

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Appropriations Committee March 9, 2023
Rough Draft

CLEMENTS: Welcome to the Appropriations Committee. Good afternoon. Sorry, we got a little bit of a late start. We had a committee hearing just before this, but welcome to the committee, Appropriations Committee. My name is Rob Clements. I'm from Elmwood. I represent Legislative District 2, which is Cass County and eastern Lancaster County. I serve as Chair of this committee. We will start off by having members do self-introductions, starting with my far right.

DORN: Myron Dorn, District 30.

WISHART: Anna Wishart, District 27, Lincoln, Lancaster County.

LIPPINCOTT: Loren Lippincott, District 34.

CLEMENTS: Assisting the committee today is Tamara Hunt, our committee clerk. To my left is our fiscal analyst, Clint Verner. Our pages today should be Malcolm from Omaha, a UNL student, and Kate from Kansas, a UNL student. At each entrance, you will find green testifier sheets. If you're planning on testifying today, please fill out a green testifier sheet and hand it to the committee clerk when you come up to testify. If you will not be testifying, but want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there are white sign-in sheets at each entrance where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record after today's hearing. To better facilitate today's proceeding, I ask that you abide by the following procedures. Please silence your cell phones and electronic devices. Move to the front chairs when you are ready to testify. The order of testimony will be introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral and closing. When you come to testify, please spell your first and last name for the record before you testify. Be concise. We request that you limit your testimony to five minutes or less. Depending on how many we have, we might have to reduce that depending on time. Written materials may be distributed to the committee members as exhibits only while testimony is being offered. Hand them to the page for distribution when you come to testify. If you have written testimony but do not have 12 copies, please raise your hand now so the page can make copies for you. We will begin today's hearing with LB445. Is Senator Wayne here? There you are. Welcome, Senator Wayne. Good afternoon.

WAYNE: Good afternoon, Chairman. Good afternoon, Chairman Clements and the Appropriations Committee. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north

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Omaha and northeast Douglas County. Today, this is a very simple bill. If you recall, a couple of years ago this appropriations, we, we appropriated dollars for rail spurs. The goal of this bill and we've seen the success of rail spur no farther than you have to look at Hershey's and what's going on in North Platte. Well, since then, during the LB1024 process, there was a company who looked at doing something in north Omaha and needed a rail line. They still want to come to north Omaha. However, we started looking at other places in the state because they received a big contract in Utah to help build about 400 homes. Throughout that process, they needed a rail line. And because it's no secret I used to work at Union Pacific Railroad, I started having conversations with UP about possible rail lines and, and spurs for them. The conversation quickly kind of took a different turn because since I left UP about 10, 15 years ago, federal regs have been updated and the FTA requires that anything on a mainline or anything that has close to a mainline traffic on it will require a power switch on both sides of the spur. What that means for these small towns in western Nebraska is that if a company wants to go there and they want to have rail access, it'll be around an additional 5 to \$8 million. That's a significant burden on the Third District. So as this year started to have conversations about what's going on in the Third District, Senator Erdman coined the term "preserve the Third" and that is part of this package. I have actually the second part of this package in Government after this for \$35 million to help preserve the culture of the Third District. But this really is a bill about-- and actually, I would like an amendment to even make it even more specific. I think it should apply to first-class cities to make sure that some of these smaller communities have the ability to recruit and retain companies who want to use rail access. And the biggest obstacle right now, whether it's the UP or the Burlin-- Burlington Northern, is this power switch on both sides of the mainline. That is really hindering our growth around some of these tracks. And so we saw the success again with Hershey's. I was a part of that bill along with Senator Groene, and I think it's time to extend that. The bill asks for \$50 million. I'm not saying it has to be \$50 million, but I think a minimum of \$10 million is needed to make sure that cities like Kimball, Ogallala, Brule, and all those around that mainline are-- are areas that are-- have a lot of mainline or potential mainline traffic can help build these switch and develop their, their economies. And with that, I'll answer any questions.

CLEMENTS: Senator Erdman.

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ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Clements. Thank you, Senator Wayne, for bringing this. When you talk about switches, you mean-- is there two switches at each terminal?

WAYNE: Yes. So--

ERDMAN: One entering and one exit, is that it?

WAYNE: Yeah, one entering and one exiting. Sometimes, yeah, one entering, one exit. Co-ops were grandfathered in underneath federal, federal regs. But the issue is co-ops, as you know, Senator, don't necessarily run all year round and the traffic isn't that high. So if there's any increase around 5 to 10 percent of that traffic, the FTA will require a switch to be put in both-- on both, both sides. And that's right now about a \$5 million to \$8 million buildout.

ERDMAN: So how many-- how many locations do you think need this double switch?

WAYNE: Well, from the brief conversations, Kimball, Ogallala, Paxton, that's three. And then there were some lines north to south from Falls City so smaller towns from-- on the Burlington Northern so I would estimate probably five. And again, it may not be this year, but I think rural communities shouldn't be hindered because of that federal regulation.

ERDMAN: Are you familiar what they're doing at Clean Harbors in Kimball?

WAYNE: I am. Since our conversation this morning, I did some, little research over lunch there. I think that's another opportunity that we can help out with out there in Kimball.

ERDMAN: Because they're building an addition about \$200 million, another 100, maybe 200 more jobs. And we're going to get some of that, the things they have to dispose of by rail.

WAYNE: Absolutely.

ERDMAN: So I appreciate this.

WAYNE: No problem.

CLEMENTS: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none--

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WAYNE: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: --thank you.

WAYNE: I have to go to Government to open up on the other part of the "preserve the Third" act so I will waive closing.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

WAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CLEMENTS: Are there proponents for LB445? Welcome.

KEN SCHILZ: Hey, good afternoon, Senator Clements, Chairman Clements and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ken Schilz, K-e-n S-c-h-i-l-z. I'm here in support of LB445 as a registered lobbyist for Keith County Area Development or KCAD. KCAD's mission is to lead activities and partner with community members to broaden and strengthen employment and commerce in Keith County. This includes eight communities and, of course, the Lake McConaughy area. I want to start by thanking Senator Wayne, who has been an advocate for innovative programs to spur economic development in Nebraska. Recruiting, retaining and expanding businesses is the key to healthy communities, urban and rural, and vital to our state's continued economic success. KCAD has worked closely with Senator Wayne to implement and improve the Municipal Inland Port Authority Act. Keith County is fortunate to host the intersections of Interstate 80, several highways, and Nebraska railway lines. Tools like inland ports provide opportunities to increase accessibility to these critical transportation networks for manufacturers and other businesses we would like to recruit to our area. In addition to providing more funding for inland port projects, we recommend allowing a subaccount of the Site and Business [SIC] Development Fund supported by the appropriations in LB445 also to be eligible for use by rail spur projects under the Nebraska Rural Projects Act. Both the rural projects and inland port authority programs are closely aligned. The goals of both programs are to increase the industrial access to our transportation networks. And inland port statutes, however, require a city or caddy-- or county to designate 300 acres within the port area, and at least 75 percent of the acres must be contiguous. This can be a challenge for smaller communities, especially in more rural areas. Allowing the rural projects and the inland port authority programs to access these funds will broaden the reach of funding to municipalities of all sizes. And we are working with Senator Wayne on an amendment

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which he-- which he talked about to implement that change. Behind me is a testifier who can speak specifically to how this rail spur can support the manufacturing business in Keith County. Although we've had substantial surplus, I know this committee has many proposals before it and obviously not enough funds to go around. So I would encourage the committee members to balance tax relief with investment opportunities that can broaden Nebraska's tax base. LB445 is an opportunity to grow existing businesses and recruit new businesses and workers to Nebraska so we can have long-term tax relief and thriving communities. Thank you. And I'd be happy to try and answer any questions you might.

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

KEN SCHILZ: Ah, easy day. Thanks.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent for LB445. Welcome.

PHILLIP HENDERSON: Welcome. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, committee members, for the time to be here with you this afternoon. My name is Phillip Henderson, P-h-i-l-l-i-p H-e-n-d-e-r-s-o-n. I'm the director of operations for Modern Eminence LLC. We are a modern day solution to the housing industries through our revolutionary technology and manufacturing ways. Our forefathers set out to forge across this expansive land of these United States. And while there are many forms of transportation, the one that exploded the expansion through economic growth almost single-handedly is the railroad. To this day, in fact, the very reason we have all gathered here is to invest and expand into an infrastructure that has consistently, through the booms and bursts of the time, remained a cornerstone of this country, not just for decades now into a second century through this legislative bill, LB445. The opportunity we have here today on LB445 is the key to providing to our rural communities the means to move their logistical importing and exporting of products, supplies and services to the rest of the country and perhaps the world, all while providing additional employment opportunities for those who will help create these rail spurs. Here in Nebraska, we have the honor of being home and the host to these impactful, traditional as well as modern machines we call trains. We all know they are far more than just trains. In the forging of this great country and state, these were more than machines. They were and are still today the quiet lifelines that keep our nation, our state, and our people connected to the ideals this country was founded on. While we do not see them as

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amazing as perhaps we once did, now with all the technological, technological advances and personal transportation, yet quietly, consistently and now in need of our assistance, they have been in our lifelines exceptionally during these last few historic years. In specific, they are in need of repair and expansion into our rural communities where they, too, can achieve their maximum potential by adding these rail spurs into areas that will be impacted by not just being where the train passes by, but rather stops and allows their goods and services to be transported to places that only these cost-effective means of transportation can provide. We at Modern Eminence are one of those manufacturers, not just bringing more employment opportunities to these rural communities, but rather one who brings economic return on investments in these rail spurs by employing those who are in charge of operating these vital lifelines to transport our housing products, not just to the great state and people of Nebraska, but through Nebraska, becoming the main exporting location for our entire corporation nationally. Rail spurs in counties such as Keith and cities, Ogallala, that have become our gateway to the West are in need of infrastructural repair and maintenance, and in our case, specifically, the need of having one at all. The investment this legislation can and should make now, like the past, will pay in dividends far beyond the counties and cities they are placed. Moreover, they will yield in the growth like our forefathers provided us here today when they invested in them and us all those decades ago. For those reasons stated above, as well as many others, we voice our support of LB445. It is our honor to be here, and we look forward to seeing the continued expansion of this integral transportation system, as this bill is more than another asking for funding, a piece of legislation in something speculative or untested. But undoubtedly this is an investment in ourselves, our community, our state, our country, and most importantly, our people and future generations to come. Thank you. And I will try to answer any questions you may have.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

PHILLIP HENDERSON: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: When I was introducing the committee hearing, I said If anybody needed 12 copies of a presentation to hand out, the page is available, if you would raise your hand now if you need a copy made. Thank you. Are there other proponents for LB445? Seeing none, anyone in the opposition? Seeing none, anyone in a neutral capacity? Seeing

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none, that concludes the hearing for LB445 and we will open the hearing for LB573. Senator Hansen.

HANSEN: Thank you, Chairman Clements and members of the Appropriations Committee. I know I'm not in front of your committee very often, so when I am, it's very important. And it's a bill I know all of you will like and vote for. So that's the only reason I'm here. It's nice to see so many people behind me in support of my bill.

CLEMENTS: Oh, excuse me. I have to reopen LB445. I missed a position comment that had been submitted online. We had one proponent, one opponent, nobody in the neutral on LB445. And that concludes LB445. And now we can go to LB573. You're welcome to open.

HANSEN: All right. Again, good afternoon, Chairman Clements, members of the Appropriations Committee. For the record, my name is Ben Hansen. That's B-e-n H-a-n-s-e-n, and I represent the 16th Legislative District, which includes Washington County and the city of Blair. I'm here today to open on LB573, a bill to appropriate one-time grant dollars to the Department of Economic Development to ensure that fost-- former foster youth are able to successfully launch as adults as they age out of the foster care system. I am distributing an amendment that clarifies the purpose of this grant program, which is to enhance the housing and job training opportunities for former foster youth and youth who have aged out of out-of-home placement through the juvenile court and who have been deemed safe to remain in their community by the juvenile court. You will hear from one such young person, Tyson, later today, who receives services from Angels Share and is on a terrific path for success. Currently, Angels Share operates a small program for former foster youth and other at-risk youth on the former Dana College campus in my hometown of Blair. Angels Share currently serves approximately 60 former foster youth by providing these youth who have aged out of the system without a permanent facility, a place to live, employment, or continued education. Blair has openings with Cargill's C and W Services and Novozymes to name a few, as well as a new Dollar General distribution facility, which I think is the largest in Nebraska or the nation. But it's huge and they're looking for a lot of people to work there. They are expected to bring several hundred jobs to the Blair community. Thanks to a new partnership with Lutheran Family Services, Angels Share is poised to expand this program to serve more, more of the nearly 300 young people in Nebraska who age out of foster care each year. These young people have been removed from their homes by the state of Nebraska, and for one reason or another, completely outside

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the control of the youth, they are not able to find permanency in a stable home before they turn 19. As amended, LB573 asks for a one-time investment of \$10 million to be used at locations like the former Dana-- Dana College campus to serve former foster youth. As contemplated, they will be converted into a holistic campus that will attend to the youth-- the needs of youth aging out of foster care. As a state, we have a responsibility to former foster youth who have not achieved permanency, which is why I am advocating for the use of state funds as a partial match to the investment the private sector and nonprofit organizations will make in this project. I am a fiscal conservative and believe in being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. However, I believe this is a worthwhile investment because these youth have been the state's responsibility and the state has entirely completed its mission to find permanency and a stable home for youth once a removal occurs. What's more, if we fail to provide adequate support for former foster youth, the monetary and social cost to Nebraska is much greater. Thirty percent of former foster youth who age out of the foster care system are homeless. Twenty-nine percent of those who age out of the former-- out of foster care system end up in our corrections system. Thirty-eight percent of these young people are unemployed and 26 are pregnant, 26 percent are pregnant. All of these consequences have significant impacts on the young people themselves, but also on our state budget in areas such as Medicaid and corrections. A supportive environment with housing, job training, and wraparound services will help these youth avoid these negative outcomes and prepare to launch as successful young adults. In my opinion, this is more of the hand up, the hand up and not the handout approach. LB573 makes a small investment in a program that will have a large impact on some of the most vulnerable citizens. Thank you for your consideration and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have, keeping in mind that there are experts behind me. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Questions from the committee? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you. Thank you, Senator, for being here. The program that you talk about at the old Dana campus, are there programs around that to try to get these kids to be self-sufficient? Do they-- do they help them with maybe applying for college, budgeting, finding long-term housing and how long can they stay in the program?

HANSEN: There'll be somebody behind me to answer those questions--

ARMENDARIZ: OK.

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HANSEN: --more thoroughly. But from my understanding, it does almost all of that. The goal is to house these youth and to get them to become productive members of society, right, not just giving a home and leaving there, right? It is helping them with education, hopefully helping them with soft skills, I mean, all of those things, right? And so that's kind of a goal. I don't think we have a whole lot of that in the state of Nebraska. And so they have done a great job in reinventing the Dana College campus. And they're, they're, they're I think, seeing a lot more interest in this. And now they just need some of our help to update the campus.

ARMENDARIZ: So would this money be spent to expand it on the campus so more of those--

HANSEN: From my understanding, yes.

ARMENDARIZ: --kids could live there?

HANSEN: Um-hum.

ARMENDARIZ: So they have 60 now.

HANSEN: Sixty now and looking to house a lot more. Like, for instance, they have, I believe, like the old dormitory from Dana campus that got pretty much kind of destroyed from the hailstorm. And so they're looking to update that and so it can house some of these youth.

ARMENDARIZ: You don't know the number of what you're trying to house when you're done with the \$10 million.

HANSEN: They're looking to expand and serve more of the nearly 300 young people in Nebraska who age out of foster care. So now how much they can with this--

ARMENDARIZ: Right.

HANSEN: --and how much you're looking to expand, they'll probably be able to answer better behind me.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Thank you, Ben. Thank you.

HANSEN: Thank you. And I'm pretty sure I will stay to close. I have another one across the hallway, but I'll do what I can to stay.

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CLEMENTS: All right.

HANSEN: Just because I'm not here very often.

CLEMENTS: Are there proponents for LB573? Good afternoon.

