

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee January 27, 2023

SANDERS: Good afternoon and welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. We have a couple more. Great. Thank you. I am Senator Rita Sanders. I'm from Bellevue, Nebraska, and I represent District 45, which is the Bellevue-Offutt community. The committee will take up the bills in order posted on the agenda. Our hearing today is your public part of the Legislature process. This is your opportunity to express your position on the proposed legislation before us today. The committee members might come and go during the hearing. This is just part of the process and we have bills to introduce in other committees. I ask that you abide by the following procedures to better facilitate today's proceedings. Please silence or turn off your phones or electric devices. Please move to the reserved seats when you are ready to testify. These are the first two chairs on either side, on either side of the aisle. Come to the first row and then move forward. Depart when you are done testifying. Introducers, introducer senators will make initial statements followed by proponents and opponents and neutral testimony. Closing remarks are reserved for the introducing senator only. If you are planning to testify, please pick up a green sign-in sheet. It is at the table on both sides of the room. Please fill out the green sign-in sheet before you testify. Please print and it is important for you to complete the form in its entirety. When it is your turn to testify, give the sign-in sheet to the page or to the committee clerk. This will help us make a more accurate public record. If you do not wish to testify today, but would like to be-- would like to record your name as being present, as being present here at the hearing, there is a separate white sheet at the table in the back of the room as well. Please sign the form and turn it into the clerk. This is part of the official record for the hearing. If you have handouts, please make sure you have ten copies and give them to the page when you come up to testify and they will be distributed to the committee. If you do not have enough copies, the page will make sufficient copies for you. When you come up to testify, please clearly speak into the microphone, tell us your name, and spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. We will be using a light system for all testifiers. You will have five minutes to make your initial remarks to the committee. When you see the yellow light, you have one minute to finish your testimony and then you will see a red light when you are done and you might even hear an alarm that will be timing you. Questions from the committee may follow. No display of support or opposition to a bill, vocal or otherwise, are allowed in public hearing. To the committee members with us today, we will introduce ourselves starting at my right.

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RAYBOULD: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Jane Raybould, Legislative District 28 from Lincoln, which is really the heart of Lincoln.

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37: Kearney, Gibbon, and Shelton.

HALLORAN: Steve Halloran, District 33, which is Adams, Kearney, and Phelps County.

HUNT: I'm Megan Hunt, and I represent District 8, which is the northern part of midtown Omaha.

SANDERS: I have our legal counsel, Dick Clark, to my left and the committee clerk, Julie Condon, over at the end of the table. And we have our afternoon pages Logan and Audrey. Is Audrey back there? Perfect. Now we will move on to the first item of the-- of, of a bill on the agenda, and I am going to pass this over.

LOWE: Welcome, Senator Sanders, to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm glad to see you could make it.

SANDERS: Thank you, Senator Lowe, and good afternoon, committee members. For the record, my name is Rita Sanders, R-i-t-a S-a-n-d-e-r-s, and I represent District 45, which includes much of the Bellevue-Offutt community in eastern Sarpy County. Today, I am introducing LB2 to create a Commission on Asian American Affairs. I want to thank Senator Danielle Conrad for cosponsoring this bill, the Asian American [SIC] Community and Cultural Center of Lincoln for bringing me this bill. First, I want to offer some context. In 2021, this bill was introduced by State Senator Matt Hansen as LB442. The bill passed through committee, but unfortunate-- unfortunately, it was not prioritized or discussed on the floor. Currently, the state has three other cultural commissions: the Commission on Indian Affairs, the Commission on Latino-Americans, and most recently established the Commission on African American Affairs. LB2 would ensure that the Asian American community in Nebraska has representation equal to existing commissions. This bill is structured the same way as LB918 from 2020, so that we could use an existing tested framework created on the Commission on American-- African American Affairs. The commission will have 14 voting members of Asian ancestry appointed by the Governor. Members will serve four terms. There is an annual cost and a fiscal note identical to the comparable commissions. I have mentioned this before, the commission would cost the state 250-- \$255,000 annually. The Asian American community in Nebraska comprises 3.5 percent of Nebraska residents, and they are the fastest growing minority group in the state. This includes descendants from over 20

