

BOSTELMAN: [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] the Natural Resource Committee. I am Senator Bruce Bostelman. I'm from-- from Brainard and represent the 23rd Legislative District. I serve as the Chair of this committee. Today, we're here to hear LR102, introduced by Senator Wishart. This LR is a res-- resolution to provide the Legislature take-- to take steps to combat the climate and ecological crisis. We only have one hour for today's hearing. Testifiers will be allowed three minutes to speak and then maybe asked questions by the senators. To ensure we give everyone an opportunity to be heard, we will start with five proponents, then switch to five opponents, then five neutral testifiers, then back to the proponents. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. When you come up to testify, please spell your name, your first and last name, to ensure that we have an accurate record. Committee members may come and go as they have other obligations during this time. And the committee members will introduce themselves starting on my far left with Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Good afternoon. Senator Gragert, District 40, up in northeast Nebraska.

HUGHES: Senator Dan Hughes, District 44, nine counties in southwest Nebraska.

AGUILAR: Senator Ray Aguilar, District 35, Grand Island.

BOSTELMAN: To my right?

J. CAVANAUGH: John Cavanaugh, District 9, midtown Omaha.

MOSER: Mike Moser, Platte County and parts of Stanton County.

BOSTELMAN: To my left is committee legal counsel Cindy Lamm. To my far right is committee clerk Katie Bohlmeier. Our pages for the committee this afternoon is Chloe and Savannah. Thank you very much for both being here today. With that, I would invite Senator Wishart to please come up and open on LR102.

WISHART: Well, thank you, Chairman Bostelman and members of the Natural Resources Committee. My name is Anna Wishart, A-n-n-a W-i-s-h-a-r-t. I represent the 27th District, including parts of west Lincoln and southwestern Lancaster County. Today I am introducing LR102, a resolution I brought on behalf of the adolescents of Prairie Hill Learning Center and all youth in Nebraska that care about addressing climate change. For a little bit of background, LR102 was originally introduced in 2021. Actually, it may have been 2020-- no,

2021. But because of the ongoing COVID pandemic, it was decided that a hearing at that time would be inappropriate, having youth coming into the Capitol and potentially impacting their health. So unfortunately, because of that, a lot of the youth who drafted this resolution are not able to be here today because they graduated from Prairie Hill. But we do actually have some alumni who are responsible for the language in this resolution that are here today to speak to this, as well as some other advocates as well. I don't want to take a lot of time because I want to leave time for the voices of youth to discuss this issue. But the first thing I would ask for this committee is to take some time to read the resolution. It's an incredibly well-written resolution that goes into great detail and length about the problems facing our world on a global level and Nebraska on a local level when it comes to a changing climate. It's articulated better than anything I would be able to say to all of you today, and so I do encourage you to read it. And you'll hear more from those that actually wrote these words for you. The second thing I'll say, and Senator Wayne is the only person who has, I think, in this room, experienced this with me, but when we got to the top of Kilimanjaro and we were at 19,000 feet, we've gone six days traversing 37 miles up the tallest freestanding mountain in the world and going through some of the most incredible environmental changes from rainforest all the way to freezing temperatures, they call it the rooftop of Africa, and you look one way and you see as far-- as far as your eyes can see, across a country. That's how high we were up. But what you also do is you look over and you see these magnificent glaciers, turquoise glaciers that it's hard to describe how beautiful they are. And when we talked to the guides, when they were young, because these guides are from a tribe where they grow up on the mountain, and this is the coveted job, is to be a guide for people to get to the top, when we talked to them, just 15 years ago, these glaciers went all the way up to the trail. You could walk just a couple feet and touch them. They have receded so significantly that it is very likely, in the next 15 to 30 years, they will no longer exist. And we sat there and talked to these guides at the top of this mountain about the impacts of a changing climate from people who spend their entire life outdoors, experiencing with their eyes what happens when our climate changes. It's-- colleagues, we-- we have to do something about this as a species, as humanity. And so I do hope, again, that you will vote out this resolution and support it and support the voices and the words of our younger generation who are going to have to experience changing climate far beyond any of us. Thank you. I'll take any questions.

BOSTELMAN: Thank-- thank you, Senator Wishart. Are there any questions from committee members? Seeing none, you'll stay for closing?

WISHART: Of course.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you. I would ask anyone who would like to testify as a proponent in favor of LR102, please step forward and-- so the green copy goes to the page, and if you have any other handouts, they'll go to the page as well. But when you're ready, please state and spell your name for us. Please go ahead.

