better job. Unfortunately, for years we've allowed barriers to continue to exist for people who want to move ahead, particularly for those working families that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or commonly known as SNAP. What I'm referring to is commonly known as the cliff effect, which remains unaddressed in SNAP. Eligibility for this work support program is based on income. Eligibility standards for this program are currently set at a gross income limit of 130 percent of the federal poverty level, with benefits phasing out as earnings increase. The unintended consequence of this design either creates a disincentive to work toward economic mobility or at least to a situation where the parent or guardian is working harder, but is financially worse off. Today I'm introducing LB770 to address the cliff effect in SNAP by allowing working families to accept raises or other small increases to their income without losing the vital support of SNAP. LB770 would accomplish this critically important change by increasing the gross income eligibility limits, while keeping the current net income limits in SNAP unchanged. More specifically, SNAP rules apply to a two-pronged income test, both before and after deductions like childcare, healthcare, and housing costs. Nebraska's gross, before-deductions income standard is currently 100 percent...130 percent of the federal poverty level. Nebraska's net after-deductions income standard is currently 100 percent of the federal poverty level. LB770 would increase the gross income limit to 160 percent of the federal poverty level while retaining the 100 percent income limit. With this adjustment, families that can successfully prove expenses like childcare would still be eligible for SNAP. Here are some facts to keep in mind as we

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consider policy changes about Nebraska's benefits and the families who rely on them. One hundred percent of aid costs for SNAP are fully funded by the federal government. The administrative costs for SNAP are split 50/50 between the federal government and our state. These administrative costs are the only cost to the state of Nebraska. In Nebraska, 71...74 percent of Nebraska families who receive SNAP benefits have children under 18. This is higher than the national average of 68 percent. Twenty-nine percent of Nebraska families include members who are elderly or disabled. About 48 percent of the families have members who are working. SNAP provides services to the poorest Nebraskans. Less than one in five SNAP recipients earns an income above the 100 percent federal poverty level. Average monthly benefit for each household member in 2016 was \$114. This breaks down to \$1.27 per person, per meal. In 2016 SNAP benefits generated \$241 million of economic activity in Nebraska communities. According to a fall 2016 USDA analysis, during an economic downturn, a \$5 increase in SNAP benefits generates \$9 of economic activity in the wider economy. Another USDA study, commissioned under President George W. Bush, found that \$1 in SNAP benefits equals \$1.84 in GDP, a finding collaborated by Moody's Economy, which found that \$1 in SNAP benefits equals \$1.73 in GDP increase. Children who are in families struggling to make ends meet, and have access to SNAP, are 16 percent less likely to be obese as adults, and 18 percent more likely to graduate from high school than children with similar backgrounds and no access to the program. LB770 would position Nebraska in the top half of states that have raised their gross income eligibility limit. Fifteen, where almost half percent (sic) of the 31 states have taken up this option, raised their state's gross income eligibility even higher, to even 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Now as I mentioned, 100 percent of the aid costs for Nebraska for SNAP are funded by the federal government. The administrative costs are split 50/50 between the federal government and our state. I would tell you that SNAP benefits generated \$241 million of economic activity in Nebraska communities. Supporters of LB770 and I definitely expected a more modest fiscal note for this bill. Our expectations were based on the information in the handout you received on March 3, 2017. The Department of Health and Human Services reported a revised fiscal impact estimate for both proposed percentage increases, originally proposed in LB358, using the ACCESSNebraska case management model. The department's staffing estimate, at 158 percent...158 eligibility level percentage, was two additional staff--two additional staff. Staffing at the 185 percent eligibility level, proposed for 2019, would have been eliminated had the committee adopted it last year, but that amount was five additional staff members. In the span of one calendar year, how did the need for two staff to handle 158 percent in eligibility level morph into 59 more staff for a minor 2 percent increase? Now, at 160 percent level, somehow a 2 percent increase morphed into 500 (sic) and 460 more households...5,460 more households eligible. In the morning's World-Herald, Director Courtney Phillips wrote eloquently about her department's mission of helping people live better lives. In 2015 and 2016 I witnessed the department's positive, can-do attitude when I served on the ACCESSNebraska Investigative and review committees. However, the same can-do attitude seems to be missing from the fiscal note for LB770. Having said that, even if the fiscal note of this year could be shown to be accurate,

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the estimated cost to the state would be absolutely justified by the significant amount of federal funds that would be leveraged and spent in this state with the change in SNAP proposed by LB770. Thank you, Committee. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you, Senator McCollister. Let's see if we have some questions from the committee members. I know we may come back around to...I've contended that in this session we probably all need to have an agreement to wear pink on one day just in respect for the fiscal note, but so we'll probably want to talk more about that. I don't know whether you want to talk about that at this time or... [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Well, as I said, I... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Do you have someone following, or... [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: I have major questions about the fiscal note and, you know, it may take an interim study to determine the proper rationale they used or the...on that, on a study like that, we need to better define that and in...perhaps by looking at some other states and how...what's happened to their workload with an increase in eligibility levels so maybe we can ascertain... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Another one that's been key this session is, for stuff to move on to General File, is having a priority. Do you have a priority assigned yet? Are you working on that or...? [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: I haven't determined that. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, okay. Are there any other questions? Senator Crawford, please. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Riepe. And thank you, Senator McCollister. Just to clarify, are you...when you were talking about adjustments from last year to this year, the number of staff and other factors, are you also concerned about the size of the fiscal note that came from the Fiscal Office? Or do you think there also is work or adjustments we can do from that angle? [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Well, there's a major disagreement... [LB770]

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SENATOR CRAWFORD: Yes, I saw that. [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: ...between the Legislative... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: ...Fiscal Office and HHS. And so I haven't resolved that difference. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: And I'm concerned that, you know, they expressed such an eagerness to help last year with a fairly minor fiscal note, but all of a sudden we've, as I mentioned, morphed into a fairly significant additional staff required, in their view. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator, we also hear a lot on the, at least on the national news, about SNAP funds being used to buy pet food. Do you...have you addressed that, or is that sort of a byproduct? [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: I didn't put that prohibition in my bill, but I don't think that's currently in the current SNAP program anyway. So it's a...I think it's a nonissue. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: It's hard to go against pups. Okay, are there other questions? Seeing none, thank you for presenting this bill. [LB770]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: And we will now hear from proponents, please. Welcome. If you'd state your name and spell it, and then tell us the organization you represent, that would be helpful. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: (Exhibit 3) Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Julia Tse, J-u-l-i-a T-s-e, and I'm here on behalf of Voices for Children in Nebraska. We believe that children are Nebraska's greatest resource and, when all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential in life, we all benefit. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB770 because it builds upon a successful

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work force support to ease hunger among children in our state. Hunger during childhood is extremely harmful to proper development. Although the child poverty rate in our state has mostly recovered from recession highs, we have noticed the troubling trend that household food security--food insecurity, excuse me--has almost doubled in less than one decade. What that fact, in combination of really low unemployment rates in our state and high parental work force participation, suggests to us is that families are having a much harder time making ends meet these days. The simple solution lies in smart investments in families as they get to a livable wage. SNAP is widely recognized as one of the most effective antipoverty programs in the country. Not only does it keep food on the table for families, as Senator McCollister mentioned, it has also been help...found to help stimulate local economies that are otherwise struggling alongside families. You will see, in the handouts that are attached to my testimony, references to the family bottom line, or the break-even wage. This is a measurement of how much it actually costs to raise a family, based on market costs without any government supports, which is usually in the neighborhood of 200 percent of federal poverty. There is a glaring design flaw in our public programs. Families lose work supports before they ever get to 200 percent of federal poverty. In looking at all of our public programs, the Children's Health Insurance Program is the only one that has reached that level. Without LB770, families will continue to choose the rational decision to keep food on the table in the short term over an incremental wage increase that might put them on the ladder to financial independence in the long term. There are parameters of SNAP that the state cannot change, primarily the net income threshold set at 100 percent of federal poverty. This means that with LB770, the number of families newly eligible for SNAP would be relatively small and limited to households with higher expenses. Examples would be larger families, single-parent households, and those especially with young children. We know that childcare costs are really high, higher than college tuition in Nebraska. I've attached to my testimony a document that reflects how benefits scale down as income rises, because the amount that families receive in SNAP is based off of their household budget. I would note that those scenarios, the theoretical families that I created, are sort of the best-case scenario, and many other families would likely lose eligibility well before they even reach 160 percent. LB770 addresses two critical issues: In the short term, we can ensure that more families are able to put food on the table for their children and, in the long term, we can ensure that more families can get ahead and have more time, resources, and bandwidth to invest in the future of their children. With that, we would like to thank Senator McCollister for his leadership on this issue, and many of the members of this committee that cosponsored the bill, as well, and the committee for their time and consideration. We would respectfully urge you to advance the bill. And I'd welcome any questions. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Are there questions from the committee members? I have a question.
[LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

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SENATOR RIEPE: I'd like to have you respond to this. The reading that I do is...says that the demand request for SNAP food stamps is down in the country. And part of that is because of the employment is down. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Do you have a response to that? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: I think that it's probably...that might be an indicator of how our economy has been improving on the whole. On the national level, I think there's a lot of research that suggests that some of this prosperity has not been shared by some of our lower-income and moderate-income families. So I think that in spite of maybe a decline in need, that doesn't dismiss the fact that we need to make sure that our programs are designed efficiently. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Well, it's an interesting talking point that says that lower income has not participated in the success of the economy. It still doesn't address the idea that fewer people are requesting SNAP, which is quite contrary to this legislation... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...which proposes to expand it. So it seems when the demand is down, we're still talking we want to increase the availability of it. So it seems inconsistent to me. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: I would have to take a look at those stories nationally and compare them with the data that we have on SNAP. Voices has been collecting participation data for SNAP for several years now, and I haven't taken a look at the trend data recently. But I can certainly take a look and compare and see how we do in comparison to the national trends. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Might also be helpful to try to localize it as much as we can. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: When I say localize it, I mean state of Nebraska... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Right. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...because it can get skewed because of the entire United States. [LB770]

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JULIA TSE: Right, yes. We under...oh, sorry. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Is there another question here? Senator Crawford. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Riepe, and thank you, Ms. Tse, for being here and providing this evidence for us. So as I understand it, really our key focus with this change in the program is to allow people as they're transitioning to continue to receive those benefits as they transition into work, so, but they key is making sure that people are able to have that support as their incomes go up and that's the key focus here,... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure, right. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...not necessarily on marketing or how many people use the program but on... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Right. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...making sure that when we have people and we're helping families build to self-sufficiency, that as their income goes up they're able to use this tool as their incomes rise to deal with the cliff effect. Is that correct? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yeah, and I would say that that was one of the primary goals of the bill. I think, you know, I mentioned earlier in my comments that the research suggests that even families that are living at above 130 percent, even if they're not transitioning off of SNAP benefits, they're also struggling to make ends meet. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator Linehan. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. Are...these are your charts, right? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So I...just to be clear, I think I've figured this out, but you say this is District 39 but I think this is all of Douglas County, right? [LB770]