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Asian countries and those who claim multiple races. The Asian American community in Nebraska has a tremendous impact on our state. Asian Americans are enthusiastic contributors to our workforce, and Nebraska enjoy products from Asia and Asian American cultures ranging from, ranging from cuisine to public events. We see their impact in Nebraska sports. Even Nebraska baseball [SIC] player Keisei Tominaga-- I believe I said that right-- represented Japan in 2021 Olympic Games in the three-on-three basketball game. Additionally, Asian American countries contribute greatly towards security of our state and nation. At Offutt Air Force Base in my district, 2 percent of the workforce there identifies as Asian. We work closely with countries such as Japan and the Philippines to defend the United States interests at home and abroad. Like the other commissions to the respective demographic, the purpose of this commission is to gather representa-- representatives, representatives of Asian American to enhance the cause of Asian American rights and to develop solutions to problems common to the Asian American community in Nebraska. This could look like developing programs to encourage the involvement of Asian American people in community activities or coordinating relevant programs in any policy area such as education, healthcare, or housing. Furthermore, a commission can research, document, and champion the history of their contributions to Nebraska, dating back to the 1800s, which later testifiers can speak to. Additionally, with the rise in instances of anti-Asian hate crime across the nation, it is more important than ever to establish a commission that can educate the population about the varying contributions that different Asian cultures bring to our state. This bill has a personal meaning to me. I believe I am the only senator of Asian descent. My parental family came from the Philippines in the 1920s to work in the sugar cane industry in Hawaii. As mayor of Bellevue, I was fortunate to connect with the Nebraska Filipino community and learn more about my own heritage. I want to re-- I want to recognize and thank the many supporters who are attending today. Following my testimony, you will hear from several proponent members of the Asian American community in Nebraska who can share about the culture, the need for this commission, and the culture-- cultural work being done here in Nebraska. You will also hear from the executive director of the Commission on Latino-Americans, who can tell you a little bit more about these commissions and how they work. And I thank them all for taking the time today to testify. Thank you for your time and attentiveness. And I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you might have.

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LOWE: Thank you, Senator Sanders, for your opening. Are there any questions? Seeing none, we'd have our first testifier. Just to go ahead of that a little bit, there were 16 letters in-- that were proponents, zero in opposition, and one neutral. Welcome.

SHARON ISHII-JORDAN: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Sharon Ishii-Jordan, spelled S-h-a-r-o-n I-s-h-i-i-J-o-r-d-a-n, and I'm here to testify in support of LB2. I'm very much in support of the creation of a Nebraska Commission on Asian American Affairs because of my long-term family history of Japanese immigrants in Nebraska and events that occurred in our lives. I'm a sansei, or third-generation, Japanese American with one-quarter Bohemian descent. Nebraskans often associate people of Asian descent as more recent first-generation immigrants, perhaps because they have the knowledge of the Southeast Asian refugees after the fall of South Vietnam. However, Asian American history in Nebraska goes back to the late 1800s with Chinese immigrants in railroad, laundry, and medicinal businesses and Japanese immigrants in thriving farm and town communities across the state. My own Japanese American history goes back over 100 years to 1907 when my paternal grandfather came to the U.S. and began his life in south Omaha shortly thereafter, working in the meatpacking plants. His older brother eventually moved to Scottsbluff to open a restaurant and a pool hall. My grandfather saved enough money to attend a driving school and became a chauffeur and butler for Minnie Storz, the daughter of the famous Storz family brewing company in Omaha. He later moved on to open his own successful photography studio in south Omaha. Unfortunately, in order to marry my Bohemian American grandmother, they had to go to Iowa because of the anti-miscegenation laws that prevented different races from marrying here in Nebraska. This law was not repealed in Nebraska until 1963. Because she chose to marry a Japanese, my American-born grandmother lost her U.S. citizenship, a U.S. law at the time. My maternal grandparents immigrated to the Sacramento area to farm on leased land where my mother and her nine siblings were born. She was 18 years old and a senior in high school when her family, along with other Japanese Americans on the West Coast, were forcibly moved into internment or incarceration camps in 1942. She spent two years in two different camps before her family members moved to Omaha to settle. Others from the camps also had opportunities to leave and moved to Nebraska for employment, Boys Town was a major employer of 200 or more individuals, and to UNL and other colleges for education during the war. In March of 1941, my father joined the Army Air Corps in Omaha. He eventually amassed 22 years in the Air Force and retired back to Nebraska. I've always appreciated my life as a military dependent growing up on three

