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FLOOR DEBATE

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works in the whole healthcare setting and so she was very understanding about group homes and about the necessity of group homes, but at the same time she was concerned that we think the process through. It says: Dear Senator Schimek, prior to voting on the mental health bill on Tuesday, April 13...actually, it's going to be Wednesday, April 14...we ask you to consider the following. One, we are the parents of a five-year-old boy who was knifed last Wednesday by a resident of a group home in Lincoln. The information gathered thus far into the investigation of our son's abduction suggests, first of all, placement of the resident in a community group home may not have been an appropriate placement given his history of violence and sexual predilections. Secondly, there may not have been appropriate or adequate oversight of the practices and policies in place in this particular group home. C) Existing or proposed laws may not be adequate to ensure the safety of neighbors and others in the community. Next, does the proposed legislation adequately address safety issues and oversight of facilities housing mentally ill or developmentally disabled residents? Does the proposed legislation provide a mechanism for closing, sanctioning, or fining such facilities for breaches of contractual or statutory provisions when such breaches jeopardize the safety of others? If the Legislature votes to close two of the state's regional centers, are specific, appropriate and feasible strategies in place to allow communities to receive these patients without compromising citizen safety? Will there be guidelines in place outlining acceptable criteria for residents, only allowing nonresident...or nonviolent residents to reside in residential communities? Is there going to be enough funding to adequately train and license the staff working in these group homes? If more group homes will be opened to fill the need created by the closing...by closing two of the state's regional centers, there should be regulations in place that encompass all group homes, all group homes, no matter how many residents live there. Thank you for consideration of these concerns before casting your vote on a very important issue. We recognize there are many, many people in our society who have mental health diagnosis or developmental disabilities. These citizens are our friends, family members, and coworkers. Most of these individuals are kind, caring people who function well on a day-to-day basis. It