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JULIA TSE: Yes, yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR LINDSTROM: Okay. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: So I had...yes, I like to...I didn't have a chance to footnote, but usually when...yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: No, no. That's okay, because when I first looked at it I'm like, this is not District 39, but I get that. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Um-hum, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So on your Nebraska-wide chart, do you have a copy in front of you? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: I do, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So almost half the kids in this state--there's 350,000 kids in the state in private and public schools, so this is close--almost half are participating in free or reduced lunch. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: But then down here it goes kids in low income is 38 percent, which is only a 4 percent difference, but is that...what do you figure...when you say low income, is that free and reduced lunch? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. Yeah, so this, I love this question. So free and reduced lunch, although the income requirements includes...it goes up to 185 percent of federal poverty, they're all populations of kids who are eligible for free meals based on participation in other programs, so they may be in foster care, they may be participating in TANF, so that number is a little higher, and then the low-income number refers to under 200 percent of federal poverty, which is sort of the sweet spot that we talked about when it comes to making ends meet. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: I see, so that's the difference. So the numbers at the bottom,... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: ...are they...is that net or gross income? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: That would be gross. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: And these are numbers, like I said earlier, that are based on market rate for rent and childcare and they've been updated for inflation. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. All right. Thank you very much, appreciate it. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: You're welcome. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I think you agreed that this is basically a program to help transition upon taking employment and yet the fiscal note on this indicates an expansion or an increase up to 160 percent, so that goes beyond transition. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yeah, so I think we recognize that it's...those...the folks who are transitioning off of SNAP who have already been eligible currently under 130, that's a subset of the folks that would be affected by this bill, and we recognize that there are certainly situations where there may be families who are not currently eligible who would become eligible under LB770. But I think from our perspective that's still a worthy population that we need to look to and make sure that kids are able to focus on what their real job is, which is learning, and not worrying about whether they'll be able to come home and have dinner. So I think that's sort of our view on that. And looking to the point of the fiscal note, I think we were surprised, as Senator McCollister was, that the narrative suggests that filling out an application for a dual-income household would take a full work day, eight hours, if they had two incomes to verify. I think that is a point that needs some investigation but, you know, I certainly concede the fact that this is not...last year we had a discussion about whether this could mirror the childcare transitional program and we investigated and the SNAP program is unfortunately structured in a different way. So our childcare dollars are a block grant so the state has some flexibility, but we weren't able to do that and still receive federal funds to cover the benefits or half of the administrative costs. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I want a little education here. Oftentimes governmental programs are silos. How does this SNAP expansion, if you will, relate to free food in schools, free breakfast, free meal, free lunch. How? Is that a different... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

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SENATOR RIEPE: ...program than the SNAP? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: So there might be a double dip here, if you will. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: A double dip? [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Well, you know, receiving a free breakfast and a free lunch and also at the end of the day getting SNAP funds, as well, on top of that, right? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay...per family. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: So is your question about what's the...so the... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I'm just trying to make sure that they're two different programs. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: And I just then have a concern whether there's any coordination between the two. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. So there could be. It's possible that there is some data cross-walking, so as I mentioned earlier, to Senator Linehan's question about the free and reduced lunch numbers, there are a subset of kids who become categorically eligible for free meals at school if someone in their household is participating in SNAP or if they're on one of the Indian reservations or if they are in foster care. So they are two separate funds, so the funds for free and reduced meals are...would...I would...my view of it is that they're sort of funneled through the Department of Education and these funds are for...are through the Department of Health and Human Services. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: And has the Education Department expended that by...my understanding is sometime they pack backpacks, which is okay, for weekends... [LB770]

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JULIA TSE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...for kids going home... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...to what might be empty refrigerators. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: I would have to check. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: So that's been expanded as well. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure. My understanding of the backpack programs is many of those programs are actually funded with private dollars, so sometimes it's maybe like the school foundation. Teachers get together and they say this is unacceptable that kids don't have enough foods and they, you know, they put their money together and create a program. But to the point about there being double dipping, I'm, you know, I'm...I wouldn't characterize it in that particular way. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Well, in Legislative District 12, at Mockingbird School, the parents are invited in for meals as well. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Sure, yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: So it's not only the children that come in for free meals but the parents do as well. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: So there are some after-school programs where it's in a particular...so it has to be in an area that's been identified in a census tract as being high poverty. I think it's like 60 percent are living in poverty. And so in those places they'll say that it's more effective for after-school programs and meetings to be effective if they can serve meals to anyone who wants to come and join, and that's just a way to get at program efficiency. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I certainly wouldn't clarify or classify Legislative District 12 as being...Millard and Omaha and Ralston as being a poverty area but... [LB770]

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JULIA TSE: I think that looking at some of the numbers, we might be a little surprised. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Maybe I'm the only poor one in the (inaudible) district. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: I think that, you know, looking at some of the districts--you mentioned Millard--they have a pretty...not an insignificant amount of kids who are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals and that's sort of the...you know, the trend that I mentioned about food insecurity doubling in the last nine or so years in Nebraska, that's been mirrored in our free and reduced-price numbers as well. It's been about the double and it hasn't recovered. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there...Senator Linehan, please. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. I think some of the confusion here is terminology. So we have free lunch. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Um-hum, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: And that's poverty level, and that's what the federal government... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: That's 130 (percent). [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: One hundred and 30 percent of poverty, yeah. And then we have reduced lunch, which is...? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: One hundred and eighty-five. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So when we say... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: ...that everybody on free and reduced lunch is in poverty, it could be... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yes. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: ...you could be overstating...well, you're overstating what the federal government poverty lines are. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes. Yes, you're right. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So these...would the numbers you were saying...when you say 60 percent of the school district, that 60 percent of kids--I think this is right--60 percent of the kids are free or reduced lunch,... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: ...not 60 percent of the kids are living below the poverty line. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yeah, yeah. We would agree that 100...the free and reduced numbers are not a good measure of poverty but that's what schools have and that's one of the best numbers that we have consistently. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: But they have both. They have free lunch numbers,... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: ...and they have free and reduced; they have the reduced lunch numbers. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: They have that down to the district, yes. Yes, that's correct. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: They do. So on your sheets again here, if we have 88,525 kids, or 19 percent of children, are in the SNAP program and then you have 86,000, or 20 percent, with food insecure, so do...is this saying that kids who are in the SNAP program are still insecure? [LB770]

JULIA TSE: So the definition I believe for the stated point of food insecure is the USDA definition that at some point the household wasn't able to put food on the table in the last year, so I...the numbers may not be the same, and I believe that the above number is...the SNAP number is directly from the department, so they're not the same data sources. They may not be exactly the same but... [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: But there's some crosswalk there, you would hope. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yeah, I... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: You would hope, if they're insecure, they're getting SNAP. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Okay, thank you very much. That's helpful. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: You're welcome. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator...let's go to Senator Howard first, ladies first. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Sure. Well, this is just more of a comment. So one of the...you were asked about SNAP numbers and one of the cheaters that I use is I look at the ACCESSNebraska dashboard and that gives us those month-to-month numbers of how many people are enrolled in SNAP. So if you want to check that out, I know we had an increase in December, and so that's worth looking at. We went from, you know, we had a couple hundred more families go on in December... [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: ...probably because of the holidays. But that's a really great cheater when you're looking at numbers for this. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Yeah, that's a good point. I'll have to take a look at that. And I think that, you know, that is an excellent point that I hadn't thought about raising is that there's volatility in how much families are able to afford, so many low-wage workers have irregular hours and on top of that we talked about school meals and, come summer, a lot of families are a little more vulnerable than they would be during the regular school year. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Yeah, and it's interesting because they're volatile but steady, right, across the years in Nebraska, which is really interesting. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. That's very helpful comment. Senator Erdman, do you have a question? [LB770]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Riepe, yes. Thank you for coming. So discuss for me, or describe, Millard's free and reduced lunches, because Senator Riepe said that that district may not be as poverty stricken as we think, so explain that to me. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Well, I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I did recently pull the numbers and I believe that it's not as low as you might suspect. I think it was somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 or 40 but I could go back to my phone and send it to you in a minute if you would like to see them. [LB770]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay, thank you. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there other questions? Thank you. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: You've been very engaging. We appreciate that. [LB770]

JULIA TSE: Thanks. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Additional proponents, please. Welcome. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: If you would be kind enough to state your name and spell it and then who you represent, then the show is yours. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon, Senators. Yes, hi. My name is Danielle Galvin, and thank you very much for allowing me to testify before the committee today. I'm a graduate student at UNO and I'm engaging in a... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Did you spell your name? [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: I'm sorry. D-a-n-i-e-l-l-e... [LB770]

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SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Thank you. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: ...G-a-l-v-i-n. So I'm a graduate student at UNO in a practicum placement with Financial Hope Collaborative with Creighton University. I'm also a volunteer for CASA with Douglas County and No More Empty Pots, and I'm a mentor at Boys and Girls Club in Westside, just a couple blocks from Creighton. To the other testimony, I can tell you there's poverty in Nebraska. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, we might ask you to speak up a little bit, if not for anyone else, me. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: I'll try. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, thank you. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: Is this better? [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: A little bit. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: Okay. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Can everybody hear? [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Yeah. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: Can you hear? Okay. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, maybe it's me. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: So I work with many low-income working families who currently rely on the SNAP program as an important bridge in their journey to self-sufficiency and stability. I'd like to share Tamicka's story with you. She is a part of our cohort with Financial Hope Collaborative's current nine-week financial skills class where they're learning financial skills and changing behaviors and getting out of debt. Tamicka is a certified nursing assistant. She works a 12-hour shift to care for her three children, and she's a single mom. She tells me that she...her children are the most important things in her life and they keep her going. She currently does not receive child support. She relies on the Community Market Basket program that supplies a box

of fresh food and vegetables weekly. She uses the recipes to cook healthy, low-cost meals for her family and she's currently able to pay for it with SNAP benefits. She works hard and she stresses the importance of work for her children. Recently she completed additional course work at Metro and she's going to receive a salary increase and promotion. She's worried about accepting the promotion because it will cause her to lose her SNAP benefits. One of her friends received a 20-cent-per-hour pay increase and her benefits were cut. Tamicka is constantly trying to balance the costs of her children, healthcare, transportation, food, basic necessities, and she's trying to break the grip of poverty with low, razor-thin margins. An unexpected illness can set people back substantially. Many of the people with...in Tamicka's situation rely on very patchwork solutions and just rely on any program they can achieve to help their kids. They've asked others for food. They scrounge at pantries. They take second and third jobs and they also have gone without eating at times so their children don't go to bed hungry. Ironically, Tamicka doesn't actually want SNAP benefits. She hates the fact that she currently needs them and is committed to being self-sufficient, but she puts her pride aside in order to get her...the resources to care for her children. She doesn't dream about collecting benefits. She dreams about getting out of debt, working at a good job with benefits, and buying a home and raising great kids. So our current SNAP policy disincentivizes Tamicka to continue to achieve and grow and to work hard to improve their lives and save money and provide for their children. She hopes someday to manage a skilled nursing facility and become financially self-reliant. She won't get there overnight and she needs a bridge while she progresses to mitigate the current cliff effect and phase her SNAP benefits out in a measured way. When she talks to me about her SNAP benefits, she talks about them on a temporary basis. She has no desire to keep them for any longer than she absolutely has to. So I'm asking you to vote for LB770 to help our working Nebraskans break the cycle of poverty. Thank you. I'll take questions. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you very much. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Crawford, please. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Senator Riepe. I just want to thank you for bringing that personal story and thank you for your work. Your work with her is part of a program to build self-sufficiency. [LB770]