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continents, yet my family also experienced discrimination by classmates or neighbors in Omaha who would call us derogatory terms or pull their eyes back. Discrimination existed then and still does now, as evidenced by hate crimes occurring as a result of the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In my professional life, I'm a teacher. I wanted to serve the students most in need with disabilities, limited English-language proficiency, and in the less economically prosperous parts of Omaha. The desire to provide just outcomes and opportunities comes from my family values, church upbringing, and my family's cultural experiences. I eventually earned a doctorate from UNL and was a professor first at UNL and then for 20 years at Creighton University, serving as professor, chair, and then associate dean before my retirement. I continued to work part time in education and research and part time as a volunteer in my church social justice committee, on the Omaha chapter board of the national Japanese American Citizens League, with Radio Talking Book Services for the blind, and giving presentations across the country on Asian American history so that the sometimes invisible knowledge about legislation and court cases, as well as cultural history, are made known to prevent our state and our nation from repeating past discriminatory mistakes and to support just equitable policies. That's why speaking in support of this bill, LB2, is so important to me. Nebraska has a rich history of Asian American contributions to the economy and producing leaders in business, education, healthcare, technology, the military, local firefighters, and police officers. But there are still challenges for all of us. I urge you to vote to move this bill out of committee and to urge your fellow senators to vote for the bill when it comes before them on the floor. Thank you.

LOWE: Thank you very much, Ms. Ishii-Jordan.

SHARON ISHII-JORDAN: Thank you, Senator.

LOWE: Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Our next proponent.

MARIA ARRIAGA: Good afternoon. I thank you in advance for your patience. As you might notice, English is not my first language. My name is Maria Arriaga, spelled M-a-r-i-a, Arriaga, A-r-r-i-a-g-a, and I am the new executive director of the Nebraska Latino-American Commission testifying in favor of LB2. First of all, I want to thank the Senator Rita Sanders for introducing the legislation that is so prevalent in our state today. This testimony is given in my capacity as executive director of the Latino-American Commission, but also as an immigrant. I like the-- I, like the tens of thousands of Asian

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immigrants in this state, came facing the same barriers, fears, and dreams that any immigrant faces, the language barrier, the language barrier being one of the biggest, but also the stigma and racism. I have worked shoulder to shoulder with them in a meatpacking plant 12 hours a day and there I noticed that, like me, this group also endured the same issues; lack of representation, lack of support, and lack of recognition. When the COVID-19 pandemic brought many aspects of the Nebraska to stand-- many aspects of the Nebraska to a standstill, it was Latinos and Asians alike that continued the vital work of providing food for not only the state, but of an entire nation and beyond. My mother, a 60-year-old woman still working at a meatpacking plant, speaks to me about the barriers, barriers that she and her Asian colleagues continue to face on a daily basis. And she also tells me that besides Latinos, the only ones who endure those jobs are Asians. I will give you a simple example, a person at this plant, at this packing plant takes it upon herself to provide translation services for as many as ten different Asian languages. This person is not receiving pay or recognition for the services that she's providing to communicate information to the workplace. This person has left the job due to feeling-- because she's feeling abused for not having adequate pay for her interpreting services. This left a large number of employees without quality attention in the labor field due to the lack of personnel able to speak the languages. This and many other stories that had been conveyed to me helped me realize that there is much to be done. In the nearly four months that I've been in the charge of the Nebraska Latino-American Commission, I have recognized how powerful and important it is for our community that an organization like this exists. From things as small as asking for guidance or assistance to interpret a phone call or translating a document, to being the only point of support to request help to locate a family member lost in another state where the language barrier and lack of knowledge and how the system works made it almost impossible to obtain information on their location or health status of their loved one. In situations such as, such as this and many others, it is important to have a voice that can be heard on these issues where in many cases there are no other entities fighting for you and your rights. No other entity in Nebraska can provide the things as a state commission is able to. The most important, being a direct communication link between them and the state. It helps bring the population closer to the government and shows that Nebraska has a genuine interest and investment in this specific population. A commission that represents your community is important because you focus on the specific needs, limitations, and issues which have caused pain and suffering as well. Knowing that there is a medium, an entity

