

April 1, 1996

LB 1189

SENATOR BROWN: Madam President, members of the Legislature, I have to disagree very vehemently with Senator Avery in terms of when this needs to be dealt with, because during the normal biennium budget issue we, the Legislature, we, the Appropriations Committee, made a commitment in terms of funding at 75 percent and in terms of intent language for the future this year of raising it to 80 percent, and I think if we go back on that commitment, we will not move forward in this area at all and I think we will also be called into question about any of the commitments we make in terms of intent language. If the issue is honestly about whether we should be involved in this area, whether we should be providing that much resources, then we better have that discussion and we have had the discussion over a period of years around LB 8...the bill that originally funded developmentally disability services and the blueprint, and I'm sorry I can't think of the number right now. The second issue that I take...that I take great issue with, with Senator Avery about, is that I don't believe the services will be available if we do not do this. Without pay equity, there's...the services are not going to be available and we can talk about reducing the waiting list and it just will not happen. We've had a lot of discussion in the last week about our low unemployment economy and competition for positions. We've talked about fast food restaurants paying between \$6 and \$7 an hour and in order to be able to compete, we have to have salaries that are reasonable in this area or the services just are not going to be there. The third thing that I would dispute a little bit, and I don't think the senator talked a lot about it, but that the money is going to remain in the budget, as I understand it, to replace potential federal cuts and this is an area that both the administration and the Appropriations Committee decided not to deal with what is potentially out there in terms of federal cuts and only deal with those things when they're actually put in front of us. And so having the money just in the system is, in my estimation, not going to do anything to improve services to these people who absolutely need the services, and if we're going to make that kind of policy decision, then I think we should be making it honestly rather than having this kind of a sort of around-the-door discussion about it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Brown. Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Madam President and members, I rise to oppose