JORDAN HOPE: Good afternoon. I am Jordan Hope. My name is spelled J-o-r-d-a-n; my last name is Hope, H-o-p-e, and I am here to represent Prairie Hill Learning Center, as well as our students who have graduated, our students who are currently there. I have been a director of a nonprofit, so I am a businesswoman, I am a mother, I'm a teacher, and I stand for all those parties. Today, I'd like to share a little bit about what the students did-- sorry-- to-- to decide to write this resolution and the work that they put in. The students began with-- under the tutelage of their teacher, Jason Nord, to research it as a class topic, first as a group, and then they each took individual projects to look at how it was impacting our world in different ways. And at the same time, the students were looking at how laws are made, this very process of which you're going through right now, and the students were creating fake bills and resolutions, of which I got to be president and veto some of them and it was a great class project. But it wasn't real-world and the students were not satisfied with that and came and asked Jason if they could write a real resolution that would come to you because, in the end, what they felt was it's not enough to write fake bills and resolutions when there are real changes that need to be made immediately and we cannot wait. We cannot wait for them to grow up. We can't wait for these students to become the lawmakers themselves. They felt like it was imminent, that it needed to be changed now. And so they asked Jason if he would help them and together they wrote this, this resolution that comes to you. This is the second version of it, as it's been revised. As you already heard, as a mother, as a teacher, I see that students are not able to play outside at all times of year. They are not able to play in the same ways. Currently the ground is so dry out at school-- we are out in the country off of Highway 77-- there is dust that blows across the field because of the lack of-- of rain, and there was flooding not so long ago. Nebraska is highly impacted, as you have heard. All across the world, we know that this is true. And if we wait to do something about it, your

children and your grandchildren and their children will not have places to live. So I think it's incredibly important that we take on what these youth have started and that we take it further and that we do something about it immediately. Are there any questions?

BOSTELMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions from committee members? Thank you, Ms. Hope, for your testimony. And so for the other testi-- next proponent, please. And just so you know, when you come up, you'll see there's three green-- there's three lights, for our other te-- so the green light, when it goes to yellow, you have a minute left; and when it's red, it's time to wrap up your-- your testimony. So with that, welcome, good afternoon. Please state and spell your name.

ALEX HAMRIC: Hello, my name is Alex Hamric, spelled A-l-e-x H-a-m-r-i-c, and I'm representing myself as a citizen of Lincoln, Nebraska. I last spoke to you, when I was 12, about a resolution at my class and I wrote. I'm now 14, and here we are, speaking about the same resolution. Last time I was here, I had half a year's worth of preparation, 11 cosigners, and 420 written in and in-person testimonies, all in favor of the document, to back me up. The resolution was still postponed indefinitely. This document has been treated like nothing more than a learning experience for schoolchildren. In some ways, that perception is correct. I learned more about politics and the people in power than most of my teachers and peers ever will. I was taught that it doesn't matter how much information you have, no matter how little you are asking for, you will be ignored if you are below the age of 25. LR102 is asking for two things: this Legislature acknowledge the current crisis is real and anthropogenic, and you have a moral obligation to take action to combat it. The first request is simply a fact. It has a 97 percent consensus in the scientific community. I can point you to hundreds of peer-reviewed sources, but a quick-- quick Google search will do that for me. Instead, I'm going to focus on the second request. It states that the State Legislature of Nebraska has a moral obligation to take steps to combat the climate and ecological crisis. It is simply a promise to the children and younger generations that you will not stand by and let our future go into ruin. We are already witnessing the effects the climate crisis is having on our environment now. Anyone notice that we haven't had any snow days? The argument I heard-- I've heard time and time again was that transitioning to sustainable forms of energy would be detrimental to the economy; that acknowledging that the climate crisis is real and caused by humans would be detrimental to the economy. Do you know what is really detrimental to the economy? Mass casualties, unprecedented

homelessness, complete and utter agricultural collapse, and I cannot believe I have to say that out loud. This resolution is asking for the absolute bare minimum. It is the smallest step you can take in the right direction. I am 14 years old, and I know that there is nothing I can do or say to make you see me as anything more, so let me talk like a 14-year-old kid. When I grow up, I want to be an author. I might want to be a lawyer. I want to get married, maybe have a kid. When I grow up, I want there to be a future and a life waiting for me, one I can mold and change so maybe it is a little bit better than where you left it. This is the last chance you have to take this tiny step in the right direction before it is far too little and far too late. I implore you to take it. I implore you to give me the chance to have a future. Thank you. That will be all.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Ms. Hamric. Are there questions from committee members? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Bostelman. Thank you-- Hamric?

ALEX HAMRIC: Yep.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank-- thank you for being here, and I-- I appreciate your very articulate, well-- well-articulated, nice, but specifically appreciate the use of the word "anthropogenic." A lot of people don't use that one and don't don't use it correctly, so I appreciate that. So you started working on this when you were 12?

ALEX HAMRIC: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: So-- and this resolution looks like it was updated last year. Do you have an idea of how much worse the situation has gotten just in those two years?