DANIELLE GALVIN: Correct, um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, right. And so can you just speak to how SNAP benefits can fit into that program in terms of working with families on planning to eventually move to self-sufficiency? [LB770]

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DANIELLE GALVIN: Certainly. Thank you, Senator Crawford. Tamicka and her other cohort members receive weekly sessions with our group and our trainers and I'll be coaching her for a year on a monthly basis after her graduation. They receive a little hard drive and they are told to take all their receipts and keep them and they log them into basically an expense log. They log every single receipt. And so they map their income, they map their expenses, they set their smart goals, and then we sit down with them and we work to say, okay, how are you going to get out of this debt? How are you going to pay this off, what's your schedule, and to get very, very precise about where the money is going to come from, how you're going to cover your bills, and how you're going to meet your progress, needs. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you so much for being with us today. We are still with proponents. If there are other testifiers that are going to testify as proponents, please come up front to the front seats. Thank you. Welcome and... [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: (Exhibit 5) Chairman Riepe and members of the committee, my name is Kathy Siefken, K-a-t-h-y S-i-e-f-k-e-n, here today in support of LB770. I am the executive director and the registered lobbyist for the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association. I don't come before this committee very often but this was an issue that Senator McCollister approached me about. I took it to the board and the result was the letters that are being handed out to you right now. It's a little bit different perspective than what you have heard so far. Our people are telling us that this is an issue in the store or in the stores across the state. And it's no secret that we are an industry that has entry-level jobs. We hire people with little to no skills. We start them out generally at a lower wage because they don't have skills. We train them. We offer them raises and we expect that they move up and on. That is the nature of our industry, always has been, always will be. What has happened in recent times is that when we hire these people and they improve their skills so that they actually should earn more money, they are refusing the pay increases. In addition to that, they are refusing to work additional hours because the overtime and those pay raises put them over the threshold on the back end. And while those pay raises are something that most of us look forward to, what happens with many of our employees is they, if they took the raise, it would put them above the level, but the raise is not enough to compensate for the benefits that they need to support their families. So we support this bill because we think that our employees should be able to work themselves into higher paying jobs. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Are there questions? Senator Linehan, there you go. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you for being here. Okay, I understand that, but don't you think maybe some of it is these are people who are insecure, right? They're low-income jobs. It's an hourly job. They get off the program and they get...they lose the job next week. So it's also a learning process if you're...you know, if you're not secure in your job, and these benefits are pretty secure, isn't that kind of a hard thing for them to switch off of too? And also, another question I have is...we're talking about moving people up to where it's almost the median income of Nebraska, so maybe our wages, we've got a problem with wages. [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: My understanding with the bill is that it's still 100 percent income level...the net income doesn't change, and so the people that this bill would help, and someone can correct me if I'm wrong, but it was my understanding that the people that this bill will help are those people that have additional expenses that could be used toward lowering... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: We all have those expenses though. Every family has rent and childcare and... [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: Medical bills. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Right. Everybody has those. [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: But when... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: I mean... [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: But these figures have not changed where income has gone up, inflation has occurred. You've seen... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Inflation hasn't been very much in the last five, six years. [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: But... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Inflation has been pretty low. [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: That's true. But in the last maybe quarter or two, we've seen an increase in the wages that people are being paid,... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: But isn't it... [LB770]

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KATHY SIEFKEN: ...so this should also go up to compensate and stay in step. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: But isn't it true, last year, weren't groceries actually cheaper? Don't I remember last year during Thanksgiving time they said you could actually buy groceries cheaper for Thanksgiving dinner last year than you could the year before? [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: Yes, and that's a great...that is a great thing that our industry is proud of. But look at the medical bills, look at prescription cost, look at rent and the cost of living overall. Everything has gone up except for the cost of food. And the SNAP program really isn't a program that is designed to feed an entire family for the month. It is a supplemental program and these are people that need that help. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Thanks a lot for being here. I appreciate it very much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there other questions from committee members? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB770]

KATHY SIEFKEN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Additional proponents, please. [LB770]

SHELLEY MANN: Good afternoon. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Good afternoon. If you'd be kind enough to state your name, spell it, and tell us who you represent, and then the show is yours. [LB770]

SHELLEY MANN: (Exhibit 6) Absolutely. My name is Shelley Mann, S-h-e-l-l-e-y M-a-n-n, and I'm the assistant director of the collaborative SNAP efforts of Food Bank for the Heartland and the Food Bank of Lincoln. Thank you for allowing me to address you today and express our sincere support of LB770. You have my written testimony and I'll let you read that for more information about what we do and how LB770 would help those Nebraskans that we serve at the Nebraska food banks. Together, the food banks turn over millions of pounds of food through our doors and trucks every year, but our mission to move the needle for hungry Nebraskans cannot be achieved through rescued and donated food alone. SNAP allows our neighbors to choose their meals from a grocery store, not just rely on what exits your cupboards in a food drive. I came here today not only to express that support but to share with you a story from a Nebraska family that would benefit directly from this bill. Kelly is a young mom living in Otoe County. Kelly's husband works full time as a farm hand, as well as owning his own small business doing land

maintenance and snow removal. Before becoming pregnant, Kelly was able to find part-time work and help the family make ends meet, but after the birth of her children, in order to keep up with the piling bills, she would need to make at least \$15 an hour and find full-time childcare for her two children. In her rural community, these things were just not easily accessible for her. With Kelly not working, the family started using their savings to pay the bills, eventually having to use credit cards to buy groceries and keep the lights on. Kelly and her husband ended up maxing out everything they had to keep themselves off of SNAP because the stigma around the program made them so uncomfortable. However, as a last-ditch effort, she eventually applied for and began receiving benefits. But when summer came back around and Kelly's husband got the opportunity to pick up some additional contracts with his business, the family was faced with a tough choice. Did they pick up the extra work and bring in an additional \$100 a month but lose their \$259 in SNAP benefits? This question left the family in a place where it made the most sense to forgo the additional work in order to keep putting food on the table. They elected to take the extra work in hopes that these new contracts would lead to more and more work, eventually pulling them out of their current situation, but unfortunately it didn't. The family now chooses between food and their mortgage payment many months, and sits just over the income guideline to receive benefits again. At this time, Kelly would be able to qualify again for SNAP benefits should LB770 raise the gross income eligibility guidelines. This small additional aid could help Kelly's family ease their way into more income while still assisting them with meeting their basic needs. These new guidelines would keep our safety net from punishing individuals and families who are trying to find work and increase their earnings. Nebraska families should not have to choose between food and other basic needs like utilities, medicine, and their rent or mortgage. Through SNAP these families are not only able to afford food, but more nutritious food which can, in turn, help their children to succeed in school, lessen their healthcare costs, and put these dollars back into the economy through local grocery retailers. SNAP benefits also lessen the weight on pantries and community supports like ours, who often cannot keep up with the growing needs of the families they serve. Ultimately LB770 will aid these families in accessing food and make Nebraska a place where working families like Kelly, her husband and children, not only survive but are able to thrive. We at the Nebraska food banks urge your support for LB770 to continue to end hunger in our state. Thank you, and I'll take any questions. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here. [LB770]

SHELLEY MANN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: If you would, please, state your name, spell it, and your organization that you represent. [LB770]

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JOHNATHAN HLADIK: (Exhibit 7) Before I do, I would like to say that it's been a very long time since I've been in front of this committee, and you have much better wall art than other committees and I appreciate that, I really do. John Hladik, J-o-h-n H-l-a-d-i-k, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Center for Rural Affairs. And I primarily just want to bring attention to the fact that SNAP is an issue in rural communities as well. A lot of our discussion earlier focused on urban areas, rightfully so. That's the first place we think of when we think of programs such as SNAP, but there's a lot to be concerned about and a lot to think about when we look at the members of Nebraska's rural communities. While Nebraskans who participate in SNAP have incomes in line with national figures, overall participation rates, as we know, fall below national trends. Nebraska ranked 36th in 2014 with 77 percent of eligible SNAP households participating, and nationally that number is up to 83 percent. But when consideration is given to the rural-urban residency of Nebraska's SNAP participants, further variance emerges. In 2015, 9 percent of the state's total population enrolled. This was up to 9.1 percent in micropolitan Nebraska, 9.5 percent in metropolitan areas of the state, but in rural areas we were still at 7.6 percent of the total population. The percentage of rural Nebraskans enrolled in SNAP is concerning when compared to the percentage of the population at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. You would think it's much smaller in the rural areas, but it is not. In the state's rural areas, 12.4 percent of residents are at or below the poverty line and this figure, of course, is at 100 percent. It does not account for those who may currently be eligible for SNAP with gross incomes of 130 percent of poverty or below, before deductions. With respect to the cliff effect, adjusting the gross income threshold for participation can help address some of these barriers by increasing the gross income requirement to 160 percent. Families that are working hard and seeking additional employment opportunities can continue to improve the economic conditions of their household without the concern of losing benefits that make their budgets feasible today. In rural Nebraska, where incomes often fall behind state averages, SNAP is a lifeline for working families and the elderly. We have, as we know, an outsized portion of elderly individuals in our population. Increasing the gross income household threshold while maintaining the net income requirement of 100 percent of the federal poverty level will open opportunities for added employment for a lot of these families. Many of our jobs are low wage, as you know; many of them are service-sector jobs and a lot of families have more than one. This adjustment not only improves the lives of the families but also the communities they call home, many of which are welcoming of entrepreneurship, new workers, and new ideas overall. So in conclusion, we know that as prospects for Nebraska's ag economy remain bleak and rural incomes continue to fall, the need for nutrition assistance in our rural communities is going to continue to increase and we ask that program adjustments and budget consideration be given to increasing SNAP for our needy families by increasing the gross income requirements. And with that, I'm happy to take any questions. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Do I see any questions? Thank you very much. [LB770]