CHRIS TONNIGES: Good afternoon. Chairman Clements, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Chris Tonniges, C-h-r-i-s T-o-n-n-i-g-e-s, appearing before you today as President and CEO of Lutheran Family Services in support of LB573 and the creation of a one-time or of a time-limited grant in support of our youth aging out of foster care system here in Nebraska. Lutheran Family Services is grateful for the Legislature's commitment to the overall mental and physical health of the people of the great state of Nebraska. Youth aging out of the foster care system are often faced with difficult and impossible decisions just to survive, especially those that have limited or no social support network to fall back on. LB573 provides these youth with the opportunity at a chance, a chance to thrive, a chance for generational change, a chance to live a full and fruitful life. There are roughly 130 to 160 youth aging out in Nebraska's system every year. And while some exit the system and thrive on their own, others struggle with the years of trauma they have endured. Those that struggle to make it as a 19-year-old alone and often needing to move to a new community to find services or opportunities end up back in the system as adults. As referenced in the attachment, 30 percent of youth aging out of the system end up homeless within the first nine months; 40 percent end up dealing with drug or alcohol addiction; and 25 percent end up working in the sex trade. If we translate those to real numbers, we're talking about roughly 45 youth ending up homeless, roughly 60 struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, and roughly 40 ending up-- 40 ending up working in the sex trade every single year. The loss of human dignity and hope in these numbers for these kids that were under the care and supervision of the state is both staggering and sad. But this problem can and should be addressed. LB573 with the partnership with Angels Share and Lutheran Family Services provides a glimmer of hope to every single one of these youth aging out of the system that need support and want an opportunity to thrive as an adult. The funding from LB573 will be used to enhance and further the already redevelopment-- starting redevelopment of the former Dana College campus into a place of learning, hope and healing and provide opportunities for the partnership to serve up to 60 youth annually through Angels Share supportive programming wraparound services provided by LFS. This funding will allow for the added development of additional housing and programming space, creating the

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capacity to serve even more youth each year and provide a transition-- and provide for transition services to independent living. The campus will become a place where the Blair community and additional partners are invited to be part of the growth and well-being of all of those who are served through mentorship, skills development, workforce training, internships, mental and behavioral health services, and the list goes on and on. While LB573 is not the silver bullet to solve all of society's problems, it does provide an opportunity to provide much needed support to some of those that are truly the most vulnerable in our state. Kids in the foster care system just want a chance at a normal life, and this project is a large step forward in that process of hope, healing, and well-being for those who have aged out. Our hope is that you can see the potential impact this, this time-limited grant and investment can have on generations of people and communities across Nebraska. This will also have a positive impact on the state's budget long term as the negative outcomes of our youth currently face come with a large price tag for the state in respect to incarceration and homelessness, to name a few. LFS requests that the Appropriations Committee include LB573 in its final budget package to invest in its youth that not by choice, but rather circumstance ended up in the custody of the state. More than happy to answer any of the questions that you had about programming or anything else.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you. So you would be the appropriate organization that would be disbursing this \$10 million--

CHRIS TONNIGES: So I--

ARMENDARIZ: --or another organization?

CHRIS TONNIGES: Yeah, another, another organization in Angel Shares. So we're, we're really the program partner in this so.

ARMENDARIZ: So you have some programming that you help the-- these young people get on their feet and, and trajectory, I guess, for long-term success in their lives?

CHRIS TONNIGES: Correct. Yes. Our programming is centered around those that are the most vulnerable in our communities and really providing all of those wraparound services. So whether it's job placement, job training, English language learning, soft skills, emotional

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intelligence, behavioral health, all of those are parts of the service delivery.

ARMENDARIZ: And then to stay in the facility, there's, there's a process that they need to participate in to stay there. And do you know the age?

CHRIS TONNIGES: So the ages are roughly 19, starting at age 19, which is the age out for the foster care system and serving those individuals up until roughly about 24. The intent for these dollars is to expand the housing on campus to provide for those individuals to transition to deem more normal housing environment rather than kind of campus-level housing, thus allowing us to serve hundreds of individuals year over year in the-- in the future.

ARMENDARIZ: OK, thanks.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Senator Clements. Thank you for being here. How, how-- do they-- when they leave this program or how do they leave this program? They have a job, they are sufficient on their own, or is there an age?

CHRIS TONNIGES: No, there's no age limit. It's really more about self-sufficiency. So there's a couple of other individuals that can talk more specifics about way-- the way that the program is structured today. But we anticipate that the program will really be centered around financial, not only financial stability and security. So allowing those youth to stay there as long as they are financially stable and have the ability to exit the campus. But then also, you know, it being a campus, it creates an environment where we can provide a lot of support for those individuals and we want them to be emotionally ready to exit and move on with their lives too. So not really centered around an age so much as it is at what point are their personal and life skills at the level in which they're ready to launch into adulthood, even though they're already adults but adulthood on their own?

CLEMENTS: Other questions? One question is operation like this being conducted in any other part of the state?

CHRIS TONNIGES: To our knowledge, this is a unique, unique, even the country level. We don't really know of any other program that's really centered around foster care youth aging out of the system. And so this

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is truly somewhat unique in the sense that it's a campus setting, really providing wraparound services and housing at this scale.

CLEMENTS: And if we fund some of this expansion, will it be self-supporting?

CHRIS TONNIGES: It would be, yeah. All the programming dollars are programs that we already offer today through all of our network of 17 offices across the state and the housing development. And Ed can talk a little bit about that here in a little bit, but the housing development would be utilizing private dollars that Senator Hansen talked about. So whether that's a traditional financing, LIHTC programs or other types of development for housing projects.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

CHRIS TONNIGES: Yeah.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your testimony.

CHRIS TONNIGES: Yeah. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Other proponents? Welcome.

ED SHADA: Good afternoon, Senators and Chairman. Thank you for-- thank you for hearing us and for entertaining this LB573. For the record, my name is Ed Shada, E-d S-h-a-d-a, and I'm the executive director of Angels Share, a program focused on support of at-risk and former foster care youth on the Dana College campus. I'm grateful to Senator Hansen for introducing this bill and to help former youth, foster youth as they transition to adulthood. I launched Project Homeless Connect in 2005 in an effort to combat the issue of growing homelessness in the metropolitan area. I also wanted to address the issues of individuals suffering from home-- homelessness were having trying to lift themselves out of poverty. Through this work, we identified that things like permanent address to receive benefit checks, connections to health clinics, and to provide ongoing care and mental health services were contributing factors in homelessness. One of the key issues was coordination of services amongst the service providers. During my time with Project Homeless Connect, one of the areas I identified as having one of the biggest needs and probably the best point of intervention were at-risk youth and had recently-- and those who had recently aged out of the foster care system. A lot of them talked about the lack of support and the need to have a safe place to stay and supportive services to get them on track to

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self-sufficiency. In 2017, I approached Frank Krejci with an idea of how to utilize the Dana College campus in such a manner. Over the past five years, I've been able to take Frank's donation of the abandoned down to college campus to Angels Share and through a little fundraising, a partnership with the city of Blair, some bartering for services have been able to get the campus in a position to begin serving these youth. We've already secured LIHTC financing to remodel two of the once abandoned dormitories. This will allow us to serve up to 61 youth in supportive housing once the construction is completed here in the end of '23, beginning of '24. We're also providing the youth with a gymnasium and workout equipment donated by Schwab to support the physical activity on the campus and provide simple amenities that others who are afforded who are working. The investment in our youth that LB573 provides creates a catalyst for further development of the campus, allowing us to serve even more youth for a longer period of time. We know the one area we will need to solve for is how to create a housing environment that provides not only the supportive housing, but housing that allows youth to establish roots in the community of Blair, the opportunity to transition to additional housing opportunities on campus close to the services that they need. In turn, this will create capacity to allow for additional youth to be served for decades to come. With the redevelopment of the campus, it will take years. LB573 provides a much needed boost to those that need it most and who can provide the greatest impact on the community and state. I strongly encourage the Appropriation Committee to include funding for the important program in their mainline budget.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you. I think I have the right person here now.

ED SHADA: Yes.

ARMENDARIZ: Yeah. I was just looking to see, so for \$10 million, you have a business plan of how that would be spent and what the-- what the end looks like and how, like, how many youth you expect to serve, how many rooms would be remodeled, and what your-- what your end goal, basically a business plan--

ED SHADA: Oh, yes, absolutely.

ARMENDARIZ: [INAUDIBLE] you know.

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ED SHADA: We've, we've had a business plan for a number of years now as to what we were going to be doing up on campus. That's how we got the LIHTC funding, working with NDEE how we built the first suite of apartments that we have up there on campus. We have-- we've been working on a Brownfield project with the EPA on a plan for the development of the campus and what could continue on. With the LIHTC development, we're looking at 61 additional apartments to the 20 that we currently have.

ARMENDARIZ: Do you have-- do you have one more refined for this committee to look at exactly what you'd be spending the taxpayer dollars on, the \$10 million?

ED SHADA: The \$10 million? I'm sure that we've got a business plan--

ARMENDARIZ: OK.

ED SHADA: --around somewhere that would highlight that. Absolutely.

ARMENDARIZ: That would be great.

ED SHADA: Yeah, the business plan from the standpoint of how we're going to spend the money, where we're going to spend the money and how we're servicing the youth, Tyson will be coming up here shortly. He's a youth who came in. He, he was in the Boys Town system. He graduated from Boys Town. His-- he and his girlfriend were referred by Boys Town. They had a-- she had aged out of the foster care system. She's now off. Tyson is still here. He's working for C&W Services. He just bought a car through the Opportunity Passport program and is working right now on getting his budget aligned so that he can pay off his debt, improve his credit score, so that he has an opportunity now to move and grow where he didn't before. So we, we think we've got a pretty good plan as to where we're going and what we're doing.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you.

ED SHADA: Yeah.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

ED SHADA: Thank you, Senators.

CLEMENTS: Are there additional proponents for LB573? Good afternoon.

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TYSON HILDEBRAND: Good afternoon. Members of the Appropriate [SIC]Committee, my name is Tyson Hildebrand, T-y-s-o-n H-i-l-d-e-b-r-a-n-d. I am one of the residents that's on the Angels Share program. The experience that I've had with them is being able to help get myself a vehicle, find affordable housing for myself, and be able to acquire a profession of a job that has room for growth. Some of the stuff that they do offer other opportunities, as they were mentioning in the-- before, with the-- with activities for the weight room. There's a gym for us to go into. And for location-wise, there's multiple jobs that are opening up with multiple opportunities for employment.

CLEMENTS: Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: I just have a comment. I want to thank you for being here, because your voice is very important

TYSON HILDEBRAND: OK.

ARMENDARIZ: --for you and for people that may find themselves in your situation later. It's very important that you speak up, and I know it can be intimidating sometimes, but it's important you keep doing it. I thank you.

TYSON HILDEBRAND: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: I have a question. While you're residing there in Blair, do you pay rent to the facility?

TYSON HILDEBRAND: Ah, yes, I do currently. The rent that we pay is a reduced amount for-- to help us to be able to afford apartments that are cheaper so we can be able to afford vehicles, any medical bills or bills in general that need to be paid off or if you acquire them due to any health issues. So they keep it down at a lower rate for you to be able to afford everything.

CLEMENTS: And how long have you been there?

TYSON HILDEBRAND: I have been there for a little over a year now.

CLEMENTS: All right. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony.

TYSON HILDEBRAND: Thank you [INAUDIBLE].

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CLEMENTS: Other proponents for LB573.

SPIKE EICKHOLT: Good afternoon, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Spike Eickholt, S-p-i-k-e, last name is E-i-c-k-h-o-l-t. I'm appearing on behalf of Voices for Children as their registered lobbyist. Voices for Children advocates for and works with children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and we do support LB573. You heard Senator Ben Hansen explain. It's a very good bill and it does fill a necessary need in this state. We are particularly appreciative of Senator Hansen bringing the amendment to, to broaden the purpose of the program to not only accommodate youth who are exiting the foster care system, but also youth who are exiting the juvenile justice system as well. You heard the statistics that have been mentioned before from the earlier testifiers. If you go to our prisons, you know-- we know where people come from who end up in our prisons. They come from broken homes. They come from trauma as a youth. They come from the foster care system. They come from the juvenile justice system. You heard the last testifier testifying, explaining that he was at the Boys Town facility before. The services that we have now have an 18-- age 19 as a termination date and that's arbitrary. And many times, unfortunately, when the people age out of the system, they just have nowhere to go. And you heard Senator Hansen explain what happens. And you can just imagine what happens for youth who don't have the necessary family support, which is why they're often in the foster care system. And then when they turn 19, they just don't have anything there. And this really fills that need. I don't-- you got my statement. I don't need to read it to you. We just want to echo that this is a worthy investment. It's an important thing for the state to do. And we encourage the committee to work this into the budget. I'll answer any questions if anyone has any.

CLEMENTS: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Is there any other proponent for LB573? Seeing none, is anyone here in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wishing to testify in neutral? Neutral? Good afternoon.

JAMES SUMMERFELT: Good afternoon, Senators. Chairman. My name is James Summerfelt, J-a-m-e-s S-u-m-m-e-r-f-e-l-t, and I'm the CEO of Visiting Nurse Association and Easterseals Nebraska. I'm here, I guess, to be neutral. I was-- and you'll see in the testimony that I was a proponent of the bill until I sat down and heard the amendment that Senator Hansen made, which specifically takes the appropriation towards the foster youth program. The reason I was in favor of the, the bill is we just purchased at the end of the year 65 acres of the

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Dana College campus, Easterseals Nebraska being we. So I was excited to see that \$10 million, which is a lot of money, would help us develop the undeveloped area of Dana College campus into a barrier free camp. As you'll see in the testimony, Easterseals Nebraska, has operated a camp for people with disabilities for over 50 years in the state of Nebraska. We had a camp in Milford, Nebraska, and in 1999 there was a rail-- derailment of a freight car that spilled diesel fuel and made the land uninhabitable. And so for the last 24, 25 years, we have been nomads, taking our camp from place to place. We've leased camps from other facilities which were not ADA compliant or barrier free. We've looked for 25 years for the property that we found on the Dana College campus, close to a hospital, close to easy access, close to Omaha, and felt like this was a great place. We have a plan to develop the 65 acres and the estimates are in the area of about \$60 million. So as I said, \$10 million would get us started. We've had over 200 campers for a five-week period during the summer, ages from 5 years old to 80 years old with all disabilities, and it has been operating self-sufficiently. So our first stage would be to duplicate what we've been doing with about five cabins, which then brings the cost down tremendously from that high ticket item, which again, this \$10 million would have been very helpful or part of it would have been helpful to-- we've got other funding opportunities as well that we have lined up. But the economic development obviously is for the construction infrastructure and construction work. We're working very closely with the city of Blair and making other grant opportunities, federal appropriation requests from Senator Smith. There will be ongoing job opportunities. Our intent is to enlarge the campus to roughly 20 cabins and then an additional 20 cabins that we would be able to develop that into a corporate retreat that then the profits from that would help us pay for scholarships for those people with disabilities that couldn't afford to attend the camp. But this would be the only camp of its type in the state of Nebraska. Iowa has three barrier-free camps. Nebraska has zero. And we're-- we have been the only camp and will intend to continue to be the only camp in the state of Nebraska that admits everybody, regardless of their, their abilities. I see I've got the yellow light so.

CLEMENTS: All right. Are there questions from the committee?

JAMES SUMMERFELT: I'll talk with Senator Hansen about the amendment. But at this point, I can't obviously be a proponent. I mean, we've, we've worked with Angels Share. We purchased the land from Angels Share at a-- at a discount and as I said, have been working with

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Senator Hansen, have met with him on numerous occasions and he knows our intent. So why we weren't given a heads up I don't know.

CLEMENTS: OK. Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Clements. Thanks for coming. So I was late. I was at another hearing. So describe for me again what the amendment does that you don't like.

JAMES SUMMERFELT: From what I understood and I haven't had a chance to read it, that it is specific to foster youth program and not our program.

ERDMAN: And so the original bill did what differently?

JAMES SUMMERFELT: It was-- it was vague. It said something to the effect of, yes, it was for the foster youth program, but it didn't eliminate other programs. And again, from what I heard and I haven't read it, it sounded a little bit more restrictive and specific to the foster youth program.

ERDMAN: OK. So in your testimony, you said neutral. Obviously, you're not neutral.

JAMES SUMMERFELT: We're friendly with Angels Share and with Lutheran Family Services. I hate to be an opponent to their program because it is a very good program. So I'm explaining to you why I'm neutral. I-- and you can-- you guys know this system a whole lot better than I do. You can tell me that I'm off base and I should be a--

ERDMAN: Yeah, I don't know. I mean that's up to you. But--

JAMES SUMMERFELT: Yeah.

ERDMAN: --obviously and this is generally what I ask people who are neutral, are you OK if we adopt this bill--

JAMES SUMMERFELT: Yeah.

ERDMAN: --this amendment?

JAMES SUMMERFELT: I am. And as I said, we'll talk to Senator Hansen and see if there's another amendment that he might be able to make as well.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

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JAMES SUMMERFELT: But I came all this way, so I figured--

ERDMAN: Yeah.

JAMES SUMMERFELT: --I'd come up here and say hi to you.

ERDMAN: Thanks for coming.

CLEMENTS: All right. Thank you for your testimony.

JAMES SUMMERFELT: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Is there anyone else here in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, you're welcome to close.

HANSEN: Thank you, Chairman Clements. I believe we had like 200 letters of support, didn't we? I'm just joking. I don't know. I was just hoping we did.

