

straightforward bill and provides us with the means to obtain some information that I think is necessary for us to have. Frequently, before the Commission On Postsecondary Education, I have asked them when they come and give their report to us, who is teaching our teachers how to teach? You know, I think this is something that they should be addressing because they have to do with the education policies of our state, especially in postsecondary education. And the problem that I have always had and the Education Committee members have heard me speak about it before, is the fact that we have a functional literacy rate in Nebraska that I think is unacceptable. And I don't know how we address this if we don't take advantage of these sort of studies and try to find out where the problems are, where they're starting, where they're coming from and what we can do to stop that. So I would ask that you support this legislation and I don't ever want to stand up here and say, trust me, because I don't like that particular phrase, but I think this is legislation that will be of benefit to education and to the youth of our state. Thank you.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Thank you, Senator Dierks. Senator Baack, please.

SENATOR BAACK: Yes, Mr. Chairman and colleagues, I think we're having a very good discussion about what this bill is all about. And I think that just to add another perspective to it, I think we did, you know, we took what I consider the best first step towards restructuring schools last year and that's when we passed choice. And that was the first step in the process. I know that educators will argue with me and say that the first step in the process is you give them the restructuring and then we'll talk about choice. I think you do it the other way around and you give parents the ability that if a school district is talking some restructuring, maybe doing some programs that they're not in agreement with, you give those parents an opportunity to go to a different school. So I think that, you know, one of the reasons that I felt that choice was necessary was to provide for innovation and creativity of ideas and for schools to...and to promote those kind of ideas so that schools could promote creativeness, promote innovation in their school so that they could make their school better and make their school more attractive for students so that they could bring in choice students to their school district. We now have choice in place in Nebraska. I think this is the next logical step is that we allow those school districts some flexibility in