

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**STINNER:** [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] --Appropriations Committee hearing. My name is John Stinner. I'm from Gering and I represent the 48th Legislative District. I serve as Chair of this committee. I'd like to start off by having members do self-introductions, starting with Senator Clements.

**CLEMENTS:** I'm Rob Clements, District 2, Cass County and eastern Lancaster.

**McDONNELL:** Mike McDonnell, LD 5, south Omaha.

**STINNER:** John Stinner, District 48, all of Scotts Bluff, Banner and Kimball County.

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

**KOLTERMAN:** Mark Kolterman, District 24: Seward, York, Polk and a little bit of Butler County.

**VARGAS:** Tony Vargas, District 7, downtown and central Omaha.

**DORN:** I'm Myron Dorn, District 30, Gage County and part of Lancaster.

**STINNER:** Assisting the committee today is Tamara Hunt, and to my left is our fiscal analyst, Sam Malson. Our page today is Jason Wendling. On the cabinet-- on-- to your right, you'll find green testifier sheets. If you are planning to testify today, please fill out a sign-in sheet and hand it to the page when you come up to testify. If you will not be testifying at the microphone but want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there is a white sign-in sheet on the cabinet where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record at the end of today's hearing. To better facilitate today's proceeding, I ask that you abide by the following procedures. Please silence or turn off your cell phone. Order of testimony will be introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral and closing. We ask when you come up that you spell your first and last name for the record before you testify. Be concise. It's my request that you limit your testimony to five minutes. Written materials may be distributed to committee members as exhibits only while testimony is being offered. Hand it to the page for distribution to the committee and staff when you come up to testify. We need 12 copies. If you have written testimony but do not want to have-- but do not have 12 copies, please raise your hand so the page can make copies for you.

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Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

With that, we will begin today's hearing with LB1152. Senator, welcome.

**McCOLLISTER:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner, and members of the committee. I am John, J-o-h-n, McCollister, M-c-C-o-l-l-i-s-t-e-r, and I represent the 20th Legislative District in Omaha, and I will be concise. I'm bringing forth LB1152 at the behest of the Building Commission. We are all aware that costs of materials and wages are increasing during the supply-- shortages caused by supply chain issues. The HVAC project is not immune from continued cost increases that will be incurred as the last phases of the project are completed. I'm grateful that the Governor has recognized the problem and is proposing that some increased costs to be met. However, it's quite possible that the increased costs will be greater than he has forecast, hence the necessity of this bill.

**STINNER:** OK, any questions? Just for your information, I think the last we saw, to continue on at the pace we're at was about \$25 million, which-- which we agreed to do as part of the next biennium. We've certainly made the intent known that we want to continue to have all of the project done as first designed, so.

**McCOLLISTER:** Well, this particular bill asks for \$30 million, so a slight increase from that amount.

**STINNER:** Very good. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

**DORN:** That was short. That was short. [LAUGHTER]

**KENT ROBERT:** Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kent Rogert, K-e-n-t R-o-g-e-r-t, and I'm here today to support LB1152 on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Former Legislators. I've been here before to talk about our group. We are very interested in making sure this building is kept in its best condition. And in our conversations with the people in the construction of the HVAC, it's very obvious that COVID had a major supply chain issue on the stuff they're putting in here, and it's actually worse now than it was two years ago. There are pieces and parts that comes from all over the world to go in this building, and as we all know, there are something like 56 container ships sitting out in the harbor outside of Long Beach almost all the time. So with delays and increases in demand and decreases in supply, we've seen almost \$30 million of increases on the project. Happy to take any questions.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**STINNER:** Any questions? Senator Clements.

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Rogert. Do you know anything about why the windows are still single pane?[LAUGHTER]

**KENT ROBERT:** Well, what-- I think they're trying to keep it to the original design as close as they can. But in the process of fixing all those, at least they put foam rubber in the-- in the-- where they come together so you don't have snow on your desk in the morning after a storm.

**CLEMENTS:** All right, thank you.

**STINNER:** Any questions? Well, congratulations, by the way, the man of the year for CASA?

**KENT ROBERT:** Oh, thank you. Thanks very much.

**STINNER:** Additional proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Would you like to close, Senator? Senator waives closing. We have three letters of support, proponents of LB1152. That concludes our hearing on LB1152. We'll now open on LB1228. OK, we're going to skip over that. Senator Wayne apparently is held up in another committee. We'll now move to LB1195.

**McDONNELL:** Thank you, Senator Stinner and members of Appropriations Committee. My name is Mike McDonnell, M-c-D-o-n-n-e-l-l. I represent Legislative District 5. LB1195 appropriates \$1.5 million in fiscal year '22-23 to the Department of Economic Development for Program 603 for the purpose of sponsoring the FEI jumping and vaulting World Cup finals in 2023. The event was last hosted in Nebraska in 2017. After beating out several international competitors, the success of 2017 event led to Nebraska again being awarded the honor of hosting this event in 2023. For Nebraska, the 2017 event had an economic impact of over \$19 million and 80 percent of VIP tickets were from out-of-state visitors. Over 70 percent of over-- over 52,000 tickets sold were sold to individuals who were more than 50 miles from the host site of CHI Health Center. This is the exact sort of event that will help our tourism industry and lodging dollars recover from the last few years. New in 2023 will be the FEI vaulting World Cup finals, and this will be the first time this event has ever been hosted in the United States. This event will bring in hundreds of vendors, as the past event brought vendors in 30 states and 8-- from 30 states and 8 different countries. Writers, rooms, officials representing over 26 different countries and 170 media members from across the globe

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

attended with over 1,100 stories written and 653 million impressions. The 2017 event was estimated to have a marketing value of over \$18 million in promoting the state of Nebraska. The 2023 event revolves around the year 1723 and the Great Horse Tribes of the Plains. The FA-- the FFA and the 4-H students from across the state will be invited to participate in the public speaking, demonstrations and exhibits. Nebraska-sourced hay, alpha-- alfalfa and grain will be featured to writers, groomers, officials from around the world. Due to the large influence and international agricultural interests that will attend this event, this is an ideal opportunity for us to promote our state and our agricultural economy to a global audience. It is these reasons that I ask for your support. Also here to testify today is Julie Boilesen, CEO of Omaha Equestrian Foundation; Toba Cohen-Dunning from the Omaha Public School Foundation and others. I attended this event in 2017. I don't know anything about horses. I know win, place or show. You know, I've never been involved with anything, so Senator Wishart also attended, and at that point, I was-- I was very, very impressed. But then as I went and we learned more about it and the economic impact and having a world event here, and what they were talking about trying to do for the future, I became a fan. And the people behind me again are very passionate about this and they put a lot of time into it, and so I'm looking forward to their testimony.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you. Afternoon.

