

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

March 15, 2005      LB 206

Byars is saying is the right answer for the short term, and Senator Chambers' argument is the right answer for the long term. And let me just tell you the couple of observations I had as...again, as it relates to the small amount of time and exposure to the system that I had as a result of this incident in Lincoln. And one of the...one of the big things out there is that these organizations who are taking care of these young people, and some older people, they either are not doing the appropriate amount of training or they don't have the funds to do the appropriate amount of training, and they don't have the funds, apparently, to pay people who are the caretakers a reasonable amount of money. So when you go out to the group homes, what you'll see is...in Lincoln at least, is an awful lot of college kids who are there for six months, a year, sometimes a little bit more. But lots and lots of the caretakers are in this category. They're very poorly paid. They are not as well trained as I think they should be or as most people, I think, think they should be. There's another bill that deals with training. And this system overall is somewhat financially fragile. It will improve as the state economy improves, as the Legislature and the Appropriations Committee are able to put some more funding into provider rates and hopefully find a way that that funding for provider rates can go into training and keeping people there longer so that there is an increased level of expertise among the caregivers. That really needs to happen first, because if you create a negligence liability standard in this atmosphere, in these conditions, I think it is true that the providers, as Senator Byars has indicated, may rebel and simply not want to take anybody they consider to be on the more dangerous side of the spectrum, or somebody that would require more constant care, like Mr. Einspahr. Senator Chambers, I'm sure, will argue, well, training will come faster if we hold them to a negligence standard, and that is, generally speaking, the reason in American jurisprudence why you hold people to a negligence standard, so that it forces things to improve. But I'm not sure at all in the context of this particular situation at this time that that will be the result. I think a few years down the line, when everything is more stably structured and hopefully there's more training, there's another bill that requires more training and some other adjustments to the system,...