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March 15, 2000 LB 1399

SENATOR Dw. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. First of all, I want to say that I'm a supporter of LB 1399 and I'm going to oppose the Tyson amendment. But I want to bring up a couple other things that I think we ought to be considering here. I know what a master level teacher is. My twin brother has a couple master's degrees and teaches school. I have a daughter who is now in the business of teaching school. My mother was a teacher, my older brother is a master degree level teacher. But something we must consider, if we're going to start down this line, is to remember that we have people with master's degrees who work as probation officers, we have people with master's degrees, a lot of them, who work in social services. We have some people with master's degrees that work in corrections who are very low paid. And if we're going to be spending the taxpayers' money, we have to be fair on how we look at this. Senator Brashear mentioned some things about the CHARTS and child care, how we wasted money. As you know, one of the areas I've often talked about is corrections. We're building a \$75 million new prison, we're building a \$6 million work ethic camp, and we will be hiring 500 new full-time state employees in the next three years to take care of them institutions for the same amount of prisoners we have today. We can't get blood out of a turnip, so I think we need to start looking more seriously at how we're spending our dollars and spending them where they're going to count the most. Teachers is an area, I would say, is very important, very important. And we have to take care of those people who we already have working for us. We can't be raising taxes. Our tax burden is so heavy now in this state that people are leaving, but our good teachers are leaving. In the area that I work in, good probation officers are leaving, as soon as something opens up with the feds or over in Iowa, they're gone. So we have to take a look at the whole picture. Again, I want to say that I support LB 1399 and I'm going to oppose the Tyson amendment, but I'm hoping that we take a look at the whole picture and see what we're going to be spending money on now and in the future. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. We're discussing the Tyson amendment to the committee amendment. Senator Byars, followed by Senators Lynch and Schimek. Senator