

to address the overall system. I applaud what is currently before us in the form of the committee amendments and 638 as it will be amended by them. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Hall. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Madam Chair and members of the body, I apologize to you for not being here as...I particularly apologize to Senator Dierks who had to introduce the committee amendments in my absence. I just wanted to comment on what it was that the committee intended in so amending this bill. I...I certainly understand the concerns of Senators Wehrbein and Hall that they are voicing, were voicing, because of what they have seen to be repeated attacks on the two residential schools that exist. And this bill, in its original introduction fashion, was another attack upon those, or at least part of the bill was. The committee felt that we ought not to do that, that we ought not to take away the property that is owned by those schools and, in effect, sunset them out of existence while we're doing this study. By the same token, I think the committee recognizes there is a concern with those two schools, as there is a concern with how we deal with our young people in this state that are in need of long-term, long-term placement. On one hand, we probably provide more resources than are needed for the schools for the deaf and the schools for the visually impaired at the same time that we're spending tremendous sums of money, in some cases, and sending out-of-state placements because we don't have placements in Nebraska. So the committee amendments are to look at the overall problems of severely disabled young people and how we can provide more appropriately for those people here in Nebraska. And if it means altering the role and mission of some existing institutions, then we may need to do that. But it should not presuppose that we're going to do that or presuppose that we're going to close any campuses or presuppose that we're going to make another major attack on those individuals. So the committee amendments attempt to do somewhat of a balancing act in putting everything on the table to look at but not presupposing a result that's going to be negative for those...those particular campuses. So that's what the committee was attempting to do by drafting these particular amendments and sending the bill on to you and I would urge you to support the amendments.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Withem. Senator Rasmussen.