

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

April 8, 2003

LB 513

only appropriate that I bring you a bill that is student friendly. And I think this piece of legislation is one that is interesting. It's simple, but I think extremely meaningful. LB 513 provides that any student enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution who resides in on-campus housing shall be vaccinated against meningococcal disease, which we would know as meningitis. Now, this is a bill that's designed truly more to educate and to spur families and students in a high-risk area to become vaccinated. It's in no way a mandate. If a student chooses not to be vaccinated after they have received the educational information from the postsecondary institution about the detailed information on the risks of the meningococcal disease, they can sign a waiver form which is available to them. So it...this bill is a mandate that isn't a mandate. It mandates that the university provide, whether it be a community college, state college, university system...if a student is going to live in on-campus student housing, they need to be informed that they need a vaccination, and those risks. And if they choose not to do that, they can sign a waiver form and not be vaccinated. Why did I bring this bill? The facts, as they started become apparent to me, show that college students living in a congregate type setting, student housing, dormitories, fraternities, sororities, are at more than a seven-time risk of contracting meningococcal meningitis. But there's a vaccine that's readily available to protect against this disease. But I want to take a little bit of time talking about, what is the disease itself? Meningococcal meningitis is rare, but it's a potentially fatal bacterial infection. What causes meningococcal meningitis? It is a disease that strikes about 3,000 Americans every year, and is responsible for about 300 deaths annually. It's caused by a formal bacterium, which...we won't even get into trying to pronounce the name. And all the Page family are smiling at me here. I'm going to have them come assist me in doing this presentation, since this is student friendly, for all of you. It's estimated that 100 to 125 cases of this disease occur annually on college campuses. Who's at risk? Recent evidence shows us that college students residing on campus in dormitories or residence halls appear to be at higher risk and, as I said earlier, seven times higher risk than than college students overall. The Center for Disease Control, in a...after a study, and in a release in October of '99, the