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through which can influence the policy, and speak on behalf for your community's needs and problems, provides representation, and most importantly, has the ability to help influence the law, gives us a sense of belonging in this capital and in this state which we call home. I will end by saying that Nebraska has some of the country's fastest growing communities of color. The Hispanic population has nearly doubled since 2000 U.S. Census. Residents who trace their heritage to Asia and the Pacific Islands increased by more than 70 percent over the same time. And even so, and despite their labor and cultural importance, they continue to be one of the most vulnerable and less represented communities. They need a commission to fight for their particular needs just as the Latino-American Commission has done for more than 50 years for our own community. I stress the preponderance of the existence of the commission representing the Asian American community, and I urge you to advance this bill to the General File. Thank you so much. If you have any questions, I'm more than happy to answer.

LOWE: Thank you, Mrs.-- Ms. Arriaga. And for English being not your first language, you did very well.

MARIA ARRIAGA: Thank you. I was so very nervous.

LOWE: No, you're very welcome. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

MARIA ARRIAGA: Thank you.

LOWE: Please go ahead.

SHEILA DORSEY VINTON: Sure. Good afternoon, committee members. My name is Sheila Dorsey Vinton. That is S-h-e-i-l-a D-o-r-s-e-y V-i-n-t-o-n, and I am the executive director/CEO of the Asian Community and Cultural Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. I'm here to testify in support of LB2, which would create a Commission on Asian American Affairs. The Asian Community and Cultural Center is a nonprofit organization that supports and empowers all refugees and immigrants through programs and services. At the same time, we strive to advance the sharing of Asian culture and every cultural heritage of our clients with the community at large. For over 30 years, our organization has served the Lincoln area by increasing the stability of immigrant and refugee families who face economic and cultural barriers to self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency as new Americans. Our clients come from a wide variety of backgrounds spanning over 30 nationalities, including Vietnamese, Chinese, Karen, Middle Eastern, Yazidi, Afghan, and

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Ukrainian populations. And here behind me in the audience, you will see just a portion of our staff members who do this work, all of whom are here as a physical presence of support for LB2, also Karen Society of Nebraska representatives are here in support as well. When we brought this bill to Senator Sanders, we did so knowing that the Commission on Asian American Affairs is a much-needed entity. It has the potential to create a lasting impact by promoting Asian American interests in our state and eliminating disparities. The Asian Center will not directly benefit from this bill, but it would serve to improve the lives of Asian Americans throughout the state. At the Asian Center, we have seen firsthand many of the successes and barriers Asian Americans experience in the community. These barriers vary widely and can include lack of mental health resources, translation and interpretation barriers, insufficient support for survivors of domestic violence, and racially motivated aggression and crimes, among others. With the establishment of a Commission on Asian American Affairs, there is the potential to research these issues and develop culturally relevant resources that are unique to impacted communities. The Asian Center is primarily focused on community support within the Lincoln and Lancaster County areas, so a statewide commission has the potential to reach even more Asian communities in Nebraska. There's also the possibility of addressing new challenges that may exist and we do not know about. The commission can connect residents to organizations and agencies that help resolve these issues, or even use this as an opportunity to share that there are cultural groups in Nebraska that exist to help with building community. And of course, a commission like this would have the opportunity to recognize the contributions of Asians to Nebraska, honoring veterans of Asian descent, supporting Asian American-owned business interests, and tracing the history of Asians in the state. Asian immigrants started coming to Nebraska as early as 1875, primarily from China and Japan, including many Japanese sugar beet farmers near Scottsbluff in the early 1900s. Lincoln became a primary refugee resettlement site for Vietnamese refugees fleeing their homeland in the 1970s and continued to be resettled in Nebraska in the 1990s, making it one of the largest groups in Nebraska, originally from Asia. Those families have raised their children and grandchildren here and contributed many successful businesses to our state, along with their scholars and other professionals. In the 2000s, people began arriving to Lincoln in Nebraska from Myanmar/Burma. Karen, Karenni, Zomi, and others have made their home in our state. Many refugees and immigrants find their initial jobs in the agricultural sector, our primary economic driver. Also Vietnamese is the third most spoken language in Nebraska, and Asians are the fastest growing

