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programs do require higher costs than many other programs. There is a need for quality career programs in our schools so that we can enhance the academic and occupational skills of students. And I would just like to point out that all students do not learn in the same way, and it is good for them to have an opportunity to apply learning and they really...students really do their best when they can be involved in some real problem-solving experiences. We need to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary to pursue career opportunities in Nebraska. We also need to provide them with some skills to balance the dimensions of work, family and community. Academic knowledge is really of little value unless it can be applied. Sometimes they say that life is really a juggling act, and I believe when we all do try to balance our work and our family and our communities that this we could certainly agree with. We need to also provide students the opportunity to learn about and participate in an ever-changing technological environment. We need to ensure quality education required to meet employer expectations with such skills as critical thinking, team building, communications. These are all important skills. Some of the career preparation programs included in the bill are agriculture education, business education, family and consumer sciences, industrial technology education, marketing education, health occupations education and diversified occupations, which are really career clusters. LB 495 will provide education and career opportunities for young people to stay in Nebraska and contribute to our growing economy. And I do want to mention the funding aspect. As the bill is currently written, funding for this program was to be appropriated annually from General Funds by the Legislature. However, I will be offering an amendment for your discussion that will change how these funds are appropriated. To receive the grants, each local school system will need to complete an application, identifying those programs that they would like to improve and how the funding will be used, and the grants will not be counted as a receipt toward the state aid formula. Some benefits of the program, career preparation programs assist students in applying the core academic competencies to real life situations. Vocational technical education is preparation for life. Vocational tech education contributes to decreasing drop-out rates, and in 1997 to '98 there were 4,000 drop-out students in Nebraska public schools, and those that do drop out of high school are more