

It's better for the people. It's better for the state and it's the right thing to do, and again, would help alleviate the regional center crowding problem. And so I see, with the EPCs and with the community based program initiatives, two ways in which resources can be put into place that better serve our people at a better cost and...and still take care of the regional center problem that we have. What I'm saying is there may be alternatives to this ward being opened that would be better spent and better serving the State of Nebraska. In addition, the idea of serving this over-population by opening up this ward, again, there is a higher cost to institutionalization and community based programs will serve more people with the money that we have and we have a broad range of needs and so we have to understand what the trade-offs are here. If we go forward with this ward, then that means money not available for community based programs that may better serve the functions and needs that we are envisioning here. So I'm just saying, Senator Peterson, maybe it's better not to proceed at this time. Let's take a little effort to talk about this and maybe there are some ideas that we have yet to really fully explore that may better serve this problem.

**SPEAKER BARRETT:** Time. Senator Hannibal, followed by Senators Hefner, Wehrbein and Korshoj.

**SENATOR HANNIBAL:** Mr. Speaker and members, I...I need to state emphatically that I am very empathetic with Senator Peterson and his goals and I believe very, very strongly that Senator Peterson is working in good faith on this issue and feels...he feels very strongly that this needs to be done. My position and the position of the committee has been that we probably ought not to get involved in the department's operations. I guess you could say that if there is a problem, it's not necessarily making the decision to open the regional center at Norfolk, to open that new wing, but maybe it's a problem with the director of the department and maybe we ought to just approach the Governor and suggest that the director isn't fulfilling his needs and duties and say we need to have a replacement. Now, I don't happen to feel that way and I don't think most people here feel that way. I think that Dale Johnson has been doing an excellent job there and I believe the Governor thinks that he has also been an excellent job. I happen to see behind the glass a former director that was kind of smiling back there. I think he was probably saying in his mind, geez, I'm glad I'm not going through this myself this time. But Senator Wesely has