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Toba Cohen-Dunning, T-o-b-a C-o-h-e-n-D-u-n-n-i-n-g. Thank you so much for this opportunity. This initiative is so important for not only the Omaha metro area, but the state of Nebraska to bring international competitions. As the executive director of the Omaha Public Schools Foundation, I work diligently to help students, who are 78 percent free and reduced lunch have out-of-school experiences. Getting out of the classroom and seeing the world outside of your neighborhood is pretty life-changing. The FEI jumping and dressage World Cup finals is no exception. Our organization has supported the international in the World Cup events over the last five years to ensure that students from our district can experience this truly unique opportunity. Pre-COVID, we were sending thousands of children to the-- to the events and the response was incredible from kids, from their parents, from the teachers. This is not a petting zoo visit. Students meet with the equestrian trainers and the educators for hands-on learning at the CHI Health Arena. They meet world-renowned athletes and learn about what it takes to be in the sport in a world far outside their own. They get to understand the importance of veterinary medicine and its impact, and it's an important moment in this time for our students to see

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

these animals in action and to understand the communication skills that come in a variety of platforms. One of the most important aspects of the experience is that when they return to the classroom, the relevance does not stop. Our educators work with the Omaha Equestrian Foundation to understand the importance and relevance of the history of horses in Nebraska going back hundreds of years. In 2019, 4,500 students from around the metro area went on free field trips to this live event. The upcoming Cup in 2023 will be no exception. Students will explore language and geography from some of the finest athletes, both human and-- human and equestrian around the globe. Our very own Bryan High School urban agriculture students are working to raise hydroponic carrots for the horses. Tim Dutta, who is an equestrian flight expert, will be speaking to the Bryan High Logistics Academy in advance of the World Cup to provide insights onto how the students' particular skills apply to future jobs in this industry. Lastly, the Omaha Equestrian Foundation is working with the International Equine Veterinary Panel to establish FFF-- FFA and 4-H internships, as you heard the senator just mention. This legislation is not about right now. It's important for our future generations of Nebraskans, and it's far more than just about sports. I will leave you with this. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who does a survey every five years, the horse industry impacts the American economy, employing more than 700,000 people directly; 450,000 of these positions are FTEs and the rest are part-time and seasonal. The total impact on our gross domestic product is 1 point-- \$1.5 billion. The industry has been a vital component of our Nebraska economy forever and now more than ever, as students are working diligently to better understand-- better understand what future jobs await them, they have the opportunity to see what the international and the World Cup offer right here at home. Thank you so much for your time.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Senator Clements.

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming. I'm wondering how much money has the foundation committed to sponsor this?

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** Over the last five years, we've put in \$40,000 to ensure that all bus transportation is taken care of from schools all over our school district.

**CLEMENTS:** How much for this event?

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** For this one, we've committed 20.

**CLEMENTS:** \$20,000?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** For the net-- for 2023.

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you.

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

**TOBA COHEN-DUNNING:** Thank you so much for your time.

**JULIE BOILESEN:** Senators, thank you for your time today. I'm Julie Boilesen, J-u-l-i-e B-o-i-l-e-s-e-n, and as Mike said, I'm the CEO of the Omaha Equestrian Foundation. Mike did such a good job covering my numbers. I'm now going to speak off the cuff a little bit. I'm a girl from Ord who grew up riding ponies on my grandfather's farm. That was my babysitter, many miles from home, which I think would make most city people very nervous. And growing up was showing 4-H, FFA, rodeo. My brother roped and roped broncs. And so I will tell you, I think sometimes there's an impression that this sport with these tiny saddles and these funny pants isn't for western Nebraska. This is the opinion of a friend that's an NFR roper. I love the way he said it. Roping and team roping is the NASCAR of equestrian sport. Dressage is the Formula One. And if I am in-- in a place where there is a Formula One race in my backyard and I'm a NASCAR fan, I'm going to go see that Formula One race. And I think this is very similar to that. We have a real appreciation for other disciplines in the equestrian world. So I think this is a very representational event for all of Nebraska. From a budgetary standpoint, this event takes right at \$9 million to pull off. Very much like the swim trials, we go into our beautiful facility at CHI Arena and we turn it into a world-class equestrian center. And when I say world class, Isabell Werth, who is the most decorated equestrian Olympian ever, said that the '17 FEI was the best equestrian event she has ever attended, bar none. This is a woman who has attended six Olympics. So I think that speaks very well for the facilities we have. She was overwhelmed by the support from the fan base and was just-- more of the riders comment on the fact that we have young children touring. That's not something they see at these European events. And they were so impressed by the way we created a connection between our agricultural economy and culture here in the state and this-- what is really an agri sport. You know, this is the product of our livestock background put to life in the arena and competing. So I would really encourage you to see this beyond just a sporting event itself. Mike mentioned the \$19 million economic development. To put that in a little bit of context, this is the first year we've hosted this event, has, has tons of opportunity to grow. So

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

that's \$4.8 million economic impact a day of each competing day. If we look at the College World Series, which is kind of the gold standard of sporting events in Omaha, they have \$5.8 million of economic impact a day in their 2019 event, and they've had 70 years to grow that event. So with your support and your encouragement, I think we can continue to see this event grow. We would like to host it every four to five years. Mike laughs every time I say this. The only place that ever hosted other than us in North America is Las Vegas and Las Vegas has been told not to bid against us, that people would much rather see-- make their way to Nebraska. And it won't surprise you that the first time that we were selected over Hong Kong and London, the headlines in the equine press said, Oma-who? But I will tell you they know where we are now and they can't wait to come and see us in '23. Thank you for your time.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Senator, would you like to close?

**McDONNELL:** Thank you. Back to Senator Clements' question with the amount of money they're raising and looking at that approximately \$10 million, we're also working with the city of Omaha and Douglas County, of course, the philanthropic community. It is-- it is a special event. It's the only world event that we will-- we will host in our state. Now going forward with-- with the opportunity, the education, and as it was testified to, people don't want to go back to Las Vegas. This is hosted all over the world. They want to come back to Nebraska. And I think that's very telling of our citizens. I think it's very telling of the community, how we reached out, but also something to note is that around the world when they host this, most of the time it's-- it's being funded by government. They don't have to go out and raise the money. But also, I think that helps us in one hand to show how much support we have from-- from the community. But because of where we are-- and I've got one more handout just in my closing of what-- some statistics from Douglas County and everyone knows what's-- what's been going on with our-- our economy and travel and especially starting in March of 2020 with-- with COVID. So looking at those dollars that were available that-- that aren't today, the idea of us having an opportunity to make sure this-- this event has been secured for 2023, but that's why I'm asking for the-- the \$1.5 million, any dollar, all dollars are going to-- are going to help this event. So I appreciate your time.

**STINNER:** Questions? Senator Clements.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you. This is an ARPA plan request, right?

**McDONNELL:** Yes.

**CLEMENTS:** And Douglas County and the city of Omaha also received quite a bit of ARPA money. Are they committing any of that?

**McDONNELL:** They are-- they are definitely going to participate. At what level, I don't know. But they are definitely participating. Now, I can't say specifically it's only ARPA money. There might be some General Fund money in there, but I know they've committed to participate financially.