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minority group. With this growing population, it is necessary for everyone to have a voice and adequate representation. And lastly, it is helpful to note that across the nation there exist dozens of commissions on Asian Americans in a wide variety of cities and states. From California to Iowa to Virginia, advisory groups like these exist to uplift the diverse voices of the Asian community and inform governing bodies of issues impacting them. Just this past week, a legislator in Kansas introduced a bill that would also create a Commission on Asian American Affairs. We think Nebraska should join these efforts in recognizing the diversity of our state, and having a commission in place would go a long way in continuing to make our state more equitable and inclusive. I urge you to vote in support of LB2. I thank you for your time and consideration and I'm happy to answer any questions.

LOWE: Thank you, Ms. Vinton. Are there any questions? Yes, Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you so much, Senator. Not really a question, but just wanted to say welcome and thanks for your good work and your staff-- staff's good work. I'm very familiar with your organization, and you are an absolute gem for the Lincoln community. So thank you so much.

SHEILA DORSEY VINTON: Thank you so much.

CONRAD: Yeah.

LOWE: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Thank you. Next proponent.

CHUEQA YANG: Comfy. All right.

LOWE: Just relax. It's OK. Go ahead.

CHUEQA YANG: Good afternoon, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Chueqa Yang, spelled C-h-u-e-q-a Y-a-n-g, and I'm representing myself in support of LB2 in creating this long overdue Commission on Asian American Affairs for Nebraska. Firstly, I want to thank Senator Sanders for reintroducing this bill. I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. I currently live in Lincoln, where I was able to receive my college education at UNL. There I reestablished their Asian Student Union in 2016 that focuses on education about Asian and Asian American issues, and it is a source of political and social advocacy for students in the community at large. But I wasn't always an advocate for Asian American issues. Growing up in Nebraska, I lived in neighborhoods that had very few community members. I went to schools that were predominately white or

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black, and my parents were the stereotypical immigrant workers that worked every day. So I never learned my native language. And it wasn't until my second year of undergrad where I rediscovered my Asian identity and grew to cultivate and love my culture. In undergrad, I found community within a multicultural sorority and absorbed so much knowledge, care, and comfort from strong, independent Asian American women. Being surrounded with people who understood the same struggles that I had growing up felt empowering. I recognized that there are few resources given to Asian students on campus. For example, UNL got rid of the only Asian American Studies major available, and it seemed like there was no safe space for Asian identifying students. It made sense for me to reestablish the Asian Student Union, and it really fueled my passion to be an advocate on these issues. I am Hmong American and first generation. My parents immigrated from Laos 44 years ago and you are probably unaware of what or who Hmong people are. It's not short for Mongolian, we're not Laotian, but that can be confusing because my parents, their village resides there. Hmong people are a small, nomadic Southeast Asian mountain group that don't have a country of origin. Though we make up a small percentage of the Asian community here in Nebraska, I can attest my people have always been incredibly bold and talented. I mentioned before my dad, my parents emigrated 44 years ago, my dad fought in the Vietnam War with the U.S. and brought my mom back. In 1994, actually rest in power, Lormong Lo was the first Hmong American to be appointed to city council in Omaha and was the first Hmong ever to become president of a city council. He was also the first Hmong American to ever hold the title of acting mayor in June 1997. I don't believe there has been a lot of Asian representation in Nebraska political offices in a while. Senator Sanders mentioned before is the only sitting legislator of Asian American heritage today. Within the last few years, there has been a scary rise of anti-hate-- anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S., and I was asked to speak to hundreds of people in front of the, the State Capitol to rally and march against the discrimination and violence against Asian people. This was in response to the 2021 tragic Atlanta spa shooting of eight people, six of whom were Asian women. That same summer, I found hate crimes of graffiti here in Lincoln on 27th Street. I found someone had written the capital letters WHO, short for World Health Organization, on only Asian-owned businesses and buildings on that block. And it all really hits me in waves, you know, like my parents didn't sacrifice immigrating to this country to be put on this model minority myth or to be fetishized to the point of getting shot at or even getting curb stomped on like our elders. The point taken, Asian Americans are not a monolith and are a huge diverse group. We can see how much culture and talent Asian Americans have

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given to the community from the growing Karen community in north Omaha, the growing Laotian and Viet community in South Sioux City, and the growing Yazidi community here in Lincoln. This commission can and should be-- and should research, document, and champion the contributions that Asian Americans have made to our state so that such contributions can be duly recognized. Please vote in support of LB2. Thank you.

