

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Urban Affairs Committee August 2, 2024

**McKINNEY:** I am Senator Terrell McKinney, Chair of the Urban Affairs Committee. Before I start, I would like each senator to introduce themselves, starting at my right.

**LOWE:** Senator John Lowe, District 37.

**HUNT:** Senator Megan Hunt, District 8, in the northern part of midtown Omaha.

**McKINNEY:** The committee legal counsel to my right is Elsa Knight, and the committee clerk to my left is Raquel Dean. Today and before all hearings to be heard will be posted outside the hearing room. The senator introducing the proposed legislation will present first. Senators who serve on the committee are encouraged to ask questions for clarification. That said, the presenter and those testifying are not allowed to directly question senators serving on the committee. For purposes of accuracy, to record, we ask each presenter to state one's name, spell it, and state who you represent, if not yourself. If you're planning to testify today, please fill out the testifier sheets that are found in the binders on the tables at the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill out completely. When it's your turn to testify, give the testifier sheet to the page or the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify but would like to indicate your position on a bill, please complete the sign-in sheets with the LB, LR, or AM number. These can be found in the binders on the back tables. This sheet will be included as an exhibit for the official record. In your Urban Affairs Committee, we use the light system to, to promote maximum engagement of those wishing to express their position on the proposed legislation before us. The light system will generally be 5 minutes with the green light, one with the-- 1 minute with the yellow light, and red, we'll ask you to conclude your testimony. I think we'll just use 5 today. Might as well. Not a lot of testifiers. Should you have handouts you wish to share, please share 10 copy-- copies or ask our clerk to make the copies. The clerk will then distribute any handouts to all committee senators. Following all proponent, opponent, and neutral testimony, the, the bill's presenter is offered the opportunity to close with final remarks. As a committee, we will work diligently to give fair and full hearing. We will make every effort to accommodate special requests of assistance. At this hearing, we ask you to be respectful of the process and to one another. And lastly, please put your phones on vibrate or turn them off. Thank you. Senator Wayne, you're welcome to open on LB49.

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**WAYNE:** Thank you, Senator-- Chairman McKinney. 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. This is a bill that I brought a couple times over the years that I've been here. The one that was the most successful was in 2021, with Senator Hunt. We used one of her bills after a storm froze and increased natural gas prices to allow municipalities to get grants. What that taught me is that if we are serious about property tax relief, we got to provide more, more funding at the local level to these counties and cities to make sure that they can keep infrastructure and those kind of things that we all depend on. They used to have municipal aid. And then over the years, they cut it. And by the time I got to the Legislature in 2027 [SIC], it was gone. And so I think one of the things we can do is provide more resources at the local level to provide property tax relief. And with that, I'll answer any questions.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you. Are there any questions from the committee? No? Thank you.

**WAYNE:** I'll waive closing. I have a fundraiser to get to.

**McKINNEY:** Any proponents?

**CHRISTY ABRAHAM:** Sorry. This is a new room. I don't want to invade your space. Thanks. Thank you, Senator Lowe. Hello, Senator McKinney, Senator Hunt. Nice to see you this morning-- this afternoon. My name is Christy Abraham, C-h-r-i-s-t-y A-b-r-a-h-a-m. I'm here representing the League of Nebraska Municipalities. Thanks to Senator Wayne for introducing this bill again. As I went back, I think this is the fourth or fifth time this committee has heard this bill. Senator McKinney had this bill in 2023. So we're grateful for all the folks that have introduced it over the years. And as I reread the testimony from the last 4 or 5 times this bill has been introduced, sort of the testimony has very similar themes. Municipalities are in dire need of infrastructure funds. We have storm sewer problems, wastewater problems, crumbling streets and bridges, so we're very grateful for this influx of money to be used for infrastructure. As you know, there is a bill in Revenue, LB1, that's putting caps on municipalities at possibly even 0% property tax increase authority. So any funds that we can have seem particularly important right now. So we're, again, grateful for Senator Wayne and want to support this bill. And I'm happy to take any questions.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you. Are there any questions? No? Thank you.

**CHRISTY ABRAHAM:** Thanks so much.

**McKINNEY:** Other proponents? Are there any opponents? Any neutral testifiers? No? That'll close our hearing. But for the record, there were-- for online comments, there were zero proponent, 1 opponent, and zero neutral. Thank you. Now we'll move on to LB78, Senator McDonnell.

**TIM PENDRELL:** Hello. Tim Pendrell, T-i-m P-e-n-d-r-e-l-l. I'm filling in for Senator McDonnell, who is in Revenue with everybody else. This bill is-- well, thank you, Senator McKinney and members of the Urban Affairs Committee. This bill is LB78, a pivotal proposal aimed at amending provisions relating-- related to the issuance of bonds by cities of the metropolitan class. This bill underscores a democratic approach to fiscal responsibility and community involvement in significant urban development projects. LB78 mandates a crucial requirement for any bond or series of bonds exceeding \$80 million earmarked for a specific project. The consent of the registered voters of the metropolitan city must be sought and obtained. This provision ensures that the voice of the community is not just heard, but is integral to the decision-making process for large scale financial undertakings that have a profound impact on the city's future and its residents. In discussing LB78, it's important to distinguish that unlike state appropriations that do not increase debt, this bill addresses the potential taxpayer liability for city projects, necessitating repayment regardless of the project's financial success. By bringing such financial decisions to a public vote, LB78 aims to foster transparency, accountability, and civic engagement, ensuring that the projects financed by these bonds truly reflect the will and the needs of the community. It is a step towards making more participative government, where the residents become active stakeholders in the urban development narrative. The requirements set forth by LB78 to involve registered voters and decisions for significant financial undertakings aligns with our commitment to democratic principles and responsible fiscal management that acknowledges the importance of ensuring that large scale projects, which have the potential to shape the city's infrastructure, economy and community life for years to come, are embarked upon with widespread public support and scrutiny. Thank you for your time today. I would appreciate your support of LB78 and its potential to redefine how cities of metropolitan class approach significant development projects through enhanced public participation and oversight. And Senator McDonnell can answer any questions if you have them for him. But I believe this committee had the same bill during session, so you can also look back to the transcripts.

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**McKINNEY:** Yep. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you.

**McKINNEY:** Are there any questions? No? Are there any proponents? Are there any opponents? Any neutral testifiers? OK. For the record, for online comments for LB78, there was 1 proponent, 1 opponent, and zero neutral. That'll close our hearings for the day. Thank you.

**HUNT:** Thank you.