

amendments.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Matzke. Is there any discussion of the committee amendments? Seeing none, Senator Matzke, do you wish to close? Closing is waived. The question before the body is the adoption of the committee amendments to LB 451. All those in favor vote aye, all those opposed vote nay. Have you all voted? Please record.

CLERK: 26 ayes, 0 nays, Madam President, on adoption of committee amendments.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: The committee amendments are adopted. The Chair recognizes Senator Engel to open on the bill.

SENATOR ENGEL: Madam Speaker, members of the Legislature, LB 451 will provide for the establishment of standards for licensing Native American foster homes. This bill was brought to me by the Department of Social Services and the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. LB 451 would allow the Department of Social Services to establish separate standards for the licensing of Native American foster homes living outside the boundaries of any reservation. Families who live within a reservation are licensed based on standards established by the tribe. These standards would be developed by a committee jointly appointed by the Department of Social Services and the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs and would provide culturally sensitive standards for the health and safety needs of children and youth. These standards would comply with the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act, the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act and all other applicable federal and state laws. You may wonder why there is a need for different standards for Native American foster homes. Let me assure you that the standards covering age, character, criminal history, financial resources, et cetera are still required. The standards that would be established would cover the cultural differences. For years Native Americans have reported that current foster home licensing standards are insensitive to the culture values and beliefs of Native American families. For example, the majority standard that each child have his or her own bed is not a belief held in the Native American culture. To the contrary, it is important for siblings and nonsiblings to share a bed. This legislation would further the goals and purposes of the Federal and Nebraska Child Welfare Acts in that additional Native American families would be licensed, increasing available