DORN: [INAUDIBLE]

HANSEN: OK. All right. Yeah. I do want to mention, I appreciate Mr. Summerfelt coming here and talking about the program that they're setting up in Blair, that they purchased part of the land from Dana College. I think it's, it's an exciting program that I think the state of Nebraska can look at with pride. And there-- and it's kind of a unique facility that's looking to set up. And I think it's something we can look at in the future to kind of helping, helping out as well for those that are disabled. So I did-- I did [INAUDIBLE] mention one thing. The original intent of the bill before the amendment was still towards those who primarily-- with an emphasis on youth exiting the foster care system. So we did that in the original bill. I think with the amendment we specified it because we want to be specific about how we're spending taxpayer dollars. And so that's why with the amendment we've kind of made some more specific changes to it so it can be directed in a certain way. And actually in the original bill we had it for \$20 million, but me being a little bit of a fiscal nerd, cut it down to 10. Right? And we also want to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being spent well. And I think somebody alluded to this as well, or they mentioned that this is matching funds. So it's not like a direct grant. They do have to have 100 percent matching funds. And being on the Health and Human Services Committee and what happens with the foster youth when they do age out of the foster care system is becoming a problem. And I think this is a very unique program that I think they mentioned before that, you know, throughout the country,

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some states are taking this approach. And just to reiterate a couple of stats that I mentioned before that are important and why this is-- this bill is important to me, 30 percent of former foster youth who age out of the foster care system are homeless, a third are homeless. Twenty-nine percent of those who age out of the foster care system end up in the corrections system so almost a third as well. Thirty-eight percent of these young people are unemployed and 26 percent are pregnant. So this is a way to help those who have a difficult time aging out of foster care. And again, like I mentioned before, whenever we spend taxpayer dollars, I want to make sure it's something that the state should be responsible for, and these kids were in the foster care system and they're having a very difficult time integrating back into society. And so I think it can be a state role to help these youth become good members of society again and contribute. So with that, I will do the best to answer any questions.

CLEMENTS: Are there any questions? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you. I just want to reiterate, if we could get a direct outline of how the \$10 million will be spent before we decide on it.

HANSEN: Yeah. I'll discuss that with them to get that--

ARMENDARIZ: Thank you.

HANSEN: --information for you.

CLEMENTS: Seeing no other questions.

HANSEN: Thank you. If I get no questions with Senator Erman, that means it is a good bill.

ERDMAN: You're welcome.

CLEMENTS: We have position comments for the hearing record. We have one proponent, two opponents, and no one in neutral on LB573. That concludes the hearing for LB573. We now open the hearing for LB608. Senator McDonnell.

McDONNELL: Thank you, Chairperson Clements, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mike McDonnell, M-i-k-e M-c-D-o-n-n-e-l-l. I represent Legislative District 5, south Omaha. Today I bring before you LB608 and AM697, which is a sequel to the very popular Shovel Ready Capital Recovery and Investment Act that we

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passed in 2021. The original bill was-- which was-- this committee select-- selected as its committee priority bill in 2021, sought to provide a much needed investment to stabilize growth, grow and in many instances save the nonprofit and hospitality industry in Nebraska after the industry was forced to shut down during the early days of the pandemic. One of the segments of our economy that was among the hardest hit during the pandemic was our not-for-profit industry. Nonprofits rely on donations from their patrons, foundations, and supporters to fund their activities. During the initial days of the pandemic, the majority of donors shifted their funding priorities to support people and families who had been struggling. One of the consequences of this was-- immediate funding shift is the impact it had on the capital campaigns that were happening in communities throughout our state. When a nonprofit organization is planning on building something to benefit their community, they do this through fundraising campaigns. Since donor priorities shifted to support individuals and immediate needs, many organizations would have-- would have had to make very difficult decisions if it had not been for the work of this committee. Last year, DED ended up awarding \$115 million to 76 organizations, which leveraged over \$600 million in additional private investments throughout our state. Shovel ready was resulted in nearly \$1 billion in direct construction happening in our state right now and building, building new assets throughout our state. But one thing we did not know in 2021 was the total number of projects in Nebraska that were impacted. There were 125 total applicants, and many more have been identified since and all 125 projects were funded. That resulted directly-- direct economic impact of the construction alone would have been over \$1.3 billion, with under 30 percent of that being state support. Also remember, these nonprofits do not get a sales tax exemption on their construction cost in Nebraska. For the purpose of ImagiNE, the rule of thumb is that 50 percent of the construction costs are subject to sales tax. So the sales tax revenue for those projects would be about \$35.7 million on \$1.3 billion of construction. Nonprofits also do not qualify for things like ImagiNE, TIF, and unlike streetcars, they do not pay for themselves through magic. And that's a Appropriations joke. Thank you, Senator Erdman, for the sympathy laugh there. OK, So this bill needs to appropriate an additional \$90 million to be split equally among Nebraska's three congressional districts to help encourage more investments into these communities' assets and key employers. There are many-- there are a number of key-- there are a number of key reasons to continue to make these investments into our nonprofit sector. Nonprofits employ over 90,000 Nebraskans, and they pay over \$4 billion in annual wages. That

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does not include the \$3.5 billion in annual tourism sales in our state on the 40,000 jobs provided through our tourism and hospitality industry. Hospitality and tourism is Nebraska's third biggest industry at least until we get to some of my other bills that we could pass, Senator Erdman, again. OK, Thank you. And AM697-- that is the last joke in the [INAUDIBLE] AM697 is to clarify that this is an existing program. It does not require DED to develop a new program to lower the fiscal impact. I have some letters of support I've received and handed out to the committee. So we knew the situation we were in as this committee. I know there's three new members and looking at what we could do with ARPA money, there was \$100 million of ARPA money; \$15 million came out of the General Fund. We ended up making that our priority bill and to look and see if it-- what kind of impact it made. Well, we didn't expect when it ended up going through the Department of Economic Development that there was going to be that many projects come in at \$335 million, east, west, north, south in the state. Also going back to the \$115 million, we divided it up amongst-- equally amongst the three Congressional Districts. But we also gave direction that we'd start with the smallest projects first and we broke it down for \$5 million or less, up to \$25 million, and then \$25 million to 50, then over \$50 million. But we concentrated on the smaller projects first. We think that made the impact that we thought it would. But also we look at today and have and again, \$115 million and having \$335 million worth of projects come through, that's why we're looking at Shovel Ready 2 and asking for \$90 million, \$30 million per Congressional District.

CLEMENTS: Are there any questions? Seeing none.

McDONNELL: Thank you and I'll be here to close.

CLEMENTS: All right. Thank you. Are there proponents for LB608? Good afternoon.

MITCH GROSS: Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Mitch Gross, M-i-t-c-h G-r-o-s-s. I'm the CEO of the YMCA in McCook, Nebraska. I'm here today in support of LB608 on behalf of the Nebraska State Alliance of YMCAs, which is comprised of 14 organizations across our state. I'd like to thank Senator McDonnell for introducing LB608 in support of nonprofits like the YMCA. Our State Alliance is extremely grateful and understands how transformational these funds have been and can be as evident from the first round of shovel ready grants that positively, excuse me, impacted our quest to provide opportunities for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Specifically

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in McCook, our YMCA is what I would consider to be a community hub. Our Y is a place that brings people together to learn, grow and thrive. We connect people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge the gaps that exist in our community. Our YMCA is a true nonprofit as we do not receive any federal, state, or local funding. We serve our members and the community through membership-based fees and local donations. There is no city recreation department in McCook. We serve as that capacity with limited resources. Our facility in McCook was built in 1980 and had a life expectancy of 40 years. Now that we're three years past that life expectancy, we've identified that now is the time for our organization to revitalize our YMCA to ensure that the organization remains a pillar of the community for generations to come. Our facility has become outdated. It's inadequate for today's programming needs. Many years of deferred maintenance is now taking a toll on our operational budget and has become increasingly difficult to afford the cost of mixing old parts with new. Therefore, after going through an 18-month visioning study, we are preparing to kick off a \$15 million capital campaign to renovate and expand our YMCA. The project will include a new swimming pool, expanded gymnasiums, indoor walking track, updated wellness center, and renovated space to enhance our youth development and community outreach programs. A campaign of this size has never been completed in the community of McCook by a nonprofit. We believe it can be done, but we know it's certainly not going to be easy. It's an exciting time in our little community of McCook as there are several progressive initiatives taking place. We see the YMCA project as a spark that will ignite a continued movement for progress that is sorely needed in McCook and has been long overdue. Having the opportunity to apply for funding through LB608 will increase our percentages for a successful project and campaign. Additionally, the potential to see funding directed specifically to southwest Nebraska will continue to offer hope to our region so that we may retain and attract young families and talent for a vibrant future in our community. I'd like to thank you all for allowing me to be here today, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

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

MITCH GROSS: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your testimony. Next proponent. Seeing none, is anyone here in opposition?

WISHART: There is a proponent.

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CLEMENTS: Oh. Excuse me. I missed you. Good afternoon.

WILLIE BARNEY: Good afternoon. Good to see you again, Senator. Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y. I wanted to stand in support. Over the last 15 years, we've had a lot of community organizations working together. We served over 8,000 residents that we have polled, worked with, and a large part of our focus is on job development, job creation, and working together with the community for community development. I wanted to come up and be in support of what Senator McDonnell is doing. When this first application went through, there was a limited number of north and south Omaha organizations that benefited. And with this new application, my understanding is that organizations in north and south would be available to support through this funding. So I wanted to be in support of that and take any questions that you may have.

CLEMENTS: Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: I'm sorry, I think I missed what organization you're representing.

WILLIE BARNEY: I'm with the Empowerment Network. We've worked in north and south Omaha for the last 15 years, primarily in youth employment, housing, and making sure that community development occurs in those areas.

ARMENDARIZ: OK. Thank you.

WILLIE BARNEY: Thank you for the question.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

WILLIE BARNEY: Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity.

CLEMENTS: Are there additional proponents? Good afternoon.

PRESTON LOVE JR.: Good afternoon. My name is Preston Love, Jr., P-r-e-s-t-o-n L-o-v-e, Junior. Let me begin by saying that establishing my credibility and quite frankly wisdom as it relates to my perspective on the potential economic development in north and south Omaha. I am uniquely unique. I have observed and lived, studied the economic devastation in my beloved north Omaha and my counterpart in south Omaha for 50 years, where in our two wonderful communities there has been no major economic development or major investment for those 50 years. This Legislature has shown leadership in the providing

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of the \$335 million to stop the bleeding in our respective communities. Let me pause for my five minutes. That is five minutes, no, it's three, and say just thank you for that. But let me say with my thank you that now, now is the time for the Legislature to listen to our communities, to listen to our leadership, listen to our businesses large and small and our respective grass-root people. It's time, if I may be respectful, to listen. And quite frankly, that list is all here. We have our leaders, our grass roots, our businesses, small and large, really in the room right now they represent. And I'm asking you thank you, yes. But listen, right now. Many of us have some cement projects that were to be potentially funded to finally jumpstart our community development once and for all. Some of those projects were recommended and some were not. My project focusing on the expanding of north Omaha tourism was not recommended. Many projects were not recommended and we are highly disappointed. But if the legislatures would listen closely, they may hear from some disgruntled companies. But no matter how disappointed I and they may be, I wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the projects that are to be funded for north and south Omaha. LB785 [SIC LB608] is a thoughtful, commonsense solution to the funding and selection of the project. While I'm not recommending, I support the approach and the recommendation. My disappointment for my projects gives way to the fact that after 50 years, now is the time. Now is the time. My years and my wisdom says that development will "drowned" out disappointment and growth will humble grumblings. Some senators, may I say, senators listen. I come to testify that north and south Omaha are solidly and jointly one committed voice to the fund. Not north Omaha, not south Omaha, but together we are jointly in support of this legislation. And I say in closing, I've never testified down here where the yellow light didn't come on before I said I'm closing. But anyway, I say support our wishes. Support our community, a community that's been waiting for economic development for 50 years. We're here. The time is right. So I ask that you see that for what it is. And let us go ahead and support this bill and let's get on with the job of recovery and the bill.

CLEMENTS: Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: Thank you very much, Preston. And I just want to clarify, technically, your testimony is referencing LB785. We're on LB608. Do you intend to testify on both of these bills?

PRESTON LOVE JR.: Yes. Well, I had no business coming up here, making you sit [INAUDIBLE].

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VARGAS: This is good reference for everybody that we're still on LB608. You gained another support, McDonnell, on the record it seems like on both of these bills. But--

PRESTON LOVE JR.: I do support that. So you could use my testimony as a dotted line for LB608.

VARGAS: For both. We can update that.

PRESTON LOVE JR.: If there is great demand on the part of the senators, I'll come back and do this again. Thank you. But I'm sorry, I really am.

VARGAS: No, no, I just wanted to make sure other people don't get confused to come up and testify for LB705 while we're on LB608. OK.

PRESTON LOVE JR.: So I'll give way unless you have questions.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? No. Seeing no questions, thank you for your testimony. Are there other proponents for the LB608 shovel ready projects?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Hello. Hello. Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Gayla Chambers, Lee Chambers, and it's spelled G-a-y-l-a, Lee, L-e-e, Chambers, C-h-a-m-b-e-r-s. I am and also, too, I am a registered lobbyist. I am in support of Senator McDonnell's bill LB608. And my reason for that is that the Shovel Ready program is an excellent program, and I'm hoping that we do something a little different. We will make it more accessible for small business because I know that in the Shovel Ready funds, there's a little matching fund. So when you talk about nonprofit organizations, you talk about their ability to be able to do capital fundraising; and some of them don't have the expertise or the staff to be able to pay somebody to be able to do that. So I am supporting the Shovel Ready project. I like Senator McDonnell very, very well. He's an excellent friend and an ally, but I'm just hoping that we can bring some amendments to that, that legislation to be able to accommodate smaller businesses that are not able to raise that additional matching fund that's needed. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: All right. Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Are there additional proponents for LB608? Seeing none, is anyone here in opposition? Oh, excuse me. I'll wait. Are you an additional proponent?

WILLIE BRYE: Yes, I am.

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CLEMENTS: Yes. Well, welcome.

WILLIE BRYE: Welcome to you also.

CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

WILLIE BRYE: My name is Willie Brye. I am co-owner of Mr. Willie's BBQ Pit. And I'm here because I have been in north Omaha for 69 years and I've witnessed a drastic change.

CLEMENTS: Would you spell your name, please?

WILLIE BRYE: I'm sorry.

CLEMENTS: It's OK.

WILLIE BRYE: W-i-l-l-i-e B as in Bravo-r-y-e, Willie Brye.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

WILLIE BRYE: I'm sorry about that. I'm kind of nervous. But anyway, like I said, I've been here for 69 years and I've seen a drastic change in north Omaha. At the time I grew up, there was-- there was numerous restaurants, bars, barbershops, clothing stores, supermarkets, community halls, dentists' offices and doctors' offices. Now, you go down the street now and everything is, is bare. It looks like a ghost town. And I at that time, they even had streetcars that you had to put tokens in. But like I said, all that is changed. And what we need there is an improvement in the economic-- the economic stage because jobs in economic stage will provide a smaller man businesses and a lot of people will be able to become involved. The area at that time was flourishing with businesses. And now all the funds have been coming in and going mostly to nonprofits and real estate people. But the thing is, these nonprofit organizations were taking all the money. And then when the funds run out, the businesses run out so it leaves the place empty. What we need is economic businesses to continue on year after year, and we don't have to beg for money. And the jobs would be there. They won't go away. So I just want to make that statement. And if there's any questions, you could-- you can ask at this time .

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: I can-- I can make a comment because I can relate. That's where I grew up. And I steadily watched all of these businesses leave.

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WILLIE BRYE: Right.

ARMENDARIZ: I remember going to Hested's on Ames and it was three stories. Santa would come, decorated like Brandeis. There was Brandeis, stores everywhere that you could shop at, grocery.

WILLIE BRYE: Everywhere.

ARMENDARIZ: What do you suppose-- I mean, when I was living there and they were leaving one by one, the news would report that there was theft. And these are national companies that just remove--

WILLIE BRYE: Yes.

ARMENDARIZ: --if it gets too costly to participate in that area. So it makes me sad to see the area. When I go by my home I grew up in--

WILLIE BRYE: We're all sad.

ARMENDARIZ: --and it looks like a ghost town.

WILLIE BRYE: We're all saddened about it.

ARMENDARIZ: How can we-- how can we attract those even large businesses to come back and make it a vibrant place again?

WILLIE BRYE: Well, the first thing you have to do is provide an economic community with smaller businesses, and this will provide jobs and people will start coming into the area again. Now, they just-- they just flow right through. They don't even stop. We need, you know, we need places where they can sit down and eat, places where they can have entertainment. You know, we don't always want to go way out west. We want to do these things in our own-- in our own area, you know, And if we did this other than bringing in all the large-- bringing in all the large companies, it would-- we can provide more. The funding will stretch further and we'll all be happy because we are very unhappy at this time, very because it, it, it hasn't just happened just one time. This happens, the funding comes out every year and these big companies are taking the money and then they're running off, going back to their neighborhoods, and taking our money with them. And we don't have it there. And the status quo of the people that's down there now are not doing what they should be doing. You know, they should be trying to advance us. And that hasn't been happening. And it's evident by just going down the neighborhood.

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

WILLIE BRYE: Thank you, sir.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for being here. We're on proponents for LB608, the Shovel Ready bill. Is there anyone else here in the proponent? We're on Senator McDonnell's Shovel Ready bill.

_____: I'll wait for.

CLEMENTS: Are there any opponents-- any opponents for LB608? Seeing none, anyone in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, you're welcome to close, Senator.

McDONNELL: Just want to thank everyone for, for-- that wrote letters and was here to testify. I'll waive my close unless there's questions because I know there's a lot of people that want to testify on the next two bills.