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JOHNATHAN HLADIK: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Nice job. Additional proponents, please. Do we have additional testifiers? If you would, please, move up to the front. Okay. Thank you. You're close enough. Thank you, Sir. If you'd just give us your name, spell it, and then tell us your organization. [LB770]

DAVID VAN HORN: (Exhibit 8) I'm David Van Horn, D-a-v-i-d V-a-n H-o-r-n. I appreciate the opportunity to testify and share some thoughts with you. Currently I serve as vice chair for the board of directors for the Center for People in Need that's located here in Lincoln. The board and the staff support the passage of LB770 which increases the gross income eligibility limit for participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The central focus of the SNAP program is to address food insecurity that's faced by individuals and families living in conditions associated with poverty. The USDA defines food insecurity as lack of consistent access to adequate food. Using data collected in 2017, 13 percent of Nebraskans, or about 248,000 individuals, faced food insecurity at some point in the year. Of that number, just under 94,600 were children. That represents 20 percent of our state's kids. We know that food insecurity has a negative impact on an individual's health. We know it can affect an individual's physical development, and there's no doubt that a lack of access to quality food too often contributes to poor attendance and performance at work or at school. For much of my career, I was a junior high/middle school principal in Lincoln. During that time, the school system's nutrition services team constantly strove to serve quality meals to all students. We all knew, though, that too many of our students returned to a home where very little food was available. As school staff and I worked with individual students living in those homes, we realized how difficult it was for some of those students to focus on their learning when they were facing real concerns about hunger. We used the resources available to us and most of the time we were able to address problems on the short term. I remember recognizing then, however, that for too many kids, facing hunger was a daily challenge. We all knew that the number of...or we all know that the number of people facing that obstacle continues to grow. As an example, the percent of Lincoln children living in poverty has increased by 78 percent since 2008. To help some people meet that challenge, last year the center distributed over 3 million pounds of food to nearly 11,500 men, women, and children. Many other organizations throughout our state are doing similar good things to provide assistance to those in need. By enacting LB770, the Legislature can help thousands of Nebraskans overcome their challenges associated with food insecurity. Passage of this bill provides a hand up to individuals who are striving for independence and a more secure life. I'd ask you to please support this important legislation. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you, Sir. Let's see if we have any questions from the committee members. Seeing none, we appreciate you coming today. [LB770]

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DAVID VAN HORN: Thank you very much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Additional proponents, please. Thank you, Sir. [LB770]

GEOFF SILVERSTEIN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: If you'd be kind enough to state your name, spell it, and then please share with us the organization you represent and proceed on. [LB770]

GEOFF SILVERSTEIN: (Exhibit 9) You bet. Hello. My name is Geoff Silverstein; that's G-e-o-f-f S-i-l-v-e-r-s-t-e-i-n. I'm a founding partner of Friendly Design Co. It's a brand and interactive design firm with our Midwest offices in Omaha in District 9, Senator Howard, where I...I also live in the district with my wife and daughter. I'm here today as the chairperson of the social justice committee at Temple Israel, a Jewish synagogue in Omaha in Senator McCollister's district, actually, and we count over 700 families from around the metro area in our membership. The congregation right now is in the midst of a yearlong focus on hunger. We are driven by our Jewish values to feed the hungry and protect the vulnerable in our community, and our tradition teaches us that we're required to help our neighbors who are in need and that we should do so before his or her situation becomes dire. So over the course of the year, we're organizing food drives and serving meals to the homeless, we're planting neighborhood gardens, and packing lunches for hungry children. But we've also dedicated ourselves to learning more about the root causes of hunger and lending our voices to wider community efforts to mitigate hunger and food insecurity in Nebraska, like what's proposed in LB770. As our social justice committee has dug into the issues affecting Nebraskans who struggle with hunger, I've been struck by the stories shared by some of our congregants. Our membership is largely middle-class families and most of us have never worried about where our next meal is coming from, yet among us members shared stories of points in their lives where they relied on food stamps to make ends meet, or how they were forced to choose between feeding their families and paying the rent when they made just a little too much to qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. It's easy to think that hunger is an issue only facing other communities, but we're learning that we know better. We know there are hardworking families all over the state who are finding that hard work is not always enough to put food on the table. We know that, according to Voices for Children in Nebraska, one in five Nebraska children don't know where their next meal is coming from, and we know there is more we can and must do. LB770 is a clear step towards better helping those hardworking families. We're hearing from other folks testifying the cliff effect is not just a hypothetical issue. A colleague of mine who works in human resources and who is a congregant at Temple Israel shared heartbreaking stories of employees who declined promotions because that incremental increase in salary would mean they were no longer eligible for SNAP benefits, yet the increased salary was less than the value of the SNAP benefits they would lose. As a

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business owner, I can only imagine the frustration and heartache that a high-performing employee would face if he or she were forced to sacrifice a promotion and the ability to grow professionally because doing so would mean they couldn't feed their family. The cliff effect is not only bad for Nebraska businesses, it's bad for the state's bottom line. Current policy seems to actually discourage recipients from accepting better jobs that may help their family become self-supportive. It's time that we ease SNAP's cliff effect and make a smart investment in Nebraska's work force. According to economist Mark Zandi, every dollar increase in SNAP expenditures boosts real GDP by \$1.73. I know the Nebraska budget is tight and we've heard that concern, but federal funds cover 100 percent of SNAP benefits and half the administrative costs. Let's advance LB770 out of committee and utilize national funding to benefit the state of Nebraska and help ensure our neighbors can feed their families. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee members? Seeing none, we appreciate you being here. Thank you. [LB770]

GEOFF SILVERSTEIN: Thank you so much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you for your work. Additional proponents? [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: (Exhibit 10) Good afternoon. My name is Ann Hunter-Pirtle, A-n-n H-u-n-t-e-r, hyphen, P-i-r-t-l-e. I'm the executive director of Stand for Schools. We're a nonprofit dedicated to advancing public education in Nebraska. Thank you, members of the committee and Chairman Riepe, for having us testify today. And thank you, Senator McCollister, for introducing the bill. Stand for Schools supports LB770 because it addresses rising food insecurity and growing income inequality in Nebraska, both of which have a serious impact on school-age children, their families, and school districts. One in five children in our state does not know where their next meal is coming from, and income inequality in Nebraska is growing. In a trend mirrored across the state and the nation, Lincoln Public Schools has seen its percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch double from 24 percent in 2000 to 48 percent today. I looked up the numbers in Millard Public Schools, Senator, and they have tripled from 6.86 percent in 2002-03 to 20.91 percent in 2016-17. Teacher across the state report more and more students coming to school hungry with a predictable effect on their behavior and ability to learn. Nobody can do their best when they're hungry, but this tragic reality is preventable through smart policies like LB770. More than a third of eligible Nebraskans do not participate in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. LB770 would bring Nebraska in line with more than half of other states that have already adopted legislation to increase the gross income eligibility limits. The cliff effect is a real problem but LB770 would enable participants...recipients, rather, to seek better employment, higher wages, and gain financial independence without losing critical assistance before they can make ends meet. Quite

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simply, this is a smart investment in our state's future. Enacting LB770 is an important step toward putting an end toward child hunger and generational poverty. For these reasons, Stand for School supports the bill and urges you to advance it to General File. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. My own comment would be is I think that some of the numbers, in terms of particularly the Millard ones, might not be geographically reflective because they get students that come in with, in Omaha, with open enrollment pieces. We have students come in from all over Omaha... [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Sure, yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...into that, and Ralston both, so, you know, it's not... [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Sure. I don't have... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...it's not just Millard kids. It's Millard geography but kids coming from all over. I just wanted to make that as a point of clarification. [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator Linehan. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. Thank you for being here. So right at the beginning of your testimony you said one in five Nebraska kids were food insecure. [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So what numbers...what does that...what's...because I'm looking at the Voices for Children thing. [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So it's the same group of numbers, so you've got 86,000 kids at 20 percent were food insecure, so that's your one in five. But then up here it says 19 percent of kids in Nebraska are participating in SNAP, so I'm hopeful, at least, that those 20, those are the same group of kids, right? And we, hopefully, we don't have 20 percent of kids that are food insecure and a different 20 percent are on SNAP. [LB770]

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ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: I don't know that for sure off the top. I would hope the same is true. Maybe Voices can clarify that. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So do we consider kids that are getting SNAP benefits food insecure? [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: I don't know that off the top. That would be a great question for Julia. I'm happy to double check with her. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay, thank you very much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Is there other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB770]

ANN HUNTER-PIRTLE: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Next proponent, please. Thank you, Sir. State your name and spell it. [LB770]

ROBERT LARSEN: (Exhibit 11) Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Robert Larsen, R-o-b-e-r-t L-a-r-s-e-n, and I'm here today in support of LB770 in my role as Holland advocacy fellow for the Holland Children's Movement. When our state takes steps to support working families, we demonstrate our commitment to rewarding hard work and promoting economic growth in the future. And because of this, the Holland Children's Movement supports LB770. You've already heard from a lot of people today, so I'll go ahead and talk about the public opinion research that our sister organization, the Holland Children's Institute, recently conducted. That research showed that Nebraska voters overwhelmingly agree that the best way to build a stronger middle class is to give people the tools they need to succeed, rather than cutting spending on programs in order to reduce dependence on government. We strongly believe that SNAP is an incredibly important tool for hardworking families as they move up the economic ladder. Multiple recent studies I've found have also found that SNAP benefits for children make an impact in both the short term and the long term. A 2017 study in South Carolina found that in the short term children score much higher on math tests, for instance, in the weeks after their family received SNAP benefits. In the long term, a 2012 longitudinal study by three of the country's top economists found that childhood access to SNAP led to significant reductions in obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes and, for women, an increase in economic self-sufficiency. These studies demonstrate that this legislation makes economic sense. They mean that children, who are the future of our

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state, will grow up to be healthier, more productive and, thus, more apt to contribute to our state's communities economically. And so given that this legislation makes moral and economic sense, on behalf of the Holland Children's Movement, I want to thank Senator McCollister for introducing this legislation and I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator Kolterman, please. [LB770]

SENATOR KOLTERMAN: Welcome back, Robert. [LB770]

ROBERT LARSEN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR KOLTERMAN: I just want to ask you, is it any different sitting there than it is over there? [LB770]

ROBERT LARSEN: Yeah, it was less nerve racking over there (laughter). [LB770]

SENATOR KOLTERMAN: Nice presentation. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there other questions, comments from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being with us. Next proponent, please. Thank you for being with us. If you'd be kind enough to state your name and spell it and who you represent, and we go. [LB770]

