

SPEAKER BARRETT: The Chair recognizes Chairman Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, this bill would bring our number of caseworkers for child protective custody and foster care up to national standards. The desire of the committee, because of the fiscal impact, was to phase that in over a period of four years. That's what the committee amendment would do, it would phase in the move up to those national standards and I would move for its adoption.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Discussion on the committee amendments. Seeing none, those in favor of the adoption of the committee amendments to LB 720 please vote aye opposed nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 28 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the adoption of committee amendments as offered by the Health and Human Services Committee.

SPEAKER BARRETT: The committee amendments are adopted. To the bill, Senator Wesely, would you care to explain LB 720?

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, LB 720, another important bill dealing with children, attempts to address a problem we've had in this state with lack of what are called CPS and foster care workers in the Department of Social Services. The situation is that we have an incredible amount of domestic problems in Nebraska and elsewhere in this country where you have child abuse and other divisions in families that have resulted in placement of children outside of the home and you must try to, as best you can, investigate these complaints of child abuse and, number two, hopefully try to keep on top of the situation with those foster children so that they are not lost in the system. I know many of you are familiar with the Franklin case and that has brought a lot of attention to this sort of problem, but this whole concern is not new and limited to that. It is something that is before this body now for some time and this piece of legislation was introduced prior to any of the revelations on Franklin coming out to the general public and what we found was, according to the nationally recommended standards, Nebraska had far too few caseworkers, too few individuals to take care of child abuse complaints across the State of Nebraska, too few workers who try to keep track of our wards and foster care children so that they didn't get lost and