LOWE: Thank you, Ms. Yang. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. How many more proponents are going to be speaking? OK. Thank you.

SOULINNEE PHAN: Forgive me. I'm a little nervous.

LOWE: Oh, relax. We're like your brothers and sisters up here.

SOULINNEE PHAN: That's great. Good afternoon, everyone that's here. And good afternoon, Senators. I would like to thank you for the time today and providing me an opportunity to speak before you. My name is Soulinnee Phan. That is S-o-u-l-i-n-n-e-e P-h-a-n, and I'm here to testify in support of LB2, creating Commission on Asian American Affairs. I'm a first-generation American, born here in Omaha, Nebraska. Growing up, I lived in a small town 30 miles south of here in Beatrice, and I currently live here in Lincoln, working and raising my family here. I'm here on my own regard representing myself and my loved ones and my community. And I'll testify on my personal experiences and the reasons why I'm here to support LB2. What I'm about to share with you today is very personal and dear to my heart. I was eight years old when my father told me a story that impacted me throughout my entire life in all my experiences. At the time, I didn't realize how important it was. It was 1980, similar to our proponent ahead of me, Chueqa, my dad had arrived in the Omaha airport. My family are refugees from Laos. They fled their homeland due to poverty, corruption, violence, and war, not only in their own country, but from the surrounding countries as well. My father told me that he didn't know where he was going to go, what was going to happen, who he was going to meet. And he had put his trust in a stranger by the name of John Tiger in Thailand. Mr. Tiger told my father that he was going to be taken to a place where he can start a new life for his family. There was going to be people that will be helping along the way until they arrived here in Nebraska. Now, imagine going to a country starting over with nothing. Not being able to understand and speak the language clearly, thinking to yourself all these questions. Where am I going? What's going to happen? Where will I live? What will I do? How are we going to survive? My father was not worried about just himself.

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He was worried about three aunts, two uncles, and my mother who was pregnant with me. They had clothes that they were wearing, belongings that they could carry in a white bag that my mother was holding. And in this white bag was the most important thing they had in their possession, documents saying and showing that they were legal to be here in the United States, in the state of Nebraska. My mother still has this bag. My father said that the tunnel walking from the plane and towards the airport seemed endless. And the weight of his anxiety, his nerves, the fear heavy on his shoulders and the pressure pounding against his heart. All of them walking through the same tunnel, feeling the same thing and asking the same questions to themselves, not knowing what to expect. And I remember my dad pausing for a moment while he was telling me the story and telling me to dig the dirt for the garden at the same time. I remember looking at my dad and seeing him fight back his tears filling up with his eyes. And I will always remember the sigh that he had before he told me that the moment that he looked up for the first time, he saw a large group of people, a large group of people of families, significantly the Hill family. They were all there to greet to help my dad start a new family and a new life. These were our sponsor families. They helped my family with learning the basic skills to help become sustainable in a new country. They helped with finding a home to live in, finding work, writing a check, getting a high school diploma, getting their GEDs. They took my parents around Omaha to show them where the grocery stores were, the laundry mats, the parks, the hospitals, the government offices. They supported my family in creating a system for them to be successful. Not everybody is going to have a Hill family. That is why I support LB2 in creating the Commission on Asian American Affairs to be able to help support the purpose of creating this commission to join the community leaders and representatives of Asian Americans in Nebraska to help determine and educate and enhance the rights of Asian Americans. A committee that can help define the gaps and develop solutions to problems that are significant and common for all ages and everyone living here in the state. I, too, had also struggled and I, too, also had to overcome a lot from my life experiences. I'm in a position right now in my life where I can speak for those and help those that are needing to be helped. And I want to be able to support everyone that is needing that support system to be able to live a sustainable and equitable, happy life here in Nebraska, home of the good life. Right? I thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share my story with you today and I appreciate your time and thank you for all that you do for our community and for everyone here in the state.

