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Appropriations Committee
March 09, 2015

[LB185 LB274]

The Committee on Appropriations met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2015, in Room 1524 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB185 and LB274. Senators present: Heath Mello, Chairperson; Robert Hilkemann, Vice Chairperson; Kate Bolz; Ken Haar; Bill Kintner; John Kuehn; Jeremy Nordquist; John Stinner; and Dan Watermeier. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR MELLO: With that, that will end today's public hearing today on Agency 34, the Nebraska Library Commission, and take us to our first bill hearing of this evening, it looks like LB185, Senator Kate Bolz. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: (Exhibit 1) Well, good evening, committee members. My name is Kate Bolz, that's B-o-l-z. I represent District 29, here to present to you LB185. Numerous academic studies--and I have a summary here for you--illustrate that teacher quality is what I refer to as the "secret sauce" to academic achievement. Academic studies from a variety of sources show that teacher preparedness and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics. Importantly, these positive indicators remain true both before and after controlling for poverty and language status. Creating a high-quality teacher work force not only aids Nebraska students and schools in responding to national pressure for student achievement, but teacher quality also has a positive impact on the achievement gap. So how do we promote teacher quality in our state? LB185 funds a highly supported program that is currently in the Nebraska statute and referred to as the Master Teacher Program. This initiative provides financial assistance for the process of becoming a nationally board-certified teacher and a subsequent salary increase. This Master Teacher Program was established in statute in the year 2000 but has never been funded. Research indicates that such certification improves student achievement and promotes teacher satisfaction. In fact, a number of Nebraska's teachers of the year are nationally board certified. Essentially, teachers are rewarded for pursuing their teaching passions and rewarded financially for going the extra mile to become excellent teachers in their field. This is particularly important because Nebraska ranks 38th in the nation for teacher salaries. It also helps to address teacher turnover, which is costly to the state. Education is one of the activities, of course, that is required by our state constitution. Education is the foundation of our democracy and an educated population is the foundation of a civil society. I can think of few things in front of this committee that are more important than promoting the quality of education we're providing to our students. I urge your support for LB185 and happy to take questions. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony today, Senator Bolz. Is there any questions from the committee? Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: So, Senator, the program is already set up; it's just never been funded. Is that correct? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: That's correct and the statute outlines in some greater detail the requirements and the steps that a teacher must go through in order to become nationally board certified and how the reimbursement structure works. So the statutes itself are well defined and were well supported when the bill passed in the year 2000. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: What would be the cost... [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Senator Stinner. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Stepped on a false start here. What would be the cost to get certification as a master teacher? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: The cost in terms of fees to become nationally certified is about \$5,000. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: So this would fund how many teachers? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: So, assuming that we start with all new teachers, teachers that have not been nationally board certified, to pay for the certification and the salary increase would cost about \$10,000 per teacher. So we're looking at about 100 teachers per year. After that, the numbers change just a little bit because we'll have teachers who are already certified but are still receiving salary incentives for maintaining their certification over time. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: How many master teachers do we have in the state now? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: That's a good question and I can answer it. I think the number is 112, but let me find my sheet for sure. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: There it is. It is 112. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: A hundred and twelve confirmed. [LB185]

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SENATOR STINNER: If I could read your handout, I would have probably picked it up. Sorry about that. How long has the program been in force, the Master Teacher Program? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Oh, that's a great question and I don't know the answer to that. I know that other states have had this program in place over a period of years. North Carolina, for example, has hundreds of teachers certified, so it is a long-term proven program. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: And it's geared right to math and reading? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: There are a number of different types of certifications that anyone can get. There's a reading specialization. There's math at a couple of different levels. But there are a variety of certifications that are available. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Okay. Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Yeah. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Senator Stinner. Are there any other questions from the committee? Senator Watermeier. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Bolz, I just can't quite get through the history of what would have happened if you'd have gotten that close to getting it started--and maybe they'll... [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Uh-huh. Yeah. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...lots of heads nodding behind me--but maybe... [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: (Laugh) My understanding is that the concept was well supported and continues to be well supported, but that year there was a funding crunch and it just didn't make it on to the priority list. And then, of course, we've had our economic ups and downs. And I would argue that now is a great time for us to start seriously investing in teacher quality because we have so many national performance indicators that are putting pressure on us, as well as our own state initiatives. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: But the cost will be \$5,000 per teacher. [LB185]

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SENATOR BOLZ: Right. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: And you had mentioned a \$10,000 cost. What...I missed it. I'm sorry. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Oh sure. The \$5,000 is to become certified. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: That's the certification cost. There's a yearly salary bonus of an additional \$5,000. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Uh-huh. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Senator Bolz. First, we'll hear proponents for LB185. [LB185]

JASON HAYES: (Exhibits 2 and 3) Good afternoon, Senator Mello and members of the Appropriations Committee. For the record, my name is Jason Hayes, J-a-s-o-n H-a-y-e-s. I am here today representing the Nebraska State Education Association, testifying in support of LB185. We thank Senator Bolz for introducing this legislation. The Master Teacher Program Act was originally passed by the Legislature in 2000 as LB1399. Thereafter, the Department of Education promulgated the rules and regulations in 2002. The primary purpose of the Master Teacher Program was to build a group of recognized teachers of high achievement in the teaching profession. Unfortunately, the program was never funded and I believe some of that has to do with the economic downturn after 9/11. The provisions of the act provide that a teacher who applies to a credentialing organization to be a master teacher shall be eligible for a registration award in order to pay the fees associated with obtaining such credentials. Registration awards were to be paid in two parts: half upon registration in a credentialed program, and the remaining half upon completion of the program. Up to 40 teachers annually were planned to receive this registration award, and that's in statute right now. The second part of the act provides that for each teacher who has completed the Master Teacher Program, he or she shall receive an annual salary bonus based upon the amount of money remaining in the fund, not to exceed \$5,000. So this actually could be an amount that would be lower than \$5,000. That was just the cap. Currently, teachers across the state may achieve master teacher status by earning credentials from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, or NBPTS. To be