**CLEMENTS:** OK. Thank you.

**STINNER:** Any additional questions? Anything I would ask is if you fill-- have somebody fill out a guideline sheet we can have for that.

**McDONNELL:** Yes. Yes.

**STINNER:** That'll give us enough information, so thank you very much.

**McDONNELL:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Let's see. We have-- LB1195 has two letters of support, proponents for LB1195. That concludes our hearing on LB1195. We will now open with LB1202. Welcome, Senator Day. How are you?

**DAY:** I'm wonderful. How are you? I'm a little intimidated by this setup. This is the first time I've testified in front of the Appropriations Committee so this is a little--

**STINNER:** Welcome to the garage here.

**DAY:** --but thank you for having me. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jen Day. That's J-e-n D-a-y and I proudly represent Legislative District 49 in Sarpy County. Today I am introducing LB1202, which would appropriate \$5 million in-- of funding received by the state of Nebraska from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to the Department of Economic Development to provide for a grant to assist professional soccer or professional baseball teams affiliated with Major League Baseball with costs and revenue losses directly resulting from COVID-19. Let me begin by thanking the committee for the amount of time that you have spent and will spend in deciding how to allocate Nebraska's ARPA funds. I know this is a daunting task and I appreciate what you're



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

doing. The purpose of this bill is to utilize \$5 million of Nebraska's \$1 billion ARPA allocation to assist two of Nebraska's outstanding sports teams, the Omaha Storm Chasers and Union Omaha, which operate out of one of Nebraska's top tourist and entertainment sites at Werner Park, housed in Legislative District 49. Both teams face different challenges since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. Omaha Storm Chasers, Nebraska's only professional baseball team affiliated with an MLB team, had their doors closed from September 2, 2019, until May 4, 2021, approximately 600 days. As a result, there were no games played, resulting in the loss of an entire season, incurring costs of roughly \$2.5 million during the time COVID-19 hit the state. These losses included projected ticket and concessions revenue of between \$600,000 and \$1 million over 72 games. Also included in this calculation is another \$637,725 in rent payments to Sarpy County for the use of the park, COVID-specific safety supplies, utilities and other costs related to maintaining the physical operations of the organizations. Two, it includes a reduction in revenues during the period of recovery from COVID-19 of roughly \$833,000. Excuse me. Union Omaha, Nebraska's professional soccer team, was welcomed into Nebraska with open arms. However, the launch of the team occurred during the pandemic. The impact to Union Omaha was more than \$2.5 million during 2020 and 2021, with over \$2.3 million being lost revenue from ticket sales, group package sales, and concessions revenue. In addition, Union Omaha incurred costs of another \$157,000 in housing costs for the team, resulting in COVID-19-- resulting from COVID-19, costs for COVID tests for the team and team meals that were covered because of COVID-19. In my review of the eligibility for the use of the ARPA dollars, the dollars sought would respond to a negative economic impact in one of the enumerated areas, aid to impacted industries, specifically both the tourism and hospitality sector. Following me in testimony will be Martie Cordaro, the president of both the Omaha Storm Chasers and Union Omaha, who will outline for you the impact that the loss of revenues and costs related to COVID had on the teams and their operations. Following Martie will be Laurie Schlender, the chief financial officer of both the Omaha Storm Chasers and Union Omaha, who is familiar with the financial impact and costs incurred by both teams during the pandemic. I'd be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have. However, the representatives following me may have more detailed knowledge. Thank you for your consideration.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**DAY:** Thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**MARTIE CORDARO:** Martie Cordaro. Glad to be here today. President, Omaha Storm Chasers and Union Omaha. It's Martie, M-a-r-t-i-e, last name, Cordaro, C-o-r-d-a-r-o. Thank you, Senator Day. I am here to talk to you today about Union Omaha and Omaha Storm Chasers. You know, when we started on the path of Union Omaha, it was a three-year due diligence and buildup to our May 1, 2019, announce that we were bringing a new sports entertainment tourism business to Sarpy County, specifically the Omaha Metro. And once COVID happened, April 26, 2020, we knew was not going to be a reality. And that was pretty tough. You know, at that time, we laid off half of our staff, and in time we also froze any additional hiring. We were able to play in 2020. USL, the league we play in, was the first North American sports league at any level to welcome fans to our home stadium as we started playing in August of 2020. But instead of a 9,000 capacity, we were restricted to 2,500 due to health-- health restrictions. So pretty tough year when you get-- when you're able to start a new business, especially in sports tourism, and you're not able to take advantage of your inaugural season. Moving into '21, we had some of the same restrictions. We did play a full season in '21, not abbreviated, but it was a tough year as well, so a lot of losses, which Laurie will talk about. We're hopeful that '22 is our first normal year with our three-year business. From Omaha Storm Chasers' perspective, it's been a business since 1969, so a lot more mature. We do \$17 million in economic impact. That was the last study we did with the Omaha Greater Chamber-- Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, was in 2017. So it is not an insignificant number. We also donate to more than 500 Nebraska nonprofits, more than \$600,000 in cash, tickets, in-kind donations. Our staff serves-- serves on a number of boards and we volunteer more than 1,000 community hours each year. Due to COVID in 2020, Minor League Baseball was the only sports league in North America that had our season completely wiped out. Every other league at every level, college or pro, had at least some abbreviated season. So as Senator Day mentioned earlier, September 2 of '19, May 4 of '21, we went 609 days without business, front doors closed. Very difficult, very challenging. While playing in '21, we got back to business, but we started in May instead of April. We did lose the April portion of our season and we did have reduced capacities in 2021 as well. We are optimistic that '22 will finally be business as usual as we can get back to doing what we do in entertaining folks here in Nebraska and attracting people from Kansas, Missouri and Iowa to our games. To wrap it up, as I said at the dais in 2012 with Mr. Warren Buffett, who was at that point in time selling the team that he had owned for 20 years to our new ownership group, and he leaned over to-- to our new owner and said, Gary, remember you may be purchasing this business, but the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

community is really who owns this team. And we hope that we can gain your support so we can get back on solid footing. Thank you very much.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Senator Kolterman.

**KOLTERMAN:** Thank you, Senator. I just have one question.

**MARTIE CORDARO:** Yes, Senator.

**KOLTERMAN:** So the soccer team, it's-- is it semiprofessional or is it professional soccer?

**MARTIE CORDARO:** Professional soccer.

**KOLTERMAN:** So how-- I'm familiar with Minnesota United. So where do you stand? Is it the same level?

**MARTIE CORDARO:** It's not. Minnesota United would be MLS and the-- the league we play in is USL. And then there's championship at USL and then League One. So we're kind of like AA baseball is how-- we're the third division.

