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March 10, 2004      LB 1005

ASSISTANT CLERK:      Mr. President, thank you. The Education Committee would like to meet in Executive Session now in Room 2022. That's Education Committee, in Room 2022.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. (Visitors introduced.) On with discussion of the Jensen amendment, Senator Combs.

SENATOR COMBS: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I stand in support of AM2835. I think a dining assistant is just a great idea. It will be a cost savings, though, and let me explain why. When people are in assisted-living, or even independent living, a lot of times some of the first activities of daily living to go involve the hands, your manual dexterity. Perhaps you have people with MS or people with other neurological problems, Parkinson's and so forth. They are totally mentally alert and appropriate to be in that level of care, but perhaps just need minimal assistance with dining. If you look at fluid intake and dehydration and proper nutrition, these are all very critical components to keeping people in assisted-living level of care. And with the aging of our population, we find that we have a lot more assisted-living units being built, and we have more people, you know, over the next 20 years, that will be living there. So I believe that in order to maintain independence for as long as possible at as low a level of care as possible, the dining assistant provision of this amendment is extremely important. Also, the license<sup>d</sup> nurse supervision is also critical. I believe that assisted-living is not just a resort motel that we take our aging folks to, but it is more and more becoming more skilled observation being required at that level of care. Because when conditions change, it's imperative that it's recognized at once, so that people can receive the proper intervention, and then if they need a little bit of hospitalization or hydration, whatever, the intervention is needed, perhaps they need medication management, hopefully it's minimal and they can return to the same level of care. The provisions of this amendment provide for that, and also provides for a longer time for aging people to be independent. That's critical when we look in terms of the Medicaid budget. We've heard other senators on the floor this morning talking about budget issues, and remember what we've committed to here and