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nationally board certified, the teacher can complete the program in segments over a three-year period at a cost of about \$3,500. And that amount, Senator Bolz mentioned \$5,000, that amount appears to be lowered just recently but...and we have a few testifiers that will speak to the actual program who they have gone through the program. There are currently 112 national board-certified teachers, as mentioned, in Nebraska. Over the 28-year history of national board certification, local districts have been supporting their teachers through local incentives to obtain such certification. And it's my understanding that right now LPS--Lincoln, Ralston, and Millard have such programs but I'm not sure to what extent they're funded. I have attached a handout showing the impact of this certification upon student achievement. Numerous studies show that students of national board-certified teachers outperform students of non-NB-certified teachers on achievement tests. The original appropriation for the program when it was first proposed was intended to be \$1 million. In LB185, we are asking that this original appropriation amount be made. We ask that this program, first adopted 15 years ago, finally be implemented as intended. And I thank you for your time and consideration. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony this evening, Mr. Hayes. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Stinner. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: I have a question relative to the teachers' contract. Does this have to be negotiated through the union or is this... [LB185]

JASON HAYES: You know... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: If we do an appropriation? [LB185]

JASON HAYES: No, I...no, this would be outside of that. I know that Millard, Ralston, and LPS have some provisions in their contract, but I was just given that information right before the hearing so I'm not sure exactly to what extent it's funded. But... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: But if we...if a school would get into the program voluntarily, I understand they would have to, because we tried to do that in Gering and we did have to put it in the contract. But if it comes through appropriations, the question is do... [LB185]

JASON HAYES: Well, my understanding is this is separate from the contract purpose, because this was... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Really? We can pay bonuses to teachers now. [LB185]

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JASON HAYES: Well, this is...I believe this is through the Department of Education so it's not... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Oh. Okay. Thank you. [LB185]

JASON HAYES: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Jason. [LB185]

JASON HAYES: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Next proponent for LB185. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: (Exhibit 4) Good evening. It's been an interesting afternoon for me. I've enjoyed this very much. My name is Nila Jacobson and I'd like to address Chairman Mello and the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is spelled N-i-l-a J-a-c-o-b-s-o-n. I have been a teacher for the Lincoln Public Schools for 32 years. And I've worked with elementary, middle level, high school, and preschool students as I teach Spanish. And I am a national board-certified teacher and that's why I'm here today. If we want to ensure that all students receive an excellent education that prepares them to succeed in today's world, we must systematically increase the quality of our teaching work force. In short, teaching that is accomplished must be the norm and not the exception. And to achieve this transformation in teaching to set all the teachers on a path toward accomplished practice and board certification, we must develop a coherent teaching continuum. Harvard University's Strategic Data Project recently reported that students of national board-certified teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District gained roughly the equivalent of two months of additional instruction in math and one month in English language arts as compared with students taught by nonboard-certified teachers. As is true in the medical profession, the teaching profession must include a series of steps that begin in preparation, lead systematically through novice and expert phases, and leverages this growing pool of expertise so that teachers are providing the bulk of leadership for their profession without necessarily leaving the classroom or schoolhouse. To accomplish this goal in Nebraska, we must fund LB185, the Master Teacher Program. I am 1 of 112 nationally board-certified teachers in our state, as compared to 20,611 in North Carolina. The reason for the difference is teacher incentives. North Carolina has led the nation in national board certification of teachers because they are rewarded for their efforts with a 12 percent salary increase in the year that they receive certification. For a beginning teacher in Lincoln Public Schools, that translates to \$4,800. In addition, the certification cost is supported by scholarships so that the educators can recoup the cost of 25, 35, depending on the fees. And the reason that the costs

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vary is this is a very, very rigorous process and some teachers need to do parts of it more than once to complete the process. How has national board-certified teaching changed my career and my life? Through the national board certification process, I have had the opportunity to conduct a rigorous analysis of my teaching, comparing it to the very best practice models in our profession. I've learned to focus carefully on the outcomes for my students. And I'm really proud to say that when I hear from my students that have gone on to college, they are telling me that they're doing very well, in fact, that they are exceeding what their peers are doing at the college level in their Spanish courses because of their preparation. And that makes me really proud. The path to my certificate required nearly 500 hours to complete. The resulting portfolio of work I completed for national board certification is now my road map and I use it to develop meaningful lessons and opportunities for my students at Southwest High School. I believe the funding of LB185 will have numerous positive outcomes. First, it rewards teachers for their efforts to bring their best work into the classroom. It encourages educators to continue to grow and learn through the process and to provide economic support. And in addition, I believe that LB185 will encourage our best and brightest students to join education as a profession. In today's marketplace, we must have talented individuals entering the profession. LB185 would create an additional financial incentive to do so. I appreciate this opportunity very much and I encourage your support of LB185. And I would be very pleased to talk to you about my process of becoming a certified teacher. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony this evening, Ms. Jacobson. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Kintner. [LB185]

SENATOR KINTNER: Well, thank you for coming. I'm a former teacher, by the way. So you're saying if we do not incent teachers, they won't bring their best in the classroom. You just said that we incent them, they'll bring their best, something or other, in the classroom. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: What I am proposing is this: The national board certification process has made me a much better teacher. I do completely different work than I did prior to my certification experience. And so the outcomes for my students have increased tremendously based on what I've learned through the process. I am not unique in that we all need to pay our bills, and I think that especially young teachers would be much more willing to do the work that it costs to both financially and, you know, personally, the time commitment, to become nationally board certified if they saw that there was another outcome for them in addition to their increased ability with their students. So the financial incentive I think would be a really great one. [LB185]

SENATOR KINTNER: Okay. Thank you. [LB185]

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SENATOR MELLO: Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Yes. How many teachers...you were incentivized by Lincoln Public Schools to get yours. How many teachers get their board certification without incentive? [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: You know, that's a good question. I don't know the number. I know that there are only three districts to my knowledge in Nebraska that provide incentives for teachers, and I know that there are folks outside of those three districts that do get national board certificates. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: If one does it on their own, are they recognized by that, by their school systems? [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: You know, I'm not an expert in that. I would assume that there's some kind of a recognition ceremony. But as far as any kind of monetary reward, I don't believe that there is one. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: And you mentioned that going through the board certification process improved your teaching and so forth. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Why are our educational programs at the different universities that educate, are they not incorporating those practices for all of our teachers to be? [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: You know, I'm not saying that they're not incorporating them, but just as I said in my testimony, we have different levels of expertise. Just as on your committee you have members of the committee that have been veterans in the Legislature and you have novice members, it's the same with education. We have novice members who...new teachers who come out of the university systems well prepared but that can grow to be even better. And I think the national board is the conduit for us to become the best that we can be because it is a very rigorous process. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: As a former teacher, I would...at some time I would like either for Senator Bolz or you to show me that curriculum that you do for your board certification. I would very much appreciate that. [LB185]