MARY BOSCHULT: (Exhibit 12) Thank you, Senator. My name is Mary Boschult, and I represent...and that's M-a-r-y B-o-s-c-h-u-l-t, and I represent the League of Women Voters of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and I'm here today support LB770, a bill that would reduce the cliff effect of terminating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, "SNAP," benefits when people become employed or advance in their employment. The League of Women Voters believes that one of the goals of social policy should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families, and that the most effective programs are those that prevent or reduce poverty. Benefit levels should be sufficient to provide decent and adequate standards for food, clothing, and shelter. Work should be encouraged and participants' total income should increase as earnings increase. There should be financial incentives for job advancement and success. Revising the income test in consideration of expenses provides an incentive for success in achieving and maintaining independence from public assistance, rather than slamming the door shut when gross incomes reach 130 percent of poverty. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The

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league does not support or oppose candidates. We work to increase understanding of public policy issues and to increase voter participation in elections. Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee members? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here. [LB770]

MARY BOSCHULT: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Next proponent, please. If you'd be kind enough to state your name, spell it, and share your organization, please, and proceed on. [LB770]

MARIEL HARDING: (Exhibit 13) Sure. Good afternoon. My name is Mariel Harding, M-a-r-i-e-l H-a-r-d-i-n-g. I am the director of health and food security at the United Way of the Midlands in Omaha and I'm here on behalf of our CEO, Shawna Forsberg, as well as partner United Ways across the state, specifically United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County, Heartland United Way in Grand Island, and Columbus Area United Way. We are here speaking as a united voice because this is an issue that affects our state from east to west. We've heard a lot about how this bill helps with self-sufficiency and that is what I was going to focus my testimony on. But I would like to remind us that what we're really talking about is hunger; we're talking about food. We've heard about how important it is for people to have a reliable, consistent source of food for productivity, for childhood development, for health, and so I just want to bring us back to that because hunger is a basic need. That's how we talk about it at the United Way of the Midlands. We invest and in front of you have a list of our investments for the Omaha metro area, over...we invested around \$700,000 in food security and have supported around 30,000 people in accessing food security services in our metro. I actually have the numbers for SNAP enrollment in the state and it looks like they actually increased from 2015 to 2016. So in 2015, according to the USDA, 174,092 people were enrolled on average every month, and in 2016, 175,857 individuals were enrolled. So it's going up a little bit in our state. I'd also like to say that in the Omaha metro area we are seeing an expansion of poverty and food insecurity across the metro. One of the pantries that we fund actually opened a satellite location in Millard recently to meet the rising need. So I'm going to talk a little bit about poverty. That's what we focus on at the United Way. As a reminder, about 11 percent of our residents in Nebraska live in poverty, and that is just \$24,000 or so for a family of four, so we're not talking about a lot. Also, it's important to note that people above this line are food insecure. And I think your questions are really important, Senator Linehan. Not everyone who is food insecure is enrolled in SNAP. A lot of the programs that we fund work really hard to get people enrolled, doing a lot of outreach. But there are estimates from Feeding America and they relate to 185 percent of federal poverty, so it's not 100 percent accurate according to this bill. But the estimate is that 16 percent of the people who are food insecure in our state would be eligible for SNAP if we raised gross income to 185 percent. So

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not everyone who is food insecure lives in poverty, and not everyone who is food insecure is eligible for SNAP. But I hope...I share your hope that most of the kids who are receiving free and reduced lunch are also receiving SNAP. Okay, so thinking about poverty, my first point is that SNAP is a great antipoverty program. It actually lifts people out of poverty. In Nebraska last year, it lifted 34,000 people out of poverty. This is because poverty statistics don't take into account noncash transfers like SNAP. So when you add the SNAP benefits to a person's income, it lifts 34,000 individuals' incomes over the poverty line. So that's one of the ways that SNAP is a...has an impact on poverty. The second, as we've heard a lot about, is that it supports individuals on their path to self-sufficiency and financial independence. That's what we're working for at the United Way and why we're here. Many of the programs that we fund, like food pantries, like financial education, out-of-school time, a lot of the folks who use these programs are working folks and, you know, work in industries making \$10-14 an hour where they're trying to support their families but are struggling to make ends meet, working paycheck to paycheck. And I wanted to address this point of sort of rising and falling periods of employment. So according to an analysis by the U.S. Agricultural Department, among workers who were eligible for SNAP at some point in the year, 75 percent were only eligible for a portion of the year. So a lot of workers may be eligible at some point, may need the support at some point, but not for the entire point, so it helps sort of fill those transitions when there may be a high demand in the summer for construction workers and a low demand in the winter. And by raising this income limit, we can help smooth that transition further, especially as we're talking about folks who are working towards financial stability and financial independence. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. [LB770]

MARIEL HARDING: Lastly, I just wanted to reinforce, you know, we're very honored to work with the business community at the United Way and the impacts, economic impacts of SNAP, have been stated time and time again, so I won't restate them. But I did want to point out that SNAP accounts for 10 percent of expenditures on food consumption at home in the country, which is a pretty significant amount, and in Nebraska there are 1,256 retailers that benefit from SNAP, so we're talking about bringing more dollars into our local economies to support our local businesses and that's something that we can all get behind. So again, we just urge you to support this legislation and thank you for your consideration. Happy to answer any questions you have. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Linehan, please. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. You do understand my question was about the kids, wasn't about food insecurity, about adults or...I was just trying to figure out if we're taking care of these kids that are on this sheet. It says they're food insecure. [LB770]

MARIEL HARDING: Yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Hopefully they're enrolled in the SNAP program. I was seeing if somebody could confirm that those numbers were similar. [LB770]

MARIEL HARDING: And I don't...I will look on the Feeding America Web site as well. I don't think that they have those calculations for just kids. The calculations that I have are for the population as a whole. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Okay, thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Thank you. Are there other questions? Do you have more? [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: No. No, that's it. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Seeing none, thank you very much. Next proponent, please. [LB770]

VALERIE ROTH: (Exhibit 14) Good afternoon. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. [LB770]

VALERIE ROTH: My name is Valerie Roth, V-a-l-e-r-i-e R-o-t-h. Thankfully, when I'm nervous, I talk really fast, so that should be beneficial. I am here representing the Heartland United Way. We are located in Grand Island and we cover Hall, Howard, Hamilton, and Merrick Counties, so right in the middle of the state. Imagine asking your mom what's for supper because you actually have no idea if there is any dinner, any food on the table. One in seven Nebraska citizens don't know where their next meal will come from. The Heartland United Way has seen this in central Nebraska. Tonya is a single mom with four kids who called me for rent assistance last month. She doesn't have transportation or a GED. She relies on SNAP for \$571 a month, which comes out to less than \$20 a day, to feed her family of five. In an effort to better support her family, she got a job at a fast-food restaurant making \$9 an hour. Because of her new income, her SNAP benefits will be cut. What would motivate her to continue working or advance in her job when she received adequate benefits to feed her family before she was hired? She is trying to

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become self-sufficient but doesn't have enough tools to survive before she is pushed off the cliff. The "cliff effect" is a term used to describe why some hardworking people can never seem to get ahead. In the Heartland United Way area, 80 percent of families below poverty are considered working poor. With the passing of LB770, the working poor could accept a raise or work additional hours without fear that their food benefits would be stripped away. The hopeful anticipation of their first paycheck that means the end of their money problems is usually not the case. Typically, those that are reaching out for assistance have back rent, delinquent utility bills and, if they're fortunate enough to have a car, will have upcoming maintenance due. In the Grand Island area, we don't really have a public transportation system, so that's a big issue in our area. Among these expenses, they will now have to wonder what part of their budget will feed their children. The Heartland United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability in the Heartland area. Every year, during Husker Harvest Days, we raise over 11 tons of food from FFA students. In 2016, 400 volunteers assembled 120,000 macaroni meals in order to provide an extra food resource. We give out grocery store vouchers to teachers because they see this daily in the schools. The high amount of calls we receive for food, rent, and electric assistance demonstrates the gaps families face on their roller-coaster ride to self-sufficiency. When families are not forced to worry about basic needs, they have time to work on their own self-improvement. Instead of limiting a family's potential, let's support those who want to work. Senator Riepe, in reference to your question earlier about the food backpack program, we do have many food backpack programs in our area and they've all been started by a church or a food pantry. In one situation a local couple saw that it was a need and spent \$6,000 a year giving food backpacks to their school. In Grand Island, all Title I schools are given ten food backpacks per school, so the social workers have to pick those ten neediest students and they're given a bag that really won't even support them the whole weekend, so just in reference to that question. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Um-hum. Thanks for sharing that. [LB770]

VALERIE ROTH: So thank you. Do you have any questions? [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Thanks for coming in. Additional proponents? If you would, Sir, state your name and spell it. [LB770]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 15) Sure. Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe and members of the committee. For the record, I'm Jay Sears; that's J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, and I represent the 28,000 educator members of the Nebraska State Education Association. And I'm here today to express NSEA's full support for LB770. And we thank Senator McCollister for introducing the bill to address the cliff effect in the SNAP program by allowing working families to advance in employment, in training programs, and realize greater earnings or new, better-paying employment without an immediate loss of the vital support of the SNAP program. SNAP helps

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low-income families keep food on the table. When families have food on the table, children come to school with food in their stomachs and they're ready to learn. Our teachers know that students learn more when they have the nutrition it takes to fuel their brains. Research tells us that childhood hunger has long-term and detrimental effects on cognition, physical and mental health, academic performance, and behavior. Increasing the gross income limit from the current 130 percent of total poverty to 160 percent will allow families to take the pay raise or move to a better job and still put food on the table. We owe this to all of Nebraska's children. We encourage you to forward LB770 to General File. Thank you very much for the opportunity. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Let's see if there are any questions from the committee members. Seeing none... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: I have one. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Oh, sorry. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Riepe, and thank you for being here... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator Crawford. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...and presenting this testimony on behalf of your members. So one of the interesting other issues...your testimony is focused, you know, primarily on the importance of this for children and cognition and helping families. [LB770]

JAY SEARS: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: I wondered if there was also any conversation about a similar kind of work-force issue for schools in terms of having lower wage workers and the need of trying to retain lower wage workers when the issue becomes getting a raise and wanting to make sure that you're retaining those workers. [LB770]

JAY SEARS: Yes. I'm sure it is an issue. You know, one of the things when we look at the salary of beginning teachers that are above the poverty line but when you start to add in all of their students loans and that process, I wonder if they're food secure also, but, you know, there are other employees in school districts that aren't making the beginning salaries of teachers or just above the minimum wage, and so that's a difficult thing, to keep aides, paraprofessionals, maintenance workers, and the like. So, you know, it is an issue in Nebraska as we've seen in the

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last few years. The rate of poverty keeps going up in Nebraska. And I know we're all surprised at the amount of poverty that we see in our world community, so when you're looking at rural school districts, it's even more difficult, so you're right, Senator. Thank you for bringing that up. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Any additional questions? [LB770]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Seeing none, thank you, Sir, for being here. [LB770]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Next proponent, please. Thank you for being with us. If you would be kind enough to state your name and spell it and then organization that you represent. [LB770]

