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

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and maybe it's because they can't afford to. They can't afford to take their child from one area, where they live, to a school. And why can't they afford that? Because it costs And we're saying that only the ones that can afford to option, option. Several years ago we took away transportation that follows option students, so if they can't afford to opt...to go to the...option out to a different school, it's our fault because we took the money away from them. enrollment, you can option out, but the transportation funds do go with you. So that's probably one of the reasons that some children can't afford to option into other schools. because they can't afford to. The other thing is, when we look at schools that have poverty, we look at whether they have free and reduced lunches. We don't look at their income taxes. don't look to see how much they really make. We just look at free and reduced lunch numbers. And let me tell you, there's pride in western Nebraska. Many of those students could qualify for low and reduced lunches. They don't have the money to pay for their lunch program, but either they will do without lunch or they will bring their own lunch. They do not want others to know that they are in financial straits. So, because of that, it doesn't appear that they are in poverty, and many of us know that they are. And I know for a family that I have spoken to and they told me, you know what, we qualify for low and reduced lunches, but I told my children that we need to do this because we don't have the money to buy lunch at school and their comment back to me was, oh, Mom, don't do that; I don't want anyone to know that we can't afford school lunch; we will not eat if you do that to us. And I know that happens in many, many families in western Nebraska, so we can't really tell whether someone is in poverty just because they don't qualify for free and reduced In many of our small schools, they don't even bother with the paperwork. Teacher comes in, brings food, others share, it's not an issue with them.

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR McDONALD: They don't necessarily qualify and not...the reason that they don't qualify is because they don't do the paperwork. When we look at this fiscal note, and I'm having a problem with this ten miles, and as I repeated on Friday that