ALEX HAMRIC: Significantly. It-- we started it when it said-- or when scientists were saying that we had about eight years before it became irreversible and it would be unable to stop the clim-- the climate crisis and the effects thereof, and I know that it has only gotten worse from then.

J. CAVANAUGH: So you're asking us-- obviously, we're the state of Nebraska, not the world and not the country-- asking us to take our action-- you're asking us to mitigate the harm at this point and not avoid it completely.

ALEX HAMRIC: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

ALEX HAMRIC: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Are there any other questions from committee members? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. Next proponent, please. Good afternoon. And state and spell your name when you're ready.

WILLA HAMRIC: Hello. My name is Willa Hamric, spelled W-i-l-l-a H-a-m-r-i-c. I am 14 year old-- years old and I'm representing myself as a citizen of Nebraska. This isn't my first time speaking in front of this committee. I was one of the few adolescents who helped write the resolution you are seeing in front of you, and I was also one of the many to defend it. Eleven cosigners, 400 written testimonies, and a room filled to the brim with people who support the cause of it all shared that the Natural Resources Committee should pass this resolution; however, you decided to ignore it within its entirety. Some people might call that cowardice. I will not share my opinion on the matter. There's nothing I can say as a 14-year-old kid to convince you to pass this resolution. I believe, if there was, you would have already done it, but adults will never believe when a child says they're-- they're scared. An adult will shush the cries instead of listening to them, so I have stopped my tears and am begging you to pay attention. People are dying. We must take these small steps to prevent it. We are running out of time. We are past the point of no return. Things will never be the same, but that does not mean that it is hopeless. If we can simply acknowledge that humans have caused the climate crisis and that we begin to take steps to make it better, we can make sure it doesn't get any worse. This simple step is incredibly crucial to our state of our country, even if it seems so minor. So please, please do something. I'm begging you. As a child of the state you are supposed to represent, I want to have a future waiting for me in Nebraska, but I'm afraid. I'm afraid that I will never see the rest of the life that I want. I want to get married. I want to be an artist. I want to have a future. So listen to the cries of your children. They are afraid. Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions from committee members? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman. Same last name-- are you siblings?

WILLA HAMRIC: Um-hum.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. Twins?

WILLA HAMRIC: Um-hum.

J. CAVANAUGH: All right. Well, thank you for being here. And again, you articulate well. And I just-- I should have said before that, you know, I appreciate coming and talking, and don't think that when you're not getting listened to it's because you're 14. I'm 41 and I often don't get-- well, I most of the time don't get listened to. [LAUGHTER] But keep-- keep speaking, regardless of whether you feel like people are listening, because other people do hear you. And I know-- I asked about what you're asking us to do and you-- you're imploring us to take some action. Is there, aside from adopting the resolution, is there a specific action you think that the state of Nebraska could take?

WILLA HAMRIC: I think there are many actions at the state of Nebraska could take, but one of the main ones I can see is Nebraska actually using its wind potential by making more wind farms that could produce more energy and instead of using as much oil as we do now.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

WILLA HAMRIC: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you for your testimony. Next proponent, please. Good afternoon. Please state and spell your name for us.

JASON NORD: Wonderful. My name is Jason Nord; that's J-a-s-o-n N-o-r-d. I'm speaking to you here as a private citizen. About two years ago, the two young individuals you just heard speak, and-- and seven of their friends, approached me with, well, the project, the-- the interest that you're seeing in front of you. And, sorry, I only found out this hearing was yesterday, so I had very little time to prepare. And, I'll be honest, I am-- I'm emotional. I'm emotional having heard those two speak. And, Senator Cavanaugh, I think, whether-- whether the voices of children are not being heard because of their age or whether it's because of other reasons, the voices of young people around this planet are not being heard on this issue all too often. I found out yesterday that this hearing would be going on, and I went on a walk after work. That's when I think my best. And I-- I asked myself as I'm walking through the park, what could I possibly say to convince somebody who doesn't yet understand this issue? Right. All of the science is pointing one direction. If we were to print out the peer-reviewed studies that showed you that climate

change is real, caused by humans, and going to lead to disastrous effects for-- for all of us, if we were to print those out and put them on the desk in front of you, you couldn't see me and I couldn't see you. You'd literally be buried in the evidence. So facts aren't going to do it. Logic doesn't do it. Emotional pleas from young people who say, hey, we would like a future, we would like you to leave a world that's at least as good as the one you inherited to us, if not better, but that's not what we're doing. That's not what we're doing. We're leaving a world to their generation that's going to be worse. Senator Cavanaugh, again, you asked about the state of science with this and where it's gone in the last couple years. I don't know if any of you have had a chance to browse over the IPCC report that was just released within the last year. A brief summary is things are way worse than we thought they were going to be. This is a report that's put together by some of the best scientific minds on the planet, Nobel Prize winners who are all saying we need to panic. Things are way, way worse than we thought, and if we do not act quickly, well, they're going to be the ones dealing with it, and their children, if we're lucky enough to be in a situation where that exists. I don't know. As I was walking, trying to think of what I could say, I'll be-- I'll be honest. Sadly, the answer is, is probably nothing, because if we're not listening to the evidence at this point in time and we're not listening to the emotional entreaties and to the calls for empathy and compassion, when is that going to change? How many droughts, how many floods, how many people dead before we have the bravery to do-- well, all these children are asking you to do is state that you know there's a problem and we should do something about it. Thank you. If there's any questions, I'll take them.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Mr. Nord. Are there questions from committee members? I know you're testifying on your own behalf.