**KOLTERMAN:** Similar to-- the same as baseball.

**MARTIE CORDARO:** It is. It's-- yes, AAA baseball. So we're kind of a level below what AAA would be.

**KOLTERMAN:** OK, thank you.

**MARTIE CORDARO:** You're welcome.

**STINNER:** Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**MARTIE CORDARO:** Thank you.

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** Hello, my name is Laurie Schlender, L-a-u-r-i-e S-c-h-l-e-n-d-e-r. I'm the CFO of Union Omaha and the Omaha Storm Chasers. I'm here to just share a little bit about some of the financial impact that we've had, and we'll be handing out a couple of charts, a couple of things to hit on. I'll start with the Storm Chasers. Martie said they're a well-established team, but having to go that long without having a product to sell basically, we sell the entertainment business of Minor League Baseball and we couldn't sell that product and it left a big hole. So I've prepared on my notes to show you some of the COVID-related assistance that we did receive. If you look at the side that says Omaha Storm Chasers, we did get some and our owners did step up and help us a little bit, but we still have

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

a shortfall, which is something that we have to make up somehow. And we're not going to make that up in a short period of time without taking advantage of some opportunities to get assistance. The attendee-based revenue, we actually-- we actually didn't have any-- any of that in 2020. So it's-- it's been very difficult. And as the three graphs on the bottom show, we have still had to maintain our-- keeping the facility up to date. We have a lease with Sarpy County. They require us to maintain the facility to a minimum standard. We met our obligation on that. We had utility costs. We had a lot of costs. So the percentage of expenses for the year could not go down as a result of COVID. It-- it actually went up as a percentage of the whole. So that-- that was hard on the Storm Chasers. When we turn to Union Omaha, we don't even have a baseline, but I've prepared a little summary about where we thought we would be. And-- and you can see on the bar graph in 2020, we had a lot of projected revenues that we missed out on, being not-- having half a season and having limited attendance. Also on there, I've showed that they've gotten a little bit less of assistance. Probably, you know, they're not as well-established. We didn't-- we didn't have enough-- we didn't have as much history on them. There was a shortfall. We did get some additional owner equity, which is detailed on the bottom. However, we had a very big hole with start-up costs as with any new business. So with them, they own their players. We have a lot of player costs and we were not able to reduce those when-- when COVID hit. We had to keep our contracts with the players and that took us into a bigger loss position. So I appreciate your consideration.

**STINNER:** Senator Kolterman.

**KOLTERMAN:** Thank you, Senator Stinner. So the PPP loans, I assume they're all forgiven.

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** They are all forgiven, yes.

**KOLTERMAN:** And then do you know, did Sarpy County get any money from the federal government to help offset their costs with your-- I mean, they own the land. They own the--

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** They own the facility.

**KOLTERMAN:** Yeah.

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** The only thing I'm aware of is they gave us-- the Storm Chasers hold the lease, so they gave us a rent abatement of a year.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**KOLTERMAN:** So that's--

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** That's the only thing that I know of. And I feel like they probably got some help with that because our rent is connected to the debt that they have to pay off related to the facility.

**KOLTERMAN:** OK, thank you.

**LAURIE SCHLENDER:** Um-hum.

**STINNER:** Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you. Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, would you like to close, Senator?

**DAY:** Thank you, Chairman Stinner, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I promise I'll keep it short and sweet. You guys have a long afternoon today. So I know that we're making a big ask here related to, you know, why would we spend \$5 million of ARPA funds on soccer and baseball essentially? But as somebody who has lived in Sarpy County my entire life, as a mom of two boys, 13 and 9, one is a baseball player, one is a soccer player, I think we really have to think about what businesses like this mean to the community, not just in terms of economic development, but in terms of, you know, we talk about keeping people in Nebraska and attracting people into the state, it's stuff like this that does just that. You know, I sat a few years ago and spoke as a guest speaker at a business class at Creighton and they were all business majors. I was talking about being a small business owner and I remember asking them how many of them planned to stay in the state after they graduated and not a single person raised their hand. And asking further, what were the reasons for that? Well, there's nothing to do here usually is the answer we get from young people. So I think it's stuff like this, having stuff to do, adding to the economic development of the area into Sarpy County, which is very dear to my heart, that's why I was willing to bring this bill forward and have this discussion with you today. So happy to answer any questions you may have.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

**DAY:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** We have two letters of support for LB1202 and that concludes our hearing on LB1202. Would somebody like to go find Senator Wayne?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**McDONNELL:** I'll get him.

**STINNER:** OK.

**JASON WENDLING:** Senator, which one would you like to start with?

**STINNER:** Well, we'll probably take that--

**JASON WENDLING:** LB1228?

**STINNER:** LB1228 and then we'll go to LB1224.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Senator Wayne, you are up.

**WAYNE:** Wait, I thought we were doing the-- OK, I'll follow your lead.

**STINNER:** I got you for LB1228.

**WAYNE:** I also had the other one, for--

**STINNER:** Yep, LB1224.

**WAYNE:** OK, thank you. That messes up what I was going to say. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman and the Appropriations Committee. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. Last year, training to go to Africa, we did a couple of tours up in South Dakota and I also have went up there a couple of times to go fishing and hunting. And as I drove around in South Dakota, I just saw a lot of RVs, a lot of campers, and just the overall tourism of their natural resources. I happened to go visit Crazy Horse and although they have a mountain and we don't to-- to-- to chisel into, when I walked through there, I saw numerous of items related to Standing Bear. And it just struck me, as I talk to my kids about Standing Bear, why are we not doing this in Nebraska? And overall tourism across the country during COVID, it had lost about 24 percent of its revenue. In Nebraska specifically, we lost about 20 percent of our revenue, is what-- what we show. And so we need to figure out how to-- we can figure out how to increase tourism in Nebraska and what better way than to honor what I would say is a man who needs no introduction-- that this committee doesn't need a history lesson on Standing Bear-- and is one of the most significant figures, not just in our country, but definitely in the state? So if done right, I think we can draw hundreds of thousands of people, if not millions, to a beautiful part of the state and my bill doesn't outline where, but I think everybody in this committee knows somewhere in the Niobrara River is the home

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

and possibly burial of Standing Bear would be a great addition to the state. How do I know it works and culturally it works? In Senator McKinney's district, we have roughly 800,000 people who drive through there and sign a book where Malcolm X was born. In my district, in Florence, we have close to a million Mormons who travel through there every year to stop at the Trail of Tears and to look at Trail of Tears, the Mormon Trail, to look at some of the historical areas that their ancestors and connection traveled to. I think this is along the same lines of not only honoring one of the greatest men who came from Nebraska, but also creating a economic driver in an area that is so desperately needed. I mean, we have to look at no farther than the Kool-Aid Museum in Nebraska. Just small. People travel from all over the country to see Kool-Aid. And we don't-- you know, nobody knows the actual flavors of Kool-Aid. It's red and green or purple. But anyway, my point is by establishing something like this, we could not only change some-- some areas, we can honor a person. And although I put \$75 million out, if you look at the fiscal note, it's actually more about creating a committee and figuring out where to put it and going through that planning process. I just took one page from the Governor of just allocating it all right now, we'll figure it out later approach. But that's really the theory behind this and the genesis of this bill was in Crazy Horse, I called Senator Brewer and I'm like, I'm standing here and I'm reading about Standing Bear. Explain this to me. Why don't we have something in Nebraska? And that's really simple.