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NILA JACOBSON: I would be happy to speak to you. I'll make an appointment... [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Thank you. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: ...and come in and speak to you. I'd be happy to. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for coming today too. This whole idea of the mastery teacher program is new to me. I hadn't heard about it. And just like Senator Hilkemann had asked, too, maybe what's involved in the rigorous standards. Typically, how long would it take someone to go through the mastery program? [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Well, it is...it's a five- or six-component program. There's a portfolio of work that we must demonstrate and it includes expertise in our area. So I have testing, I had to be tested in my area in many, many ways. You know, just like you get a test if you're a physician, you have physician's boards. I had on-line and personal testing for my certificate. Then I had to show in a portfolio of work planning and evaluation, my collaborative pieces, and reflection on my process. So there are five components in addition to the testing that you prepare. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: And the mastery level that you've achieved with some sort of a graduation or a certificate, is it specific to, when you said you were a Spanish teacher,... [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...is it specific to Spanish or is it... [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. So (inaudible). [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Yes, it is. My... [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay, so if you were... [LB185]

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NILA JACOBSON: My certificate is early languages, other than English, Spanish. And so I am working with like elementary through young adult Spanish speakers. That is what my certification is. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: And I'm just thinking in the big picture as far as a teacher that's trying to decide whether to be certified as a mastery program or to continue on with continuing education. I'm assuming there's both roles. Both play a different role. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Well, I have four teaching certificates. I have a administrative certificate as a master's program and I'm also nationally board certified. So this is not an if...an either/or. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Right. Yes. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: It's in addition to. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. But it one wouldn't disincentivize the other. I mean I know... [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: No. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...a lot of teachers... [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: No. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...who are continuing education little by little. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Absolutely. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...getting up to the plus 36 and beyond that (inaudible). And so a lot of them, if they enjoy that kind of work, wanting to be better and better, are probably going to have both. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Absolutely. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. All right. Thank you. [LB185]

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SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Ms. Jacobson. [LB185]

NILA JACOBSON: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Next proponent on LB185. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: (Exhibit 4) Good afternoon, Chairman Mello and members of the committee. For the record, I am Sherry West, S-h-e-r-r-y W-e-s-t, and I'm a math teacher for Lincoln Public Schools and have taught for 25 years. A few years ago I was fortunate enough to be selected as 1 of 24 Noyce Master Teaching Fellows through the University of Nebraska and a grant through the National Science Foundation. The fellowship allowed me to grow as a professional by taking graduate courses, working with other teachers, and obtaining national certification. Pursuing national certification was a rigorous and extremely reflective professional journey, but one that I most likely would not have pursued without the financial support of the Noyce grant and my district. The initial application fee is \$2,500 and the national standards are set quite high. I was warned that only one in three will pass the very first year they apply. Applicants are given feedback and allowed to rework sections of the application the following year for a fee of \$500 per section. I had considered pursuing national certification years ago because I believe our children deserve the best teachers possible and I wanted to see how my work in the classroom held up and what areas of teaching I might need to improve. And my plan was to identify those areas and then work on weaknesses. National certification is a time-consuming and costly process but extremely worthwhile. I examined current research on best practice. I watched videos of myself teaching and wrote reflections on how my work could be improved. I was asked to provide a rationale on every decision I made from designing a lesson, implementing a lesson, in how I assess student teaching...excuse me, in how I assess student learning, and provided students feedback. The process brought a renewed awareness to my work on what easily could have been done on autopilot after so many years. The renewed awareness of my work and my method continues to help me as I plan my current lessons, as well as when I work with student teachers. I help them think about how to make a lesson engaging, how to build conceptual knowledge, about procedural fluency, and how to provide feedback that motivates rather than discourages students. We need teachers with strong content and pedagogical knowledge in our classroom. And a student's chance for success is greatly affected by the quality of his or her teachers. Providing money to help teachers improve their skills is money well spent. It can serve as an incentive to those who are both currently in the profession as well as those still deciding what career path to choose. I would encourage you to support LB185, and be happy to answer questions. [LB185]

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SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. West. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Watermeier. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. West, for being here. I could tell you were a teacher because all afternoon long I've been noticing you were sitting there with your book wide open and working. (Laughter) So you're very good. I just really appreciate the program. I'll try to dig into it a little bit further. And you said that one in three pass. And so you've had a chance to encourage other teachers probably as well to do it in the system? [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: I guess that's why I'm here today, to be supportive. It's really expensive. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Yeah, I can see that. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: And with the pass rate that low, it's hard to encourage my peers to take this, even though I consider it very worthwhile. And so this type of support would help me be able to say this was really worth it... [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Uh-huh. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: ...and help take some of the financial risk and fear that goes along with going through the process. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: But you had also mentioned something about \$500 per section. And that's a section of...like you've got more than one section or is that what it takes? Okay. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: Like Ms. Jacobson talked about, there's sections where you have to show how well you can plan a lesson. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: You have to show how well you can do a group lesson, how well you can do large group instruction, how well is your content knowledge. And like in mathematics, I took a test in calculus, statistics, discrete, algebra, geometry. All those different areas apply. And if you don't show mastery in each of the different areas, you have to redo them. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate that. [LB185]

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SHERRY WEST: Uh-huh. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from committee? Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Yeah, I have a question. I'm board-certified in foot and ankle surgery. And when we talk about board certification, we talk about being proficient; that it's for the public to know that you've met certain standards and that you can perform that which we.... If I'm getting this, this is not so much that...how, for example, how does this differ from, as a teacher when I had my B.A. I was working on, you know, getting B.A. plus 12, I think, or plus 18 steps, down the line. How does this differ from going on and getting additional education beyond your B.A. program? [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: Well, and I think both are important. Getting additional education obviously helps make you a better teacher. I guess the first thing I'd liken it, there are people who could go through medical school but maybe didn't pass their boards. It's kind of that same thing. If a teacher goes through and they can get the degree, that's not the same thing as showing the proficiency that the national certification process would show. And as a doctor and things like that, you may have passed the boards at one point, but should you stop your education there? You know, 10, 20, 30 years down the road what you learned may be obsolete information. The same is true for education. And I think teachers need to kind of go through both processes to try and improve and show the board certification. I think their attempt is to try and raise the level of professionalism to one similar to doctors and lawyers and people that do have to pass a test beyond getting their degree. But I think the importance of continuing education goes along with any professional responsibility as life changes. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: So if you...I'm used to the...I don't know whether they still do it that way. They used to have the B.A., then the B.A. plus 18, plus. And so if you had a...if you got this certification, you had a B.A. and you got the certification, they would not bounce you up to a B.A. plus 18. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: No, sir. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [LB185]

