

March 30, 1981

LB 317

Education and Nebraska, I think, without a doubt is one of the leaders in the nation, and I am always amazed when I go back to conferences with other state legislators when they talk about their problems, they are indeed a considerable distance behind us. A year ago this body brought, or the Education Committee brought to this body a coordinated commission where we said we would bring all the agencies dealing with Special Education and the handicapped under a memorandum agreement. Presently they are working on that and I have an update on that program. I will be willing to give that to you at a later time if you desire a copy. Now what we are trying to do is bring the mental retardation districts into a position of responsibility on certain occasions, primarily where residential care could be considered as appropriate. This is what this bill is basically about. Now I will give you examples. There are several cases throughout the State of Nebraska where we have children who are severely and profoundly handicapped. The question is residential care. The best residential care would be offered by a mental retardation district. However, there is nothing in the law presently which says that they have to be concerned about this. And I believe if we are going to look at the care and the education of a student, then we should look also at residential care which may be most appropriate. For example, around Hastings, Nebraska there is a case where a child severely and profoundly handicapped is being offered education in that vicinity. However, the residential care is a big issue, and if it goes on to its end, it could well be that that school system will have to provide a residential care that could amount to something like \$60,000 a year, when nearby is a mental retardation office that has facilities where this child may properly be placed, be near the parents and be an appropriate environment for his residential situation. This is what this bill is about, to try to bring the office of mental retardation and the regions into a responsible position of how we are going to take care of the problem of educating children beneath the age of 21. I ask this legislative body to consider seriously the intent of LB 317. I think it is important. The committee does and would hope that you would consider it equally important with us. There is an A bill attached to it. We always get down to dollars. Might as well speak to it. It's up there. I remind you the bill calls and I think just the amount is....Pat, do you have that figure up there? I don't have a copy in front of me right now.

CLERK: Senator, I don't have it with me. It's out in