

CLERK: Nothing further, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BAACK: We will now have discussion on the advancement of LB 701. Senator Wesely. Senator Rasmussen already did open so, Senator Wesely, you may...

SENATOR WESELY: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. I would rise in support of advancement of LB 701. I'm pleased to co-sponsor the bill with Senator Withem and Senator Rasmussen and appreciate the good work of Senator Rasmussen on the bill. We are attempting to move forward in an area that Nebraska was, again, a leader nationally in trying to recognize the virtue of early intervention to help those individuals with disabilities. I recalled this discussion when I was first here back in the late seventies and when we moved forward to take that step, we were one of the first states in the nation to do that. We were a leader then and to move forward on the implementation of Part H will provide leadership again. We just had a briefing at the NCSL meeting last week where there are only a handful of states that have moved forward in this area to a similar degree that we have and it would be nice to move forward and complete the process through and implement LB 701. What we're talking about here again is there has been study after study that indicates early intervention is valuable, it makes sense. It attempts to recognize the need of these individuals early on and deal with their situation, trying to do as much as we can to help with the idea that we're making an investment of those individuals to have the most fulfilling, rewarding lives possible. And we have made that commitment here. We're going to improve upon that commitment we made some years ago by improving the collaboration between the agencies involved and working from a number of different angles that maybe we haven't in the past, but the whole idea is that we identify these problems and disabilities, address those problems early on, recognize that our school system is mandated to provide from the federal government special education services. And then understand also that later on you will be considering another bill that talks about after they get through the school system what happens to these individuals, what kind of program supports do we have for them? And so I'll wait for that time to talk about this issue once again, but clearly we need a long-term view, a continuum of services and attention to this issue. This is step one. Early intervention in a coordinated fashion, more steps need to be taken and those steps will be looked at later on with other legislation. But I would like to rise in support