

innocuous. It does deal with the idea of providing notice and that is reasonable. It also provides an optional ability for recipients to go to pharmacy services outside of the contracted services but it makes it optional, not mandatory. As a result, it won't supersede that earlier legislation I was talking about which would still be in effect dealing with contracting services. So it is, I think, an agreeable amendment with an understanding again that we're trying to make it a fair situation and give an option to the department. But I, for one, want to emphasize to you that if we're ever going to save money on health care costs and health care services, you have got to be able to let the marketplace work and the marketplace won't work if you allow everybody in the world to get in on whatever contract is negotiated on, whether it be a doctor's or hospital's or pharmacist's. You have got to let competition in the marketplace enter into the health care field or we're never going to get a handle on the thing. This doesn't upset that situation, I think, unduly again because of the "may" provision in there. But I just want to raise this point once again that we have got to move forward in trying to get that competition and marketplace factor interjected and I hope some day we'll see the department pursue that and I hope that that will be soon.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. May I introduce some guests, please. Under the north balcony, Senator Rod Johnson and Senator Scott Moore have some folks from Stromsburg, Nebraska. They are Duane and Brenda Oquist and their children, Matthew, Katie, Mark and Peter. Would you please welcome them to the Legislature this morning. Thank you for visiting us. Senator Pirsch, please, followed by Senator Abboud and Senator Hefner.

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you, Mr. President. I just wanted to rise and give my support to this amendment. It's... Senator Wesely was very thorough in his examination of this amendment and I do want to point out that it is true that the competition and the availability of pharmacy services is very important and this is a very small step in that direction. But, again, we want that option and I think this amendment, while it is just a small step in the right direction, will accomplish at least a start. So I hope you will support it.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Abboud, please.

SENATOR ABOUD: Question.