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reduced lunch program; two, who are born prematurely or at low birth weight, as verified by a physician; three, who reside in a home where a language other than spoken English is used as a primary means of communication; and/or four, whose parents are younger than 18, or who have not completed high school.

SENATOR MINES: Perfect.

SENATOR RAIKES: Okay.

SENATOR MINES: Senator Schimek, I'd return the rest of your time. Thank you.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Mines. I wanted to be sure that that got on the record. And I knew I had it somewhere, but I assumed that Senator Raikes had it more readily than I did. But this probably will be the last time I speak. I don't want to prolong the debate or the discussion on this bill. But I do think it's important that we have the opportunity to say why this is so important. I'd just like to continue from earlier that states such as New Jersey have witnessed its investment in these programs pay off in big ways. There are approximately 39,000 children enrolled in early childhood education programs in the state of New Jersey. And a recent study focusing on these programs showed that these children did better with such concepts as understanding the letters...that letters form words, and how these letters sound, more so than those children who were not participants in the program. What is happening in that state simply confirms what so many now believe about education, that it is best to start early and expose these young students to as much as possible before they enter kindergarten. In Nebraska, as it's been pointed out, there are 11 full-day preschool classrooms engaged in this state-funded early education program, 31 part-day preschool classrooms, and only 10 full-day infant-toddler classrooms. And those go from all...from everywhere in the state, from Alliance to Walt Hill. I don't know if you all have this chart. I'd be happy to distribute it if you don't, if you'd like to see where these early childhood programs are. Ideally, we'd like to increase that number in Nebraska. Finally, a local advocacy group, Voices for Children, states