

Bernard-Stevens. He is Jerry Wilson from North Platte, and he's under the north balcony. Would you please stand and be welcomed by the Legislature. And also I have some guests of Senator Emil Beyer. There are 63 fourth graders and their sponsors, from the Golden Hills School in Omaha. And they're in the south balcony. Would you folks please stand and be welcomed by the Legislature. Thank you for being with us. Mr. Clerk, LB 701.

CLERK: LB 701, Mr. President, was introduced by Senators Rasmussen, Wesely, and Withem. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 23, referred to the Education Committee, advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments pending by the Education Committee.

SPEAKER BAACK: The Chair of the Education Committee, Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, LB 701 is a bill brought to us primarily by a group of individuals in the state that have been working for the past several years trying to meet the needs of preschool handicapped youngsters. Currently, Nebraska is one of those states that provides educational experiences for special education identified preschool students. But we don't provide other types of family based services. LB 701 is a bill that will establish that type of program. The bill has a lot of broad-based support, as you can see from your bill book. It also is a relatively expensive bill, if your definition of expensive...if four and two-thirds million dollars meets your definition of expensive, this was a relatively expensive bill. The principles of 701, the committee felt, were very important. We also realize that we're not going to be able to afford that sort of bill this year. So our desire is to establish...keep the process of planning going, and establish some pilot programs, and not spend a lot of money this year. And that's what the committee amendments originally did, attempted to do. They, frankly, didn't do it particularly well. So my recommendation to you would be to defeat the committee amendments, and then adopt amendments that Senator Rasmussen has offered...will offer to you here in the near future that do basically what the committee amendments attempted to do, a few other things, and probably are drafted in a better form to accomplish what needs to be done to make this bill something that we can work with during this session. So I would ask that the committee amendments be defeated.