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Education Committee
November 07, 2011

[LR265]

The Committee on Education met at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, November 7, 2011, in Room 1113 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LR265. Senators present: Greg Adams, Chairman; Bill Avery; Abbie Cornett; Gwen Howard; Kate Sullivan; and Ken Schilz. Senators absent: Brenda Council and Ken Haar. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: (Recorder malfunction)...welcome everyone here for this interim hearing of the Education Committee. It is on LR265, and I'll read the title of it which is an interim study to examine the feasibility of implementing a career readiness certificate program. First of all let me announce that we just checked in upstairs and so there will be committee members coming in and we have the extra seating because at 10:30 we have a joint hearing with Appropriations and Education at the same time. This is under the jurisdiction just of the Education Committee. Senator Schilz, member of the Education Committee, representing the Ogallala area is here. This is Kris Valentin, the research analyst for the committee. I'm Greg Adams, representing District 24. Next to me is Becki Collins, the committee clerk, and clear over there to the right, Senator Sullivan from the Cedar Rapids area. And again, recognize that we will have others show up as the morning progresses here and we get past that check-in time. This is an interim hearing and we will conduct it as though it were a hearing during a regular session, in which case we will hear testimony on the bills, and the testifier stand is there. When you approach the testifier stand, if you will, first of all, state your name and spell it for the record so the clerk can get that very clearly. There is a registration sheet for testifiers that needs to be filled out. Yeah, right there, okay. On the table, and if you would please fill that out as well. We're going to limit testimony to about five minutes, and that is pretty typical for this committee. We'll do that, and granted some of you might be saying, well, if there's only this many testifiers, why can't we go on? I may let you, but for right now five minutes is where we're going to start and end, and we'll see how that works out. I would ask that you shut off electronic devices and not use them

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during a hearing. That's one of my rules during committee, and if you need to if you would step out of the hearing room that would be very much appreciated. And with that, do we have...I believe it's Senator Mello who's introducing... [LR265]

SENATOR SCHILZ: He's on his way. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: He is on his way? Are you going to cover for him? (Laugh) [LR265]

SENATOR SCHILZ: No, he'll be here. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Oh, is that how it works? All right, all right. Would you be willing to do that, Senator? (Laugh) Senator Schilz is always willing to be helpful and fill in for other senators, so... (Laugh) Well, again, I apologize for not starting right at 9:00 and the way things are kind of shaking out, but I didn't want to reschedule this hearing. So we'll wait for folks to show up. The second hearing, by the way, for those of you that may have an interest in it, we will start at 10:30 today, and it will be a joint hearing on LR206, meet with Appropriations and Education...okay. Senator Mello, we have introduced everyone, we have introduced the hearing, we've gone over the rules of the hearing, and so the stage is yours. [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: (Exhibits 1 and 2) All right. Good morning, Chairman Adams, members of the Education Committee, my name is Heath Mello, M-e-l-l-o, and I represent the 5th Legislative District in south Omaha. In our current economy, so-called "middle skill jobs" which require more than a high school education but more...but less than a four-year college degree make up the largest segment of jobs in the United States, and studies have shown that this is likely to be the case for years to come. Unfortunately, even in parts of the country with high skills...with high levels of unemployment, industry with high numbers of middle skill jobs are experiencing a shortage of middle skill workers. In 2006, around 50 percent of all jobs nationally were classified as middle skill, but only 44 percent of workers had the education and training