CLEMENTS: Oh, we have a question.

ERDMAN: Can, can you repeat that statement about the magic streetcar?
[LAUGHTER]

McDONNELL: Yes, Executive Session. Thank you, Senator.

CLEMENTS: We have position comments for the record on LB608; one proponent, two opponents, none in the neutral. That concludes LB608. Next we have LB719. And Senator Dover's representative.

TIM SCHROEDER: That is correct.

CLEMENTS: All right. Good afternoon.

TIM SCHROEDER: Thank you, Chairman Clements. Hopefully this is one of the simpler ones of today. And good afternoon, committee members. My name is Tim Schroeder, that is T-i-m S-c-h-r-o-e-d-e-r, and I am legislative aide to Senator Robert Dover, who represents Legislative District 19, which consists of Madison County and part of Pierce County. And this is why it might be one of the easier ones. At this time, Senator Dover has decided not to seek the advancement of this bill. The original intent of the bill was to seek funds for the Salvation Army of Norfolk's capital project. However, they have applied for a grant that will cover their costs if received. However,

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Senator Dover asked the committee that LB719 be held in the event that the Salvation Army of Norfolk does not receive the grant. Senator Dover may wish to reconsider this bill. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Seeing none, are there proponents for LB719? Seeing none, anyone in the opposition? Seeing none, anyone in a neutral capacity? And regarding LB719, you wish to close?

TIM SCHROEDER: Waive closing.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

_____: Good job.

CLEMENTS: And on LB719 we had position comments for the record: no proponents, one opponent, one neutral. That concludes LB719. We will now open the hearing for LB785. Senator McKinney, you're welcome to close [SIC].

McKINNEY: Thank you, Chairman Clements and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Terrrell McKinney, T-e-r-r-e-l-l M-c-K-i-n-n-e-y, and I represent District 11 in the state Legislature, which is north Omaha. We're here today to discuss LB785, which states intent language to appropriate funds to the Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources and the Department of Economic Development. So last session, we passed historic legislation, LB1024, which was spearheaded by Senator Justin Wayne, myself, Senator Vargas, and Senator McDonnell to appropriate funds for economic recovery in north and south Omaha. And as you know, last year, LB1024 had another companion bill, LB1025, which came to the Appropriations Committee. And we're trying to follow the same process as we did last year. And also last year not included in LB1025 was a bill for economic recovery funds for south Omaha. That bill got attached to LB1024 as the process progressed, and this year, which is all combined this year just to provide some clarity. After the session ended, the hard work began with countless meetings and community engagements, a process that was not necessarily perfect, but it was the process that we had to go through in order to get the funds for north and south Omaha to address decades of economic neglect in both communities. My number one priority coming into the Legislature was to address economic development and opportunity in north Omaha. Because as someone that grew up in north Omaha as a kid, I watched the community get worse as, as I grew older. And one of the things that I told myself, if I was ever in a position to address the economic issues in north Omaha, I'll

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do my best to do so. There has been constant levels of disproportionate levels of poverty, a lack of investment, poor health outcomes, poor educational outcomes, violence, mass incarceration, and a constant tune of wait, it'll get better. Just wait. One day somebody is going to help us out. And I'll-- and I'll honestly make it plain, as I did the other day for LB531, north Omaha is not a charity case for the wealthy to act as our saviors. The community deserves a fair chance at the good life, because for my lifetime, I believe we've taken a charitable, charitable route to address historical, historical issues plaguing our community. And honestly, to date, that has not worked. However, many entities and many individuals are doing some amazing work in north and south Omaha and are some of the individuals that are in this room today seeking resources to, you know, amplify what they're doing in the community and do it from an economic perspective to, to change our community as a whole. And the vision behind LB1024 was an alternative approach because the status quo wasn't working. So from the start, we have consistently repeated that this plan is an approach to address these problems economically. As you all know, Olsson was hired to produce the north and south Omaha recovery plan, which came out, was a coordination plan that was released the beginning of January. They met with and engaged with community members and stakeholders to understand what was needed. The community was then able to submit proposals for consideration for recommendations. And I will clarify that the Economic Recovery Special Committee senators did not evaluate or select projects for recommendations. The coordination plan was released and they selected 35 proposals for funding out of 367 proposals total-- totaling \$3.2 billion, showcasing a clear need for funds and resources in both communities. And, you know, this process has changed my perspective on many things, especially my purpose and my work here in this Legislature and my value and, you know, my understanding of, you know, my community. And my focus from here on out is to see this process through and work to ensure those historically, historically left out could see the fruits of this legislation. The weight placed on our shoulders has not been light, but north Omaha has built me to carry it and I'll do so. Many may question my views and positions on things, but my care for my community stretches past this universe. Our goals are to see poverty substantially reduced, educational outcomes improve, crime decrease, our prison populations decline, and our health outcomes improve. Most importantly, I hope north or south Omaha become economically independent and vibrant. I hear a lot of stories about the past prior to the riots in north Omaha and what was. And, you know, since the riots from a state level, a city level, a county

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level and many other levels, the ball was dropped and north Omaha was not invested in. It was left behind and it was neglected. And in my opinion, because of that, our prisons are filled and we're asking for money to build prisons instead of investing. But this is a-- this is a way we can invest, because I don't want to see another kid to grow up how I had to grow up and go through the things that I had to go through. Because although I'm here, I realize I could easily be a few miles away from here in the State Penitentiary. And I know many people have questions about the process and amendments going forward, and this hearing is another part of that process. We are working through the amendment. It's not perfect right now. We still have to clear up some language and work some things out with this committee, with the Governor, and other senators to get it to where it's supposed to be. I know people are-- keep asking about it, but I'll be clear with you all. We're working on it. And when it is ready to be introduced and shown, we'll do it; but we're still working through that process. And in this bill it would be a cash transfer from the Natural Resources Department to Economic Development. And we're asking for a cash transfer because to date much of the money that was allocated to our state through ARPA has not been spent by our Department of Economic Development. And as you all know, we have a deadline, December 2026, to have these funds expended. And we think it would be a better route to get Cash Funds and General Funds to fund these projects because we know we're-- we know we're up against a deadline that might not be able to be achieved. And what I would hope not happen was we told an entity, OK, the state is going to give you this much money. We don't spend that money, then December 2026 passes and somebody has a \$10 million project and we only gave them \$5 million, but we got to give the other 5 back to the feds. That's what I don't want to happen, because then, one, the state has to get the money back and then we'll have to figure out how to get that project that money. And, and that's where I'm at. And I'll open myself up to any questions. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Senator Wishart.

WISHART: Thank you, Senator McKinney, for, for being here today and for all of the work that you and Senator Wayne, Senator Vargas and Senator McDonnell in particular have done on this. Just to talk a little bit about what you were discussing, I've had some conversations with you and some of the others about last year we appropriated sort of historic funding to north and south Omaha, east Omaha through ARPA funds. But in having conversations over the summer and in, in being part of this process, kind of recognizing that with the looming deadline of ARPA funds, it may make more sense to look at this for a

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state funding investment because it allows then a little more flexibility in time. And so instead we talked about, and I think it's what you were discussing, that it looks like there are some water projects--

McKINNEY: Yes.

WISHART: --that are needed across the state, whether it be in Lincoln. I know Senator DeKay has a bill. I know there's Sarpy County, so I know Omaha has some, some water issues. So the opportunity instead to allocate water funding from ARPA, from those ARPA dollars and instead these funds would come out of either Cash Reserve or General Fund. Is that-- is that-- just wanted to get that.

McKINNEY: Yes, that's, that's what we've discussed and that's what we're trying to do.

WISHART: OK. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Senator Vargas.

VARGAS: Thank you very much, Chairman. And, Senator McKinney, appreciate your leadership on this. We've been working for some time on this. It seems like for, I mean, it's been a year. I wondered if you would talk a little bit about, you know, the process of the special committee that was created and the Olsson recommendations. But I wanted to be able to give you an opportunity to get this on the record. Is that a typical process that is done with grant programs? Is this atypical? What was the reason behind this originally? And I wanted to give you the opportunity to get some, some items on the record.

McKINNEY: No, it is definitely not the typical process. I believe we, for better or worse, got lucky or cursed because of the process. The process was needed because when the original bill was introduced, there was a plan with that, that, that bill. We got to the floor and the Legislature said, no, we want you guys to have a study conducted, which is why we had to go through the coordination process.

VARGAS: That's great.

McKINNEY: Yep.

VARGAS: And I think in typical practice for just the public, in addition to having this coordination plan for this, you know, we've

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had coordination plans for STAR WARS, you know, and a special committee do that. It's become much more-- it's a new practice that we've taken on, I think, for some level of transparency and accountability to the public, which I commend you and the rest of us that have been on the committee and others for taking that. And for the people that are in the audience that have been-- I see, recognize faces that have testified in front of Urban Affairs and Appropriations a year ago that have worked on projects, have been working with engineers, and have been working with architects to propose and bring this forward to Olsson and then got identified. I appreciate all the work that's been done by you, Senator McKinney, and all those behind you that will likely be testifying in support of these recommendations.

McKINNEY: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Senator Clements. And thank you, Senator McKinney, for, for being here. I guess just some clarification, we-- on some handouts. So we got this handout. So this is kind of the project that you've been working on with Olsson.

McKINNEY: That's the--

DORN: That came out in--

McKINNEY: Yeah.

DORN: January.

McKINNEY: Yep.

DORN: OK. We also got two different amendments here. One was dated the 28th and one was dated the 10th of February.

McKINNEY: Yeah, we did.

DORN: Are one of these the amendment-- you were talking about an amendment coming or what-- where are we at with amendments I guess?

McKINNEY: The one dated the 28th--

DORN: 28th.

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McKINNEY: --is the most recent one. But we still have to work through some issues with that one and also address some concerns from the community. So the one-- and I just-- I shared those just to show what we're working on.

DORN: OK.

McKINNEY: Not to say that's the final one,--

DORN: OK.

McKINNEY: --but I just wanted to give you an idea where we were working at.

DORN: And your work-- but the-- is the one then from the 2-10 here, February 10, is that-- you showed us that, too, so that that's part of what you might include here?

McKINNEY: Yeah. I just wanted to give the committee a good perspective on where-- what we were working on.

DORN: The ARPA funds from last year then--

McKINNEY: Um-hum.

DORN: --that the Olsson plan came up with here. Where do we sit with that today? Are those funds-- and I think there's been some discussion as we heard here, there's a proposal coming forward that has or is there an amendment or what are we-- what do we know?

McKINNEY: So there will be an amendment that I'll submit to the committee once it-- once we get it to where it's needed. As far as the ARPA funds, as far as the money that was set aside, that was for the recommendations, that's \$225 million that we still have [INAUDIBLE]. But also with the bill last year, there was money set aside for other projects like the Airport Innovation Hub, crime prevention and internships, film and financial literacy that DED is in charge of.

DORN: Thank you.

McKINNEY: No problem.

CLEMENTS: Senator Erdman.

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ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Clements. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Senator McKinney, these amendments are amendments to LB531, is that what--

McKINNEY: Yeah. So I showed that one because Section 4 of LB785 is pretty much LB531. And I wanted to show you the language that we're working on that took place in both bills. That I just was using that as an example, not to say those amendments are the amendment for LB785. Just to give an example.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

McKINNEY: Yep.

CLEMENTS: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

McKINNEY: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: We now welcome proponents for LB785. Good afternoon.

ERIK SERVELLON: Good afternoon, Chairman Clements, members of the committee. My name is Erik Servellon, E-r-i-k S-e-r-v-e-l-l-o-n. My full-time role is vice president of operations and development for the Tri-Faith Initiative. I also serve on the Latino Economic Development Council Steering Committee. I recently retired 14 years being a soldier with the Nebraska Army National Guard, serving this great state, and I live in south Omaha. I reside in LD7 currently, and I grew up in south Omaha. South Omaha is very, very close to my heart and something I'm always going to be an advocate for. Today I am here representing the OneWorld Community Health Centers as their chair-elect on their board of directors. OneWorld Community Health Centers serving Douglas, Sarpy, and Cass Counties. We are a federally qualified health centers with 18 clinical locations and three additional support service locations. We care for 50,000 people every year from 74 zip codes with a special focus on the medically underrepresented and underserved and south Omaha. Eighty-five percent of our patients are racial and ethnic minorities that live at or below the 200 percent poverty line, or about \$50,500 for a family of four. Our main clinical location is in the heart of south Omaha in the historic Livestock Exchange Building Campus. And we all know all too well the immense impact that COVID has had on our patients and our community. Over the past three years, we have been a leader in providing COVID testing and vaccination to vulnerable peoples, both our patients and those that are not. The pandemic exacerbated

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underlying health and economic disparities. Low-income families were and are much more likely to work in essential or public facing jobs, have fewer resources, larger transportation hurdles, and less access to healthcare and supportive services. This was especially true for COVID in the meatpacking plants, one of the biggest industries in Nebraska and south Omaha, where large outbreaks among workers deemed essential were commonplace. This was also true for small business owners: hospitality, fast food, landscaping, roofing, construction, and the childcare industry. So much of the economic vitality of the Omaha metro area is reliant on healthy workers from south Omaha. While we have grown to address gaps in care, we are simply out of space in south Omaha and are unable to accommodate all the requests that we receive for services, especially for behavioral health. We, like others in the healthcare field, also have an acute need to recruit, train, advance our staff, as well as grow employment pipelines for our health center and in turn, create livable, good paying jobs for the community. OneWorld has-- is-- was one of a dozen south Omaha projects recommended for investment of ARPA funds. We all know each other. We all work together all the time. We support each other. South Omaha is united in this cause. Our specific project proposed was to construct a \$12.5 million, three-story, 24-square foot building. Once built, OneWorld would expand access to behavioral health, operate a health workforce training center, as well as expand quality childcare options. While many colleges exist, there is a need for additional types of skills and abilities in our workforce. And we want to help our workforce and the community grow professionally to keep the community vital. We also want to address the behavioral health gap by providing traditional behavioral health. Our goals add traditional behavioral health to our behavioral health service array, which now only includes shorter visits with warm hand-off to therapists in a medical room in order to help patients solve the most current or more urgent problem. As we look to longer term resources for patients, time and time again, our patients are not able to obtain these services elsewhere. Partnering with childcare experts that already exist throughout the community will bring new options to the community and to our workforce that is primarily of child bearing age group. OneWorld has a long history of capital renovation campaigns, meeting deadlines, staying within budget and sustaining both human and fiscal resources through a combination of public, private, and patient cost sharing. We believe that the project is, is in line with the intention of ARPA funding to ensure community and economic development and to invest in critical businesses and services in the communities that need them the most. OneWorld has grown from 65 employees in 2005 to

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622 today. We are truly a jobs and skills developer, along with the provision of-- with the provision of vital primary care and support services, welcoming everyone who needs care. Construction of additional building will have transformational impact in the 68107 zip code and will create at least 170-255 temporary jobs, 50 permanent jobs, 250 individuals annually within the workforce will be trained, and job pipelines of talents within Omaha South, Bryan, Buena Vista and other metro area schools. The result will be an improvement in economic conditions in south Omaha, opportunities for good paying jobs as we upskill and grow our own while bringing in new community residents as employees. It means a decent life for all people while they're supporting physical or mental well-being. I would like to thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none.

ERIK SERVELLON: Cool.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your testimony. Next proponent. Good afternoon.

ITZEL LOPEZ: Good afternoon. Buenas tardes. I'm Itzel Lopez, I-t-z-e-l L-o-p-e-z. Today I come in to represent a couple of organizations, specifically the Latino Economic Development Council as a board president. But during the day, I am also the vice president of fund development at the AIM Institute, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to grow a strong and diverse community. So with that in mind, the Latina Economic Development Council and the AIM Institute, both organizations have submitted applications for funding through the recommendations from Olsson for two things. And I'm going to share a little bit about myself and why this matters. So I was born and raised in Mexico, and when I was 12, I came in as an undocumented child. I grew up in south Omaha. I graduated from Omaha South High School and I still live in south Omaha. I love my south Omaha community. But today, I'm here to support the unification from east Omaha. And behind me, there's a lot of community leaders that represent both, both north and south Omaha, as we said. With this funding, if it was to advance, which we hope that you will agree that it's transformational. We've been talking about generational wealth and we've also been talking about how important this will be for these communities, communities that have worked hard to keep their doors open, but also communities that continue to go from surviving to trade. So to do that, the AIM Institute will provide training to 500 individuals or more, depending on funding, so that they, too, have access to a high paying job

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opportunity in tech, which is in high demand and continue to have a shortage, nondiverse tech workforce. Of course, the work that we will do will be predominantly in east Omaha to serve individuals, to end the cycle of poverty and enter the tech workforce. That's what we will do with the vision and the mission of the AIM Institute through this funding. With the Latina Economic Development Council, we will provide transformational projects across the south Omaha business, business district, which includes the historic Raza La Plaza [PHONETIC], [INAUDIBLE] Plaza. As I've been saying before, those of you that have been following, we're currently on 24th and N and for those that are not aware about the business district, between L and Q Street we have about 100 in businesses reported. So a huge economic growth. There's a huge opportunity for tourism. With this funding, we will be creating an outstanding state-of-the-art green space that is an inclusive space that everybody feels welcome. And we will build a Latina Economic Development Center that will provide access to community spaces, training spaces so that organizations like AIM and many others that are represented here today can provide access to quality training that is free of charge to community members so that they, too, get outside of the underemployment and unemployment that, that has been caused by the COVID pandemic, a global pandemic. That being said, all I guess in summary, because I don't want to be struck by the light, it will distract me. In summary, I will ask that you guys advance, that you will consider the recommendations from Olsson, but also put yourself in, in the situation where, where all of these lives will definitely be altered by this institutional systematic change that this transfer-- transformational funding that is going to feed into east Omaha will, will have an impact not only today, but in the long run for generations to come. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? I'd like to-- seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

ITZEL LOPEZ: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: If you're planning to testify, would you raise your hand now if I could get a count. Keep your hand up. Clerk, would you count the numbers or page? Is there about 15? And we have time for that. So we'll stay with five minutes. Welcome.

JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ: Hi, my name is Jennifer Rodriguez, J-e-n-n-i-f-e-r R-o-d-r-i-g-u-e-z. I'm here today supporting the-- for LB785 in my role, new role as a south Omaha affiliate site coordinator for Heartland Workforce Solutions, a proud partner of American Job Centers

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and also nonprofit workforce resource serving Douglas, Sarpy and also Washington Counties. We have been recognizing the need for accessible services and training opportunities for the residents, both north and south Omaha, east Omaha. For many years, the need and the value of our partners, programs, and services have been dedicated to training the Nebraska workforce and connecting people to opportunities and services where you were helping career seekers and also employers at the same time making that connection for both. Because of that, we are in the midst of opening a permanent office in south Omaha, will be making our services and programs more accessible, taking into consideration the cultural linguistic barriers as well. So this is why I'm here and I encourage you to join us and help our community to thrive and advance this bill forward. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Thank you for your testimony and you're not required to speak for five minutes. Next proponent.

KENNY McMORRIS: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

KENNY McMORRIS: Good afternoon, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kenny, K-e-n-n-e-y. McMorris, M-c-M-o-r-r-i-s. I have the pleasure of serving as the chief executive officer for Charles Drew Health Center, located in north Omaha. I'm here to show strong support for LB785 and the recommendations included in the coordinated plan by the Economic Special Committee and other projects that will contribute to the economic vitality of both north and south Omaha. North and south Omaha historically has some of the highest need in all of Nebraska, largely due to a history of discrimination, segregation, and redlining. Rates of unemployment, poverty, uninsurance, and chronic disease are significantly higher in north and south Omaha. We continue to live with the stark reality that individuals experiencing poverty are at a higher risk of adverse health effects from obesity, smoking, substance use, and chronic stress. Studies continue to highlight that the social and economic conditions are significant determinants of health. If you are to take the east Omaha QCTs and map them by zip code, you will find that 26 of the 43 QCTs are concentrated in zip code 68111, 110, 104 and 131, all of which a majority of Charles Drew patients are located in those zip codes. These zip codes have a combination, a combination-- a combined adult life expectancy of 76.5 years of age. In contrast, if you were to take the western fringe of Omaha with zip codes 68116, 118 and 130,

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you will find that the adult life expectancy is 87.3 years of age. This represent a net difference of 10.8 years. Your zip code is a greater predictor of your overall health and life expectancy, which has a direct impact on your ability to create and build generational wealth. One cannot speak about economics and wealth building without centering health and healthcare. Charles Drew Health Center has been an essential component of the safety net healthcare system for 40 years. We provide primary medical, dental, behavioral health, including substance use support and enabling services, regardless of your insurance status. We provide services to over 13,000 patients, accounting for 40,000 encounters within our 13 locations, 31 percent of whom are individuals are uninsured. Investments in community health centers have been shown to reduce cost for the local healthcare system and provide economic benefits to surrounding communities. For example, Charles Drew provided over \$35 million in economic impact, including 306 jobs, accounting for \$24 million in savings to the healthcare system based on the quality of care we provided. I provided those stats within the handouts that are in front of you. I want to express my sincere gratitude to Senator McKinney, Senator Wayne, and all of the members of the Economic Special Recovery Committee. This is a monumental moment in our history. As a kid from north Omaha, born and raised in north Omaha, my family was one of the first families to get services at the health center that I currently run today. Investments in the things that we are looking at is truly transformational. If we expect to generate wealth, if we expect upward mobility for the community, commitments to small businesses and economic vitality is critically important. Thank you for your time this afternoon, and I'll take any questions.

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

KENNY McMORRIS: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Welcome the next proponent.

GLADYS HARRISON: Good afternoon.

CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

GLADYS HARRISON: Thank you for allowing me to be here. My name is Gladys Harrison, G-l-a-d-y-s H-a-r-r-i-s-o-n. I am a lifelong resident of north Omaha. I own a restaurant that is a second generation restaurant that's been in my family. And this is my grandson, Braden,

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who I brought in because he's going to take over the restaurant once I am no longer here and I want to show my support for this bill. It is going to allow economic opportunity that I have never seen in my lifetime for our community. And to kind of give you an idea of the kinds of things that this money could do for north and south Omaha, when I was here on Tuesday testifying, and it's rare for me to leave the restaurant, so this must be really important for me to be here. But anyway, on Tuesday, when I was here, I got to hear the testimony of a really wonderful woman from south Omaha, Mrs. Ramos, and she owns the ice cream shop in south Omaha, and her husband passed away in 2019 and it was their goal to expand their ice cream shop and to produce ice cream. At Big Mama's, we're home of the sweet potato pie ice cream. And I would love to partner with Ms. Ramos and have her produce our ice cream so that we could sell it in local grocery stores. So this is how that money, right, can do things that are positive for this community. And earlier, Senator Terrell [SIC] was talking about how he very easily could have went the other way. You know, I'm trying to give my grandson a vision that when he grows up, he's got to take over Big Mama's, right, to create wealth for him and his family. And this money will give us the ability to do that. It's going to bring-- help us bring back arts and entertainment to our community. And art and entertainment, you know, is a part of culture. You need to be able to express yourself, right, through art and through music. And then lastly, this money can be used to provide health services. Everybody knows that black and brown people tend to get healthcare that is not on the same level as everyone else's. And this will allow us to not only be healthy but our-- for our communities to thrive. Thank you for your time.

CLEMENTS: Any questions?

WISHART: Yes.

CLEMENTS: Senator Wishart.

WISHART: Thank you so much for being here. First, I've eaten at your restaurant and it is delicious. And my husband would be jealous that I'm sitting across from you right now because he was very satisfied with incredible food. And two, he has just done such an amazing job today in hearing. I know this has been kind of a long day. And so you should be really proud of how much of a gentleman he has been sitting here.

GLADYS HARRISON: Thank you. I appreciate that.

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CLEMENTS: Other questions from the committee? Could we get your grandson's name for the record?

GLADYS HARRISON: My grandson's name for the record, would you like to tell your name?

BRADEN WALLACE HARRISON: Braden.

GLADYS HARRISON: Say it louder so they can hear you.

BRADEN WALLACE HARRISON: Braden.

GLADYS HARRISON: Braden What?

BRADEN WALLACE HARRISON: [INAUDIBLE]

GLADYS HARRISON: Braden Wallace [PHONETIC] Harrison is his name, and he is seven years old.

CLEMENTS: Braden, thank you for being here. We appreciate your attendance. And thank you for coming, Ms. Harrison. Next proponent.

BARBARA INGRAM: Good afternoon.

CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

BARBARA INGRAM: My name is Barbara Ingram and I hold a master's degree in architecture and I was born and raised in north Omaha. My name is spelled B-a-r-b-a-r-a I-n-g-r-a-m. You know, as I've been sitting back and hearing some of the testimonies from others, I have to say, as a native of Omaha, how proud I am of senator-- of both the senators for the work and the effort. I was recently at a community meeting just about a week ago, and the room was filled with residents, African-American and Hispanic-American business owners and community leaders that are on fire about this wonderful opportunity, this long awaited blessing and a need for our communities. I have to say that if I can respond to Senator Wishart, is that correct? When you were talking about using the ARPA funds for waterways and the state might be able to fund this, I have to tell you I'm concerned. I'm concerned because north and south Omaha has been promised monies all my life. And it seems like first it's there and then it disappears and we don't see the promises kept. And so I would impress on the committee, why not give north and south Omaha a chance to use the ARPA funds? Give us a chance to continue this excitement, because that's exactly what's happening. So once again, I'm here to support LB785 because of its

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tremendous potential on impacting north and south Omaha's ability to attract new businesses and residents, also to encourage business owners and residents to stay in these areas, particularly representatives of African-American and Hispanic-American cultures that have called these areas home for several generations and also for immigrants from a variety of cultural backgrounds that have relocated to these areas. Very-- our communities are very diverse now. This also includes anyone who has found success in their careers or seek to establish themselves in families in sustainable and thriving established communities. I am also an Omaha resident that left the state for college and work opportunities. The only reason I returned is because of aging parents that were ill, and that was in 2005. Although when I got back home, when I returned home, I was extremely encouraged by the opportunities that I have been able to take advantage of in the field of architecture and engineering over the years and, of course, starting my own company. So I'm very impressed and encouraged by Omaha. Omaha has come a long way since I was a young girl. However, we've got a long way to go and it's about keeping commitments made to both of these communities. Many of you may be aware that there is an increasing number of young African-American and Hispanic-American young professionals that are leaving Nebraska. I've gone beyond.

CLEMENTS: One minute.

BARBARA INGRAM: OK, that are leaving Nebraska due to career opportunities and thriving in other parts of the country. LB-- LB785 has a potential of turning all that around. In conclusion, I'd like to say that I have witnessed and participated in several meetings as I share with you. And I believe and in fact, we all were challenged at that meeting I told you about, to, whether our proposals were accepted or not, to get behind those that-- proposals that were accepted, and we committed ourselves to work together. Thank you so much for your time.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Senator Wishart.

WISHART: Thank you. And, and I want to clarify to this room, in case I was not clear. I made a commitment last year and working, frankly, on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro with Justin Wayne, to support significant funding for east Omaha, north and south. And so whether with this group and Senator McKinney and, and those that represent north and south Omaha want to do that out of ARPA funding federal funding, which comes with more restrictions and a deadline by 2026, or whether we do

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that through the, the state's surplus Cash Reserve through state funding, I just want you to know that I've made a commitment for those funds to go through and be invested in the community.

BARBARA INGRAM: Thank you so much. And for me, that's-- and I'm sure for all the folks behind me yet in the room, it's about really seeing the monies be there and seeing these projects realized and once again keeping a promise that was made. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Sarah Wish-- oh, excuse me. Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: I was just going to make a comment to, to build off of Senator Wishart. She's got this year and next year left, but I just started. So I come from north Omaha. I'll make sure that, that we make sure it stays in the appropriate funds and is spent the way it was intended to be spent.

BARBARA INGRAM: Thank you for saying that. Thank you to you both.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your testimony. Next proponent, please.

WILLIE BARNEY: Good afternoon again. Willie Barney, W-i-l-l-i-e B-a-r-n-e-y. I really appreciate the opportunity to come back before you. Last year, when we were here, we talked a lot about and we used the words unprecedented and historic, and it still is. One of the things we also want to say is that we are ready in north and south Omaha to move forward. As we have met with hundreds of people over the last couple of weeks of well over 600, the consistent message has been we want to be in support of LB531 and LB785 in order to support the recommendations that have come forward. But we also heard very clearly from the community that they also are supportive of organizations like Charles Drew, Malcolm X, the Great Plains Black History Museum, and also having additional funds to support small businesses and contractors that are looking for this opportunity as you've heard from some of the small businesses that are represented here. We believe and we support Senator McKinney, Senator Wayne, Senator McDonnell, Senator Vargas, and you that have led this effort. And we thank you for your support and commitment. Nebraska has the opportunity to lead this nation. People across the country are watching what's happening in north and south Omaha, partly because of what you were able to do last year. But we're here to push this across the finish line. What I mean by that is we have people that are waiting and counting on us. We have children. We have families that are waiting for [RECORDER MALFUNCTION]

now hit the streets so that their businesses can be impacted. I stand-- sit here before you in the last 15 years with many of the people behind me and others that are watching on television that couldn't take time off to come down. Over 8,000 people have given us their recommendations and their strategies of what they want to see in north and south Omaha. They do want to see job creation. They want to see entrepreneurship, continue reductions in gun violence, improvements in education. This specific investment that you are now considering will help us to accelerate the pace of growth and development in north and south Omaha. I do want to say that through that collective work, we're not asking you to do all of this for us. We are here. We are prepared. We're doing the work. And what I mean by that as well is that collectively before the pandemic, we were able to reduce gun violence by 74 percent in the city of Omaha; 80 percent in north Omaha. We were able to see our graduation rate increase from 50 percent to 81 percent. We were able to see our unemployment rate go from 21 percent down to 7 percent. But 7 percent is still too high. The pandemic has reversed some of those trends. And now we find ourselves at a point where we truly are looking at the state to help provide support and investments to help us move forward. But I just want to say again that we are in support of LB785. We appreciate the incredible amount of work and time that has been invested by our senators representing us. And we stand ready, we're prepared, we're united, and we have very specific projects. I do want to say on behalf of the Empowerment Network, which is one of the recommended organizations, that we have put 7,000 youth in our city to work over the last 15 years. With this, we will be able to add another 500. And on top of that, over the next three years, also connecting adults in our community with employment opportunities and making sure that we're increasing wages, expanding business opportunities and continuing to reduce gun violence. Many of the people that are coming behind will tell specifically what they are doing, what their role is. But we are truly in support of LB785. This is historic and we need to press forward. We support the recommendations. We support the amendments that will be coming forward. And we thank you for the time that you've dedicated to this. Now is the time. This is the moment to make this happen for north and south Omaha. And I leave you with the fact that as we have this continued progress in north and south Omaha, it also has a ripple effect on Lancaster and other qualified census tracts around the state that also have need. So I would take any questions about what I've said so far, but we greatly appreciate your work.

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

WILLIE BARNEY: Thank you for your time.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent, please. Good afternoon.

TUT KEAT: Good afternoon. My name is Tut Keat, T-u-t, my last name is K-e-a-t. I came here to present a New Life Family Alliance, a nonprofit organization for Sudanese in general of Nebraska. So I'm the founder and program coordinator and community organizer for South Sudanese community. So furthermore, I thank Senator McKinney for your wonderful job and God bless you and keep doing that for your community. So the reason why I come here again today so I've been in Omaha 16 years. I moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan. I found this organization in 2013. So the reason I found [INAUDIBLE] organizations, my community, they locked themselves. They don't have any [INAUDIBLE] African-American, Latino and American community. I'm the bridge to open the route for Sudanese community to work together end of the use for the violence. From South Sudanese community that is many young people join gangs. I work with the police department. I work with the city council. I work with the mayor to help young people from South Sudanese. I drive from Omaha to Grand Island to York to Lincoln to help start a new community, New Life Family Alliance, and this year we get three people, one for full-time and two people for part-time to help the community. So any time for elections, I work very hard for my community door to door. I tell them that boot, boot, we boot we pay taxes. We are part of this community and I support this bill to get the job done for the community. Thank you very much.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

TUT KEAT: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

ERIC L. EWING: Good afternoon. My name is Eric L. Ewing, E-r-i-c, middle initial L. E-w-i-n-g. And I am the executive director of the Great Plains Black History Museum. I'm also a native of north Omaha [INAUDIBLE]. I was born and raised here and left for 20 years and served in the U.S. Navy for 20 years and I returned. But I've been with the museum since 2017. When I came on board in 2017, for that year we had a little over 2,500 folks come through the door. Last year

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in 2022, we had a little short of 13,000 come through our door. In 1958, along the 24th Street corridor, there were over 400 black-owned businesses that lined the 24th Street corridor, over 400. In 1969, there was a riot that was the straw that broke the camel's back. And since 1969, all I've seen in north Omaha is a lot of empty lots and empty spots. We are here with the possibility we were one of the 34 organizations that were recommended to receive funding, ARPA funding. And we are looking to establish a new facility, a two-story, 20,000-square-foot facility. You have the diagram of the-- of the facility. The Great Plains Black History Museum is looking to build a new facility that will help attract thousands back to the 24th and Lake area. As such, the new building would create an estimated \$64 million impact on the Omaha economic community in the first five years of operation. The museum, excuse me, 6-- \$64 million impact on the Omaha economic community in the first five years. The museum estimates that approximately 65,000 visitors would come through our doors in the first year, with that-- with 19,500 of them coming from out of town. The importance of that is tourism, the dollars generated from tourism and in particularly African-American tourists. We are a flyover state for those individuals. They don't come and they don't spend money in our communities. They fly over, go to other places to then spend their money. We're hoping to be an organization that will generate and give a reason for people not to fly over, but to fly in, to visit the city, not only impacting the museum, but also impacting businesses in the north, north Omaha area and businesses throughout Omaha in general. So with that saying, we-- I support the bill and I want to thank the senators that-- for all the hard work that they've had to put into this and for the work in which everyone else has put into this. So thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent. Good afternoon.

