

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 11, 2000 LB 950

get into too much detail there. There are other important things, I think, we need to hear, but what we call an OAE test and an ABR test, and I'll spend more time, if anybody has questions regarding those tests. One thing that was extremely important, as I studied this bill, was significant bilateral hearing loss occurs more frequently than all of the other Nebraska statutorily required newborn screening tests combined. All of the tests that we require now, take all of those, combine them, you see more bilateral hearing loss occurring more frequently than any of them. I think this illustrates and highlights the importance of taking the screening test and making sure that we do it on our newborns like we do our other screening tests. As we...as we look at the reasons for adopting this bill and what newborn hearing loss is and why we should do that, probably we ought to get a little bit into the technicalities of the bill. LB 950 is going to require hospitals and other birthing facilities to phase in a system of universal newborn hearing screening. It would be the responsibility of the Department of Health and Human Services to assist in developing that recommended method of testing and tracking of infants with a hearing loss. The Department of Education would assist those infants who failed the initial screening test in order that we ensure future educational success. There is no additional funding in this bill for...for the treatment of individuals who are diagnosed. That funding stream is already there. It's already mandated that we do that within our school system, so it's not adding additional costs to the school system but ensuring that we diagnose those infants early so they can be given the treatment necessary. Both those departments would coordinate the services through the Early Intervention Act so that we assist infants in need of services. LB 950 mandates that 95 percent of infants born in Nebraska's hospitals and birthing facilities be screened...be screened for hearing loss prior to 2003. We put these dates in; we've moved them out into the future as much as possible so that everybody had the opportunity to get on board. The hospitals, through our visits, talking to rural, talking to urban hospitals, are comfortable with this. Most of them want to move in this direction, and this just gives them a little added impetus to do that. In the rural areas, hospitals can join together, with the regions that have already been set up after we closed the School for the Deaf, to be able to do this type of work jointly. I am