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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 761

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Thompson, to open on advancement of LB 761.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. When the Foster Care Review Board was created in 1982, it was a small agency and the board itself consisted of seven members. Over the years, there have been changes to that board. In 1987, Senator Landis passed legislation to increase the membership to nine members and specified that three of the nine members be from local foster care review boards. In 1990, Senator Paul Hartnett passed legislation that specified that one of the remaining six members must be an attorney with legal expertise in child welfare. With the amendments that will follow, this...the bill has been changed to accommodate concerns of the Foster Care Review Board, and what is left is what the committee...and with one other amendment having a subsequent meeting after the committee amendment came out with the Chair of the Foster Care Review Board that I think is minor but a good addition to the bill. Senator Schimek and I have discussed that and I don't think it takes away from the intent of the Government Committee. But essentially, this bill will strengthen the Foster Care Review Board makeup, giving them expertise from a variety of areas that will be helpful in the execution of their prescribed duties. It keeps the three local members of Foster Care Review Board that is current statute. Now that doesn't mean that other members of the board who fit other categories cannot also be members of local foster care review boards, but it does keep the current statutory language that said at least three. It keeps the attorney with guardian ad litem experience which is part of current statute. The others, it adds to and specifies that the others be a pediatrician, a child psychologist, a social worker, and all of these the bill stipulates be licensed in the state of Nebraska; a representative of a statewide child advocacy group; a child advocacy center director, and currently it says coordinator and that will be changed to director, hopefully, if you adopt the amendment which will follow; a director, and this is another change of a court-appointed special advocate program, that is the CASA program; and a member of the public with a background in business or finance. This is an agency that has over a million dollars of state General Funds going into it, has a very