

counties to incorporate, to come together, to work together, but bind themselves so they can access state services and that's a policy that I don't know if the Legislature wants to start down that trail. I'm not sure it's necessarily a bad concept, but to do it here with this bill, with this approach, basically, I think you'll find the counties all back out and say, no way, we can't afford to spend the extra money to buy the insurance. With that, I would oppose the Beutler amendment. He brings a policy choice to the Legislature that's fairly..fairly plain, but it has grave impacts. I rise to oppose it. Thank you.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Kristensen. Senator Hartnett.

SENATOR HARTNETT: Mr. Chairman, members of the body, I also oppose this. We, a couple years ago, the three senators from Sarpy County passed a bill that allowed part-time public defenders in counties over 100,000 because the law was so that if you got over 100,000 that you had to have full-time public defenders and the basic reason that we did and still have part-time public defenders is because of the cost. We would break the cost because we are a suburban county and we have lots of costs and a part-time public defender works out better. Whether we'll ever use this...what we're passing, Senator Beutler, in 646, I don't know, but right now, you know, this kind of forces us to have a full-time defender in four years and so I think from our county would be a bad move. I think we like...I think the counties would like to have the independence like Senator Kristensen said with his...with his county and we do too, that we have part-time rather than full-time. It seems to work well in our county and we're the third largest county in the state, so I simply rise to oppose this amendment.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Hartnett. Senator Beutler, there are no further lights. You're recognized to close.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Bernard-Stevens, members of the Legislature, I don't think that size is an excuse for ignoring responsibility. It is the responsibility of the counties to take care and to have a public defender system. When they do it in such a way that they lack the expertise to operate a real system and then call upon the state for funds to operate their local systems, that's not responsibility. That's just a system whereby the larger counties pay for it out of local funds and