JUNE RYAN: Sure. Thank you, Chairman Riepe and members of Health and Human Services Committee. My name is June Ryan; that's J-u-n-e R-y-a-n, and I'm here today, testifying in support of LB770, on behalf of AARP Nebraska. I am retired and an AARP volunteer for about seven years. I also want to thank Senator McCollister for introducing this bill and his commitment to the issue. As you probably know, AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works across Nebraska to strengthen communities and advocate for the issues that matter most to families, such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from financial abuse, especially as these issues relate to the 50-plus population. It's the policy of AARP that food benefits should be increased to ensure nutritional adequacy and the prevention of malnutrition for our most vulnerable Americans. According to the Center on Budget and Policy, nearly 67 million people in the United States are over age 60--or 60 or over--and are eligible for a number of government programs to assist with basic life needs. 6.3 million seniors, or 9 percent as we heard earlier, live below the poverty line. There are many, like my mother who is 94 and living in my home because she can't afford to live alone, who live on a fixed income and have limited financial ability to be able to afford their basic expenses, such as food, medical, or housing costs. It's important to note that many of these are also disabled or taking care of children or grandchildren, like me taking care of my mother. SNAP plays a very important part for these seniors, allowing them to utilize other income to pay for other important needs, such as prescription drugs. Some statistics that relate to Nebraska: the average SNAP benefit in Nebraska for a senior is a modest \$96 and, as we heard earlier, that's

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not much money to buy meals for a month. 14,500 Nebraskans over the age of 60 were utilizing benefits, which is only 4 percent of our seniors. Yet we know that some 13,700 households in Nebraska with a senior...there are over 13,700 households with a senior residing in the home. My point here is that seniors are not taking undue advantage of this program but, again, this is a program that can help seniors when there is a need in their homes. 62 percent of SNAP households with seniors have gross incomes that fall at between 51 and 100 percent of the federal poverty level. According to a report, the SNAP Access Barriers of April 2013, aging Americans have become especially vulnerable for insecurity--food insecurity. And you know, we laugh about stories that seniors eat cat food and dog food, but it happens, and it happens right here in our state, and that's because it's cheaper, not because it's more nutritious. Many in this group have been plagued by high unemployment and underemployment, and some are too young for Social Security and Medicare, and often are not eligible for other kinds of assistance programs. So the SNAP program is really the only nutrition assistance program that is available to many individuals in this age group. Food insecurity, as we know, is associated with greater use of healthcare services, increased doctor's office visits, longer overnight hospital stays, and more emergency room visits. In other words, having adequate nutrition is a protection against medical emergencies. So it's really important that we continue to focus on this. SNAP is really critical to our aging population, and we strongly support that you vote this bill out of committee and so it can go to the full floor. And I.. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. [LB770]

JUNE RYAN: ...would be happy to answer any questions. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you. Well, let's see if we have any questions from the committee members. Seeing none, thank you very much for being with us today. [LB770]

JUNE RYAN: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Additional proponents. If you would be kind enough, Sir, to give us your name, and I'm guessing you're from Appleseed. [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: (Exhibit 16) I am; thank you for remembering. My name is James Goddard; that's J-a-m-e-s G-o-d-d-a-r-d, and I'm the director of the economic justice program at Nebraska Appleseed, here today to support LB770. I realize it's getting late in the afternoon. I'll try and keep my comments brief, but want to just point out a couple things and see if I can answer a question or two. The first thing is this body has recognized in the past that the cliff effect is an important barrier to forward momentum and work. As recently as 2015, the body voted 47-0 to pass LB81, including several committee members, to address the cliff effect in the

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childcare program. This afternoon it's...LB770 has been characterized as an expansion of SNAP but, by its very nature, addressing the cliff effect requires step-downs to be created that didn't exist, transitions to be put in place that weren't there before. Now we have to work within programmatic rules in order to address this. In childcare, it's a block grant. There are far fewer rules and restrictions coming down from the federal government on childcare, and what you can do with, than there are on SNAP. SNAP does not allow the same structure as was used in the childcare program. We talked with federal Nutrition Services and they said it can't be done in this way. And it's crucial to work within these programmatic rules because, if we don't, then we're trying to create a state-funded-only program that would be much more expensive than the fiscal note in this bill. But the point I'm trying to make is this is a transitional program as in as a person's income increases, their SNAP decreases in the way the program works. So if we want people to move ahead, if we want to reward work, this is the way to do it. The second comment I would have is on SNAP and school lunches. We talked a little bit about that earlier today. And there certainly are low-income kids that get both, that get both SNAP and free-and-reduced meals. And those meals at school aren't a substitute for a whole family having SNAP. And each SNAP meal is less than \$2.00 a day so, in reality, SNAP is just barely helping some families get by. And that brings me to the food security question, Senator Linehan, I think, has had this afternoon, and that is: Can kids both be food insecure and on SNAP? And I think the answer is yes; unfortunately, the answer is yes. Many folks in the SNAP program end up utilizing all of the benefits on their EBT card before the month is over, before it's filled up again the next month. So that last week of the month, they may not know where their meal--next meal--is coming from and, therefore, would fit in the definition of food insecurity. So they can be both. The...very quickly on...just briefly on the fiscal note, I'm not going to get into a lot of detail, just to underscore what Senator McCollister said. In 2017, looking at this issue at a very similar eligibility level, the department estimate was 1,840 people would come on the program, and they would need 7.5 workers. One year later, after automation has been taken into account, it's now 7,300 people would come on the program and 54 workers. I can't explain that to you but, obviously, there's a huge discrepancy from one year to the next. And the last thing I would just...wanted to clarify was you...SNAP benefits cannot be used for pet food. They cannot be used for nonfood. You might be referencing, Senator Riepe, an online petition that apparently is going around the Web, where people are saying we should be able to use SNAP for pet food. But as it stands, the rules don't permit it. And with that, I'll conclude and answer any questions, if I can. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay; thank you, counselor. Before you go on, would you please state your name, and then spell it. We need that for the record, too. I think we passed over that. [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: Sure. It's James, J-a-m-e-s G-o-d-d-a-r-d. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, thank you very much. Questions? Senator Crawford. [LB770]

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SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. And thank you, Mr. Goddard, for being here today and bringing data and...to this question, and you're also answering some of our questions, as well. I wanted to come back to the gap, really, between the median wage in the state, and I just had a chance to check that out. It's \$56,000...a little over \$56,000 is the median wage in the state. And the aim of this program, which is right now food stamps go up to 130 percent of that gross wage, and the bill is trying to take it up to 160 percent. And I think there still is a pretty sizable gap, in most cases, between that and the median wage. I just wondered if you might comment on that. [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: Yeah. Senator, if the median wage is \$56,000, the change here would allow people earning up to about \$3,300 a month to then be eligible to apply for the program, and that's going to be somewhere in the area of what...\$40,000 a year or so? So this wouldn't take folks up to that median wage or above. It would still be below that at \$56,000. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, thank you very...Senator Howard, please. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Senator Riepe. Thank you for visiting with us today, and thank you for clarifying what SNAP covers. Does SNAP cover like diapers or toothpaste or... [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: No. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Does it cover anything else that might be considered a necessity? [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: It is solely items that are considered edible and food, so the items you just mentioned would not be considered food items. They would be nonfood and, therefore, if you attempted to purchase one of those items, even if you had nothing but groceries, if you had one tube of toothpaste in your grocery basket and you tried to run the EBT card, the whole transaction would be declined. So it...the way the system works prevents the purchase of nonfood items. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Do we have any programs that help people pay for diapers or things like that? [LB770]

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JAMES GODDARD: Certainly you could use ADC benefits to purchase diapers for very low-income parents. There are commodity food programs like WIC to help with food. But I'm not aware of something that would be specific to something like diapers or those necessities. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay, thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, thank you. Are there additional questions from the committee members? Seeing none, thank you... [LB770]

JAMES GODDARD: Thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: ...for being patient and being with us today. Are there additional proponents? Are there any...are you a proponent? Yeah, okay. I can't see that far back. And opponents, please. If you will, Sir, state your name, spell it, who you represent. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: (Exhibit 17) Yes. Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Matt Wallen, M-a-t-t W-a-l-l-e-n, and I am the director of the Division of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in opposition to LB770 today. Currently in Nebraska, SNAP has adopted the state option to implement a Temporary Assistance to (sic--for) Needy Families funded program to establish broad-based categorical eligibility. In Nebraska this program is also known as the Expanded Resource Program. This subprogram within Nebraska SNAP allows the state to set the resource limit and income guidelines for individuals who qualify for broad-based categorical eligibility. LB770 proposes to increase the gross income guidelines for those who qualify for the broad-based, categorical eligibility from the current gross income guidance of 130 percent of federal poverty level to 160 percent of federal poverty level for individuals who qualify for this TANF-funded program. The net income guideline for SNAP would not change. The income level would remain at 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Based on U.S. census figures, increasing the federal poverty level from 130 to 160 percent would increase the potential client base by approximately 104,318 persons, or 46,757 households. Due to the amount of eligible expenses necessary to pass the net income test, it is estimated that approximately 15 percent, or 7,378 of these households would be eligible for SNAP benefits. The department would receive the applications, conduct the interviews, and determine the eligibility, the estimated 39,379 households who would apply, but potentially not be eligible, due to the high amount of expenses needed for the household to reach 100 percent to the federal poverty level and receive a SNAP allotment. The addition of 46,757 SNAP applications would require 54 additional social service workers and 5 social service supervisors, based on the required task time involved to complete the work. This bill will add 106,511 hours

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of work by the social service workers. The task times utilized include: one hour for application processing, an additional one hour for 30 percent of the applications to be received verbally via the phone, and then four hours of casework to complete case review and case changes as they occur throughout the year. This significant increase in staffing is a major issue for the division and the department. In 2015, LB81 passed, which addresses transitional childcare assistance when a family's income falls below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. LB770 is regarding the SNAP program, which is an entirely different program and is under the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. LB770 does not address the cliff effect in the same manner as the transitional childcare, as it utilizes an increase in the federal poverty level on gross income, but utilizes 100 percent of the federal poverty level on the net income. We have a SNAP Department of Labor pilot project assisting families and achieving better jobs. A pilot works with clients on bridging so they are aware of income needs to avoid the cliff effect. This bill offers limited assistance to small...this bill offers limited assistance to a small population who have an increase in income. Therefore it does not have a big impact on the cliff effect. We remain willing to work with Senator McCollister to further our SNAP labor pilot project. I am happy to answer any questions any of the committee members may have. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I think one of the lead-off questions, at least to me, is the...maybe you can help us with the...last year's--2017--which session which talked, I think, about two FTEs increase, and this is talking about something...54. Obviously there's...these are different programs. And I know last year...I believe last year we were talking about 158 percent. Is that correct? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I think so. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Get with this, please. Can you help us? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: So I will focus more of my time on how we came up with our calculation for this year's. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Last year, I do understand it was a little bit different where it was...it brought the gross up to 158 in the first year and 185 in the second year, and I think we had just a couple

