

the smaller schools, who have told me all these years about what great places they are and what great quality education they have, to live with the system if they happen to have some parents that don't quite agree with that assessment. This allows them an opportunity to look at their programs, improve their programs. I would be shocked if a school district were to say, okay, we lost 5 percent of our students, we're going to hang onto those other 95 percent, we're going to make things worse for them, and then the next year we lost another 5, so let's make things worse for them. They're going to be trying to improve their schools districts, and that is what this is all about. Every student in the State of Nebraska, this is included, will be a student of choice.

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: They will have chosen to go to the school district. Most of them, and I think it will be far more than 95 percent, will choose to go to their home school district, they will not choose to opt out. But they will choose to go to their home school district because they like the quality that is there and they will have some leverage to deal with their school administrators and their school boards to see to it that those schools continue to meet their needs. The concept of elitism is a very hollow charge when we have, we have choice today, and the choice truly only exists for those people...and I shouldn't say elitism. I know a lot of people that are paying tuition to go to private schools, boy Senator Hall just hit the floor to hear this, too. A lot of people are paying tuition to go to private schools aren't necessarily your rich, wealthy individuals, but they are making sacrifices and they are able to make those sacrifices. This would allow choice for students that are not necessarily meeting all of those needs. I think this is a good amendment, good clarification amendment. The charges of too many amendments and elitism are probably the two more hollow arguments I've heard to date on this bill.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Before proceeding to the next speaker, the Chair is pleased to announce that Senator Hannibal has some guests in the south balcony. We have 50 students and their teachers from Omaha Burke High School. Would you people please stand and be recognized by your Legislature. Thank you. We appreciate your taking the time to be with us this morning. Further discussion, Senators Hefner, Hannibal and Bernard-Stevens. Senator Hefner, please.