

to a decrease in the number of children born each year with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. According to estimates based on data presented in the fiscal year, 1979, the state plan of the Nebraska Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, approximately six hundred children a year are born in Nebraska with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy or autism. Medical technology has identified many causes of mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. According to a report by the President's Panel on Mental Retardation, 50% of the known causes of mental retardation are preventable. Such causes include, poor maternal nutrition, excessive smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, overexposure to x-rays and lack of immunization against or improper care against childhood diseases." That gets back to the original intent of LB 59. "Other developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy and epilepsy are equally preventable. Based on such facts, it is the State Board of Health's opinion that educating Nebraska's young adults as to the causes and prevention of mental retardation and other developmental disabilities can and should play an integral role in reducing the incidence of mental retardation and other developmental disabilities among the citizens of the State of Nebraska by means of educated prenatal care. The second major reason the State Board of Health strongly supports LB 63 is that of public education. Two substantial benefits can be achieved as a result of public education. First, increased community awareness and sensitivity and, second, appropriate intervention as a result of early identification of mental retardation and other developmental disabilities." And there is more that I would like to read to you but I know that we have discussed this matter several times. I hope that you will seriously consider it because I think it is a very good step to take for the State Legislature and the State of Nebraska. I want to emphasize one point once again. This is not a new course. We are already teaching health education but we are not including in that a unit on mental retardation. This would only add a unit, not a whole new course to the school systems and the school districts will decide for themselves how they want to teach this unit. There is no specification in the law that says you have to do this, you have to do that. You have to teach so many hours. You have to do it in this manner. That is left up to the school boards. They can decide for themselves how to do it. All we are saying is that mental retardation is a serious problem in the state and by taking some steps to educate our children about its causes and how we can prevent it, we can provide some positive solutions to that problem and