

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 18, 2001 LB 598

particularly in a system that's fraught with problems right now. People work hard in the system. They care about the kids. But it's an overwhelming system. Has problems with the computer system, it has problems with finding placements. It needs this oversight at this point in our history. Now is not the time. And the recommendation that came down, from which this bill was developed, was also made with the caveat that you have to get the confidence of the system of people who surround it, not just the department, that the evaluations and the assessments that are being provided are working to make sure that it's the best possible treatment for the child, and will have the outcome that we want to have. There isn't confidence in that system in some parts of the state. The second thing is you need to have the continuum of care built, and the options there. If you pass this amendment, the department will be able to get...continue to build that depar...that, by having the ability to make the placements, which I support. The court will be able to direct level of treatment, but the placement will be with the department. However, before that placement is made, a plan must be in place, and there is an appeal process to that plan. So I support a vote for reconsideration. We're probably going to spend a lot of time on this bill, because this is something I cannot rest without knowing we've given it a thorough, thorough review. Because this is significant, this is significant. This is a huge change. And I think we shouldn't leave it up to a court process, and leave these kids in these limbo situations for years, until this is resolved. We need to take care of it now, on the floor, by getting this system either deferred, or the suggestion that's in LB 598 that's being considered; we either need to defer it or we need to amend it. And this reconsideration motion gives you the option to amend it, with a process that's worked in the state since it was voted on by the Legislature in 1989. We're just extending that same level of oversight to the courts, and not taking it away from them in terms of plans for juveniles, and oversight of those placements that can be appealed through a court process. So you have two options; one is to reconsider this motion, and fix this bill now. And the other is to spend some time talking about deferring this decision, which will come in subsequent amendments if you don't reconsider this motion. Thank you.