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required to fill those positions. This skills gap is not limited to states with high levels of unemployment. As the Omaha World-Herald reported in the editorial last week, Nebraska is projected to see around 321,000 job openings between 2008 and 2018, one of which nearly 64 percent would require education and training beyond the high school level. At the same time, only 36 percent of Nebraska's current working-age population holds an associate's degree or higher. In fact, according to the Georgetown study recently cited by the Omaha World-Herald only six other states have a greater need for workers with postsecondary education than Nebraska. If committee members are looking for further proof that a skills gap exists in Nebraska, I'd be happy to share copies of the transcript from LR263 interim study heard two weeks ago in front of the Revenue and Urban Affairs Committee on manufacturing jobs in Nebraska. At that hearing, the outgoing director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from Nebraska's manufacturing industry all cited the growing skills gap as the greatest challenge potentially standing in the way of the future growth of our state. Career Readiness Certificates, which are the topic of LR265, are one possible solution to help address the skills gap in our state. As successfully implemented in the state of Virginia, and a wide variety of other states, a Career Readiness Certificate is a portable skills credential that has the potential to be equally valuable to employers, educators, and recipients alike. CRCs can be used either as a complement to a high school diploma, GED, or college degree, or as a stand-alone credential and can easily facilitate job placement, retention, and advancement in middle skill level employment. The CRC model tests workers on their work readiness skills, using the WorkKeys assessment developed by ACT. And CRCs have been implemented through a variety of different state and local agencies in other states. Work force development centers, social service agencies, and community colleges are the most common partner agencies. However, and even absent a statewide program, CRCs, or the assessment themselves, could potentially be useful to many Nebraskans. Since 2006, ACT has also run its own nationwide program, the "National Career Readiness Certificate" which just underwent a major upgrade. All in all, more than 40 states have some form of statewide or regional CRC program. I've invited

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representatives from ACT to come and testify today, as well as representative from PSI, an Omaha-based career center that has begun the process of implementing a WorkKeys-based CRC system. With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Otherwise, I will leave things to the testifiers behind me. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you, Senator Mello. Are there questions for Senator Mello? Yes, Senator Sullivan. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Adams. Thank you, Senator Mello. You mentioned that it's predicted that we're going to need 300,000-plus, or there's going to be that many jobs? [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: Three hundred twenty-one thousand projected in the next decade, 2008 to 2018. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any indication of where they will be located? [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: That was not...at least that's not what the data that we were getting from the study that the World-Herald cited, a Georgetown University study that recently was released. It was, I think, more statewide figures not so much based on counties. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are there other questions? Senator, now, just so that I completely understand what generally you're thinking. So we've...your indication is that we have a gap, and that gap is in a work force that's going to need more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree. [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: Correct. [LR265]

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SENATOR ADAMS: All right. And the associate degree through our community colleges is not filling that gap? [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: I don't know if it's not...I wouldn't say it's not filling that gap. Part of the study, this Georgetown University study amongst many others regarding middle skill jobs, almost equate less than a two-year degree. They associate also a four-year bachelor's degree, but essentially the thought that most of these skilled jobs will need at least one year of postsecondary education, which that might not necessitate them fulfilling another year to receive an associate's degree. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: So, hypothetically then, the thought pattern might be if there were curriculum and program in place, a person might finish their high school degree, and then go on to a community college or wherever the source may be to complete a job skill curriculum, and then in some form or fashion be certified. [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: Correct. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: That's essentially what the career readiness certificate program is. Without taking too much testimony from the representative from ACT who will explain it in a significant...significantly more detail than I will in an abbreviated fashion. It will measure an individual's skill sets in certain levels, to a bronze, silver, gold level in regards to their skill readiness, whether it's in math or science, job readiness issues, comprehension, communication. That would serve as not an equivalent of an associate's degree, but it would serve to help complement what someone currently gets right now beyond a high school diploma or GED with the thought that most of these jobs are not going to require a person to have an actual degree to get the position. Now granted, I think a statewide goal of P-16 Council is to encourage degree completion and

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to encourage the number of Nebraskans with associate's, bachelor's, is ultimately advanced degrees, Ph.D.s and Master's. But this serves as an in-between, so to speak, between a high school diploma and an associate's degree where someone can receive these certificates, become employed, and in theory still move towards getting their degree, but it provides the business community and the employer credentials to know this is where that employee is at this particular time with their skill comprehension. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. Great. Thank you. Are there any last questions for Senator Mello? Seeing none, thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: First testifier? Good morning. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: (Exhibit 3) Good morning. Good morning, Senator Adams. My name is Steve Anderson, A-n-d-e-r-s-o-n, and I'm with ACT based out of Iowa City, and I am with ACT's Work Force Development Division. Back in the late 1950s, ACT created a nationally recognized standardized resource for college entrants, and with the NCRC we're now doing the same thing for the work force. The NCRC or the National Career Readiness Certificate issued by ACT is a portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success. It is a certificate of performance, as opposed to a certificate of completion. It is earned by the career seekers to present employers certification of their work readiness skills. Currently we have 44 states engaged with either ACT's national career readiness system or their own state-based career readiness certificate. Programs on a statewide or regional basis is how we come up with that figure. Additionally, there are several state education programs that utilize these assessments as part of their end-of-instruction graduation requirements for their high school programs. Since the inception of the NCRC in September of 2006, ACT has issued 1.2 million certificates, which is not inclusive of the state-based programs which

