

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: You have about three minutes.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Great, won't need that much. Thank you, Senator Crosby. I appreciate Senator Crosby yielding to me especially since she has no idea what I'm going to say and she might not agree with what I say but, Senator Crosby, I appreciate the courtesy. I just want to make one point that I think is very important relative to this section of the amendment and that is that the Legislature is taking back, in my opinion, the authority of setting the appropriation for this particular issue. I agree with the comments that have been made. This is very important. It's a very important component of welfare reform. It's a very important component in that these individuals need this funding and yet I also believe that we need to be able to go through the appropriation process and set the level of funding that we deem appropriate for any two-year period for this program just like we do in a myriad of other programs. So my point is I think this amendment is important because we then take back the appropriation authority that I think the people of Nebraska expect us to have and don't acquiesce to some sort of an automatic adjustment that will be made by rule or regulation. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Maurstad. Senator Wehrbein, now you're recognized for your five minutes.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I want to just a couple comments. I do have the rates here now, Senator Hall, if you are interested in specifics. I'm not going to go into them over the loudspeaker, but if you have more interest in it I will definitely do it. I want also to remind the body no federal funds are available if you go above the 75 percentile and unless a child has very special needs and then there is a provision for that. The other thing I wanted to... significant to me, we spent \$27 million on this area last year and it's an area that I think it's right. I keep using the word "appropriate" all the time. I'm trying not to do that. It sounds like appropriation, but at least it's right that we at least have some handle on that and the market survey should and could have an impact. We've tried hard not to get too far out of line in many of the things that we do and those are the kind of struggles that we have and some of the problems that many of you had in raising the rates that we did. We had the pay equity issue in it for development disability providers