

away the earmarks of the federal fund, the estimate for state aid, which only be used for such purpose, and what we are saying is, it will definitely go to community-based mental health programs, so that we are assured that that program will continue to get full funding and the cuts then would be coming out of operations of DPI. I hope that's clear. I know it's a little difficult to explain, but that's the intent of the committee's recommendation to override this one thing, and that is the earmark specific, once again, it does not deal with dollars. It simply removes or adds the earmark to community-based mental health programs so that funds will go to that program and not potentially suffer. It would be within the purvey of the director to continue a million dollars to these programs, even with the earmark removed, but we want to be sure that it does go to community-based programs. It does take away a little of his flexibility, granted, but it also assures that community-based programs will get their funding in the form of state aid that they have been receiving.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senators Stuhr announces that the following guests are visiting the Legislature. There are 38 fourth graders here from the Milford Elementary School in Milford, Nebraska, with their teachers. Will you all stand and be recognized please. Welcome to the Legislature. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature. I rise in support of the amendment offered by the Appropriations Committee, but I also want to take an opportunity to talk about mental health funding. I suggest that it is unfortunate that we are facing the cut that we are. We, in studying the mental health services in the state, have come to the conclusion that there is, in fact, an ability to save money through the Regional Center and to serve people with mental health needs better and more efficiently in the community. The problem is that any time you try to make a transition like this, you can't shut down on the Regional Center side, and automatically start up on the community-based side programs that are needed. We had a perfect opportunity with two million additional dollars from the federal government that we won through a lawsuit to start up in the community these services and programs that we need, so that we could have in place the types of services that these mentally ill individuals need that are now getting served at the Regional Center at a more