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be preferred whenever possible. Currently, the courts usually award the custody of the children to one of the parents and the other parent becomes noncustodial. This creates an imbalance between the importance and responsibilities of parenting by each parent. We talk about family and strong families, and I think that when you try...when you look at a bill like this that you will agree it is promoting strong parenting by both the mother and the father. So the children, the children need both parents to raise them, and when you have joint custody, at least you have a balance there between the two parents. If the family doesn't stay together due to a divorce or separation, we still say that both parents are equally important in the child's upbringing. Currently, the courts may only grant joint custody if both parties agree to it and so LB 120 takes that out that both parties have to agree to it. We have an unspoken social belief that mothers should be the lead parent but often the father wants joint custody and the mother won't agree to it because odds are that she will prevail as the custodial parent. The fathers who pursue joint custody, as a usual rule, are the fathers who are actually willing, they are begging to maintain their role as a parent and usually the fathers who are capable of succeeding in a joint custody arrangement. This bill allows courts to grant joint custody when it's in the best interest of children even if one party, such as the mother, is reluctant to do so. The parenting plan is a helpful avenue for parents to work out their differences and come up with a plan to carry out the continuation of shared equal parenting. It doesn't dictate to the courts that joint custody is mandatory but it does provide that first consideration be given to sharing the responsibility of parenting in a joint custody situation. If the court determines that the facts of the parties involved are incapable of successfully sharing custody, then the court does not have to award joint custody because the best interest of the child or children is paramount in any and all of those cases. There are several states who have a presumption of joint custody allowing both parents, and in particular fathers, to take a much more active parenting role. It's working well in other states. Thirty-three states have adopted joint custody, 13 of which endorse preference when one parent seeks joint custody and/or a rebuttable presumption when both parents seek joint custody. Compare only 6 to 7 percent delinquency in child support payments for joint custody versus 50 to 72 percent default in