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FLOOR DEBATE

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don't see eye to eye. And when I introduced the bill, there was no opposition, absolutely no opposition, except, I should say, one parent, who we took her needs into consideration by delaying the date when...the effective date of the bill, so that parents would have another year to evaluate the situation. We do have an amendment that is coming down that will leave the October 15 date, because I do think that at least allowing and trying to bridge that gap is still important and we're looking at the upper end. But with the time that I have, I did want to share this letter with you, and it is from an Omaha school teacher: I am very pleased to read of your proposal to change the entrance date of kindergarten to August 1. As you recall, that's the date that we originally had. It's about time Nebraska kept up with their neighboring states, such as Kansas and Missouri. An educator of 30 many years in the Omaha Public School District, most of which I have spent with kindergartens, I feel this move toward making our little ones more emotionally, physically and mentally ready to handle elementary school an important one. Every year I have a few of those August and September birthday children that struggle to make it in kindergarten. Often these children end up knowing too much to repeat kindergarten but are certainly not ready for the first grade. How often I sit in on meetings regarding our older students who are having problems of one sort or another, only to discover that they are usually ones with the earlier entrance dates. How much wiser it would have been to "red diaper" those entering kindergarteners than to have them suffer the humiliation of later being held back. And I just wanted to share with you that that is really why we brought the bill, because research has been done that those older students many times are having...are struggling, and the situation has frustrated me for a long time. What is best for children must come first, not what is convenient. And as to the question of permitting certain youngsters with birth dates between August 2 and November 5, of course we know that, and as we have talked about, that the local school boards do have the option of testing, giving an assessment we should say. Sometimes we say testing, but it's really an assessment that might indicate their readiness. And she closes by saying, readiness is a measure of so many things children know and can do, and also how they feel about the demands made upon them, And my best to you in the quest to do the right thing for