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we don't have a count on. NCRC services such as skill training, prep testing, certificate issuance are generally delivered through state work force agencies or community colleges, career technical ed programs, or a combination thereof. The NCRC is a derivative from ACT's WorkKeys system, which is a unique system that combines skill analysis, assessment, and skill gap training. The skill gap training is the key component of the three, because testing and job analysis is, in and of itself, static. However, the idea is to raise the skills, to up-skill our citizens to address this gap...skill gap, and we recently brought on board with our division a curriculum that provides a WorkKeys-specific skill training called KeyTrain. The WorkKeys battery of skills consists of 11 essential-based and 3 behavioral-based skills. The NCRC utilizes the three most demanded skills, as determined by our occupational profile database, and those three skills are reading for information, applied mathematics, and locating information. Locating information, by the way, is the ability to retrieve information from workplace documents, graphics such as maps, charts, blueprints, computer screens, a number of things. The distinguishing characteristic that I would like you to take away with is with our assessments, what we are measuring is a person's ability to apply what they've learned...to apply what they've learned, to apply their knowledge in these three subject-matter areas to real world workplace situations. In essence, what we are measuring...the competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking, reasoning skills, and decision-making skills. The NCRC is also accepted as the gateway assessment by three industry associations such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Center for Career...or Construction Education and Research, and the Center for Energy and work force Development, with other sectors to follow. If you would like to take a look with inside your package, I took the liberty of making up a sample of what a Nebraska NCRC certificate would look like. You'll find two certificates in there. The first one that you will find will provide an overview of what we call a "cobranded certificate." It is the national brand, but we also, as many other states have done, is "cobranded" it with their own state seal, governor's signature line, and a statement saying it's issued in the state of Nebraska. This is standardized across the country. We use the same three tests, and it's all based on four different certificate

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levels based on the scores that an individual would receive on those certificates. It's to be used, again, to provide to employers documentation of their skills. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Mr. Anderson... [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Yes. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Your five minutes is up... [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: I figured it would be. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Your five minutes is up, but given the fact that you've traveled here, why, if you can kind of begin to summarize, why, I suspect the committee's got some questions for you. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Very good. Very good. I'll just go straight to the summary, then. Implementing an NCRC or an NCRC Plus, which we didn't get to, the NCRC Plus will add a soft skill piece to the equation. But by implementing either the NCRC or the NCRC Plus program in Nebraska, we feel it's a viable approach for addressing the critical skill gap issues, as mentioned by Senator Mello, in the U.S. and in Nebraska. The results we've experienced since the program began. A statewide NCRC program can produce a win/win/win situation. For career seekers, we will provide them with verifiable evidence of their work readiness skills. For employers, we will provide a connection to qualified employment candidates or advancement candidates within their own organization. And it also provides businesses and education a common language to talk about the skills that are required in today's work force. And finally, from an economic development standpoint, it's a very...well-performing tool in terms of aggregating skills data to identify the talent pool within a defined area, whether it be in the Lincoln area or by county or by region, so that you can provide empirical evidence of the skills that Nebraskans have in order to attract new business to Nebraska or to retain

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the businesses that are already here to show that Nebraska does have a skilled work force. And with that, I will entertain any questions. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Great. Thank you, sir. Are there questions for Mr. Anderson? Yes, Senator Sullivan. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Adams. Okay, I just need a little bit better understanding of...okay, you have the tool and the instrument for making the assessment so that an individual can acquire the certificate, right? [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Um-hum. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Do you also have the curriculum? [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Yes, ma'am. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And in the states that are operating under this, where is the curriculum placed? In a community college or the university or how is that carried out? [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: In a variety. They are...from the states that I work with, I'm used to having the work force development, the one-stop career centers, provide most of the services. In Iowa, we have a partnership between the work force development department and the community college system, where they both provide assessments in the curriculum. Okay. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Other questions? So the way I understand it, then, this could work two ways: either you provide the curriculum, or the state could develop its own curriculum and you provide the assessment methodology if that was the interest of the state. [LR265]

