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followed by Senator Dwite Pedersen and Don Pederson.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor and members of the body. I just want to rise and commend Senator Matzke for bringing this bill forward. You will see in the next month, as the budget process comes to light, that we have expended large amounts of dollars in the Health and Human Services area, above budget, and this is one of those areas that is causing that increase. As you can see by the handout that Senator Matzke put out, a year ago we had 5,500 kids in out-of-state placements; now we have 6,400 children in out-of-state placements, so it is a very expensive item. But really more than that and the real crux of this is you have kids without a home, kids that have no belonging, that have many times been moved from foster home to foster home. Here is an opportunity that they can really have a home and really have an attachment to a family. And so it's just a great program. As Senator Matzke said, that the dollars returned will be substantial. It will reduce the costs that all of our citizens are bearing with these out-of-home placements right now, but really the more important thing is the fact that you are giving a child a home, a family, to grow up in. So I just want to commend Senator Matzke for this initiative and hope that the body will move it forward. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Jensen. Senator Dwite Pedersen.

SENATOR DW. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature. I just stand to support this bill as it is a...imperative that we do whatever we can to get more people interested in adoption, and one of the main reasons in the people that I have worked with, as you know, most of you know, I work with young people and have seen this over and over again, and some of these people adopt more than one child, but the finances is a problem for them, and I would hate like the dickens to see us ever turn down a child's adoption for the few pennies that this is going to cost us in the state of Nebraska. This is a good bill and I hope that you will vote for it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Don Pederson.