RYAN SELL: Good afternoon. Ryan Sell, R-y-a-n S-e-l-l. I got to apologize up-front because I hastily-- I wasn't going to testify and I hastily scribbled it down. So if I can read my own writing, we'll be all right here.

CLEMENTS: All right.

RYAN SELL: Good afternoon, Senators. I'm here today as a proponent for LB785. I personally spent the last 24 years working in north and south Omaha. The funding attached to this bill has the ability to change the economic landscape of north and south Omaha. Last September, the

application period was open and over 300 applications were submitted. Olsson then accumulated the data for the projects they recommended. I don't-- the number is I think 30, 36 approximately. I think there's actually 42 between the catalyst and the supplemental. The projects that were recommended for funding requested-- desired amount of monies. And my concern about this, where we stand right now, are the pitfalls that stand in front of us that we aren't ready for. All of the projects requested a certain amount of funds, and then Olsson recommended a smaller amount of funds. My concern comes where if the-- when the funding is applied that not all the projects will be able to move forward. When the applications were submitted, there were some applications that included many projects inside of one application. For example, one application requested \$66 million was ten different projects by several entities inside the one application. Olsson recommended \$39 million. I would ask how these dollars will be distributed within the one application. Who will be in charge of that distribution? This-- there needs to be a conduit entity to distribute the funds after this bill is passed. At no point in this process was the question asked, if you receive half the funding, can you complete your project? There will be projects that will not be able to move forward without that recommended funding. It is imperative that we get this correct. We cannot distribute funds-- excuse me. Sorry. We cannot distribute funds and place a short-term Band-Aid on the communities. This bill has the ability to change the economic environment in both communities. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity we have to get this correct. Other states have already completed this process. I personally have looked at the data and the mistakes that are made in those states. Some of those funds will be returned to the federal government. The red tape that it takes to just get these projects started here is enormous. There's-- on some of the projects, there's lands accuit-- accusa-- acquisition. There's Davis-Bacon wages that could potentially be involved; HUD requirements; Dun and Bradstreet for the contractors; the planning department inspections; engineering. The clock is ticking and we need to get boots on the ground. It would be a shame to not take this opportunity that we have, but it must be done responsibly. The only conduit to distribute this money after the bill would be of the Nebraska Economic Development. You need to give them discretion to decide where those funds will go, even within one application that has ten projects in it. This has to be done correctly. If, if one project tries to make it a certain distance and decides that the funding is not available to complete what they proposed in their application, that might be an eight- to nine-month process and we're already in a hurry. So then Economic Development

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would get that money back and say this project isn't happening. And then they would come to someone else and say, hey, we had this funding come back. Are you guys ready? This is what happened in Iowa, right? So then you've put the next project eight months behind. This needs to be decided by Economic Development where this funding is going to go so these become successful so we can spend every dollar in north and south Omaha. We constantly have heard testimony about north and south Omaha. But this is not the only-- this helps Omaha as a whole. Not only that, it helps Nebraska. Sorry, I got the red light.

CLEMENTS: Yeah, that's your time [INAUDIBLE].

RYAN SELL: I was pretty much done anyway.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your-- oh, Senator McDonnell.

MCDONNELL: Ryan, you want to finish? Do you have anything else you want to say?

RYAN SELL: I do. I-- our project is we, we have a five-acre parcel. We bought a old meatpacking plant that was built in the '40s. It went bankrupt in the '70s. The projects-- the property sat empty for, well, until, until I purchased it. Since then, we've tore it down. It's off 24th and Z Street. We crush concrete there right now and recycle concrete. So the dump trucks come in, they dump concrete, we crush it, turns into gravel and then recycles it. It's not the prettiest thing for the community to be, but the zoning is there and it's heavy industrial. Right? So it's-- but what this changes-- for, for you to see what it truly changes, it takes five acres in the middle of south Omaha and it keeps us from not crushing concrete, but putting up a structure that has 30 bays for all the different subcontractors that work within the community. So south Omaha has many, many entrepreneurs that work hard every single day. They're not here right now behind me because they're out there working. Right? And the facilities that are available right now don't have the, the ceiling height for one for them to get their equipment in. It doesn't have the ability for them. And frankly, what you should be saying to me is then why don't you just build it and do it. Right? Great question. Because of the economic viability in the area and the cost of construction-- constructing that facility and working with those contractors, there's a gap. And that gap needs to be filled in between where we can break even and have a performing asset and making the whole thing work. We could have taken our money to west Omaha and spent it. We've worked with south Omaha area for my entire career. These people are the

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hardest working people you'll ever work with in the community and north Omaha also. We have to pass this funding to complete this process and Nebraska as a whole will benefit from it.

CLEMENTS: All right. Thank you. Any other questions? Are you saying that you prefer Department of Economic Development to score projects rather than Olsson Associates? Was that it?

RYAN SELL: No, I'm not saying-- I, I think they can use this as a tool. But there's a lot of things that have changed since this came out. There's other things that could potentially change. And what's imperative is what I see is if you recommended \$100 million for your project and Olsson recommended \$24 million, your project may not get funded. We don't want that \$24 million to go back to the federal government, and we may not even know that it can't be funded. It may take them a year to say, sorry, we can't make the project go. So then this \$24 million is hanging out there of a project that didn't happen. And it can-- it can be sent to other projects if Economic Development has the ability. So when Olsson did this study, it's a very, very, very short financial analysis of the applicants, very short. In fact, there was no-- it didn't-- it didn't-- you know, some things change, obviously, but there's some documentation and there's also pitfalls within when you're using federal funding for projects on the construction and people plan on certain things. But there's rules out there. And when those rules hit you, you get hit with a sledgehammer to the head. Right? And it's, it's rough. So there are folks that, that need to be aware of what these federal rules are. So when they go, oh, I'm so happy we received our funding and then they find out what the rules are in order to build something when those federal funds are involved, it changes the project significantly.

CLEMENTS: Economic Development needs to make people aware of that.

RYAN SELL: They do. That, that should be their job. And-- but on the other hand, Economic Development has to-- this has to be expedited because I know 2026 seems like a long time away.

CLEMENTS: We need to kind of move on here.

RYAN SELL: Yep. I'm sorry. I apologize. All right. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent.

RYAN SELL: Yeah.

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CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

PETE FESTERSEN: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thanks for having us here today. I'm Pete Festeresen, it's F-e-s-t-e-r-s-e-n. I'm the president of the Omaha City Council and also vice president of public affairs at CHI Health. So I'm here supporting this bill in those capacities. Also testifying on behalf of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce. So you've heard from a lot of great partners here today already, and you're going to hear from a lot more. So I'll keep this pretty brief. I support LB785 and also LB531 earlier this week, because they do represent a generational opportunity to make a difference on poverty and economic disparities in our city. And that does benefit our entire, entire city when we do that. Most of the projects you have before you in the Olsson report there will require some kind of city involvement or city council approval. So I'm here to let you know we're in full support of that. The city council is anxious to see these projects move forward and are willing to be a partner and get those-- all of them moving as fast as possible. We do have a pretty busy agenda every week. But I will say I think this is the-- this is the most important thing we can be doing. And to miss this opportunity would be a huge miss for our community. From a CHI Health perspective, we support these projects and of course the community partners we work with that help address social determinants of health. There's a lot of those in this report, too, and a lot of those recommendations that would make a substantial difference in that area. One project I would specifically mention is what is called the Community Innovation Campus in your packets there. It's a proposal by the Omaha Economic Development Corporation that would invest about \$12 million into north Omaha, and CHI Health will be a partner as a long-term tenant to create a new central kitchen for our health system. It would create about 100 jobs in the community, well-paying jobs with benefits and folks who would hire from the community. So we're confident, should that recommendation be followed and should that appropriation be made, that would be a quick win we could all have in this program at work, and it would benefit the programs that-- the community substantially. It was rated very highly in the report you'll see there for providing long lasting employment opportunities and economic growth in the area. So we're confident we can help make that happen. I want to thank Senator McKinney for introducing this bill and our north and south Omaha senators, in particular, Senator McDonnell and Senator Vargas on this committee, also the special committee that got us to this point. And I'm really

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encouraged that together we can make a difference on this generational opportunity. Thanks for having me.

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

PETE FESTERSEN: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

TONY VELAND: Good afternoon. My name is Tony Veland, T-o-n-y V-e-l-a-n-d. I am the director of human development at the AIM Institute. We are one of the organizations that was recommended for funding. We are an innovative nonprofit with a mission of growing a strong and diverse tech community. I'm also a mentor and an advocate for those living in north Omaha through organizations like the TeamMates mentoring program, Omaha Housing Authority, and [INAUDIBLE] for Youth. I'm here today to support the collective efforts regarding the need for more work-- workforce development in north Omaha. The AIM Institute is the only nonprofit currently training participants in north Omaha to enter high skill, high demand, high wage opportunities in technology. However, a lot of the residents lack the resources available to participate in our courses. With the help from this bill, we can remove barriers to those H-3 careers, making these job pathways accessible to everyone. The vision of AIM is to create a thriving community where anyone can pursue a rewarding tech career. Though what I want to stress, there is anyone. As someone who is from north Omaha, born and raised in one of the lowest income zip codes in the city, I know what it's like not to have much. I know what it's like not to see opportunity. I know what it's like to only think my way out of sports. I know what it's like to not see faces in some of these industries that are really doing well and where people are really doing, doing awesome. And basically AIM, we're taking necessary steps to address this. We have a strong focus on the areas where there are lacking the city. We meet people where they're at in life and we provide the resources, education, and partnerships that will allow them to not only remove the personal limitations that they set upon themselves, but also to help them level up and transform themselves into the talent that a lot of these companies around here are looking for. Furthermore, we are creating spaces that are more welcoming and representative as we increase diversity in this industry. There are over 1,500-plus unfilled tech jobs in our area, and it's no secret that there is a shortage of tech workers. But what's also a concern is the high unemployment and underemployment in some areas in our city,

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especially among those excluded populations. So we're trying to close this gap. We can train up to 500 individuals in north Omaha with the funding, which in turn can end the cycle of poverty for a lot of people, which in turn can address the unfilled jobs that are available, which that number is continuing to grow. We can also address the diversity issue, which no longer is just a moral decision, but more of a business decision because it's been proven that more diverse workforces benefit the bottom line. And finally, we address-- we can address leveling the playing field and provide hope and possibilities where it historically hasn't existed. So in the end, this bill will positively affect-- positively impact the entire community and will help us build a stronger tech workforce where anyone can find a seat at the table and help to improve the larger community that we all share in. And I want to thank the senators for the work they put into to bring this bill to the Legislature. And I thank you all for your time.

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

TONY VELAND: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent, please. Good afternoon.

CANDICE PRICE: Good afternoon. My name is Candice Price. That spells C-a-n-d-i-c-e P-r-i-c-e. I'm very excited to have an opportunity to talk with you all today, mainly because of the opportunity you have in front of you to change lives for the better. Historically, and unfortunately, oftentimes it has purposefully been overlooked, my community. And so you have this chance now in front of you to do some good with policy, to do some good with funding. And I can't be any more excited than I am to see that happen. I am the owner of Home Team Auto Sales, along with Ron Devers. I'm the only black woman own an auto dealership in the state of Nebraska. I sit on many boards, so I work in the nonprofit world through service and then also in the for-profit world. So I get to see the best of both worlds thankfully. In Omaha, we've had many opportunities for growth that have oftentimes, as many have mentioned, has not come to fruition. We definitely don't want to see this happen this time. I support LB785. I was down in Lincoln last year supporting LB1024. I'm thankful to the special committee that made that happen, to our senators who have worked tirelessly. I've seen them in many of the venues that you typically wouldn't see people working. They're there late hours in the night working to make this happen, working on bills and working to be

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inclusive. So for us, working together with north Omaha and south Omaha, I'm certain many of you know that's not come together before. We have seen so much within our community unite behind this funding possibility that should no longer even be called a possibility. It should be certain. There should not be a question as to whether or not this funding occurs to change lives. So I'm going to talk to you under two hats. One is as an entrepreneur. When I moved to the state so I'm not from Nebraska, I moved here. I went to school in Oklahoma. And while in school I was on Section 8, I came to Nebraska and became a Section 8 landlord, able to give opportunity that others provided to me: safe, secure, clean, nice housing. Because of opportunity offered within north Omaha, that was able to happen. I now own business, but I also want to talk to you as a parent. So my daughter attended Omaha North High School. She's now in school in North Carolina A&T as a junior making straight A's in civil engineering. She was able to come back home to Nebraska last year and interned with HDR. She has the opportunity to come back again this year and she wants to do some things in the arts. What I know for certain is growth attracts youth and we want to be able to see our youth come back home. It's great you can take your talent out and go learn, but bring all of that back to our city. If we don't have growth, especially where they started, they're not going to do that. This lends that opportunity. Not only does she come back, but she brings friends with her. The Department of Economic Development has been working on that directly and purposefully to bring students from HBCUs to our community. They have to see growth and change. A lot of that happens with money. Because I sit on the nonprofit realm, I believe in programming. But one thing I know for certain is programming does not get us out of poverty. That is why it's important that these funds we also see go to for-profit businesses and for-profit industries. Money attracts money. We know that. And so the better our community does, as the gentleman before me stated, the better we'll all do. That's through state taxes. That's through tourism. We would like to see others in our community continue to grow. My project was presented to Olsson as well, though it was not recommended. And though I've been in countless meetings to support, I stand strongly in support of this bill for whomever those dollars go to in the community, because all of the money is going to continue to not only sustain itself, thankfully, because it is also going to for-profit businesses, but it'll go to other businesses. So you'll hear those in, in here that are stating what their projects are. I happen to sell cars. At some point, I'm sure a company is going to need a vehicle. So whether I get the money directly or not, I'll still see that in turn. And many of our businesses will. That's why it's

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important that we see this money funded to our community. The last thing that I'll state here is that growing our existing businesses also attracts other businesses to our state. I was in a meeting this morning with a company out of Atlanta that's considering some projects here in Omaha. As we continue to develop and grow, we bring others into our state so that we're no longer a hidden gem. We're just a gem. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

CANDICE PRICE: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

SHARNELLE SHELTON: Good afternoon, Chair and Appropriations Committee. My name is Sharnelle Shelton, S-h-a-r-n-e-l-l-e S-h-e-l-t-o-n. I am the representative for the Learning Community for Douglas and Sarpy County, Subcouncil 2. But I am here today with my entrepreneur hat. I am also the founder of Minorities Owning Businesses. It's a local collective that strategizes in helping small minority businesses grow, scale, grow-- grow, scale, throw-- grow, skill and thrive. Tongue twister here today. I'm born, raised, and I reside in north Omaha and I support LB785 and all amendments and recommendations for funding for north and south Omaha. This financial investment and commitment to catalytic change is necessary to provide solutions to disadvantaged communities who have been overlooked for far too long. This funding will positively impact social and economic challenges by creating careers, access to affordable housing, attract tourism, enhance entrepreneurship and economic development. Collectively, with your support and recommendation, we can transform and strengthen these communities to result in a thriving, equitable city, as everyone has stated before me. The time is now to build on progress and accelerate a prosperous future for not only this generation, but the ones that come after. Thank you.

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

SHARNELLE SHELTON: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent.