SHERRY WEST: Thank you. [LB185]

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SENATOR MELLO: Next proponent for LB185. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: (Exhibit 5) Good evening, Chairman Mello and other members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Katie McLeese Stephenson, and that's spelled K-a-t-i-e, McLeese is M-c-L-e-e-s-e, and Stephenson, S-t-e-p-h-e-n-s-o-n, long name. I'm an elected member of the Lincoln Public Schools Board of Education and my testimony today is in support of LB185. Within Lincoln Public Schools and throughout the state of Nebraska, we have outstanding professionals that comprise our public school educational system. Teachers love kids. They help them to become critical thinkers and seek to make a difference each and every day in the lives of their students. I'm a product of amazing teachers, our sons are being shaped by outstanding teachers, and I know that your lives have been enhanced by the incredible educators in our state as well. Highly trained teachers make a difference in the lives of children, their families, and our state's economy. And why does this matter? As Goldhaber pointed out in a 2006 American Education Finance Association publication, studies have shown that teachers who receive national board certification are indeed more effective at raising student achievement than both average teachers in the state and teachers who apply to be certified but fail to obtain certification. We know that teachers who take this step to receive national board certification make a huge impact on student learning and student achievement, both of which are important to us as Nebraskans. We have many things to be proud of in Nebraska, including our thriving economy, agricultural resources, rich pioneer history, and of course Nebraska women's volleyball. And while our Nebraska K-12 school system is outstanding, an area where we do not shine as brightly is in the number of highly certified or master teachers in our state. According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, in 2014 our state ranked 47th in the number of national board-certified teachers. We have fewer national board-certified teachers than all but three states--South Dakota, North Dakota, and New Hampshire--and the District of Columbia. As has been stated earlier, we have a total of 112 national board-certified teachers, which is far fewer than our bordering states of Missouri with 924; Colorado, 890; Iowa, 709; and Kansas with 403. Board-certified teachers are led nationally by North Carolina, where there's 20,611; Florida, where there's 13,637; and South Carolina with 8,820. And we continue to fall further and further behind. Fifteen years ago, your forward-thinking predecessors in the Unicameral made way for incentives. Unfortunately, this has never been funded. LB185 funds a program that was first passed in 2000, in the year 2000, but, as stated, has not been funded. LB1399 from the 2000 Legislative Session established a financial incentive for teachers who complete a national certification program. This program would award annual bonuses of up to \$5,000 to qualifying teachers for the ten-year life of their certificates. To retain the high quality educational system our children, families, and communities love about Nebraska, we need to have the highest qualified and best trained teachers. Funding LB185 is a critical step in this journey. You have many competing interests and priorities to sift through as a committee. I know you join me in valuing high quality

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education that leads to student learning and student achievement. Thank you for your consideration of fully funding LB185. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. McLeese Stephenson. Is there any questions from the committee? Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I have just a couple of questions. You said you were on the school board of Lincoln. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Uh-huh. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: If you have a teacher that has a B.A. plus 18, do you pay them at a higher level than you do a teacher with a B.A.? [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. But you would not...if they had a B.A. plus this board certification, you would not pay them at a higher level. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Within Lincoln Public Schools, we do provide. We are one of the three districts that provides some additional compensation. I believe, and I wanted to double-check that as the questions were starting, but I believe that we're compensating at about \$1,000, and my teacher friends that are here could help with that. But we are not reaching the amount that is suggested. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: If I were a teacher in the Lincoln Public Schools and I wanted to go on to get some more additional education, do you help fund? Do you provide any stipend for me to...would you provide stipend for me to go from a B.A. to a B.A. plus 18? [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: You know, I don't have command of the contract well enough to tell you that. I apologize. But we can...I can certainly get that information for you. [LB185]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: Well, I don't want to sound like... [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Uh-huh. No. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: ...I'm antiteacher. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: No, I understand. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I'm really, I'm really behind...I want to like this. It's just a matter who's funding this. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Right. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Is this going to be for... [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Uh-huh. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: So you say that North Carolina and Florida have this, but I also believe the testimony was is that those school districts helped them obtain this. Is that correct? [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: I'm not sure in those states if it's the school district or the state that has helped them to achieve that. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: The local district or the state. And I guess I would add, you know, LPS is one of three districts that is helping with funding. We're not helping it to the degree that it's costing the teachers to do it. And so we have many, many districts across the state that are not funding this additionally. And this would certainly help those districts as well. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: But you would say, from what your testimony is, is that you value a teacher with a B.A. plus 18 more than you do with a B.A. plus being board certified. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Correct. [LB185]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [LB185]

KATIE McLEESE STEPHENSON: Uh-huh. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Good afternoon. I flipped a coin and Jason overruled me. No. For the record, I'm Jay Sears. I work for the Nebraska State Education (Association), all 28,000 members of them. I just wanted to, Senators, you've been asking great questions about the national board certification process and the teachers that are here. And I just wanted to share with you, because I spent the last 15-20 years working with the national board-certified candidates and teachers who become certified in Nebraska through a federal program that's called...was called the subsidy program, if you will, where the federal government, through a grant to the national board, provided incentives to states to start the process of national board certification. Started after the bill that we passed by the Legislature in 2000 and didn't fund. About, I would say...years don't matter too much but 2002 or '03, about the same time we were going through special sessions and cutting the budgets and doing those things, the federal government came up with some incentive funds for all states to increase the number of national board-certified teachers in their states. And part of that piece was providing half of the funding for the initial application process. At the very beginning of national board certification, the process cost an individual \$5,000 to go through, whether they certified or not. Our language in the bill was about giving half of that fund to start the process to incentivize people before there was federal funds. And the bill today is still the same amount of money to incentivize educators to go through this process. And, Senator Hilkemann, you've asked some great questions about should I go get my B.A. plus and my master's, or should I do this. And it's, yes, do both, do all three, do whatever you need to do to become a better teacher. In fact, in the past...I want to say in the past five to ten years a number of our state universities have started the process of making it an option of a master's degree level program so that you can count the process that you went through in national board certification. UNO and the MOEC, the metropolitan consortium of schools, have supported in the Omaha area the candidates going through national board certification. And so by using federal subsidy funds, we were able to ratchet up a number of people in the process and that's why we're at 112 today. In fact, the department will tell you that of 112 who are nationally board certified who have given their address as being in Nebraska, 85 of those are teaching currently in Nebraska. The other piece in information for you, and I'd be glad to take you through a lot of things if you want to hear about national board certification, because I love being around those people because they are the educators you want your children and your grandchildren to have. It's because they're very reflective about their practice, not that they're better than somebody else but they've gone through that reflection about what it takes to be a great educator in the classroom. And I'm sure from the medical side or from attorneys or whomever has other professional certification processes, you'll find the excitement there. And so