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additional staff requirement in that first year and then about 25 additional staff in the second year. That was based, really, on a different methodology. What I referenced in my testimony, with regard to the fiscal note for this year...and if I can walk through this, we're anticipating the potential of 104,318 clients, which comes to 46,757 households, and we anticipate total applications of 59,233. Of those we anticipate that 7,378 will be eligible applications. So the way that breaks down is that, that will take one hour to process 41,463 applications. It will take two hours...I'm sorry, it will take one hour, which equates to 41,463 SSW hours needed to process applications in one year. So it's basically how many hours our team will spend processing. We have...the applications that are received by phone require two hours, and that is anticipated to require 35,540 SSW hours needed to process those applications. So what it comes down to is we're looking at that an additional of 7,378 are eligible. It will require an additional 29,511 SSW work hours to maintain and work those ongoing cases throughout the year, about four hours there. So what it comes down to is an additional 106,514 work hours to process the applications and then the ongoing cases for those eligible. And when we look at our SSWs, they have 1,984 work hours and, if you do the math of it, I'm adding 106 hours--106,514 hours, and an SSW works about 1,984 hours a year. That comes out to roughly 54 additional SSWs. So that was the methodology that was used to determine that, and we've added five supervisors, in general, in our call centers. A supervisor will oversee ten SSWs, so that's the 54 and the 5. And in these call centers, and we develop these time frames where it's one hour for kind of a traditional application, two hours for a phone application, and then four hours for the case throughout the year. In our call centers, we are extremely, I guess, task driven, if you will, and when we look at January, we processed work tasks...22,845 work tasks in January. We processed 21,583 of those, so we track those on a monthly basis, and then we track the number of work processes, on a daily basis, of how many phone calls come in and how quickly we're handling those phone calls and how much time we spend on each of those phone calls. For example, yesterday we received close to...just over 1,900 calls, and it comes out to roughly, you know, just under 200 calls an hour that we processed through the call center. We know we spent average talk time of about ten minutes and then kind of wrap-up time to complete some of those tasks associated with those particular calls of about 20 minutes, so we spend about 30 minutes roughly. So it goes to say the difference in the methodology from last year's fiscal note really centers on, I think, a 1992 study that was a little bit older. And this year we are really keyed in to the number of hours it will take and the number of applications we think we will receive and the number of manpower that it will take to process and maintain those applications. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there follow-up questions to that? Let me go to Senator Linehan, and then I'll come back to Senator Crawford. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. And thank you for being here today. I just want it clarified, because I think, for the record here, even if we--what you're saying in your testimony--even if we did increase it to 160 percent, because the federal law says with their

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expenses they have to be back down to 100 percent, very...only 15 percent of the people would qualify. The perception of what would happen here is not your perception of what would happen or what seems to be the bigger perception. But we keep all...we'd help all these people, and you're saying not likely. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: That's what I'm saying. I'm saying increasing this up to 160, it creates a lot of time to process applications that fall within that first tier of the gross test. But they don't have enough expenses or deductions to get them to meet the second test, the net test, which is 100 percent of FPL. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: And that's the federal law. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes, that's the... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So are there states that have done this where they kind of have the numbers that...your assumptions are built on experiences in other states? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I think there are variables and the deductions that we can...that other states may look at or may be able to do, the 100 percent FPL is...that's the federal requirement. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: If you take another state, like a California or another state that might say...I heard it referenced, maybe go up to 200 percent of gross, they may have different deductions that are acceptable, based on... [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Because...cost of living. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Cost of living and other things in a different part of the United States. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Because their 100 percent of poverty in California and Nebraska is the same, right? If I remember, they're only different in Alaska and Hawaii. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum; they are. Oh, I believe it's Alaska and Hawaii, and then we have the 48 continental, yeah. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: So New York, California, and Nebraska are all the same. Okay, thank you very much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I think Senator Crawford had a question. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Oh, thank you. So just to reinforce what I think I just heard there, when we're talking about who qualifies for this program, for the SNAP, the folks who go up to...we're talking about pushing that limit up to 160 percent of poverty gross, but you have to have enough expenses that you would be down to 100 percent of poverty net, right? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. And so your estimate is that that would be a 15 percent... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: 15 percent. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: All right. So we're not moving everybody up to 160; we are focusing on those who have expenses like prescription drugs, childcare, those kind...medical expenses that really create that gap for them. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: So again, I guess I want to come back to the fact that when you have these kinds of programs where people are applying and...how often do you have every--100 percent of the people who qualify for the program apply for the program? How often do you have 100? It looks like the cost estimate is based on 100 percent of the people who would apply for the program, but are expected to...oh, 100 percent of the people who are eligible for the program are stepping up to apply for the program. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I mean, that is... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Is that... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: That is the population that would be eligible... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: ...under that, based on U.S. census data, yes. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, right. So we're assuming...and so is there any guidance or information people have about this program, when you just are starting to log on, to help you understand that it's not just your gross income but there are other eligibility factors that you would need to meet, to meet this program? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: It's...I'm sorry, is your question...is there... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Yes, so I was asking, is that true? So if somebody is interested and thinking: Oh, do I qualify or not, are there any guides before it gets all the way through your whole screening process, for someone to know: Oh, okay, wait. I'm not going to meet this? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I believe there's some information that's available that knows it's not just that one number, and then there are particular deductions, and it has to come in at the 100 percent federal poverty level, that it's just not that gross income. And the deductions are...I've got what our average deductions are for different categories, and then there's a maximum (inaudible). It is so there are some maximum deductions available as well, so it's not like you can just go out and get a more expensive apartment to raise your income. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, right. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: There are some guidelines around that, as well. So... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. So would it be fair to say that people who begin the application process...would it be fair to say that not everybody who begins the application process goes all the way through the expense of the entire screening process? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I'm not...I'm not sure. I mean there are people right now, when we look...that go through the application and the eligibility process. We have a number of people that get screened out... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: ...because they don't hit that 100 percent FDL, so they're at 130 percent in gross, and then they go through the application, the screening process, and their income is too high. So they would get screened out. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. Before...but I'm just talking about the fact that, if we have (inaudible) expected expense for going through the entire screening process, we don't necessarily take...everybody who starts the process doesn't go through that entire cost of that screening process. Is that fair? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Through the entire...I mean, once we get an application, we would work the application all the way through to its conclusion... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Okay.. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...and verify income, and if...you know, pay stubs are generally included in the app, we have those types of things and work through the household budget part of those applications. So am I addressing your question? [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Oh, I just...I was just trying to get a sense of, if somebody is calling and getting assistance or going through the process, they would get to a point where they would see that they don't necessarily...aren't going to qualify, before they would go through the entire cost of all of the screening, if we are overestimating the cost, in terms of assuming that everyone who is eligible would take that entire cost of screening. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Right. And if someone is taking that application over the phone, and we're collecting that data and that information, that particular individual right there on the spot taking the call wouldn't say: Oh, we're going to stop your application; you don't qualify. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right, right. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: We would take it through to completion and then... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Continue as far as the consumer...as the citizen wanted to go. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Yes. [LB770]

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SENATOR RIEPE: Is it fair to say, on most of those, that the costs are front-loaded, as well? That you would have...more of your cost is going to be in the first ten minutes of that conversation than it will be as it goes along. I think that's typical of... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Well, on a phone application for...I mean they would...they go through the application. And then we actually have to input the information that was collected over the phone into the computer system. So I mean in that process... [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: But your expense isn't evenly spread, I'm assuming. I'm assuming that your cost is going to be higher at the start, when you're collecting basic information. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: That's always a requirement, to collect that basic information. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: I'm sorry. Did I see a hand down here? Senator Howard. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. Thank you for visiting with us today. So what do I need to show you when I'm applying for SNAP? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: What you have... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: I think I might be eligible. No, I'm kidding (laughter). But like if I was going to apply for SNAP, what do I need to show you? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: You would fill out the application, in itself. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: And what I know from kind of a higher level, some income verification... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...where I know we have a couple of systems in the state where we can possibly do a data match to verify employment, or generally, I believe, you have to...we ask you to include pay stubs. [LB770]

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SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: So it would be pay stubs and then some things... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Then if you verify them with the computer, do I still need to send you my pay stubs? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: No, some of them we can...if we verify them with the computer, then we wouldn't have to send that--the pay stubs. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. And what else do I need to share then? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: And then things around your budget, your household budget. Probably a lease, if you're doing that, and utility bill of some sort to show kind of that overall shelter cost. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And okay. So how are we doing on call wait times for SNAP? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: We're doing very well on call wait times for SNAP. I have my call wait time data. I know we've come in under five minutes... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...for the last year. Let's see. I mean yesterday our average wait time was 1 minute and 46 seconds. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: That's beautiful. And so I know that we used to have an issue with emergency applications and those not being processed timely. How's that going? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: With emergency applications? We haven't heard that that's a problem because we've been...I think I have yesterday's data on it. We're doing about 35 percent of our applications the same day. Yesterday we did 35 percent of our applications the same day. Those emergency applications are prioritized. I'm not seeing my emergency line on here, but... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And why would a family apply for an emergency application? [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: If there's some sort of...I guess immediate hardship, a hardship that took place. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: How many applications did you get last year? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: How many applications did I get last year? I don't have that exact number of how many I got last year for SNAP, in particular. What I can tell you is I have it by month. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: So it generally fluctuates between mid-13,000 to upper-14,000. And in August we received 18,091 applications but, for the most part, it would appear it averages around 13,000 to 14,000 applications a month. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And then how many people do we have currently receiving this benefit? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: We have, as of December, it was 77,407 households, I believe. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Do you consider that a large number or a small number? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: It kind of is what it is. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: I guess I'm going to your...this bill offers limited assistance to a small population. But you've indicated that 46,000 is a small population. So do you consider 77,000 a large population? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: It's all I can speak to is that we've got 77,000 households on SNAP, and I...are there more likely SNAP-eligible households out there that are not on SNAP? [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Right now? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Likely, yes. [LB770]