KAY LeFLORE: Hello, my name is Kay LeFlore, that's K-a-y, last name L-e-F-l-o-r-e. I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. I'm 70 years

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old. I've seen a lot. I've seen the good times and the bad times in the community. Just, it's just so much to do. I mean, the north Omaha was redlined. When I started my business, I went to the bank. Anybody been turned down for a loan? If you want to buy a Mercedes, they'll give you \$60,000. But if you want money to start a business, the banks are not your friend. They would turn you down over and over. But we have survived for 23 years selling men's clothing. And I'm happy where I'm at. I just wish I had a better landlord. And, and this is what I hate. Old people, they have all these buildings that don't want to do nothing with them. I had to put in \$9,000 of my own money just to make some improvements. And then I say, hey, I just put in \$9,000. How much-- how many-- how many months are you going to give me free rent? He said, one. I said, h'm, I hate you, but we've continued to grow. The only thing I would say is the businesses could all use money. Everybody can use frontal improvements. Everybody can use roofs, wiring or, you know, we're, we're a desolate area, but we can be an area that can be very prosperous. We've, we've taught kids the retail. We work with the unemployment office and a couple other youth groups to teach them how to handle customers, how to-- how to be something more than a car mechanic or whatever jobs are out there for the youth right now. I'm very, very disappointed in the way that this was done. I was-- I was listening to the news and I was seeing, oh, we got money coming in north Omaha. Well, it's coming. Oh, right, right, right. Then my daughter came up to me and she said, Dad, that-- that's over. They've already decided where the money's going to go. I said, huh? What? So I go up and down the street, and I guess a lot of the small businesses, the barbershops, catfish place, did you guys get any money? They said, what money? So I said, h'm, you're in the same boat I'm in. We, we missed it because we didn't know about it. So that's why I'm here today. I would like to get some of the money that's available for capturing, remodeling or bringing north Omaha back to what it should be. Money is hard to come by. Even though unemployment is low, it's still hard to come by. So I think that you should give the small businesses in north Omaha and south Omaha money. Maybe-- you don't have to give them \$1,000,000, but you should be able to give them 200, maybe \$300,000 and audit it. You can come back and audit it to see where it went. I'm sure if I got \$200 or \$300, I mean \$200,000 or \$300,000, I would buy out my crappy landlord and build a building and set it up so it would be worthy for people to come. When I started, when I started my business, people were going out of town to buy clothes. They were going to Harold Pender's. They were going to Minneapolis. Now that we're there, we do proms. We do-- we do weddings. We do-- we do a lot of business, but I need more space. I

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need-- I need the other two parts of this building. But to make myself-- make myself a real store. So and that's what I'm-- that's what I'm asking for, money to improve. And as far south Omaha, south Omaha is a fantastic place. But I live off of 29th and Ames and in the last two years, 29th and Ames area is south Omaha because there's so many Hispanics in my area. Every house that came up for sale or, or rent is, is full Hispanics. I don't know if they're El Salvador. I don't know if they're Mexican, but they're, they're, they're in North Omaha, so they're my neighbor. So I shovel their walk when it snows. I don't-- we don't have to-- it's not a adversarial thing. It's a growth thing. We all need to come together and we all need to grow and see what-- see what we can do. Prosperity is very contagious. If we're prospering, you'll see more activity, you'll see more functions, you'll see more of our kids stay. My daughter just graduated from UNO. Within a week, she'll be in Houston. That's how-- that's how bad things are. She wouldn't even give Omaha-- she wouldn't even apply for a job in Nebraska. She's ready to go. And it's not just her. I bet you-- and every time I go out of town, I see people from Omaha, whether it's Phoenix or Sacramento or Kansas City. Kansas City is just full of Omaha. That's Omaha South or Kansas-- or we're Kansas City North, whatever it is. But we're just-- we're just giving away talent. And I don't know if we can continue this for another four or five years. But right now we have an opportunity. Give the small businesses, the barbershops, the hair salons, the clothing stores, money so that they can prosper and use it the way that businesses will use it. They just need an opportunity to grow. So I'm going to end on that note. But I just feel-- I feel betrayed. I feel like I didn't get in on this in the beginning. So now here I feel like I'm begging them, but maybe I am. I'm begging to get in on this before it's all over so.

CLEMENTS: All right. Well, thank you for your comments. Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

KAY LeFLORE: All right.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

IMANI MURRAY: Good afternoon. My name is Imani Murray, that's spelled I-m-a-n-i M-u-r-r-a-y, and I'm the CEO and I represent Ital Vital Living, an all vegan smoothie and juicery that focuses on health and wellness in our products. Ital Vital Living started from my own personal health journey. As I looked around at my family and the black community as a whole, we are dying early from preventative diseases that can be healed with a healthy lifestyle and food and daily

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movement through exercise. With the use of these ARPA funds that Ital Vital was recommended will allow Ital Vital Living to expand into a full-service restaurant and a gym, becoming a health hub in the heart of north O. We have been in our location of 24th and Lake going on three years now. And since then, not many small businesses have been coming into the area and definitely not any food businesses or restaurants in the neighborhood, which food businesses truly make a business district thrive as we can-- as we can see in other areas of-- in Omaha. The community truly needs this funding for existing businesses, but also for new businesses to truly even want to be in this area to begin with. We want to be able to be a part of a walkable neighborhood where you can make many stops to shop, eat, and have entertainment in a thriving space. This funding will truly transform our neighborhood and make a possibility of that thriving space where businesses and residents will want to be a part of but most importantly, be proud of. COVID-19 devastated, especially north-- small-- north Omaha small businesses due to mandatory closures, primarily having more difficulty obtaining the capital to rebound and survive. The U.S. Census Bureau stated as of May 5, 2020, 81 percent of small businesses in Nebraska reported a large negative effect on their businesses. As of December 2021, 55 still report negative effects on their businesses. This reality exacerbated in communities like north Omaha, where low-income people of color have disproportionately experienced job loss and severe health challenges during the pandemic. The unemployment rate for black Omaha residents is 12 percent. It is three times higher than the unemployment rate for whites. North Omaha is feeling the impacts of increased violence resulting from the pandemic and access to food and healthy-- and mental health services for the most vulnerable residents of north Omaha. Ital Vital will prioritor-- prioritize community needs for healthier choices of food and drinks and snacks. Our goal is to hire people who have-- who have experienced unemployment during the pandemic and promote job growth to build resiliency. Our focus is community well-being, and our vision is to close the gap of food deserts by providing healthier food choices right in our own neighborhood. The ARPA fund is for investments in these communities to alleviate poverty, enhance economic stability, improve affordable housing, and provide community-based food security, and reset north Omaha to be stronger and ensure the impact, recovery, and directly address the needs of residents who have historically had the least support.

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CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Thank you for your testimony.

IMANI MURRAY: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Welcome.

DEBORAH TAYLOR: Thank you. My daughter is the speaker of the family. My name is Deborah Taylor, that's D-e-b-o-r-a-h, Taylor, T-a-y-l-o-r. I'm here to support the LB785 economic recovery act for south and north Omaha. As you can see that my elders early-- earlier was eager to fight and get up and talk about the future of the youth of north Omaha. I'm going to say ditto to everything that has been said today from all my supporters from behind me. I am the art director for Ital Vital Living, which is a black-- all black women small business located on 24th and Lake. I am the mother of Imani Murray, who is the CEO of Ital Vital. I stand before you today because as a mother of children who are artists and entrepreneurs living in north Omaha, two of my children have lost their father. He died from COVID-19. My daughter Imani also has lost her father during the pandemic. But in face of loss, I have taught my children that if life knocks you down to get back up and keep going. I have trained my children to live honestly and to reach for their dreams. I have taught them that as you tell your story of how to achieve your success, that you train others to pull yourself up and be self-sufficient. I have taught them to reach out your hands and pull someone up with you; the model of each one, teach one. Forward ever, backwards never is the Jamaican quote that her father has instilled in her to live by instead of crabs in a bucket. My daughter is telling her health journey and at the same time she is teaching her community to eat and live healthier. Receiving the ARPA funds will-- Ital Vital will be able to hire 20 to 30 employees and more, which will kick off generational wealth and give back to our community jobs that was lost during the pandemic. Ital will be able to teach all that is willing to learn how to eat and drink better, to live healthier. Our health hub, I hub will have an impact on the community in the most positive way by keeping them out of gangs and away from gun violence and reducing our youth falling into the jail system. Because if we don't have jobs for the future of our youth in our community, then they will leave Omaha, Nebraska, reducing our tribe, which is our community. Do you have any questions? And thank you for listening to me.

CLEMENTS: Any questions? Sorry for your loss and thank you for your testimony.

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DEBORAH TAYLOR: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

SHEILA BOATMAN: Good afternoon. I'm Ms. Boatman, River Boatman, S. Boatman. But for the record, it's Sheila, S-h-e-i-l-a, Boatman, B-o-a-t-m-a-n. OK.

CLEMENTS: Go ahead.

SHEILA BOATMAN: Yes, sir. I am born and raised in Nebraska. I am very partial to north Omaha because I was born in north Omaha. My people came from Kosciusko, Mississippi, ten of them. My mother's the baby of ten and she's the only one left. So we have generations here. We've got some that started their own business, including my brother. So I've been everything from a Girl Scout, Brownie, safety patrol, candy striper, which is a volunteer at Immanuel Hospital. I've been homeless. I've been-- I've been independent since age 15. I struggled through college, finally got it. It took a long while. I have a degree in government. I worked at the Omaha City Council and I do understand rules and regulations very well, ordinances, bills, statutes, etcetera. I want to point out something. The young-- the young man that was here earlier, I don't know if he is still here, but he was speaking about regulatory conflicts and he's got a point. When the Olsson did this scoring process, it was not appropriate for north Omaha for what we're trying to do. It was just not appropriate. And what happened was, if you play like I'm just going to give you analysis here, if you play bowling and you've got some pins down here-- I don't play very much but you know what I'm talking about-- there's pins down the alley. You take that ball. The process they use is called Harvey ball, OK? And it's an engineering/architectural and you can use it for different, different social sciences to, to weigh things. But there's still a human being involved in the process. So that human being is reviewing. And so they said they had three reviewers. Now when you-- when it boils down to it, when you have social programs and you've got economic development programs, you cannot use a systematic approach like that. You have to have interviews. You got to talk to people. Because what's going to happen when they came out, they actually gave so many different awards to different people, but only part. And a nonprofit, if you only fund a nonprofit partially, they're not going to be able to finish that. So LB531 is very important. LB531 what happened, there's two different things going on here. You got create-- creativity and innovation. And then on the other side, you've got recovery and restoration. Without

one, the other cannot make it. So you have all these creative and innovation ideas that came out of the pocket with the score from Harvey ball. And then you got the pops, the mom and pop companies and businesses that didn't get one dime recommended. And that's what ARPA is all about. It's about recovery. So here you got creativity, innovation. You got recovery and restoration. So you got these regulatory things in the way. Let me give you an example. A nonprofit, a 501(c)(3) files a 1023. In the first three years, if that nonprofit gets over \$50,000, they'll revoke that 1023. They'll lose their 501(c)(3). If you give them thousands of dollars, where are they going to get the rest of it from? So the bill between LB531 and LB785 makes sense. So you're removing a Harvey ball, You're removing that coordinating plan. You know, that was just-- it was, you know, it was just a way to, to get in the pot and find out what was the best ideas. So you got the creativity and innovation and then you've got the recovery and the restoration. You got Jim's Rib Haven that didn't get a dime and he suffered greatly. My charity suffered because during the pandemic you couldn't fundraise. You couldn't do anything. I have a national nonprofit with about \$30,000 in assets. It's ready to roll. We're ready to turn the button on. We've got our 800 numbers. We got 1-800-Omaha up; 1--1877. I forget the prefix, but north Omaha. And then this one is north Omaha 24/7. Then we got one, Sankofa. The nonprofit that I have is going to attract investors to Nebraska. It's going to give jobs to felons. It's going to give jobs to, to those people that, that need to, to fill in the gap. They can't-- they can't get over the gap of their unemployment because they don't have the experience. We have eight stations set up with different color and each one of these station handle different social issues and different approaches. So, for example, this one here is the orange station. It's going to teach African-Americans about their African-American history, their heritage. It's going to show them how to build literary assets. This book actually shows them if they have a dish on the table that came from grandma, it would show them how this is an asset. They can put insurance on it. McCormick and also we're trying to get ConAgra, but Kraft, they're the one who is going to sponsor this. How you-- and, ma'am, Senator, is it Armenat [PHONETIC]? You mentioned about north Omaha. Is that you--

ARMENDARIZ: Um-hum.

SHEILA BOATMAN: --that spoke about north Omaha? And how--

CLEMENTS: Excuse me. Your time is up.

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SHEILA BOATMAN: Oh, OK.

CLEMENTS: Could you wrap it up?

SHEILA BOATMAN: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Thank you very much. I won't-- I just want to point out that I understand your concern about north Omaha and I appreciate it. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: OK. Thank you for your testimony.

SHEILA BOATMAN: Thank you very much.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

CRYSTAL SIERRA: Good afternoon, committee members. My name's Crystal Sierra, C-r-y-s-t-a-l S-i-e-r-r-a, and I am the director of operations for Canopy South. And I'm here today to express our support for LB785. Canopy South is a community development nonprofit, and we're based in south Omaha. We predominantly work with NQCTs in zip code 68107. The best way I can really describe our work is tell you that it's grounded in four fundamental pillars: elevating economic vitality, enhancing community vibrancy, bolstering high-quality education, and developing both affordable and mixed income housing. If you visit cities anywhere across the U.S., you can realize and notice that not all neighborhoods are treated equally. Many of those challenges are rooted deeply and entangled in our country's history, policies, and practices. Take redlining as an example, which is the discriminatory-- discriminatory practice of denying services, typically financial, to residents of certain areas based on their race or their ethnicity. As the amendment references, both North and South have persistently faced social and economic challenges that have been fueled by redlining. As many as you may know or have experienced for yourself, homeownership is a key driver of wealth and intergenerational wealth. Yes, redlining has been illegal for over half a century, yet the impact can still be seen and felt today. North and south Omaha have experienced decades of disinvestment, which have contributed to higher rates of poverty, lower rates of educational attainment and inequalities in housing, employment, and health outcomes. Now you fast forward to 2020 and more currently you layer on the COVID-19 public health emergency and those challenges have only been magnified in vulnerable communities like north and south Omaha. What we know today is place predicts prosperity and we all play a critical role in cultivating social, cultural, and economic capital. At Canopy South, we recognize that no one organization, no one individual or even bill will be able to solve

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these challenges. It's a collective responsibility, which is why we're in support of LB785, which would catalyze future investments by carrying out the North and South Omaha Recovery Grant Program with a lot more flexibility and less red tape. This once in a lifetime funding will help bolster north and south Omaha, transform the landscape that currently exists, and positively impact opportunities and outcomes for thousands of individuals for generations to come. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Next proponent. Good afternoon.

JONATHAN CHAPMAN: Good afternoon, Chairman Clements, and to the rest of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you all for the opportunity to share today. My name is Jonathan Chapman, J-o-n-a-t-h-a-n C-h-a-p-m-a-n, and I am the newly promoted vice president of Community Collaboratives for the Empowerment Network. I also serve as the board chair for the Hartman Avenue Neighborhood Association, and I am also the pastor of Church on Purpose. I'm here today to vocalize my support for the entirety of the economic recovery plan, specifically LB785 today and to support the Empowerment Network strategy to prepare north Omaha residents for jobs and careers created through these projects. One of the things that I understand about your responsibility as the Appropriations Committee is you have a very weighty responsibility to properly steward and manage the resources for the residents in the state of Nebraska. That is a challenging task that is oftentimes made even more challenging depending on the level and degree of knowledge that you have of the individuals that you are disbursing the resources to. One thing that's very clear in the state of Nebraska is that a lot of people have never visited north Omaha or south Omaha. And there are only stories throughout the rest of the state of what takes place in north Omaha and south Omaha. As a Nebraska transplant, having been in Omaha now for eight years, when I first relocated, I heard a lot of the stories before I met a lot of the people. And so today, I just want to share with you some of the things that I have learned about the people of north and south Omaha. The first thing is that we have clarity. I think you can understand, based on the testimonies that you've heard today, that we are very clear that the resources that are being allocated for our community are for the purposes of economic development, with the intent to create jobs, to boost and support entrepreneurs in north and south Omaha, to increase access to housing, and to improve tourism for the specific purposes of increasing the economic drivers in both communities so that, as Senator McKinney said, they can become self-sustaining. We also have commitment. We

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have a collection of individuals in our community who work hard and dream big. Both communities in north Omaha and south Omaha have a legacy of resilience. And to our community, we have been committed for the duration. As a personal example of that, my wife and I, although we have the resources to be able to relocate out of north Omaha, we have continued to rent in north Omaha until we can find a home we can purchase in north Omaha because we're committed to staying in north Omaha. The commitment of the individuals that have come down here both on Tuesday and today is demonstrated on a daily basis, and it is a commitment that is necessary in order to continue to see the advancement of our community. We also have collaboration. Those with the experience and that have been able to see successes in the past are at a new level, sharing those resources and information with those that need it. For too long we have remained siloed. But over the last few years, we have become more and more connected and unified in our pursuit of a better community for all. We also have the coordination necessary to be successful in our efforts. We are united around a common vision of making Omaha a great place to live, work, and play in every single zip code. There is a plan for access for those that were not included. There's also a plan for accountability to ensure that the funds that are being disbursed to the community are used in the way that both the state and the community has identified they need to be used. We also have the coordination to leverage these resources to-- with other resources to exponentially increase their impact in our communities. What this bill does is provide us with the capacity. Lastly, we have the courage. We have the courage to believe that we're not wasting our time and our voices today. We have the courage to believe that we didn't waste our gas driving down here through the snow flurries. And we have the courage to believe that you have the courage to make the right decision in advancing this bill out of committee to the floor for debate where it can be approved by the entire Legislature. Thank you in advance for your support. I'll take any questions at this time.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

JONATHAN CHAPMAN: Thank you very much.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. May I ask how many other proponents do we have? One, two, three, four, five. All right. [INAUDIBLE] this. We have time for five minutes each, so we'll be able to get everybody then.

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STEVE CERVENY: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Thank you for your patience and welcome.

