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LB 264

faced with today. Caseloads must be brought down so that each child is given the time he or she deserves, and that a child in an unsafe situation is not overlooked. The Legislature made strides toward that end with the hiring of new child protective service workers last year. While the Health and Human Services Department reports that we are currently at 129 percent of state standards for caseloads, testimony at the hearing and my own 34 years at the department tell a different story. That is why LB 264 has increased reporting requirements, to help us make more informed decisions about caseloads and to reconcile the differences between the department's averages and what is reported in the field--a critical component to determining the appropriate level of support from the Legislature. This language was worked in conjunction with the department to minimize the workload of gathering new information. In addition, the new reporting requirements examine our contracted child welfare services. As many of you are aware, the state contracts with a variety of private providers for child welfare services, but because we have no data to examine, we have very little idea of the effectiveness of our private contracts. Again, this data will prove to be invaluable as we set our child welfare policy and ensure that our state tax dollars are spent as wisely, just as our constituents expect. Finally, LB 264 begins to address my goal of better focusing our limited resources. The bill sets a goal. It simply requires the Health and Human Services director to take into consideration national child welfare organization standards when establishing caseloads. For instance, the Child Welfare League of America, a well-respected national organization with a long history in social work, recommends that an investigative child protective service worker have no more than 12 families at one time, and an ongoing child protective service worker have no more than 17. In closing, I ask my colleagues to join me in helping shape a policy decision direction that will indeed give a new future to Nebraska's children. These children are now in our welfare system, or potentially could come in. In LB 264, this makes prevention and accountability a key principle in our fight to save our kids. I am hopeful that you will join me in advancing LB 264 to Select File. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Howard. (Doctor of the