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I just wanted to, you know, give you an opportunity to see the whole program and to answer any of your questions and know that we're into the dinnertime in taking your time. And you still have another bill that I'm going to come and talk to you about. So thank you for the opportunity. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Sears. Are there any questions from the committee? [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I'm sorry. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: No, that's great. Good, Senator. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I'll talk to you about that privately. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Okay, great. I'll come over and see you. Thanks. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Senator Watermeier. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Sears, appreciate that. In Ms. Stephenson's testimony here I read here for the first time it's a ten-year certificate. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yes, and there is a process to renew that through reflection in portfolio process. So you could renew indefinitely if you wanted to teach that long. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: No, I'm sorry. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Well,... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Lots of these people behind me want to. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Oh, yeah. But that just brings up some fiscal issues for me. [LB185]

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JAY SEARS: Yeah. Yes. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: I mean the \$5,000 a year annual bonus coming through the Department of Ed, obviously is over half the appropriations right away the first year because I'm assuming anybody that's certified today, even if they'd been nine years ago,... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: We'd advocate for that, yes. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: ...yeah, is going to be eligible. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. And you have people in the process and it's...you know, I'd like to ask for more money but, you know, \$1 million, you know, that's a big ticket item also when we're dealing with budget. And we're looking at how do we incentivize. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Sure. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: And some of the local districts, as you've heard from the Lincoln Public Schools, have some incentive in that process and they do have support networks to help their teachers through. If you go into some of the metro area schools, for example, Omaha Westside pays the fee for their teachers who haven't gotten a master's degree or haven't gotten national board certification. So it's... [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Say it again. If they haven't gotten a master's degree or master certification... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yeah, one of the requirements in Westside School District is if you sign on to teach here, in ten years you'll get your master's degree but we'll help you do that; we'll also help you with a process of national board certification, because they value those educators who have gone through that process. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Right. Well, some of the questions that come up as far as the fiscal responsibility here if we pass this, in the first year we're going to have 110 teachers that are going to qualify for the \$5,000. That's going to be \$560,000 the first year. And we'll have another \$450,000 over to left over to pay incentives. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Right. [LB185]

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SENATOR WATERMEIER: And then things will start to snowball is the way I see it. And then the individual districts could opt to continue to pay ones that they do, or maybe they would change their philosophy. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Right. And you bring up a good point is in a number of states where they've paid the incentive, for example, North Carolina where they get 12 percent of their salary, again, North Carolina is a statewide system. That salary comes from the state directly, not negotiated at the local level. When they were in economic times, they cut back the stipend, the salary piece. And that's the piece that's in the legislation. And the rule and regulation is if you will only appropriate \$1 million, then that's the pot and that's how you divvy it up. So your reward this year or incentive payment for the stipend may be only \$2,000 because you prorate based upon the number that you have. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Right. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: So we were trying to look at \$1 million. That's a nice figure. It takes care of the people we have right here. And if we start to build some more, one, it builds more constituents in the process. And you have to look at the economic times and what you can afford to do. We tried to help local districts think about how they could incentivize their teachers also in the process, so there's a mixture of that. [LB185]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Okay. Thank you for that history. Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Senator Stinner. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: I want to do a little bit of math with you. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Sure. I'm a social studies teacher, so I'll hang in there. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: I'll tell you what. I'll do that math. You just give me the numbers, okay? [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Okay, good. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: In Lincoln Public Schools, what's their program? Is it similar to this? Does it reimburse the employees for the cost and then gives an incentive? [LB185]

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JAY SEARS: My understanding is what has been negotiated between the district and the local association is there is time and support from the district, for example, release time to write some of the portfolio, some support from the curriculum division at the school district. They help the candidates, whatever number during the year are going through the process, get together and find support for them. And then I believe there's a \$1,000 stipend each year in their salary that goes in that process. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: So they...do they reimburse them for the cost of school or help them at all? [LB185]

JAY SEARS: I don't believe so. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Is there any school district that has a program similar to this? [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Westside had reimbursement for the... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Okay, plus a little bonus. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: ...plus a little bonus. And Westside also has the merit pay, different salary schedule than most districts. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: I'm glad you said merit pay. That makes me feel so much better because... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: I'm sure it did. I'm sorry. (Laugh) It doesn't come out of my mouth very well, so yeah. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Yeah. I could give you an example in the '90s how I struggled with that, but in any event. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yes. Yeah. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: So Westside has how many teachers and then how many teachers are... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: I don't have those numbers, but I'll be glad to get those for you. So I'm sorry. [LB185]

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SENATOR STINNER: I'm just trying to take that and extrapolate it on these 28,000 teachers, or whatever it is that we have, and... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. Right. And... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...then I could give you a better number for your... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: And the other piece is in the beginning of national board, it wasn't about certifying every teacher. It's like when you put it into the medical field. Not every doctor is board certified. It's a rigorous process. And though every teacher is qualified to teach their class, what we're looking at, at national board-certified teachers, are those super qualified. They're the people that you want to put into districts and school buildings where students need highly qualified people who are working for kids who are at risk and those types of things. So it's... [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: I'd just like to get the number... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...so I can... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Sure. I'm with you. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...use some kind of calculation on... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Okay. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...what this is going to look like year one, two, three, four,... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: One, two, three, sure. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...so on and so forth. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Well, if you want to put some money in for four years out, I'd love that. But we have to work in two-year budgets, right? [LB185]

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SENATOR STINNER: Well, we're going to cap it at \$1 million, is the way I understand it. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Right. Correct. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: If we get 200 people,... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Right. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...then we're going to divide 200 into that pot of \$1 million... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: That's correct. Right. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...and not roll it forward. So \$560,000, yeah, it's probably there, but as you hit the million,... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Uh-huh, the next...yes. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: ...the number gets less and less per individual. (Inaudible). [LB185]

JAY SEARS: And, Senator, I'd love to have the problem that we had too many people going for it. [LB185]