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STEVE ANDERSON: That could work. What I've found over the years in working with this program is that by...and there are several other publishers of WorkKeys-specific skills, but because what we are measuring is application ability along with the knowledge that you have, it's a unique type of curriculum that we really haven't found in any of the education systems today that would match this, particularly with skills like locating information, again, the ability to interpret workplace graphic materials where we really don't have standardized type of classes or courses based on that skill. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: So conceivably a student could take your assessment without ever having walked through any formalized curriculum designed to get them to the point of assessment. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: They could. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: To find out where they stand. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: We would advise that they would prep beforehand, but that is possible. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Other questions for Mr. Anderson? Yes, Senator Sullivan. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Adams, and I'm sorry, thank you again. So what's been your experience? Has there been any follow-up evaluation to the success of workers who have gone through this certificate program and the reaction from the employers? [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: A lot of that is anecdotal to this point, which we have a lot of good case studies and articles built up on the NCRC, and within this past year we have developed, within our own department, a labor study division so that we can do

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follow-on studies. We have good empirical information regarding the skills data and what's transpired. What we want to do is follow-on studies to a much larger basis of individuals who have earned the certificate, what happened to them six months, a year down the road. We don't have that yet. That is our target to realizing that that's very important information for us to provide. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Tell me again how long you've had this program going with this. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Five years. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Five years. Okay. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Any last questions for Mr. Anderson? Well, thank you, sir, for coming all the way here this morning. Appreciate it. [LR265]

STEVE ANDERSON: Thank you, Senator Adams. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Next testifier? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Good morning. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Good morning. Folks, if you'd like, to save you some time, when you come up to testify, you can put your forms right there in the box and we'll collect them when the hearing is over. And if you do have copies of things that you'd like the committee to see, we'd ask that you have enough copies for everybody. Good morning. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Good morning. My name is Debra Lowry, L-o-w-r-y, and I work for Policy Studies Incorporated. We're doing business here in Nebraska as Employment

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First Career Center in Omaha. To give you a little history as to what has brought us to this point where we have purchased the Career Ready 101 and the WorkKeys program, back in...between the years of '05 and '09 there was lots of money spread around for short-term career readiness programs. What we have found in 2009 is that money was cut off, and so we started purchasing assessment programs. By the way, I should explain that I work with a contractor that has a contract with Health and Human Services deliver their Employment First program, so TANF recipients. And we currently have 2,500 single-parent families on our caseload, so I thought I'd better clarify that. Anyway, what we have found is that many of our clients have skill sets but nothing to validate those skill sets. A lot of them are, like I said, single parents and going to an associate's degree or Metro Community College or a four-year degree can be difficult for a single parent, especially when transportation is an issue. We have found that our high school graduates and our GED graduates have not been able to pass the entrance exam at Metro Community College, so what can we do to validate the skill sets that they have? And so in looking at what we could do, we've looked at the education and training CareerOneStop Center and there they have a pyramid of competencies that someone would need to have in order to be employable in certain career sets. And in that, it...the three that are key are...interpersonal skills, which would be soft skills that we have said here, academic skills which we already know they've not been able to obtain because of not being able to pass the entrance exam at Metro Community College, and then workplace skills that they can obtain with work experience or community service. But to validate those, what can we do for them? And so this past year we have chosen to purchase the Career Ready 101 and the WorkKeys program because in there it has a preassessment to determine what skill sets our clients have when they walk in the door so we already will know where they have skills to work right now. But that may not be an area they want to work in. So what can we do to help them obtain those skills and go into areas of work that they want to go in and validate those? And that's what we will use WorkKeys for. We have not yet implemented this. We just are now in the middle of putting our computer program together. I think we have 14 computers that we've put in a training room and we also just had an agreement with the Small Business Association

