

population, and provides for a follow-up evaluation of students who have attended the academy. Again, I apologize for not being better prepared with those, but these are, in essence, fairly technical amendments that will allow the process of this Unicameral Scholars Academy to function better, if you should choose to agree with the concept that Senator McFarland is bringing forward. These are amendments that need to be adopted. So I would urge you to support these amendments.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Any discussion on the committee amendments? If not, the question is the adoption of the committee amendments to LB 226. All in favor vote aye, opposed nay. Record, please.

CLERK: 27 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on adoption of committee amendments.

SPEAKER BARRETT: The committee amendments are adopted. Senator McFarland, would you care to open on the bill itself.

SENATOR MCFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and senators. I appreciate those that are here and listening and in attendance. I know it's been a long day. This is a...may not be as dramatic a change in education as 1059 will be, but it is an area that I think is very significant and is an area that I have taken a great deal of interest in in the time that I've been here in the Legislature. It proposes to establish a Scholars Academy for gifted students within our state. It is modeled, to a degree, after many of the scholars' academies or gifted education summer programs that are in a number of other states in our country. I think there are about 25 to 28 states in our country that have some form of summer program for gifted students. This particular bill would establish a scholars program for gifted students in the seventh and eighth grade. Many of the programs are focused on the senior high students. There are some that are focused on junior high students. The reason we designated junior high students as the ones most in need of this type of summer program is that for many gifted and talented students the junior high age group is a critical period. It is a time when many very bright young men and women either excel...choose to excel in their educational careers, or they make the other choice and they become underachievers, or sometimes they even drop out of school, have problems in school and so on. What we're trying to do is develop a program for students across the state who may have the most intellectual ability, intellectual potential of the students in our state, but may not necessarily