

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Wiitala.

SENATOR WIITALA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, colleagues, when this amendment was first proposed I signed onto it for a whole host of reasons but largely because when 652 originally lay in committee and the equivalency provision was stricken from it, I couldn't accept advancing it from committee to this floor. On first notice when I took a look at this amendment it did provide some equivalency over a four year stretch, sixty hours for elementary teachers and a hundred and twenty hours for basically high school teachers. And so I felt that that put some teeth that were missing in LB 652 but on further consideration of this amendment I feel that it was poorly drafted, maybe hastily drafted. It was almost drafted on the floor that day and that there are all kinds of weaknesses within it that I think that you should be notified of. First of all, there is no enforcement provisions in the bill that provides a plan but no penalty, no enforcement for complying with that plan. Another problem is that in two years time a high school teacher or one who is aspired to have some equivalent hours to teach in a Christian school, it would take them to achieve those forty hours they would have to do it in one year. It is an impossibility and as you go down the plan you're going to see that it would be highly impossible for any teacher to get those hours if they were to continue teaching as I suppose they presently were. There is also some other difficulties, difficulties for the Catholic schools in that we're creating a two tier accreditation process here, two different types of schools. There are some fears among Catholic administrators, laymen, parents. The schools may opt for the lesser of the two standards largely because of reasons of economy and that is a problem, at least for the high standard that our parochial schools have maintained in the state. There is no definition in this amendment for equivalent or accredited hours, nothing whatsoever. What does it mean to get an equivalent? They don't mention credited and so it could probably be in anything. It could be in basket weaving, it could be in physical education, it could be mail order hours or any type of hours. Aside from the fact that this is going to be a very difficult amendment to comply with and really, isn't that what we are striving for? As I listen to debate on the floor largely we are trying to resolve the issue, not so much for the fundamentalist as it is for the Amish and the Mennonites. This amendment is not going to cure the problem of the Amish and the Mennonites. In fact, it heaps misery on the dilemma that they are faced. Now I have heard talk that the Christian fundamentalists are in favor of this amendment but I haven't heard anything about it. In favor of this amendment? No one has written to me about it and hardly anyone if anyone