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FLOOR DEBATE

March 29, 2006 LB 99, 489

Senator Hudkins.

SENATOR HUDKINS: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I have a letter before me from the League of Human Dignity questioning the reason for this bill and, if you don't mind, I'm going to give you excerpts from that letter. The League of Human Dignity is very concerned about the content of LB 99 and would urge us to vote against this unnecessary and damaging piece of legislation. The League of Human Dignity has operated a barrier removal program since 1977, and the purpose of this program is to provide grants to low- and very-low-income families or individuals with physical disabilities for the purposes of making their homes wheelchair accessible. One of the frequent modifications made with physical disabilities in their homes is the installation of vertical platforms and stairway lifts. In the 28 years that the league has been supplying and installing these lifts, they have not had a single reported incident of an accident. Please be aware that most of the contractors that we use to install these lifts are not licensed elevator mechanics, and there is simply no need to require that only licensed elevator mechanics install and service wheelchair lifts. Our barrier removal program provides and installs wheelchairs, but the cost of ongoing repair and maintenance are the responsibility of the person with the disability. If only licensed elevator mechanics can service and repair these lifts, then the increased costs of having to use only licensed mechanics will mean that people won't be able to afford to get their equipment serviced or repaired. As is the case now, factory-trained and authorized personnel are sufficient to provide service and repair at a much lower cost. If this bill is passed, we, meaning the League of Human Dignity, will be severely restricted from continuing to provide grants to install wheelchair lifts for very-low-income Nebraskans. Our costs for providing and installing vertical platforms will also significantly increase. The sad part is that there's no demonstrated need for this legislation. And also a letter from the Department of Labor legal counsel says that the Department of Labor believes that the present elevator inspection program does a good job in protecting the citizens of the state, and that the public safety will not be jeopardized if this bill doesn't pass. So unless I am missing something totally, Senator