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LOWE: Thank you, Ms. Phan. You did a great job. Are there any questions? Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Not really a question. Just wanted to provide a comment. Thank you for sharing your strong advocacy and your lived experiences with this community or with this community of legislators. But I, I think your testimony really resonated with a lot of us, and we really appreciate the, the time and talent in which you delivered it.

SOULINNEE PHAN: Thank you.

LOWE: Are there any other proponents? Are there any opponents? Are there any in the neutral?

MARRIANNE WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, committee.

CONRAD: Good afternoon.

MARRIANNE WILLIAMS: My name is Marrienne Williams, M-a-r-r-i-a-n-n-e W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s. And I want to thank Senator Sanders for bringing this bill. I am 100 percent in support of this bill. I just have a few concerns. As a samoan and a Pacific Islander, I was a little concerned that we were not represented on the bill because we are often grouped together as a racial group. Our cultures really don't have a whole lot to do with each other, but we are pretty regularly put together. All the time, actually. So I was-- I-- and I spoke to Senator Sanders before testifying and, and she's aware of it. And, and I just-- I'm hoping to see some changes in the bill that would reflect my heritage, too. And that's all I have today.

LOWE: Thank you, Ms. Williams. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Are there any more in the neutral? Seeing none, Senator Sanders, would you like to close?

SANDERS: It's a really big chair for some of us, right? I would like to thank all the testifiers and supporters who took time out of their Friday to show support of this legislation. I want to add one more thing before we close today. Of course, on the legislative website any constituent can submit their opinion on a bill and senators and staff can view these comments. One comment we received was the neutral position from Mrs. Williams of Lincoln. Mrs. Williams is a Pacific Islander, mentioned that American-- Asian American community and the Pacific Islander community are often grouped together in statistics, culture, and the like. This is referred to as AAPI. They share a heritage month in May. They are often referred to as one group in the media reporting, and from the 1800s to the 2000s, the U.S. Census

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Bureau put two together into one category. They are now separate. Mrs. Williams suggested that this commission be the Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission. To be honest, we do not consider this-- we did not consider this until just yesterday. More research could be done to determine if this would be a good addition. Based on some brief research, the Pacific Islander community is split on whether to be identified with Asian American community or to be seen in their own right. I do not know what Pacific Islander make up-- I do know that Pacific Islanders do make up only one-tenth of a percent of the population, whereas I mentioned Asian Americans make up a larger portion. My staff briefly spoke with the Asian Community and Cultural Center in Lincoln and there is no immediate objection to this inclusion. Such as-- such an addition would ensure that the Pacific Islander could have their voice heard as well. I leave that decision up to the committee. With that, I thank the committee for their time and I would like, would like to ask the committee to advance LB2 to General File at your earliest convenient-- convenience. I am happy to take any questions.

LOWE: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Are there any questions? Seeing none, that ends the hearing on LB2.

SANDERS: Thank you. We'll go ahead and continue with our next hearing, LB51. I think we're set up to go and welcome.

BRIESE: Thank you and good afternoon, Vice Chair Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm Tom Briese, represent-- T-o-m B-r-i-e-s-e, represent District 41. I've introduced LB51 at the request of the Clerk of the Legislature. The bill would repeal obsolete language regarding the use of the state's telecommunication systems by members of the Legislature. In December of last year, the Executive Board updated and modernized various policies of the Legislature, including our telephone policy. As part of that update, the Board removed outdated language that referred to the practice of state senators making long distance calls on the state telecommunications system using state credit cards, which has not been the practice since at least the 1990s. LB51 would simply repeal similar language to the language that was removed from our policy manual that refers to this outdated practice. And so I'd be happy to try to answer any questions about it. But the Clerk is with us today, I think he's going to testify, and I think I'll probably waive closing unless you want me to hang around for something. But with that, I can answer any questions.

SANDERS: Senator Halloran.