SENATOR STINNER: Okay. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Then I would come back to you and ask for more. (Laugh) [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Senator Hilkemann. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Yeah, I read the bill. I didn't see... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Sure. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: ...I didn't see the mechanism. This is going to be the Department of Education is going to determine who gets this? [LB185]

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JAY SEARS: Yes. Yes, Senator. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: So people would apply to... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: It's currently in rule and regulation about the process, how you apply, how you get paid for the first part of the incentive piece for the registration. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: That goes...that goes... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: And then you don't get any more. If you don't get certified, that's the end of the process. If you're certified, then you get the other half of the application fee. And then in that year, first full year when you are nationally board certified, then the stipend. So it's two sides of the bill. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Those are the regulations that were put in after the 2000 passage of the... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Right. Right. [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. Thank you. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Yes. Sure. Be glad to work with you. It's great. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? [LB185]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: That was my question I had so... [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Okay. Great. Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Seeing none, thank you, Jay. [LB185]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Next proponent for LB185. [LB185]

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TOM DICKEY: Good afternoon, Senators. Tom Dickey from Omaha metro area, T-o-m, last name D-i-c-k-e-y. I was asked to come down and talk about this bill because I told the people that asked me, I said I'm not board certified. I said, but I was considering this about six years ago when I finished my M.B.A. and somebody said, well, you got an M.B.A., you can leave education and make a lot more money. I said, I know, but I see opportunity here with education. And with that, I took over our Academy of Finance Program when it was in shambles. It was a mess. I used to teach all math classes and core subjects, state testing, which I understand was challenging. And I still work with those teachers but I work with them as an academy director at our school. And that spun off to me integrating our business classes with English teachers and with math teachers. And the discussion came up: Tom Dickey, why don't you get board certified? And there's financial reward, there's personal reward, but for me it came down to funding. I went on-line, without any help but myself, looking for national board certification and I said, there's no way. I have a family. I went in and got an M.B.A. and I worked on another master's degree, but there's no way that I'm going to get board certified because my district right now does not support me for this. Yes, I can go do it and they'll give me a pat on the back, but financially there's no gain. When I'm going to put that money up, I have to have reward, especially when I'm supporting my family. And I see my friends getting their master's and doctorate's and they're going to have financial gain but I am not. To finish with that, I worked with a teacher. She worked at an academy for a middle school, great teacher, I thought a better business teacher than I was. But she left. And I asked her on her way out, I said: Why are you leaving? She said, Tom Dickey, I can go somewhere else in another state and get more pay. She had a master's, not an M.B.A. but a master's. She had national board certification in business and she could get more pay for those certificates and those degrees on her resume. When I worked with academies in North Carolina, Florida, and throughout the country, some of those great academies that are Academy of Finance, that are Academy of Hospitality and Tourism, that are Academy of Information and Technology, those great academies have national board certification teachers, not all of them. But a majority of them help feed in to make sure that core curriculum and the core subjects and the elective area have that met. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your support and consideration. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony tonight, Mr. Dickey. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [LB185]

TOM DICKEY: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Are there any other proponents for LB185? Seeing none, is there any opponents to LB185? Seeing none, is there anyone here in the neutral capacity on LB185? Seeing none, Senator Bolz, would you like to close? [LB185]

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SENATOR BOLZ: Colleagues, I know it's getting late but I just want to clarify a couple of points. The first is to your point, Senator Watermeier. The underlying legislation caps the funding at \$1 million. And so even if the pool of teachers grows, we won't be increasing expenditures. Also, just a small point of clarification, some certifications are for ten years; others are for five years. So I can get you a list of the certifications if you're interested. But it does depend on the field of study. Your final question to answer was the national board certification was developed in 1987. So it's been a significant amount of time that we've had this in place. A couple of other small pieces, one is that the rigor for the certification is written into the underlying legislation, so those requirements are covered. And I also wanted to share that the types of certifications vary greatly but some of them are issues that are of great interest to this committee, including early education, the STEM fields, and world languages. So the final point I wanted to make is that, you know, certainly there's a cost related to this program, a cost that I think we should justify by...because of the quality of teachers that this is producing. And because of the competitiveness it offers for salary, and to your point, Senator Stinner, it is outside of the contract. But I would also argue that we're currently investing through our student aid programs and our student loan programs in less high-quality teachers, teachers that haven't met these rigorous standards, and I would argue that we have a cost. And the Alliance for Excellence in Education puts that cost to the tune of \$13 million a year in teacher attrition. There is a cost in terms of the loss of high-quality teachers in the state. So I know it's getting late. I'll wrap it up. I'll answer any final questions for you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Senator Bolz. Is there any questions from the committee? [LB185]

SENATOR BOLZ: Thank you. [LB185]

SENATOR MELLO: Seeing none, thank you, Kate. That will close today's public hearing on LB185 and take us to our last public hearing of the night on LB274 with Senator Hansen. [LB185]

SENATOR HANSEN: Thank you and good evening, I guess good evening. Oh, yes, it's past afternoon. Chairman Mello and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Matt Hansen, M-a-t-t H-a-n-s-e-n, and I'm the state senator representing District 26 in northeast Lincoln. I'm here today to introduce LB274. The intent of my bill is to provide funding for an existing teacher mentoring program authorized in statute under Section 79-761 but not currently funded. This program, as previously implemented and regulated by Rule 26 of the Nebraska Department of Education, provided grant programs to local systems to foster mentoring and more training for first-year teachers. The regulations allow for programs, and I quote, that address first-year teacher needs based on individual needs assessment. Examples of first-year

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teaching needs may include more information or guidance with the following: building or district policy and procedures orientation; assessment of the student learning; evaluation of student work; classroom management; classroom discipline; instructional techniques; design of instruction appropriate to individual differences; student motivation; techniques for assisting students with personal problems; time management; classroom observation and the provision or reception of feedback regarding such observation; development or enhancement of curricular content expertise; coursework planning; adaptation of plans limited to instructional resources; and methods to enhance positive relationships with parents of students. I feel this program would help school districts and teachers provide and gain important professional development early on in their careers. I would ask that the committee support the LB274 and I'd be happy to work with the committee and any interested parties in making this a success going forward. With that, I'll wrap up my opening. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Matt. [LB274]

SENATOR HANSEN: Thank you. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: We will first take proponents for LB274. [LB274]