STEVE CERVENY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Clements, Senators of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Steve Cerveney, S-t-e-v-e C-e-r-v-e-n-y. I'm a deputy chief with the Omaha Police Department. The Omaha Police Department supports LB785 in its efforts to create a North and South Omaha Recovery Grant Program. This program will provide funding to public and private entities which will directly and positively impact individuals and neighborhoods who have experienced disparities due to historical inequities and, more recently, devastating effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. From a law enforcement perspective, it is crucial to build up our communities. The success of a police agency relies entirely on the success of the individuals in the neighborhoods we as officers serve. In order to achieve success, police agencies build relationships and implement community-oriented strategies that seek solutions by working with all individuals we serve and utilize their abundance of talent, input, and perspectives to develop long-lasting, effective programs. We believe LB785 helps pave the way for this type of approach. We think LB785 provides the means to strengthen neighborhoods, solve problems, encourage growth, promote creativity through specialized programs catering to specific needs, and provide immediate, long-term, problem-solving solutions by strengthening commitment to community empowerment. This bill creates a vehicle to prioritize grants toward economic recovery. It will assist in providing internships, help with crime prevention, ensure affordable housing, combat food insecurity, and allow funding for financial literacy programs that will improve economic and health situations. These are a few of the benefits that LB785 will have a direct impact on. And as a result, we feel the passage of this legislation will go a long way in efficiently and effectively creating safe neighborhoods in a holistic manner. LB785 helps promote and streamline transformation, growth, job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and long-lasting economic strength. Most importantly, it will help create vibrant communities within the city of Omaha. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Thank you for your testimony.

STEVE CERVENY: Appreciate it.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon.

RYAN McINTOSH: Good afternoon, Chairperson Clements, members of the committee. My name is Ryan McIntosh, M-c-I-n-t-o-s-h, and I appear before you today as registered lobbyist for the Nebraska Bankers Association in support of LB785. The NBA has been supportive of this process over the past year, both here today and earlier this week in the Urban Affairs Committee for LB531. We've heard incredible testimony and stories about the impact that this legislation will have. We will continue to seek ways for our members to be engaged in this process and appreciate the opportunity to participate. With that, we thank you for your consideration, ask the committee to pass forward the legislation. Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions?

RYAN McINTOSH: Thanks.

CLEMENTS: Seeing none, thank you. Next proponent please come forward. If you're planning to testify yet, would you come to one of the front seats? Thank you. Welcome.

KATHLEEN KNUDSEN: Thank you. My name is Kathleen Knudsen, K-a-t-h-l-e-e-n K-n-u-d-s-e-n. I am a sixth generation Nebraskan and I am here to voice support for Plaza de la Raza South-- and the South 24th Street project and the legislative process. As the facilitator of Metro-Omaha Raise Me to Read at the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium and founder of the collaborative project called Omaha Urban Thinkscapes, I and our team have been engaged with community leaders and with families at the North and South Omaha Learning Community Centers regarding the creation of playful learning landscapes in the metro area. Such spaces encourage parent-child interaction, a key factor in building brain architecture, a bank of known words, and buffers to stress all which lead to early literacy and school and life success. The Plaza de la Raza and South 24th Street Project imagines development of this place for all people, creating what has long been envisioned there, and was recently referred to as the future heartbeat of that area. Omaha Urban Thinkscapes hopes to build the first thinkscape structures or small structures within this project. We also understand that Historical Markers are an hoped-for aspect of the plan, which aligns with our work in writing a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for Historical Markers in both north and south Omaha alongside future Thinkscape sites. The plaza design is complete and the project is ready to commence. It met the criteria established by the legislative committee and Olsson. As a citizen and member of the so-called second house in our unique Nebraska Legislature, I

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expect that the Legislature followed the guidelines it establishes. Of course, deliberation will happen and to be-- is to be expected and there has been great commentary here. But Plaza de la Raza and others followed the process as dictated by the legislative committee, and adherence to rules and fair execution of process is essential to a trusted state government. Thank you for your time aalannd allowing me to voice my support for this project and others and the disbursement of funds in LB785.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Thank you for your testimony.

KATHLEEN KNUDSEN: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Yep. Good afternoon.

CLEMENTS: Good afternoon.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Hi. My name is Gayla Lee Chambers. It's spelled G-a-y-l-a, Lee, L-e-e C-h-a-m-b-e-r-s. I am a registered lobbyist. I'm wearing multiple hats in regards to this bill, LB785. I'm here representing the least, the lost and the last and all the people that have lost their life during this global pandemic for all of us to be able to have these billions and millions of dollars disbursed out to individuals, families, and businesses in the community. The hat that I wear in addition to being a registered lobbyist is that Together We Achieve Miracle was not represented, I mean was not recommended by the Olsson group for the ARPA funding. Our proposal and package was a business plan. We started preparing a project in 2018 which we received planning money from tourism, \$10,000 a year to help us be successful. We had our architectures in place, we had our engineers in place, we had our construction people in place, and we were ready to go. In 2018, we had no idea how we were going to pursue our goals, but to raise money through the private sector. I am a majority of a private entrepreneur. That's how I was able to purchase a beautiful 58,000 square foot-- feet building that is over a hundred years old. This building was where Lozier's, Allan's father started the Lozier's Corporation. And I'm very proud and happy that I won this beautiful building from the Omaha Housing Authority in an auction in 2018. I had the utmost respect for Senator McKinney. He's a young senator that has a very difficult job for District 11. But in my 35 years of being in business, Olsson failed north and south Omaha. They failed us because they are not real estate developers. They did not have on their

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payroll, I will call them ambassadors, that would represent north and south Omaha that knew the businesses, that knew the community, that knew the nonprofits, that knew the neighborhood. So you get what you pay for. I'd like to read something from you that was on the proposal that I knew right then and there that we were in trouble. It was at the end of their application process and I'm going to read it [INAUDIBLE]. It said: If awarded LB1024 funding, will the proposal be fiscally sustainable, not require ongoing funding for operation, not be dependent on any future funding requests? We were in trouble. Ninety percent of the people that submitted application were nonprofit. So as a businessperson that has made all of my money in the private sector, I'm looking how can a nonprofit be sustainable because they're always going to need some type of funding? So I knew we were going to be in trouble with this. So that's why I am recommending that Nebraska Economic Development take over this funding and look at all the applicants that apply and reassess and reevaluate. Because if I had to do it, I would have looked at businesses that have infrastructure, that were paying or filing income tax, that have their utilities on, that were paying property tax. I would have looked at them first.

CLEMENTS: I see that's your time. Can you wrap up?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: So thank you. Thank you, Chairman. So I would like to end it in saying that we need to be thankful and we not-- we need not to forget all these people that have lost their life in COVID-19, because without their loss of life, we wouldn't even be having, sitting up here discussing this money right now. God bless you. Thank you very much. Anybody have any questions?

CLEMENTS: Questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: OK.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent. Good afternoon. Thank you for waiting.

DeJUAN REDDICK: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. My name is DeJuan Reddick, D-e-J-u-a-n, Reddick, R-e-d-d-i-c-k. I am the executive director for the Hope Center for Kids. I'm here as a proponent for LB785. You've heard a lot today, so I'm gonna keep it very short. I am long-winded, so I'm going to promise to keep it short. I'm supporting both this proposal as well as others, and I'm here to maybe provide perspective. If you are a fiscally conservative or fiscal-- fiscally liberal, we've all heard the idiom to pull

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yourself up by the bootstraps. And as a person who wears cowboy boots, I know exactly what those are. But that's very difficult to do. You have to have the boots to begin with. You've heard a lot today from people who are the boots on the ground and what they're talking about in these proposals, whether it be for profit or nonprofit, I am here representing a nonprofit that was recommended as part of another proposal. We're not asking for a handout. We're not asking for a hand up. We're asking, as each of you members of our community, to help us create those boots with those bootstraps so that this can be financially sustainable in many different ways. Nonprofits do have to work with the for-profit sector to get a lot of things done. We want to keep that money in north and south Omaha because those communities, as it's been mentioned many times, have heard about money coming but have not always received that. We are thankful for this opportunity and we understand the gravity of the decision that you have in the Appropriations Committee as we support not just LB785, but LB608, LB531, LB532 and what each of them represent. It is not just an opportunity to move things forward for all of our lifetimes, but for our children, our grandchildren, and our communities. I have the privilege of saying that I'm from not just north Omaha, live in south Omaha. Every time I travel, whether it's abroad in our great country or in other countries, I get to say I'm from Omaha; and what we do is seen and felt around the world. Let's make that impact on our community. I'm open to any questions.

CLEMENTS: Questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

DeJUAN REDDICK: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Next proponent.

PRESTON LOVE, JR.: I'm going to stand up. When I sit down, you can press [INAUDIBLE] Just kidding. I just want to say I'm before you again because I did make my testimonial on LB608, and I'm glad I did because I surely support it and I'm not going to read it word by word.

CLEMENTS: Could I get your name and spell it.

PRESTON LOVE, JR.: Yes, I will.

CLEMENTS: Although we know who you are.

PRESTON LOVE, JR.: Yeah. I thought it maybe, you know, historically it would come up. But my, my name is Preston Love, Jr., P-r-e-s-t-o-n L-o-v-e, Jr. And again, I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to

speaking on the bill that I intended to speak on in the very first place. You have my testimony that I passed out earlier. I hope that you can sort your papers and put it in the right place. I will do my testimony and make it short. I believe I'm the last. I know you're begging to get home, but I'm begging to get back on the highway. So I surely will be straightforward. But I-- and as much as I'd like to get home to my lovely wife and this is maybe the most important situation that I've had in my adult life, so I can go for another hour. Are we agreed? [LAUGHTER] But OK. So with that said, I made the point earlier that you must look at me just a little different from some of the other testimony, because I've lived the longest. I've watched and lived and studied and experienced my community that I was born and raised in for having economic devastation and no investment for 50 years. That's the point that I want to make in that part of my testimony. For 50 years I've observed all of the good, the bad, and the ugly about my community but with the economic devastation of that level. And I did say and I say again that I thank, well, my senator is Justin, but I surely have great respect for Mr. McKinney and Vargas and my dear friend McDonnell, all of you and more that I know these names I've called, but I don't know you. But I have a lot of respect for you because I read about what you do and what you don't do [LAUGH], but I surely have respect for you and say thank you for what you've done so far in this process. And my point that I made early and I want to make to you again is really with all of that said and with all of the testimonies, really what's before you now is what I'm speaking to you. And what's before you now is to make sense of all of this. And listen, I said this early, but now that we've had all of the testimonies, it kind of underlines what I've asked you to do that you've already done. And it also makes my point that you had a chance to hear from all kinds of segments and people from the community saying, yeah, we got this problem, we got that problem but support this bill. Oh, my-- mine didn't get funded. Mine didn't get funded, but support this bill. I hope that that array can give you what this means to our community. And so I say that again. And so my point that I would like to summarize is that, that this, beside the fact that we support it, is a very commonsense solution to where we evolved from, from the original LB1024. It makes sense. It, it, it also makes some, maybe some new cents, using the word spelled with a C instead of an S. So in that sense is the right way to do it. And it will address some of the-- some of the issues that came up about maybe some of the smaller businesses that weren't addressed. And so I say all that is I bring these 40 years of observation and experience and wisdom to say now really is the time. And I won't repeat my little cute little phrase,

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maybe I will, but that development will drown out disappointment. That's what is drowning out my disappointment. And that when this begins to grow, the grumbling will go away. And so I say in summary that thank you for listening. And I mean that being here but listening to the community that is-- could be the recipient of your smart and intelligent and profound thinking on this bill and the other bill, LB531 I think the number is. So what-- the only thing left for us to do is for you all to hurry up so we can get development. Thank you very much.

CLEMENTS: All right. Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

PRESTON LOVE, JR.: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Are there any other proponents? Seeing none, you are the last one. Are there any-- is anyone here in opposition of LB785? Seeing none, anyone wishing to testify in the neutral capacity? Seeing none--

WAYNE: Oh, me.

CLEMENTS: Oh.

WAYNE: Hello. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e. I'm here in a neutral capacity primarily because there are new people on the committee and if they have any questions that they want to have for the record about the report or anything like that, I'll be glad to answer. That's why I'm here. So I can keep answers very short. But I do want to give people an opportunity to ask any questions as it relates to how Olsson's report was done or any questions about the process.

CLEMENTS: Did you spell your name?

WAYNE: Justin, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e.

_____ : He did that once.

CLEMENTS: Oh, you did?

WAYNE: Yeah.

CLEMENTS: I missed it. Were there questions from the committee? Senator Wishart.

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WISHART: Well. I'll leave the question about why you chose neutral to Senator Erdman. Good luck with that. Senator Wayne, you know, one thing that we've talked about earlier and something that I think is important to get on the record is that, you know, last year the legislature made a commitment to these funds. And the goal was that over the summer and led by the work that you were doing and Senator McKinney and the committee was work with Olsson here, get input from the community, and then come with a piece of legislation that would kind of guide this is what this significant amount of funding will look like. Can you just walk us through what are the next steps now after this hearing?

WAYNE: Yeah. So first, this body approved some dollars set aside up to-- up to \$2 million for a contractor and we put out an RFP. That RFP was eventually voted on by the subcommittee to select Olsson. I want to-- I want to frame it in this sense. North Omaha and south Omaha had individual block kind of strategic plans here and there of what, what 24th and Lake or what 24th and Q may look like. But there has never been from a state level an overall strategic plan whereas many communities, particularly what I've learned in this body is small, small town communities like Keith County, actually have plans for how they're going to grow as, as a city, and nor has the city have that. If you look recently, the city of Omaha just adopted a affordable housing plan. We didn't have a plan. So Olsson was hired to complete a plan, a plan that communities have waited 50, 60 years to develop and have to do it in five months. So, no, the process wasn't always perfect. But what you heard today is some frustration in something, but everybody is saying move forward because this plan was a starting point for these communities. So the plan moving forward is there is an amendment Senator McKinney has shared. In that amendment also sets aside some dollars for a program management firm. We recognize that it wasn't perfect, so we want to have another set of eyes on it to make sure that this Legislature gets the bang for the dollars that they put in and that they've committed to. So there will be another review of the application process, hopefully through a program manager. And then from there, really it becomes a timeline factor, which is why some of the testimony was a little confusing today about moving water funds and ARPA funds. But the reality is, is we have to have this spent by 2026 if we stay with ARPA. The issue is we may not-- we may lose another construction season for some of these projects, and the fear is we may not get it done. So that's why we are trying to find projects and build coalitions to move, move this forward in that capacity. So what would happen from here theoretically is DED and a

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program manager would put out an application, look at how these funding or these applicants are fundable and make sure they're sustainable and those dollars would be sent that-- spent that way. So we're not throwing out what Olsson did, because I think Olsson has done for the first time in our community, particularly north Omaha, brought folks together that we've never seen. We joke, and I'm going to use this and Willie Barney probably will say it's OK behind me. But Willie Barney and I didn't talk for two years. We didn't talk for two years because we had some political differences about north Omaha. But when this Legislature passed this money, the first person I called was Willie Barney. The second person I called was Willie Hamilton. Not all of us talked, but we all sat down in a meeting off of 24th and Lake and figured out how we come together to make sure we do this. And so it's that kind of pulling everybody together, even if you don't get along, that I think Olsson did a tremendous job on of just pulling people together who didn't get along and sat in the same room and came up with the plan. So we are encouraged. We are thankful for this community. We are humbled by this community-- committee and this Legislature. But moving forward, there will be another set of eyes to make sure that we recognize a five-month process for over 400,000 people may be a little rushed. But it's a great starting point.

CLEMENTS: Are there questions? Senator Armendariz.

ARMENDARIZ: I just have a comment. I thank you. I am one of the new people here, so I just want to know, you and I have already talked and, and as well as Senator McKinney, but I am enthusiastically looking forward to working on this project.

WAYNE: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: I had one. There's been comments that north and south Omaha didn't used to get along as they were working together. How has the cooperation been?

WAYNE: It's been great. In fact, the press conference we had the other day prior to LB531 was both north and south Omaha. It's interesting because if it gets on the floor, we'll probably have to have an amendment and just call it Omaha Economic because it truly is the entire community is coming around this idea, the business community, the nonprofit community. People are trying to figure out how do we take this momentum and make sure we don't-- we don't lose it.

CLEMENTS: OK, good. I'm glad to see people--

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WAYNE: Sorry for--

CLEMENTS: --working together.

WAYNE: Sorry for being neutral, Senator Erdman.

CLEMENTS: Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Clements. Senator Wayne, thanks for coming. Just want to clear the record. When I repeated the statement, "preserve the Third," that came from, from Senator Wayne. So he's, he's the one that started it. I just repeated it.

WAYNE: True.

CLEMENTS: OK. Seeing no other questions.

WAYNE: Thank you.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Anyone else in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, Senator McKinney, you're welcome to close.

McKINNEY: Thank you. Thank you, Chair Clements and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you, everyone from north, south Omaha or wherever else across the state that came out to support this bill. Thank you for everyone that has been supporting this bill. I'm just hopeful and energized that, you know, we can get this process going forward and we could begin to execute the plan to transform these communities because it is definitely needed. I'm going to work all I can to make sure the money does get to the community and make sure it works for the community. And that's my commitment and that's been my commitment and it will always be my commitment to work for north Omaha. So, you know, I just want people to know that it's not about who gets picked and who doesn't get picked. My focus is strongly about the community. But I think overall and no matter what, whoever gets resources to develop anything to do any projects it will change north Omaha for the better and south Omaha for the better. And that's where we've got to stay. We have to stay united. We have to continue to work together. I understand we still have to work through some things with the amendment, and I'm going to work every day to the end of the session to do that. And I thank you. And I open myself up for any questions.

CLEMENTS: Questions? Seeing none, thank you, Senator McKinney. We have position comments for the record on LB785. We have three proponents, two opponents, none in the neutral capacity.