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BRIESE: My lucky day.

HALLORAN: So we don't have credit cards anymore?

BRIESE: Not to be used with our phones anyway, or some state credit card. He'll explain it.

HALLORAN: I was looking forward to this, this is pretty controversial so this could be a [INAUDIBLE].

BRIESE: Yeah.

HALLORAN: That's all I have.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Senator Briese.

BRIESE: I'll waive closing then.

SANDERS: Thank you.

BRIESE: Thanks.

SANDERS: Are there any proponents that would like to testify? Opponents?

BRANDON METZLER: I'm sorry, are we--

SANDERS: Yeah, are you opponent?

BRANDON METZLER: No, I was waiting my turn.

SANDERS: Is it neutral?

LOWE: Thought you were going to blow up Briese there for a minute.

RAYBOULD: Lots of questions.

CONRAD: So many questions.

SANDERS: Keep us on our toes.

BRANDON METZLER: Thank you, members of the committee. My name is Brandon Metzler, B-r-a-n-d-o-n M-e-t-z-l-e-r, Clerk of the Nebraska Legislature. Very briefly, as Senator Briese alluded to, this was cleaned up from the Executive Board, Executive Board policy in December of last year. The policy itself has to do with long distance

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calls. Basically, to, to summarize it for you, the way that, that we are charged for our phone calls because we've switched over to VoIP, we no longer have a, a charge where the, the individual making these personal or long distance calls need to actually reimburse the, the telephone company, OCIO, etcetera. So it's just a flat fee and that fee is covered when we pay, we don't have reimbursement. The credit card portion of this was also struck that had to do with calling cards. So, Senators, some of you may be familiar with the calling cards. We no longer have calling cards. So that portion was also struck, basically cleans up to match policy.

SANDERS: Are there any questions?

BRANDON METZLER: Yes, Senator.

RAYBOULD: You know, I'm kind of curious with a cleanup item like this, and there's been a few other cleanup bills, once it comes out of committee, does it go to a consent file where we just say, that's fine or no, does it have to go through the General File and just--

BRANDON METZLER: So, Senator, generally, it's going to be determined by how you vote in Exec Session. So depending on how this comes out, I mean, we say it's clean up, but if you guys, if, if the members have a, a different opinion, there's a vote in, in a negative capacity, it's no longer an option for consent. But there will be a time, having talked to the Speaker, and I think you heard it as well in some of those meetings, that he'll have a consent calendar at that time. There will be the option for committees to recommend or senators' bills for a consent calendar, and the Speaker will make that request. And certainly some of these cleanup, depending on how they look coming out of committee, the recommendations of the Chairs, etcetera, would be an option for, for some of those consent calendars.

RAYBOULD: So how does it work? So does the committee have to vote unanimously and then put a tagline, put this in consent file?

BRANDON METZLER: I, I would say legal counsel can certainly talk about it when in Exec Session and, and legal counsel will, will kind of pinpoint this would be a good one for consent, etcetera. And then it's the Speaker's determination. He'll throw it on the consent calendar. There's a large number of bills.

RAYBOULD: OK. Thank you.

SANDERS: Senator Halloran.

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HALLORAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for your testimony. Very good. So has this been a, a substantial issue with people making long distance phone calls?

BRANDON METZLER: It, it has not anymore. Now that, now that all calls are a flat fee, we don't have the problem. As all of you are aware, we still record those long distance calls. The fact that they were made. We don't record the call, the call itself. Apologies, Senator.
[LAUGHTER] Yeah, we record the fact that those calls were made and then your office and, you know, you sign off on the, the calls in your office but-- and that's just for auditing purposes.

HALLORAN: You're just wishing to avoid the, the potential difficulty of that happening, I guess.

BRANDON METZLER: Correct. Yeah. This is just current policy, Accounting will still provide you the list of long distance calls that are made. There's just not that reimbursement aspect. There's no calling card aspect. So we cleaned up that section and essentially took that out.

HALLORAN: I'm certainly fine with this as long as they're not recorded.

BRANDON METZLER: They are not recorded, Senator.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

BRANDON METZLER: Thank you.

SANDERS: And this ends the hearing for LB51. OK. And we will need to clear the room for Exec Session.