WILLIAM WEST: (Exhibit 1) Good evening, Mr. Chairperson Mello and members of the committee. My name is William West, W-i-l-l-i-a-m W-e-s-t. This is my fourth year teaching in the Lincoln Public Schools and I'd like to speak to you today on the importance of mentorship for new teachers. As a new teacher fresh out of my undergraduate program, I was lucky enough to benefit from an LPS-offered mentorship program that paired me up with an experienced master teacher. Included in this program was a minimal incentive for the mentor teacher. While I was able to benefit from the mentor program, my mentor teacher was able to spend only one class period with me the first quarter of my first year and one in the second quarter of my first year. While those two periods were very valuable, this was not nearly enough to ensure that I was well-equipped for the specifics that I was not prepared for by my teacher education program. Anyone who understands education knows the effectiveness of mentorship programs for the new teacher. However, school districts are often put in a tough position to determine which valuable programs are most essential. As a teacher, I know that investments that we make in the quality of our teachers benefits all of our students for years to come. However, when districts are forced to choose between programs that directly serve students and programs that serve teacher development, the budget forces the district's hand into choosing the programs that directly serve students on a daily basis. Making this investment in our public school teachers and a program to provide mentorship to new teachers will serve our local communities' districts as well as our state. I'd like to urge you to support LB274 and I will answer any questions. [LB274]

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SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony this evening, Mr. West. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [LB274]

LAURIE JOHNSON-NEWELL: Hi. My name is Laurie Johnson-Newell, L-a-u-r-i-e J-o-h-n-s-o-n hyphen N-e-w-e-l-l. I'm a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing with Lincoln Public Schools. I benefited from the mentor program and I'm here to share my experience with you in support of LB274. I moved from Lubbock, Texas, in 2005. My move was more difficult than expected. I thought as a teacher with 17 years' experience this transition would be fairly simple--not so. Computer systems I had to learn, grading systems, the computer program for special education was formidable, curriculums to learn. And above all, Nebraska has a lot of acronyms. My experience is different than that of a first-year teacher, but mentoring provided me the support I needed as well. While college tries to prepare you, the classroom is where the real learning begins. It is other teachers that have had the greatest impact on me as a teacher. Mentoring allowed me to tap into their experiences. Mentoring allowed me to feel comfortable asking questions. Mentoring allowed my learning curve to be a little bit shorter. I believe the mentoring program continues the tradition of excellence in education in Nebraska. I really wanted to stop here and just tell you that as a person coming from out of state, your education system is impressive. But my impressiveness came from, most of all, the teachers that are in the public schools, because these teachers are dedicated and are committed to these children, and they pour so much of themselves into their jobs. But Nebraska was phenomenal, phenomenal, so you have a lot to be very, very grateful for. Mentoring makes the transition from a novice teacher to an experienced one seamless. After 27 years of teaching, it is my belief that good teaching begins and ends in the classroom with a good teacher. There are many programs and departments, I notice, vying for your attention today. Investing in teachers is the one area that impacts all of those areas. I hear all of the time that farming is Nebraska's greatest industry. Everybody has let me know that. While that may be so, may I suggest that children are Nebraska's greatest product, and I think the mentoring program is a vital part of that. Thank you so much. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony this evening, Ms. Johnson-Newell. Are there any questions at all from the committee? Seeing none, thank you so much. [LB274]

LAURIE JOHNSON-NEWELL: Thank you. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: (Exhibit 2) Good evening, Senator Mello and members of the committee. For the last time, I'm Jay Sears, J-a-y S-e-a-r-s, representing, as you can see, very proud members of the Nebraska State Education Association and just a few of the 28,000 people that I work for. And that's what puts the smile on my face is when they come up and testify and tell you about what's going on. I have some written testimony. It kind of goes through the history of why we're before

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you today. Clear back in 1998 when we first instituted the lottery funds, the mentoring program was part of the lottery funds. And then, as you know, the fiscal crisis came and we scooped up all the nickels and dimes we could find wherever and put them into the General Fund to make sure that, you know, government could go on in the state of Nebraska. And about that time then we came before the Appropriations Committee and we came before the Education Committee and whatever committee would listen to us to find ways to help continue the funding for mentoring, because we know that the first three years of an educator's life is lots of fun, lots of late nights, lots of worry. Because, yes, they're well-prepared when they come out of the teacher ed preparation institutions, but they aren't prepared to grow as teachers. They need that mentor to help them in the process. And so those first few years a number of districts did go after the grants to start the process of mentoring and they mentored for the first year. And then, of course, the fiscal crisis hit and the money went away. Most districts kept doing something but they haven't followed the guidelines that came out of the rule and the regulation. And sometimes we can't match up teachers with the correct mentors. And then sometimes, because of the pressures of educators today and the requirement to produce high achievement on tests, I don't have time as a professional to mentor my colleagues or I can't give that time to do that. And that's a difficult thing to say in a profession, because if we don't go grow our profession by the professionals in it, we're in trouble. And so we bring before you, knowing that appropriations are tight and \$2.5 million is a lot of \$2.5 million. And what we're trying to do is work on the front end of the program. What you heard in the bill before was about working on the accomplished teachers and helping them get better. What we're looking at now is the investment that we're asking to be made in continuing or reinstating mentoring programs is about making sure we don't lose any of those quality people. You know the national statistics: 50 percent of the teachers leave in the first five years. Thank goodness that's not true in Nebraska. We're under that, but that's just what you heard. We have quality professionals and we have quality education going on in the state of Nebraska. And we actually do have people coming in who want to teach here in Nebraska. So that's the purpose behind introducing to you a bill that would reinstitute at \$2.5 million, would be plenty of money to help every district. The concern I have and the worry I have--and as you can see, my hair is getting grayer as I've spent 30-some years with the NSEA--most of the people that started with me in the 1970s retired already. They took their retirement. They went on to bigger and better things. And there aren't people with the knowledge and skills and the experience that started in the '70s. And we have plenty of new people, as you can tell from who came and testified today. But we need to make sure that we don't lose any of them and so that's the purpose of it. The other thing, a qualifier that I want to put out there for you is all of the Lincoln Public School teachers who came today and testified for you are on their spring break--their unpaid vacation. So thank you very much for the opportunity. I appreciate what you do and what you do for education every day. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Sears. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Kintner. [LB274]

