

SENATOR ROBINSON: Go ahead and then I will open on the bill, respond to the amendment.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: What I am concerned about with this amendment is I don't object to the concept of space that's not being used on school campuses, state school campuses to be used in other ways. What I'm concerned about is maybe a hidden agenda here to hurry up and fill up these buildings so that they might not be available then for use that this study might then recommend a year from now back to the Legislature. So, Senator Hall, would you like to respond to some of my concerns in terms of what the intent of this amendment is?

SENATOR HALL: I would be glad to if there are specific questions or just in a general way. I would just state that my purposes for supporting the amendment that Senator Wehrbein drafted are that this issue goes back a number of years. We had talked about it, I know, in some other legislation. There was a number of different groups that studied the use and the, I guess, the need for the schools of the visually impaired and the school for the deaf and that those studies, the latest one being one that took place in 1985-86, of which I was a member along with Senator Remmers, who is no longer here, but then we were reappointed...we were appointed at that time by a fellow by the name of Bob Kerrey. We were then reappointed by Governor Orr because it was a two-year program and we looked at what these programs were all about. We came to the decision with that committee that they were viable programs. There wasn't any existing programs we could merge with in a regional area, that, yes, there were some issues that needed to be addressed in terms of moving other types of programs, expanding the application of those residential facilities to other areas in education. And those have been continued to be addressed. One of those most recently is the one of having the state pick up the total cost for the students at those residential facilities. In this case, through this amendment, one of the chief areas of, I guess, concern at both residential facilities was that, yes, their numbers, their populations were down from the 100, 200 years ago when they were established as schools, the Nebraska School for the Deaf and the Nebraska school for the blind. And they were campuses that were large. The problem is, is with many of the multitypes of handicaps that were being addressed at these facilities, there was much space needed but there was still some facilities that...actual buildings on these campuses that could