

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature. This bill, I think, does a number of things to clarify statutes and policies and procedures relating to the licensure of child care in the State of Nebraska; a very important topic and one which I think we all have a great interest in. First off, there has been a problem and a concern about how we deal with the coordinating commission that was established several years ago to deal with child care issues and has been co-chaired by now Senator Bromm for several...well, since the existence of the coordinating commission. And one of the concerns has been how do we appoint the chair, how do we deal with who chairs that. And there are several provisions in the bill that address that. The committee amendments clarify that it's the Governor who shall appoint the chair of the coordinating commission, and that that chairperson shall not be from either the Department of Social Services or the Department of Education, they shall be somebody independent of those two. So that is an attempt to clarify, but in fact I think it's an interim effort. I think that there will be further looks at that issue of how the commission is structured, and chaired, and its location within state government, and I anticipate that we will see further changes proposed in the future. But at this time our thought is to make it clear the Governor picks the chair at this point. We also talk about the annual report in the bill, which we can talk about later. But that annual report that we require, at the hearing we heard that there was a need for information dealing with immunization compliance and also the complaint tracking system that has recently been put in place for the Department of Social Services. So we include that in the annual report that has already been required. And actually what this bill does is take two annual reports and combine them into one, and now we're, with committee amendments, adding what's included in the annual report. We talk about, in the bill, allowing individuals to have a grant from the child care block grant, but there was concern at the hearing about allowing people to have too much access to repeat grants. And so this requires that an individual, under the committee amendments, get only one grant in a three-year period. This does not allow them to annually get a grant, has a restriction to making that grant available only for a three-year period. We talk about, in the original bill dealing with accreditation of child care programs, and we can talk about that when we get to the main bill. That...the bill mandated that there be rules and regs for the accreditation, and this goes from the mandate to