

I looked at the fiscal note, it suggests at least to me, and I haven't checked it, but it would appear that there is other employees within Social Services, and I'm sure it's true in other agencies, to which you could apply certain national standards and say that is the one that would govern the amount or the number of people you will have employed. I think it's probably correct, without any question, that some additional number of protective workers are indeed needed. I think it's a mistake, as a matter of policy, to tie the state to some national standards which may or may not be appropriate for Nebraska. Certainly it may or may not be appropriate in certain areas in the state. Certainly I can see where you get outstate where large...long distance to travel, even the national standard may be in excess of what a caseworker could adequately cover and I understand it would be only average, but nevertheless, I believe it's a mistake as a matter of policy to put this into statute and those, you may have justification of doing just the A bill if you want to fund more. I don't think you ought to do it on the basis of some national standards over which the state would have relatively little control and, more importantly in my opinion, would lead to a number of other types of criteria being established for numerous areas of state employees or local government as well.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Kristensen, please, followed by Senator Morrissey.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members, I somewhat agree with Senator Warner that it concerns me about tying ourselves to other national standards and so far this afternoon the discussion has really centered around the children. I'd like to take a different approach in that and look at the plight of the protective service worker in this state. From my experience in dealing with them, they, too, are at a breaking point. My experience also is from a protective service worker out in the rural areas and not one in Omaha and Lincoln and I quite frankly can identify with their caseload and how they may operate, but on a typical day we only have five caseworkers for a five-county area and what those people are required to do is almost impossible. Not only are they supposed to save the children's lives, they are supposed to stop them from being criminals but, quite frankly, they have very real day-to-day things that these workers must do. They are in the process of recruiting foster homes. In two counties we only have one licensed foster care home. Whose job is it to go find