**STINNER:** Very good. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**WAYNE:** Thank you. This is consent calendar worthy. [LAUGHTER]

**STINNER:** Afternoon.

**RICHARD WRIGHT, JR.:** Good afternoon, Senator John Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. Aho, Izhazhe Wiwitathe Richard Wright Jr., R-i-c-h-a-r-d W-r-i-g-h-t, J-r. My name is Richard Wright Jr. and I'm the director of cultural affairs for the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, as well as an enrolled member of said tribe. I was-- I was born and raised in the northeast town of Norfolk, Nebraska, and I will likely be a lifelong resident of our great state. I am here today to support LB1228. Firstly, it is important to note that Ponca history is Nebraska history and we are unable to grasp the full picture of either unless we educate our citizens about both. Our past leader, Chief Standing Bear has become more than just a prominent figure for the Ponca people, but a revered leader and civil rights activist for our great state of Nebraska, as well as this great nation. On May 12, 1879, a day that will forever be memorialized in Nebraska and United

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

States history, taking place in Omaha, Nebraska, Judge Elmer Dundy declared for the first time that Native Americans were considered people under federal law. It is directly due to the brave actions of Standing Bear, as well as Nebraskans, that Native Americans across the country were finally beginning to be granted their rights and privileges that our great state and nation offers to all of their citizens. A Standing Bear museum will allow us to better preserve our history for future generations of Poncas and Nebraskans alike. We currently have some of Standing Bear's personal belongings housed in our Ponca Museum in Niobrara, and we are having active discussions about repatriating more of these artifacts in the near future. A Standing Bear museum would allow us to provide a proper home for those repatriated artifacts and ensure their preservation and safety for many years to come. Since our termination in 1965 and our restoration in 1990, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has grown exponentially. And I believe at this point in time that we are more than capable of sharing our history and educating visitors on the legacy of Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca people. It is my personal belief that the construction of a Chief Standing Bear museum will be valuable in educating both Nebraskans and tourists about the legacy and importance of Standing Bear in Nebraska's history. I urge each of you today to vote in favor of LB1228. Wibthaho. I thank the Appropriations Committee for allowing my voice to be heard and I will do my best to answer any questions that you might have.

**STINNER:** Thank you very much. Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**RICHARD WRIGHT, JR.:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Afternoon.

**STACY LARAVIE:** Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. Izhazhe Wiwitathe Stacy Laravie, S-t-a-c-y L-a-r-a-v-i-e. I am the tribal historic preservation officer for the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, a Ponca member, Nebraskan, and I'm a three-times great-granddaughter to Chief Standing Bear. In my position, it is my honor and duty to preserve and protect Ponca ancestors, traditions, language, ceremonial objects and sacred places. This honor is not only limited to these duties. I am as well the curator of artifacts. As irony has it, some of these artifacts belonged to my grandfather, Standing Bear. In my eyes, not only am I preserving and protecting a part of Ponca and Nebraska history, I am preserving my family's history as well. The story of my grandfather and Ponca people goes beyond the history books and his trial. The story of Standing Bear and Ponca people's extraordinary ancestry needs



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

to be shared. Everyone on this committee has an opportunity in sharing that story. The passing of LB1228 will aid in preserving and protecting these artifacts, such as Standing Bear's tomahawk, and will tell the untold parts of Ponca history along with Standing Bear's story. You all will be part of that. The Standing Bear museum will also educate and empower Ponca people in knowing whom and where they come from, preserving our language and our culture. A museum will educate Nebraskans and the world about the greatness that can come from unity, resiliency, and perseverance of a people. Standing Bear-- Standing Bear's and the Ponca is a true Nebraska story. We have been-- we have seen this over and over again, Nebraskans coming together to do what is right. I was taught to think seven generations ahead. LB1228 will support, preserve, protect the next seven generations. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I will answer any questions that I'm able. Wibthaho. Thank you.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Afternoon.

**WARREN ANZALONE:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman and Appropriations Committee. My name is Warren Anzalone, W-a-r-r-e-n A-n-z-a-l-o-n-e. I'm the executive producer here today on behalf of my producing partner, Andrew Troy, who is a native of Cherakawa Apache filmmaker, and our upcoming feature film, I Am a Man, the true story of Chief-- Chief Ponca Standing Bear. With the consent of the Ponca Tribe, Senator Wayne, and Senator Brewer, we ask the committee's consideration of a \$5 million grant that will be utilized for the production of this film. This allocation of funds will be in addition to the funds appropriated to the museum. With this grant, our mission is to honor the legacy of Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca tribe. The film has the ability to reach a wide audience that in turn will generate interest in visiting the Ponca Museum and Ponca lands. Once completed, this film can be a promotional tool for a lifetime. This grant will result in the physical production to make this film this year in 2022. This production will stimulate immediate economic development to the state of Nebraska, including, but not limited to, local jobs, vendor services, lodging, dining, transportation, equipment rentals and local purchases. We commit to work with the Ponca Tribe on a variety of jobs, including on camera and transportation. We will be working closely with the Ponca elders to create authentic wardrobes and sets with also making sure that the Ponca spoken dialect in our film is accurate so the film can be utilized to educate and preserve the Ponca language, music and traditions. After almost a decade working to build this project into an A-list production team, this \$5 million allocation gets the film

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

made 100 percent this year in 2022. Our team is ready to make this happen now. While the museum is being developed, our film will be in production. Upon the completion of production, again the film can immediately be utilized as an ongoing promotional tool that will generate worldwide interest, which will turn, drive tourism to the museum and onto Ponca lands. Five million dollars is not our entire budget. We have already secured a certificate of match funds offered that will trigger and provide an additional \$5 million to the production of this film. With this \$5 million appropriation combined with our match funds offer of \$5 million, this meets our production financing requirements to get the film made now in 2022. Furthermore, this grant will allow us to qualify to submit for a variety of additional funding programs that have already been established by the city of Norfolk in the sum of \$275,000 and the Nebraska Film Office that has developed a \$400,000 film grant. We also honor that the-- we also honor that the Ponca Tribal Council unanimously passed Resolution 1771 in full support of this film. We want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support that we've received directly from the Nebraska Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Judi gaiashkibos. Thanks to Judi, we were part of the 2019 unveiling ceremonies of Chief Standing Bear in Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. Since 2018, Judi has been a key ally in spreading the word about our film to members of the Ponca Tribe, the Nebraska Senate, Governor Ricketts' Office and national leaders in Washington, D.C. We'd also like to acknowledge the work of former Ponca Tribal Chairman Larry Wright Jr., who aided us by discussing the film and Ponca issues on local newspapers and television. We look forward to working-- to continue working our efforts with the Ponca chairwoman, Becky Sullivan, the Ponca Tribal Council and the honorable members of this committee. Like the story of Abraham Lincoln, we believe that this film will have a lasting impact, a positive impact on society while showcasing the rich history of Nebraska, the Ponca Tribe and the Chief Standing Bear and his journey. For your convenience, a digital film package is available afterwards. And please email me at [info@imaman.com](mailto:info@imaman.com) or visit us at [www.iamthemanthefilm.com](http://www.iamthemanthefilm.com). I'll be able to answer any questions. Thank you very much for your time.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

**WARREN ANZALONE:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Good afternoon.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**SUSAN BAKER:** Hi. My name is Susie Baker. I am a Tribal Council member of Ponca Tribe, and I'm here to support both for the museum and for the film. We-- I came from California.