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SENATOR KINTNER: Hi. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Hey, how we doing? [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: Well, by my estimation, you've advocated today spending \$16 million... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: ...in all the bills you've supported. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Uh-huh. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: And then reappropriating another, looks like, \$8 million. I may be off a million or two either way. And we're somewhere around \$25 million you've advocated. We have a total of \$41 million, total, that we've got to play with. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yes. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: With that being said, are you serious? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: I'm always serious, especially about education. Because if you don't invest in education, our young people don't thrive in Nebraska and we can't do anything in Nebraska. So I'm very serious about that, Senator. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: Twenty-five million out of forty-one? I mean think of all things that we've had requests, and it's \$31 million from the university on top of that. That would wipe it out right there. We've probably had requests for about \$120 million so far... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Gotcha. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: ...for that \$41 million. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yeah. [LB274]

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SENATOR KINTNER: So you can kind of see where we're sitting right now. It's kind of tough. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yeah, I understand that, and the reason we bring those before you is we need to look at the priorities and what pays the most and what invests the most. And that's why I don't run for the Legislature. That's your decision. I just get to bring those... [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: And I'd point out you didn't say no to anything educationwise. You supported every single thing, I believe. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yes. [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: Okay. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: In fact, there's probably more. (Laughter) [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: Well, I would...whatever. I'm trying to put (inaudible), not for... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: But you keep talking, I'll keep going up. No. No, I... [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: You weren't very discriminating, you know? (Laugh) There's some are better than others, I would hope. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yes, I would agree with you and I'd be glad to sit down and... [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: But just wanted to let you know how tough this is for us... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Oh, yes, and I understand. And... [LB274]

SENATOR KINTNER: ...and all the priorities we have. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: ...and I don't come before you and I haven't come before you in the last 15 years, you know, flippantly about money that you spend, because I know it comes out of hard-earned pockets. My job is to represent the educators and the children in Nebraska and get what we can in the appropriations process. So thank you and I appreciate what you do. [LB274]

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SENATOR KINTNER: All right. Well, thank you. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Senator Hilkemann. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Yeah. How many school districts presently offer mentoring programs to their first-year teachers? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: That's a great question. And if you fund the data system for the Department of Education, we can probably collect those facts also. (Laughter) [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Another million, another how many million was that? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: That was \$8 (million) or \$7 million, wasn't it, Senator Kintner? No, I don't mean to be...but that's not a statistic I know that they collect. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: It's not part of the reporting process but... [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. I understand that you said it's...that most teachers, 50 percent you lose within...I understood that you lose most teachers after the first three years. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Usually. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. Do you have any data that teachers who have been properly or who go through a mentoring program, that they have a longer span? In other words, that they'll... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yes. In fact, I will get you the link to the National Teachers Center who is in California--Stanford, I believe--that has done the studies about mentoring and induction programs and the fact that if you do those and in fact if you follow through for about three years that the return is that they stay. They become productive educators in the program. And then the turnover, the turnover that you have in districts doesn't cost districts as much. Because, as you know, anytime you have one person leave, you've got to go through that hiring process and that generates, you know... [LB274]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: As a real...how are you going to carry this out in the rural to urban difference? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: And that's an interesting one. And when the funds were in place from the lottery for the first two years, many times what we found were if I didn't have an English teacher in the district or the only English teacher I hired was a brand new teacher, that we worked with other districts or through the ESUs. Now we actually even have better technology. We could actually do, you know, face time with one another and do that face to face, because that's very important. So I think we've got some opportunities just because of technology that's going on that gives opportunities in our rural and our urban schools, so. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: How do you anticipate this money is going to be distributed? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: In the rule that's out, and it will probably have to be revised a little bit to work with that, but there is money for districts to develop a plan which is required in Rule 26. And then they submit...at that time they would submit it to the council that governed the lottery funds--now it would be with the Department of Education--to have their plan approved for mentoring. So it would list the things that would happen for each teacher. And then there is money to do that, to buy the time and the resources. Maybe it's outside of contract time or whatever. And then there are stipends to pay educators for the extra work that they're doing, because education, as you know, happens more than just between 8:00 to 5:00. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Now you mentioned lottery funds. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Yes. [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: This is actually a request from the General Funds. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: This is General Funds. It was funded for two years under lottery funds, and then they took them away. And it hasn't been funded since. And so that's been a balancing act for school districts. You know, do I have a mentoring program, do I have a quality mentoring program, or do I just give the keys to the classroom to the person and say good luck? [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Well, I can tell you, as a first-year teacher in Table Rock, Nebraska, as the only science teacher in that school,... [LB274]

JAY SEARS: (Laugh) That's right. [LB274]

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SENATOR HILKEMANN: ...it would have been wonderful to have had a mentoring program. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Wouldn't it have been great? [LB274]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: It would have been great. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: I had to when I was in Seward because there were actually two social studies teacher and me who got all the rest, so. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Any other questions from the committee? Senator Haar. [LB274]

SENATOR HAAR: Mine is probably more in the way of statements, but I'm going to do it anyway. (Laughter) [LB274]

JAY SEARS: I'll listen, Senator. [LB274]

SENATOR HAAR: You know, there is evidence. If you look at the...the world's top-performing school system is in Finland. And I've spent some time studying, and some of the things there...we're talking about the students. The top-performing students in the world come from Finland. And they invest heavily in their teachers and they don't apologize for it. I often feel like we're apologizing when we invest more money in teachers. Teachers in Finland spend, well, it's a little bit more than half the time that American teachers spend in front of classes. What they do is it's that they spend that time in education but they work with each other. When I was teaching and somebody showed up in my classroom, I wondered what's going on here, you know? [LB274]

JAY SEARS: (Laugh) Why are they here? Yes. [LB274]

SENATOR HAAR: But in Finland, teachers work with each other. They regularly attend each other's classes and they regularly critique in a very positive way the teaching that's going on. They develop curriculums together. They collect data. They do very little testing until that test like in the 9th grade where you decide whether you are going to technical school or to a more academic school. But the way they figure out how kids are performing is they know the kids very well and so they don't have to test them the way we do in this country all the time. And teachers almost never leave the teaching profession and there's a waiting list to get into teachers college in Finland. And so I think we have to stop apologizing for investing in good teaching because it

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makes all the difference in how students perform and how we value children. That's my speech.
[LB274]

JAY SEARS: Thank you, Senator. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Senator Haar. Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Jay. [LB274]

JAY SEARS: Thank you. [LB274]

SENATOR MELLO: Are there any other proponents for LB274? Seeing none, are there any opponents to LB274? Seeing none, is there anyone here in the neutral capacity on LB274? Seeing none, Senator Hansen, would you like to close? Thank you so much for waiving closing. (Laughter) That will end tonight's public hearing on LB274, and end the Appropriations Committee hearings for the evening. Thank you. [LB274]