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SENATOR HOWARD: Yes. Okay, so I guess...I guess what I'm trying to get my arms around is...tell me about this 15 percent that would be eligible. It's 7,000 households would be eligible under this? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: The 15 percent comes down to about 7,378 households are what we identified would likely be eligible, in meaning their gross income, from what I've seen...anything over 135 percent, you don't have enough deductions... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...to get you to 100 percent of the federal poverty level. So those...and I would say that that 15 percent really falls to about 135 percent of the poverty level. And when you get much above that, you're just processing applications that are not going to come in at that 100 percent federal poverty level. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: So for you, you're thinking that it will be about 7,000 families that this would impact. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: But we would see an increase of how much in applications? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: We think it would be a potential of 46,757... [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Additional applications? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...applications. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And so last year you saw a total of 200,000 applications-ish? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And so you're anticipating another 50,000. I just...I'm trying to wrap my arms around the additional positions, given that our call time is under five minutes, our processing times are up. We are not under some sort of federal PIP... [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: ...because we're not processing things timely. And you're doing really well in economic assistance. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: We are. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And so I just can't imagine that it should...it would take you such a considerable amount of time on these. And so that's what I'm having a hard time on this fiscal note. I guess, as a final question, and this should be an easy one, how many people...so we used to have a problem with supervisors versus employees. So how many employees does an average supervisor, in an access call center, supervise? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: About ten. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: About ten? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yep, yep. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And so you're calling for 5 additional supervisors in addition to your 54 employees, in the access call centers. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And then 30 percent of these applications people...somebody is going to call you and say: Hey, I want to apply. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: 30 percent call and they apply. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And what are the rest of them? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: And those phone applications take longer. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Yeah. [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: A vast majority of them are coming in either via paper or the ACCESSNebraska, the on-line...submittal. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: The on-line? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...submittal, yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. So 30 percent are still being called in, but then they still have to mail in all of that paperwork and have it scanned and tagged? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: And so is that how you're attributing your application processing times, is the scanning and tagging? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: That's a component of it. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay, all right. Well, I appreciate you coming to talk to us today about this. I take your fiscal note with an enormous grain of salt. You are doing an incredible job at ACCESSNebraska, and timeliness is going really well. When are you planning on updating the 1992 Workload Study? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I don't know if there is a plan to update the Workload Study. As I mentioned before, we're...we've done some really fine tuning of our resource management where, at the call centers, we can get it down to...we have a good idea of peak days. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...and how much of a...how much staff we need, on a particular peak day, to handle what that peak day is going to look like. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Um-hum. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: And we know if we're going to drop under, you know, 80 percent of our FTE that day, that we're going to have some trouble handling the volume that's anticipated that day. So they're very good at optimizing where peak days are and how much staff that we need to

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make sure is present that day to handle the number of, not just the incoming volume of calls, but the tasks at that day. And the tasks kind of vary in time, depending on what the task is. [LB770]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you for visiting us today. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Sure. Thank you for the opportunity. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Senator Linehan. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: I know it's really late. I really appreciate you being here. I just have a couple quick questions. I think Appleseed did a great job of trying to lay it out on a chart of...so if a person goes above the 130--not a person, a family--and on their chart here they have one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child...they go above the 130 percent, or when they're at 130 percent, right now they're getting \$238 a month. So I just...I don't expect you to know this...I would...right off the top of your head...but so does that mean, when they go to 131 percent, what they actually lose in benefits is \$238 a month? So they'd have to get over a dollar-something an hour wage. I mean I think that's where we're...those are the numbers I don't really understand. If you could, and I don't expect you have that right now, but just kind of like, what is the benefit they lose when they go over 130, and what would that take an hourly wage increase so they're even? And then the other question that come up today, that I would like some feedback from the department on and make sense, they get the SNAP benefits that, I guess, once a month, the card gets lifted up? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yeah, it's an EBT card. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So all of us, if you get paid once a month, it's hard to make that stretch out to the end of the month. So with the electronics the way they are today, would there be any possibility you just put the money on once a week, or every two weeks, instead of giving it? I'm just asking that. Or maybe it's a federal program; you can't do anything about it. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I can look into it. I'm not sure. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I know that, if you did it once a week or...I mean that's...then that's four... [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: It's a lot more work. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yeah, yeah. So I'm not sure, but I can look into it. I know we do monthly. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Just any way so they don't run out of...because that seems legitimate. You could run out of money at the end of the month... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: ...if you feel like you're okay and then, by the end of month...okay, thank you. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Sure. Can I address one thing that you mentioned, with regard--I mentioned it briefly in my testimony--the SNAP Department of Labor pilot project that we have? And that is one project we have going where we identify people on SNAP, and we've rolled it out geographically to a pilot now. And we have some set criteria that we want to see in the family, to participate in the program, but we kind of go through our SNAP-eligible folks to see if they might be eligible to participate in this pilot program. And that's exactly what it does, is it works with families to identify exactly how much you need to increase your wage, your monthly wage, in order to get off the SNAP benefit, but not set yourself backwards, that you're moving forward to sustainability and achieving, I guess, higher wages to achieve sustainability. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So is that pilot program, is it just in a certain geographical area? Or is it more so that people that you...how do you... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: It started because what we do is we identify the SNAP component of it, and then we work with the Department of Labor and they help, either through some job training, on-the-job training, additional education to make an improvement--those types of things. So we really started it where we were kind of collocated with the Department of Labor, so we originally started in Grand Island and then have gone out to Kearney and Columbus. I believe we recently launched in Norfolk, so it's kind of where we think we have the particular demographic that would benefit from this program. And we're calling it pilot because, I mean, we're not ready to go statewide with anything like it yet. But we've seen some very good successes, where people have been in multiple jobs and in kind of unsustainable hourly wages, where we've really worked with them to get them into jobs with benefits and jobs that improve their family life so they're not working in the evenings and they have more eight-to-five type hours like that. [LB770]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: So since the Department of Labor is involved, do you get an opportunity, then, to work with employers who are looking for workers, too? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: That's where Department of Labor has those relationships with a lot of the employers. So we work with it more identifying the pool, and then kind of hand them off to the Department of Labor. So it really is a joint effort between the two departments. [LB770]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you for explaining it (inaudible). Thank you very much. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Are there...Senator Williams. [LB770]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. And just one quick question. Does that lead me to believe you have some kind of an on-line calculator of some kind to help somebody go through this process, so they can determine where they are? [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: I know we have on-line guidance. I don't know if it's a particular calculator... [LB770]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: ...that you can plug your information into, but I know there's plenty of on-line guidance that help you...walk you through the application process. [LB770]

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Is that a tax season question (laughter)? Okay, are there...Senator Crawford. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. And I do appreciate you being here to help answer questions. It's very helpful. I guess that was what...part of what I was wanting to understand, is when you have this on-line guidance, so that someone is figuring out how close...if they're likely to apply--qualify--so that one of my questions would be: How many of those people who start the application end up getting to that entire point where it would take four hours of casework to complete their case review, because they might start the application and they see this guidance and/or it's very clear they're not qualifying, that they wouldn't...where we're assuming that everybody is requiring...everybody who might possibly be eligible is requiring all of these hours, including half it, you know, four hours of casework when it's 15 percent who

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actually apply. So but the range of people who probably go through that entire process to get to those four hours is somewhere in between and not 100 percent of those people going through that process. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: If I can, in preparation for today's hearing, I know on the Web site, on the ACCESSNebraska Web site, there's a click that says: Am I eligible? [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: So you click on it, and you start to work through the next step, the next... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: And when you get it started, you have to put a lot of...I thought I could just put a few numbers in to double-check, and you have to start to really load your information into it. So it wasn't as straightforward as I thought it would be. So there is some guidance along those lines, but I don't know if that turns into an application at that point or what, and I didn't want to throw off our previous state numbers or anything like that, so... [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Right. That would be an interesting study to figure out how people use that to self-screen. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yeah. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Because that's the person's time, not necessarily staff time... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Right. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...to do those kinds of tests and figure out there are tools now, I think, to every...that you've done a great job in putting those tools in place... [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Um-hum. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: ...and putting the other guidelines in place to make this process much smoother and easier and faster. [LB770]

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MATT WALLEN: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: So...and appreciate your work on that. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Sure. [LB770]

SENATOR CRAWFORD: Should make these kinds of programs less expensive and more efficient. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Yes, right. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here. It's very helpful. [LB770]

MATT WALLEN: Thank you for the opportunity. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Any additional individuals speaking in opposition? Seeing none, are there any individuals who want to speak in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, let me...Senator McCollister, you can come up. I'd like to have Tyler read in any letters so that you're aware of letters that we may have received, as well. Tyler. [LB770]

TYLER MAHOOD: (Exhibits 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27) Yes. The following letters are in support: Amy Behnke of the Health Center Association of Nebraska; Shavonna--let me double-check that last name--Shavonna Lausterer of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, in support; Ashley Frevert of Community Action of Nebraska; Sherry Miller of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska; the Nebraska Association of School Boards submitted a letter; Andrea Phillips of the National Association of Social Workers-Nebraska Chapter; Tessa Foreman of Nebraskans for Peace; Mary Spurgeon of Omaha Together One Community; Dr. Mark Adler of the Ralston Public Schools; and Heidi Woodard of the Nebraska Women's Health Advisory Council. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Those were all in support? [LB770]

TYLER MAHOOD: Correct. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Senator McCollister, you're welcome to close. [LB770]

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SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Chairman Riepe. And members of the committee, thank you for your two, two and a half hours spent on LB770; I'm grateful for it. Last year LB358 failed, by one vote, to advance from General File. My office received a call from a distraught Nebraska citizen who's legal representative voted against the bill. The individual wrote a letter to her local newspaper, expressed her views about the bill and the vote against it. The letter struck a chord with the editor of the newspaper. He reported that he mentors a child in the community who was ill and missed a lot of school. When the editor asked his mentee how he had like his break from school, the child reported: I missed the food at the school...missed the food at the school. The editor noted that 50 percent of the children in their school district are eligible for free and reduced lunch meals. Unfortunately, this is not unique. Over 12 percent, or approximately 12 percent, of folks in Nebraska are food insecure, and that's a big number in this big, prosperous state. I think we developed last year a correlation between the free and reduced lunch and the food insecurity. And so simply take a look at the statistics in your school system about free and reduced lunch, and I think you'll see the correlation, as well. Third, you heard a report that when you start calculating 160 percent gross down to 100 percent that, you know, most people still don't qualify. I would argue that once you add childcare, healthcare, and housing, you know, I'd bet those numbers would be pretty incredible. Those deductions would amount to a lot of money. So I'm not sure I agree with the department's position on that. Finally, we've been talking a lot about the 1992 Work Study. Isn't it time that we updated that report? We need a better methodology to deal with this subject, and floating around with these estimates just does not cut it. So, you know, if this bill doesn't quite make it to, you know, General File, you know, let's resolve to finish those statistics and then get a more refined estimate what those numbers are. Thank you very much, committee and Mr. Chairman. [LB770]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay, thank you. Are there questions of Senator McCollister? Seeing none, thank you, Senator, for being here. With that, we have had a full and fair hearing of LB770, and that concludes this hearing on that. And it concludes our hearings for the day. Thank you very much to the committee and for everyone that attended. [LB770]