**STINNER:** Could you spell your name?

**SUSAN BAKER:** Oh, I'm sorry. I came from California and moved out here. I'm on council. More of my family is is moving--

**STINNER:** I need you to say and spell your name for the record.

**SUSAN BAKER:** Oh, I'm sorry. B-a-k-e-r. Is that--

**STINNER:** The first name and second-- your last name.

**SUSAN BAKER:** Oh, S-u-s-a-n B-a-k-e-r. Sorry.

**STINNER:** That's-- that's fine.

**SUSAN BAKER:** Anyway, I'm on council and I moved out here. More of my family is moving out here. We're Ponca and Standing Bear is Ponca and he's Nebraska. And I think that with the civil rights case he won, he freed all of us. Although even though he did, we were not allowed to practice-- practice our religion until the '70s. And so I think with the museum and also the film, it's going to show people the history. And I think the museum-- I think also it's going to bring a lot of money to Nebraska because of the tourism. I worked in large law firms in California and the-- our lawyers of all over the place, they pay big money to fish, hunt. They would-- people want to get out of the cities. They don't want to be in New York. You know, to have the greenery, to have the nature. And I think with all that's going on right now, I think it'll bring a lot of business to Nebraska. It's also there be our people home, because I came home and my grandson's home. He's in Nebraska. Sorry, I get emotional. So please forgive me. My grandson is on this council. He's in the back. So more and more of us are coming back here. California, as we see, it goes on-- New York, [INAUDIBLE] all over the state. I have a cousin that's moving here on the first. I have many cousins who are moving back here. Some are retired, some are not. Some retired to the cities. Some retired corporate-- corporate America and some of them might come home. And I think with that happening and I think with the tourism, if it's marketed right, and then also the film, the culture, the history. I think history is retold, especially the civil rights part. And I think it would be beneficial to Nebraska. I mean, I came home. My grandfather left in 1924, no work and suppression. He went to boarding schools. He didn't want that for us. And so I come back and I found my

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

great-- my great-grandparents' grave in Niobrara. No headstone. We're going to put one there. It's a beautiful cemetery. But with the time that they passed, there was no family out here to actually put the proper headstone there. They're Ponca. And so I think that with what you have to offer here, which I love because I was in the city and I, you know, worked at big law firms for 32 years and I think that this is the grassroots that I needed. It's also what I was taught at home behind closed doors because we were allowed to speak about it outside. So I'm just hoping you pass the bill.

**STINNER:** Very good. Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**SUSAN BAKER:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Good afternoon.

**JUDI GAIASHKIBOS:** Good afternoon, Senator Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Judi gaiashkibos. That's spelled J-u-d-i, gaiashkibos, g-a-i-a-s-h-k-i-b-o-s. I am speaking today as the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. I am a member of the Ponca Tribe and I am very proud of the testifiers today. I think it's really wonderful that they have come to share this great story. As we said, Standing Bear is a part of Nebraska's history so to know Nebraska's history, you must know the Ponca story. Just a little bit in the context of speaking as the director of the Indian Commission, I started in my position in 1995 as the director of the Indian Commission. And prior to that, I had worked for the Ponca Tribe and I believe I was the third cultural director and then I was the NAGPRA director, which is the person responsible for the return of human remains and our state was the first state to have a bill to protect human remains in 1989. So our tribe, as you heard, was restored in 1990 without a land-based reservation. We were a tribe that had four treaties with the United States government and in 1879, we had the famous trial of Standing Bear. Simultaneously, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, we had our first Indian boarding school where the mission was to kill the Indians, save the man. My mother went to the Genoa Indian School, which was one of those schools here in Nebraska, the fourth school like the Carlisle that was tasked with killing the Indian and saving the man. So while Standing Bear is being forcibly marched to Oklahoma, we're opening up a school in Pennsylvania to do that kind of work. So going forward, just relating a bit of my tribal history, my grandfather was born in 1878 and he had an allotment once the Allotment Act went into place and it was up the river from Ponca Chief Standing Bear. Standing Bear died in 1908. My grandfather was 30 years old when Standing Bear died and he was a former neighbor to

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

Standing Bear. So after my mother went to the Genoa Indian School, she returned home to the reservation and she was a Tribal Council person before non-Indian women did such things. She then left the reservation due to poverty and challenges and moved to Norfolk, Nebraska, where I grew up, as the Ponca cultural director said where he lived. So he is one of my relatives and growing up in Norfolk, Nebraska, nobody knew the story of Standing Bear. Nobody knew about Indian people. We were basically invisible people that tried to, I guess, do what the schools intended; to assimilate and no one wanted to know about us. It was-- it was very difficult and isolated and lonely experience being an Indian person in a dominant white school. The other tribes in Nebraska, the Santee Sioux, the Winnebago and the Omaha, they have land-based reservations and they too have museums. So when I started working for the Indian Commission, I decided it was really important to address all of the disparities that we had, and I needed to find something that would unify Nebraskans to come together to know our tribal histories. And after much research and visiting with elders and people that I respected, such as Charles Trimble, who passed away last year, a Lakota elder, he said-- advised me that we needed to find one unifying story. And he believed that the story of Standing Bear was that story because for the first time in our nation's history, we were recognized as human beings, even though we weren't citizens of the United States until 1924. So I began my work in celebrating and telling this story to address educational disparities, health disparities. And we began in 2006, our agency to have a Standing Bear breakfast, where we-- the last breakfast we had in 2017, we had 600 people attend. The purpose of that was to help start telling this story and educate people to understand what the challenges that Native people faced in Nebraska. So things grow and my friend was so wise because we began to tell and educate people and others came forward and wanted to do good things. And so we had the-- a donor that wanted to have, memorialize Standing Bear on Centennial Mell-- Mall. That was in 2017. Don Miller Campbell donated money, as you all know, and then we had Standing Bear up at the Ponca. And then in 2019, you, the Legislature, amended the bill or approved that Willa Cather and Standing Bear could go to Statuary Hall. So now when you watch television, we often see Standing Bear on CNN. A year ago, when we had the insurrection at the Capitol, I was so worried that something was going to happen to Standing Bear because he has become a very defining force in my life and in my work. And I do believe that what I do every day when I come to work at the Indian Commission after 26 years, I am still passionate about helping our boys and girls be proud of who they are and all of our people have access to good water, health. And I am inspired by the spirit of Standing Bear and I always think about

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

Standing Bear walking in the middle of winter all the way down to Oklahoma and then coming back to honor the promise to his dying son to bury him back along the Niobrara in the dead of winter. He's arrested and he ends up in the court-- courtroom. So if he could do that, I can get up every day and get in my warm car, drive over here to the Capitol and work for our people. So today, on behalf of the Indian Commission, I think that all our tribes would feel that it's important to honor First Peoples and lend support to a museum. The Ponca Tribe really hasn't been able to accept a lot of our sacred items, such as the tomahawk from the Peabody that we will be getting back.

