

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. President and members, I rise as a co-sponsor of LB 438 with Senator Wehrbein. This is an issue that I have been involved with for a number of years prior to Senator Wehrbein with Senator Wiley Remmers. And we sat, as many of you know, on a commission that dealt with the needs of the children who were students in both the school for the hearing impaired and the visually handicapped as well and did a two-year study on whether or not these schools should be merged either together, merged with schools of a like nature or whether or not regional schools should be developed. Came to the conclusion that these schools needed to be kept, at this point in time, separate and distinct and that there was one recommendation that the commission did make and that is what is embodied in LB 438, that the funding for these schools, at least the tuition for the children should be borne by the state. They are state schools and the issue of the ability...one problem should be taken out of the formula and that's the problem of whether or not the school district can afford to send their children if the residential facility is the facility best suited for that handicap of that individual. So I wholeheartedly again rise in support of this measure. Senator Baack, if you would yield to a question since we are dealing with your amendment to the bill.

SENATOR BAACK: Yes.

SENATOR HALL: The amendment...and I understand the second half and totally concur with the clean-up language that...basically the back half of the bill, but on the first two pages you deal with language that talks about an appropriate special education program and you are accurate when you say that this language is consistent with language that's found in other sections of the statute. But my question is, if this were to serve as a barrier so that possibly with the passage of this bill that we found out two years down the road, for example, that these young people, because of the language that we are placing in the bill right now, still did not have that opportunity to, even though the needs assessment showed that they're best suitable for this residential program, if this was a roadblock to them achieving that, would you be willing to come back and readdress this issue and look at modifying the language that we're currently placing with your amendment into the bill?

SENATOR BAACK: Absolutely, Senator Hall. It is not my intention to put up any roadblocks or anything. I just...my