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of the Midlands which covers four states has agreed to be our test site for the NCRC program and so working out finances to purchase that and to be able to pay for that certification piece with the NCRC program. We're still working on details with that. But within the WorkKeys and Career Ready 101, these three levels of competencies that are required by the education and training CareerOneStop Center pyramid, this program has, which is the first one that we've seen, and we've purchased a lot of assessments tools, in-depth assessment tools to try to have our clients obtain those skills and within this program it does support those three areas. A lot of our students...a lot of people that are coming to us, the majority of them are echo boomers and within that we have the older that are in between...from 24 on up, which have not gotten GEDs, I would say a third of them. And not only with that, we've had people that have been working in the community, but have been laid off, or let go for some reason and they have employment issues because they have background issues. And so now they're not able to get employment because the standards that our employers have are much higher now, because they can pull anybody off the street to go to work for them that has a college education. And so what can we do to help our people validate their skill sets and a certification seems to be the more accepted, as opposed to not coming in with education at all. We serve the unemployed and we serve the underemployed and I know for myself I have 2 associate's degrees and I have 12 certifications and I was laid off from the city of Omaha eight years ago, and it took me a year and a half to get a job. And that was a while ago. I can't imagine what it's like now to not have any education and so that's basically all I have to say. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. Thank you. Committee, what questions do we have for this testifier? Yes, Senator Sullivan. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Adams, and thank you for your comments. You said you had 2,500 family clients through HHS? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Yes. [LR265]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Are they all...where all are they located? Primarily in the Omaha area? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Sarpy and Douglas County. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That's your service area, specifically? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Yes. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Nebraska with its low unemployment, would you say underemployment or unemployment is the bigger problem? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: I would say unemployment with the clientele that we serve. If you want to look at Omaha, or Douglas and Sarpy County as a whole, that's going to make me say things that I don't feel I should say in this setting because it's only speculation and not necessarily fact. When you look at the numbers that we serve, the majority of them are east of 72nd Street, which means north Omaha and south Omaha, and okay, I can say numbers because these are numbers that have been published. Forty percent of the clientele that are in north Omaha that are unemployed are due to criminal history and lack of GED or high school diploma. And you know...what the percentage is on our caseload, I can't say but I can tell you a third of the people that we have placed in work experience sites have not passed a background check. [LR265]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And what can you do about that, then? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Hopefully get them the skill sets they need. I can tell you that our office in Tennessee uses this program. Our office in Wisconsin uses this program and they have employers now that have boughten (sic) into this and will hire their people over just general population. [LR265]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. Thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Senator Howard. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Senator Adams. Years ago, the department used to engage in a program called the WIN Program, Work Incentive, you may be familiar with that or have heard of it. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Yes. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: And at that time it seemed the primary employers were day cares and fast food and has that changed? What are you looking at now in terms of employment...actual employment for people? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Actual employment...it's a wide span. I can tell you when we first started off we did this big push for sector industries, you know, because that was the wave at the moment, and we started off with five, based on skill sets that came in to our agency. Now I can say we're up to 11 sectors. We have people with Ph.D.s come in our program. We have people with master's degrees, with bachelor's degrees, and associate's degrees that can't find jobs. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Can you give me an example of where you...where these people do locate employment, where you help them locate employment? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: I can tell you that we have a lot of call centers that come to our agency to hold job fairs. We have a lot of staffing agencies that come and hold job fairs, and outside of that DHHS does not require that you keep a track on that, but I can tell you I think our average wage is \$9 something an hour, with the overall population that have got employed. But within I can tell you experience that we've had people that have

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gotten jobs that are \$24 an hour and then we've had minimum wage, so it varies on what they have gotten. Some people have gotten management, some of them have finished their four-year degrees with us. You know, we have some that are in college right now. But I'm more concerned about those that are underemployed or unemployed, you know, where could...how can we help. Then they could do this preassessment, find out where their skill sets are. If they determine this is not an area they want to work in, they want to work in a higher level, the curriculum is already there. It's just a matter of them going in and taking those programs and increasing their skill sets. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Which begs the question do some of your...have some of your participants found employment with ACCESSNebraska? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: We only have TANF recipients so they all have to come through ACCESSNebraska. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Well, I'm talking about the callings (sic). [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: The call-ins? [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Right. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: You know, I don't work in that area with ACCESSNebraska. I can just tell you that everybody that's come to us has been referred to us by DHHS. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: No, what I'm asking, have some of your participants found employment at ACCESSNebraska? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: At ACCESSNebraska? [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Right, in the call centers. [LR265]

