

SENATOR WITHEM: Very hard for me to give their rationale. I support 346, I voted in favor of it, plan to continue to. I think their rationale is one of the traditional separation of church and state arguments. It's, frankly, one that doesn't carry a lot of weight with me anymore, because I think we need to be supporting children that go to schools and supporting parents that send kids to schools. That's why I supported 346. I can't give a good justification for their rationale.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Thank you, Senator Withem. I wanted that question answered just for the record. But I still say that we have 34,000 students in our private schools, and I, myself, and several others on this floor, at least 23 others, feel that the parents of those 34,000 students that attend the private schools should also be included in LB 1059, or else the advancement and support from the members of this body on LB 346. But I will have that amendment on LB 1059 on Select File. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Bernard-Stevens, on the advancement of the bill.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. We've had a very good discussion today. There are still a lot of things I think that...a lot of questions that might still be there that need to be asked. I would encourage the body to ask whatever questions they need to, try to find the answers that they need so that we can continue this discussion on Select File. I also would hope that we would also keep the focus on where...what the bill is trying to do, because obviously we're talking about a school refinance, we're not talking about an overall property tax solution, that has to come at another time. But there is something that we have to do in this state because of the tremendous inequalities that are out there in the way we finance schools, and that is we have to do something on the refinancing of those schools, and 1059 is the product of a long, long time...efforts of work, 18 months of work by a lot of good, dedicated people. I think they've given us a good alternative today. I think they've given us something that we can live with in the State of Nebraska, and it also gives us something that will provide equity and fairness in the way that all children in our state can have an equal opportunity to have the type of education that they deserve. And, with that, I urge the body to support 1059 on its way to Select File. Thank you.