

January 12, 1982

LB 423

SPEAKER MARVEL: The motion is carried, the committee amendments are adopted. Senator Sieck, do you wish to be recognized?

SENATOR SIECK: Yes. Mr. Speaker, members of the body, we are now going to talk about LB 254 which was inserted into 423. And it is amended somewhat to take out the private schools out of the bill. The reason this was taken out is because some of the parochial schools had difficulty about teaching that young women would have a problem and could have a problem in mental retardation in early pregnancy. My feeling was that the private schools are teaching it and that I had no concern about taking this out because I feel that the parochial schools have good moral ethics and do what I would like to see the public schools do. Now it is my intent in 423 to mandate that a portion of the already required school health curriculum address the problem of developmental disabilities. If the information that is available were put to use, approximately one-half of the mental retardation that occurs could be prevented. What I mean by this is if we could keep the childbearing women from smoking, from drinking and from using drugs, we could prevent 50 percent of the mentally retarded population from being retarded. The important thing about this bill is that we would ensure that young people receive this information prior to childbearing years and that is in the schools. How else can you get it? Many of our parents do not teach our children it seems, and I feel that this is where it should really come from, but we have to go to the school system. Current statutes already require that a health curriculum be offered that must include drug abuse education. Therefore, LB 423 simply specifies that mental retardation is caused by abuses of these drugs, alcohol and tobacco as well as other factors. Besides just decreasing the number of mentally retarded citizens, the best interests of the State of Nebraska will be served as well. I say this because it costs the state anywhere from \$2000 to \$30,000 per year to care for and train a mentally retarded citizen. Thus if 423 is enacted, it should prevent mental retardation and save the state future expense simultaneously. Here is what this bill will do. First, it will require instruction of development disabilities but it also provides for potential long term cost saving to this state. These savings could save up to \$1 million dollars in one child's lifetime in an extreme case. We now have a cost of \$28½ million dollars for special education in this state. The annual cost per client at the Nebraska Development Center at Beatrice is \$19,000 while the annual cost for a student requiring special education in the public schools may run up to \$60,000, and I was alerted to this from the school district at Coleridge just a year ago.

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