**STINNER:** You have a red light.

**JUDI GAIASHKIBOS:** And once we-- red light. OK, time to wrap up. So with that, I just want to say that I think this is a positive action that you all could take. The Governor is going to name the building across the street in honor of Chief Standing Bear Center for Justice. This, again, would be an example of taking that message and helping other people to come to our state and see the living Ponca people that are here, learn the past histories. And the purposes of museums are learning from the past, bringing communities together, standing firm in the face of adversity, digitalization and updating museums and finally educating future generations. And so that's what you could do by funding money for the Ponca Chief Standing Bear museum. You would help future generations, as we say in our culture, seven generations into the future. So with that, I would be happy to answer any questions.

**STINNER:** Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

**JUDI GAIASHKIBOS:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Senator, would you like to close?

**WAYNE:** Yes, briefly. The reason why I asked the individual to testify about the film is it's part of our north Omaha plan of trying to get more-- because he stopped in north Omaha and that's where he was held and had the trial, we're trying to do more production and more film in north Omaha, but I didn't feel like-- I feel like he should come to this one versus the other one because it's more the-- mainly outside of Omaha is where the focus will be. We also have part of our plan a Malcolm X enhancement from a cultural and travel standpoint and the visitor standpoint. One thing I remember about ARPA and I'll wrap it up is it was supposed to be big ideas, one-time spends, focus on COVID

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

impact and economic development, if possible throughout that COVID impact. This type of museum and areas that I think have been impacted by COVID, especially history of neglect of acknowledging what we've done as a state and to a country to a type of people, I think we can start mending and-- mending those bridges with this type of gesture of forming a museum, a state museum at that. And I think from a business case, it's good economic development. There are thousands and millions of people who go to South Dakota to look at a mountain that is not even finished and they sit there and learn about our Nebraska culture. So while that's no disrespect to Crazy Horse, but there is a significant portion of that museum that has Standing Bear and I think it's time to bring all that home.

**STINNER:** Very good. Any questions? Seeing none, there are three letters of support for LB1228 and that concludes our hearing on LB1228. We will now open with our hearing on LB1224, Senator Wayne. You might want to wait. People are leaving. We'll wait until--

**WAYNE:** This will be a very short hearing.

**ERDMAN:** Your red light's on. [LAUGHTER]

**WAYNE:** Thank you all for coming. Ready? My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. I introduce this bill on behalf of the Appropriations Committee. I know you guys are dealing with a lot of bills and a lot of issues, and I wanted to place a placeholder bill just so you guys know tourism was affected by COVID. It's a broad bill so you guys do with it at what you please, but I just-- to make sure that after touring South Dakota so much, we didn't miss an opportunity on tourism. Again, nationally, 24 percent revenue loss. Nebraska lost approximately 20 percent of its revenue. So I just introduced that bill to say, don't forget about tourism. It's a huge driver in Nebraska, and I did it on behalf of Appropriations to help you all out.

**STINNER:** Any questions? The only thing I would add is I'd like you to fill out or have somebody fill out the checklist guidance.

**WAYNE:** Yeah, I'll get both of those in.

**STINNER:** OK, thank you very much.

**WAYNE:** With that, I waive closing. [LAUGHTER]

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

**STINNER:** That concludes our hearing on LB1224. LB1224 has two letters of support, excuse me. That closes our hearing on LB1224. We will now open on LB1229, Senator Hilkemann.

**HILKEMANN:** All right. We're not quite as short of senators, but close. Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. I'm Robert Hilkemann. That's R-o-b-e-r-t H-i-l-k-e-m-a-n-n and I represent Legislative District 4. LB1229 would appropriate \$1 million from the federal ARPA funds to the Department of Economic Development for the purpose of supporting a Nebraska-based tax-exempt organization for the operation of free sports and fitness programs, stipends for event and marketing internships for Nebraska college students, and facility rental costs for amateur sports and fitness events that attract out-of-state visitors and generate economic benefit for Nebraska communities. One such organization that would qualify is the Nebraska Sports Council. Major events and programs facilitated by the Nebraska Sports Council include the Cornhusker State Games, WellPower Movement, Lincoln and Omaha Corporate Games, the Pumpkin Run, Nebraska AAU Volleyball Grand Prix and the Heartland Havoc Wrestling Tournament. Additionally, the Nebraska Sports Council runs ten secondary events and programs, which include the annual Governor's Walk to promote healthy living, the annual statewide Torch Run to unite Nebraskans in sport, the GS-- GSG High School Ambassador Program where high school students interested in sports management and sports marketing careers receive experience and mentorship. As you've heard from many groups, organizations and individuals this session, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented negative impact on many of the things that make Nebraska great, including the sporting events and activities that bring people together from around the state and into our state. Using a portion of the ARPA funds that has been provided to us will help support the solvency and growth of these programs and help get back on their feet again and will produce needed economic activity in our communities and provide enjoyment to the participants and spectators. Thank you for your time and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**STINNER:** Any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Good afternoon.

**DAVE MLNARIK:** Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thanks for your time today. I'm Dave Mlnarik, D-a-v-e M-l-n-a-r-i-k, and I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Sports Council. I'm here to testify in support of LB1229, which was initiated from conversations between Senator Hilkemann and our longtime board member, Dr. Bill Schlichtemeier, and I want to thank them both for their advocacy and support. The Nebraska Sports



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

Council, which would qualify for LB1229 funding, provides affordable, family-friendly sporting events, fitness programs for more than 20,000 Nebraskans a year. And Senator Hilkemann named our programs. The programs collectively generate an estimated \$5 million for the state's economy every year. Our operational funding comes almost entirely from corporate sponsors from the business community. We get occasional tourism grants. Very, very little government funding in our history. For-- funds provided for this would cover costs associated with our free programs, and the primary one that I want to talk a little bit about is what's called the WellPower Movement. It's an online activity-tracking program. Right now, there are 8,300 Nebraskans who are members of this program that track their activity and it helps them stay on track being healthy and active and that is the main mission of the Nebraska Sports Council. Funding would allow the Sports Council to serve more participants, generate greater economic impact, and provide long-term financial stability. We do have host communities around the state for the events in the Cornhusker State Games. We now have events in Lincoln. There's ten sports in Omaha. We have two big ones in Kearney, two in Columbus, swimming in Fremont, and our Super Retriever Series in Grand Island. So it's not just a eastern Nebraska thing. We-- we serve a lot of the state, make it convenient for them to participate in our events. Our annual budget is around \$1 million. And when COVID came along in 2020, we shut down some of the Cornhusker State Games, an event we call the Mud Run that was a good fundraiser for our organization. The impact that year, our revenue was down about \$220,000, so about 22 percent of our budget. We did bounce all the way back with participation and event revenues in 2021. That's good news. But in the process of what happened with regard to the job market and supplies, it's been a stressful time. Our office manager went to work for someone else and we have a-- we have a staff of six. So going through that process, our landlord, their business changed because of COVID and we lost our office. So I don't feel like we're going to know the true impact of what COVID-- how COVID has damaged our organization for a while. We're still treading some of those issues that are related to that and everyone's dealing with supply and inflation. So anyway, we would greatly appreciate you advancing this through committee to the floor as part of this year's budget, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

