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currently who are doing this testing, many people in the rural areas. And so then by the time they come to kindergarten, or maybe a little earlier than that, they begin to realize that their child isn't progressing the way the child should progress. If speech pathology could be done prior to that, it certainly would bring down the cost eventually to the school systems when they are in the schools. But I believe that the cost of the equipment these days has come down greatly. We have a large number of children being tested, but still we have a significant, I believe, proportion of those who live in rural areas particularly who may not be having the advantage of this test. Making this, I think as you called it, Senator Byars, standard of care would certainly raise that awareness for hospitals in many areas of the state and, therefore, I think would raise the awareness for parents in those areas who may not understand or recognize on their own those early indicators, and now we will have a test that's available to all those kids so that they know it at a very...when they're infants that we have a serious problem. I think it's a real step forward and I support not only the committee amendments but the bill, and I will give the remainder of my time to Senator Jensen.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Bohlke. Senator Jensen, you have about two minutes.

SENATOR JENSEN: Mr. President, and thank you, Senator Bohlke. I did want to relate to you currently, well, this is 1998 figures, there were 21,352 births. Of that figure, of 22,352 (sic), current hospitals screening all births are eight hospitals, Omaha, Hastings, Norfolk, Wayne. Hospitals currently screening high-risk births are six hospitals--Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island and Scottsbluff. Hospitals planning to or will have implemented newborn hearing screening services for all births by the end of 2000 are 20 hospitals in Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk, Hastings, Wayne, Grand Island, Scottsbluff, Fremont, Kearney, North Platte, Chadron, Columbus, Falls City, or 16,519, that's 77.4 births will be screened by the end of this year. And so that leaves you about 20 larger rural facilities and 40 small rural facilities, or about 22 percent that are not currently screening. Most hospitals,...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.