JASON NORD: Yes.

BOSTELMAN: Are you-- are you a teacher then?

JASON NORD: I-- so I was the teacher-- I was the teacher that assisted them. Right. They came to me with the idea for this project. I'm the teacher who assisted them. I no longer work at the school, so I'm testifying on my own behalf.

BOSTELMAN: That's fine. I-- it sounded like maybe you're aware of-- of obviously the LR and things that were done, so I just figured that's-- it was--

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JASON NORD: Yes, you know, and I--

BOSTELMAN: --there was a connection there, so hey.

JASON NORD: I had the honor of working with them as-- as they put this together and, yeah, the bravery and really the amazing work that they did.

BOSTELMAN: And, you know, more-- I think more towards the students that are here, you know, we do have students who come through the building quite often and we do talk to them and we do listen to them, so their voices are heard, so appreciate your testimony. Are there any other comments from the-- questions from committee members? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

JASON NORD: You're welcome.

BOSTELMAN: Next proponent, please. Good afternoon.

KEN WINSTON: Good afternoon, Chairman Bostelman and members of the Natural Resources Committee. My name is Ken Winston, K-e-n W-i-n-s-t-o-n. I'm appearing on behalf of Nebraska Interfaith Power and Light in support of LR102. And I guess I was thinking I-- of-- I-- well, the things that the students said and-- and I-- I don't-- I really don't have anything I can add to what they said. I mean, they-- they said it so well, and-- and they-- the thing is, they've done the work; they've-- they've studied these issues; and they refer to the-- the-- the depth of research that they cite is-- is really significant. They've-- they've really looked into this. And I guess, as they indicated, it's very obvious to me, and should be obvious to everyone, that-- that we are experiencing a climate crisis, that-- that it's real, it's here, it's in Nebraska. We had a bomb cyclone in 2019 that caused \$3-point-what, \$3.4 billion in damages. There was the drought of 2012. The damage from that was-- was \$3-4 billion. And we're in a drought right now, and we've had record heat this spring too. So I guess I just wanted to mention a couple of things from-- from my-- I'm a Christian, so I'm going to cite my own faith tradition. There's messages in the Bible that invite us to pay attention to children. Jesus rebuked the disciples when they told him to-- when they said they wanted the children to be put aside. Jesus instead invited the children to him. And then there's the story in the Old Testament of Joseph. He was a prodigious child and his brothers were jealous of him, and so they threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery. But he developed prophetic powers and later he became an adviser to the Pharaoh. And he end-- he ended up saving

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them because of the fact that he was willing to-- to develop his prophetic abilities. And I think this is a time when we should be listening to the prophecies of these children. I think they're prophecies that we-- that we need to pay attention to in order to give them a world that they can live in. Thank you. I'd be glad to respond to questions.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Mr. Winston. Are there questions from committee members? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

KEN WINSTON: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: We will now change to opponents. We will take five opponents. If we have anyone like to testify in opposition to LR102, please step forward. Seeing none, anyone like to testify in the neutral capacity on LR102? Seeing none, we'll step back. Are there any-- is there anyone else who'd like to testify as a proponent to LR102? Anyone else like to testify on the LR? Seeing none, Senator Wishart, you're welcome to close.

WISHART: Well, thank you, Senators, for spending your lunch hour here today on this resolution. I do encourage all of you to-- to consider voting this out so the full Legislature can have a chance to-- to vote on this issue at the end of session. The other opportunity that was not discussed for this Legislature to take some action on addressing climate change is the-- in the ARPA request, the Appropriations Committee did commit to putting out, and it's in the ARPA request, funding to support us renewing and-- and updating our climate change report for the state, working in collaboration with the University of Nebraska and some of our expert scientists here in the state, so that we can, as a state, be prepared to address some of-- and-- and be able to adapt some of the changes that we're going to see. So that is one piece of legislation that has moved out of committee and is now before the full Legislature for a vote included in the ARPA funding bill.

BOSTELMAN: OK. Thank you. Are there oth-- any other questions for Senator Wishart? Seeing none, I will say for-- we-- for the record, position comments, we have one proponent and four opponents. And with that, that'll close the hearing on LR102. Thank you all for being here today. We appreciate it very much. Thank you.