**STINNER:** Any questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**DAVE MLNARIK:** Thank you.

**DEREK BOMBECK:** Good afternoon, Chairman Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Derek Bombeck. That's D-e-r-e-k

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

B-o-m-b-e-c-k. I'm the sales development manager for the sports market for the Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau. I'm here today to testify in support of LB1229 on behalf of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Lincoln Convention and Business Bureau. LB1229 would allow the Nebraska Sports Council to serve more participants, generate greater economic impact and provide long-term financial stability. I hope we can count on you and help this advance from the bill of the committee and vote yes if and when it reaches the floor. My heartfelt support to Dave Mlnarik and his team and their board of directors who continue as not only a great tourism driver, but more importantly, an outlet for wellness initiatives that involve households across our great state. While the bill itself aids with by covering costs associated with operating its free proگرامing and providing stipend payments for Nebraska college students engaged in the Nebraska Sports Council Internship Program, our enthusiasm shifts focus to how this will aid the Nebraska Sports Council with facility costs for hosting events that allow out-of-state participants and collectively generate millions in economic impact. In my role with the Lincoln CVB, as well as president of the Sports Nebraska, I witness the challenges we face every day recruiting events against other cities and states. The passing of this bill would allow us the opportunity and advantage to recruit new events and participants to our city and state. LB1229 would help us bridge the gap in finding new and exciting events that will continue to grow organizations like the Nebraska Sports Council, as well as so many others. The passing of this bill would give us a distinct advantage against our competitors when it comes to the recruitment of sports tourism. Similarly, providing great quality of life of wellness based initiatives for residents in our great state. Tourism is important to me from an organizational standpoint, but also as an economic driver to our state as we continue to rebound from the pandemic. Thanks for your consideration and I welcome any questions.

**STINNER:** Thank you. Questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**DEREK BOMBECK:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** Afternoon.

**JOANNE OWENS-NAUSLAR:** Good afternoon, Chair Stinner and members of the Appropriations Committee. I'm JoAnne Owens-Nauslar-- hyphenated woman. JoAnne is J-o-A-n-n-e, Owens, O-w-e-n-s-N-a-u-s-l-a-r, and you're going, what's going on here? I'm a cattle rancher. I'm a landowner in Lincoln and-- and Jefferson County and I'm a cattle rancher. And I'm also a health and fitness speaker so you're looking at me going, what

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Appropriations Committee February 11, 2022

does an old cowgirl have to do with all of this that's going on? Well, my remarks are supporting the request of the Nebraska Sports Council for allocation of the funding within the parameters of LB1229. My connection to the request, you can tell by looking at this hair, is I'm really old and I've had 38 years of connections with the Nebraska Sports Council. I sat in the basement with our founders, O. W. "Bill" Smith, Dr. Hammer and Jerry McGinn when they came back from Orlando and said, we're going to do that. I was the state director for health and physical activity at that time. And Jerry McGinn looked at me and said, Dr. Jo, you know all the people in the world of health and fitness, we're going to do this, get us sports directors. So that's my connection. And then I have 50 years in the business of promoting healthy, active living throughout the state of Nebraska. Just as a side note, I won the first Lincoln Marathon in 1978. It ran out by the airport. That was me and the jack rabbits, so [LAUGHTER] jackrabbits have been part of my life. So the previous testimony has outlined the benefits and opportunities that the funding can bring to Nebraska communities throughout the state. In addition to hosting events, the Nebraska Sports Council anticipates economic impact, as well as an image growth for Nebraska. Let's be known as the place that you come if you want to move to improve. Philosopher Aristotle said, good habits formed at youth make the difference, end quote. Additionally, my background as a doctorate in education, we have a substantial body of literature and referee journals that supports that additional physical activity provides us with opportunities for school success. Those areas of improvement referee in the journals substantiate positive academic outcomes as well as behavioral outcomes. Events sponsored by the Nebraska Sports Council provide opportunities for all ages, but expanding opportunities for children and youth could have long-lasting health benefits. If you don't have anything to do this September, come watch the pumpkin stroll in the Haymarket. See our Pumpkin Run. We'll have over 4,000 kids who are just excited about having the opportunity to move, connect, and do some-- something-- part of something bigger. Kids are 30 percent of our population, yet they're 100 percent of our future. We're asking for funding to support and to help the Nebraska Sports Council continue our investment in well-being activities, as well as opportunities for all age groups across the state. Nebraska is The Good Life state, and I believe we ought to change our slogan and be known as "The Best Life State" and this will help us do it. The Nebraska Sports Council has an accomplished statewide 30-plus-year history of hosting, coordinating and achieving excellence for events and activities in the realm of health and physical activity, as well as economic impact. For every setback, we need to have a comeback. As we rebound from the last two

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years, let us, the Nebraska Sports Council, be a team player in the health and well-being movement in addition to economic impact. Thanks for your time, your energy and your consideration for LB1229. I hope you bring it out of committee and then a yes vote when it gets to the floor.

**STINNER:** Thank you very much.

**JoANNE OWENS-NAUSLAR:** My pleasure. Thank you.

**STINNER:** Any questions? I love your enthusiasm, by the way.

**JoANNE OWENS-NAUSLAR:** Thank you.

**STINNER:** I heard Nebraska wasn't for everybody.

**JoANNE OWENS-NAUSLAR:** I remember that, yeah. And if you need a longhorn cow, I'm the gal you come to see. [LAUGHTER]

**STINNER:** OK. Any additional proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Senator, would you like to close?

**HILKEMANN:** How do you follow up on JoAnne like that? OK. Dr. Schlichtemeier was mentioned earlier. He and I were fraternity brothers at Wesleyan and he was talking to me, just-- just very late in the process when we were told we couldn't get any more bills in. I want to thank Kate. She went to work and got this approved and I think this is a good project. And also, I have a heart for this Cornhusker Games because, you know, when you get all the gray hair that I get here and you go on a bike contest, you generally finish up toward the last. This is one where because it's age related, that I actually won a ribbon at the Cornhusker State Games in the bike case. And so that's why I'm here with-- for those folks today. I'll finish if you have any questions.

**STINNER:** OK. Any questions? Thank you, Senator Hilkemann. We do have 19 letters of support for LB1229. So that concludes our hearing on 12-- LB1229 and our hearings for today.