

appreciate the support from Senator Landis, Senator Morrissey, Senator Kristensen. As I said earlier and will reiterate that I'd be willing to work with Senator Kristensen on a differentiation on these workers' placement recognizing the travel time problem for our rural areas and I think that would be definitely advisable, so I'm more than willing to do that. Senator Warner did raise an objection dealing with the national standards. We did look at other states and a number of states do follow those national standards, but I would be willing to look at modification of that language. The real gut to the bill says the director shall establish and maintain caseloads and then it references the national standards as something as a reference, but not necessarily absolute, and so I can see where his concern is there. The intent is to give some guidelines to the director, but it also isn't attempting to be a straitjacket so I could see where we could, I hope, alleviate Senator Warner's concerns with further amendment and, again, I pledge to work with him on that. In follow-up to that, the national standards that we have, it was raised I believe by Senator Scofield, she's back, Senator Scofield, I don't know if you recall, but when we had the Appropriations hearing on this measure, you raised the point on national standards, tied into Senator Kristensen's point, that because we're more rural, the caseloads may be inadequate for a rural state, that the travel time and the differentials that you just talked about, Senator Kristensen, may mean, in fact, that we may be holding ourselves back by tying into national standards instead of pulling ourselves up, although at this point, obviously, we'd have to increase staffing to meet those standards. They still may not be adequate, recognizing in the rural areas of the state, the problems that they have. And so I'm willing to look at that issue, Senator Warner, and recognize the unique character of Nebraska, but the bottom line is, as others have said so well, the bottom line is the children and the children are not being served. They are left in abusive situations, it's intolerable and we ought not to let it continue.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Coordsen, please, followed by Senator Schellpeper.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Would Senator Wesely yield to a question, please?

PRESIDENT: Senator Wesely, please.