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DEBRA LOWRY: I don't know the answer to that. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Okay. Thank you. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: I would think not. I know that we've had several people that we've sent through Work Experience with DHHS in the process of them creating ACCESSNebraska. But whether any of those have gotten employed through that process, I'm not sure. [LR265]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Help me to understand. So you have a target clientele and that you're working with HHS. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Right. Than's correct. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: And you have a pre-assessment that can be used to determine where these folks are at, in terms of their skills. Who delivers the curriculum? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: This is through the WorkKeys and the Career Ready 101. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Tell me that again. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: The NCRC program that we're discussing here today we have purchased the WorkKeys and the Career Ready 101. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: So is this something that...if I'm one of your persons that needs to boost my skills, am I going to sit down at a computer? Am I going to sit down one-on-one with somebody? Am I walking into a community college classroom? How is

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this curriculum being delivered to these folks? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: It would be delivered through my area. I have an assessment area, and I have 12 computers in there as of to date, and you'll come in, you'll get a one-on-one with me, and then we will set you up and we'll do the preassessments. And once we determine where you want to go and where you're at, then we will set up the classrooms, because there...there are several ways that you can do it. We also have it set up that we have clientele in our program that have been in the system, and they're in their last year, and they need skills now. And so we have it laid out on what classes they will take when they come in, while they're doing their job search, which they're required to do within those last few months to help bring their skill sets up as much as possible while they're with us. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay, those classes that you just described. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: They're in the computer. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are you going to identify what classes? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: They're computerized, I'm sorry. I did not answer that. They are computerized. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. Okay. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: But there will be a facilitator there, if needed be. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: There will. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Right, and that's me. [LR265]

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SENATOR ADAMS: And then you do some kind of postassessment. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Within the system, there's a postassessment. That would be the NCRC program. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. Okay. What kind of placement success have you had? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: We just purchased it this year. We have not...yeah. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: I can tell you that right now, Iowa Work Force Development is already over on this side of the river and pushing this program, and so they're kind of already laying out the path for employers. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are you at all familiar...I'd like to follow up on Senator Sullivan's question. I realize Douglas and Sarpy County is your area of focus. Are you at all familiar with outside of those counties, what...is this same program being implemented elsewhere? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: As of right now I think we're the only agency that has bought it that I'm aware of. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. All right. Thank you. Are there any other last questions? Senator Avery. [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Senator Adams. Maybe I missed this because I came in late, and it may have been covered in the previous testimony, but how do you measure the efficacy or the effectiveness of these WorkKeys Assessments? [LR265]

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DEBRA LOWRY: You know, when we looked into this, we looked at its history, we looked at their thought process and what they did to determine how to create this program, and it just made sense to us. It's not our program, but we purchased it because we believed in what it does and what we're... [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: But you don't know whether it's working. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: We're hopeful. [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: Then how long do you think it would take before you will know? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: Before we start getting numbers? [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: You have one year, right, already. You've just purchased it? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: No, no, we've only had it for a couple months. [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: Oh, okay, so you can't know yet. [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: No, I can't give you numbers yet, but I will give you numbers down the road. [LR265]

SENATOR AVERY: So, down the road, where would that be? One year? Two years? [LR265]

DEBRA LOWRY: I think whatever time period you set for us, we'd be more than happy to give you numbers. [LR265]

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SENATOR AVERY: Okay. Thank you. [LR265]

SENATOR ADAMS: Any final questions? Thank you, ma'am. Next testifier? Truly, there's got to be another testifier. Seriously. All right. Then, Senator Mello, would you like to...and you're going to waive closing to boot. All right, well, it is 9:50, and that will end then the public hearing on LR265 and we will adjourn and come back at 10:30 for the hearing on LR206. Thank you. [LR265]