

we didn't know that this was going to come up at this time, and so I've asked for a copy of the letter that was sent to the State Board of Education. What we have said is this bill has been before the Education Committee a number of times, we have always said that, obviously, if you look at what we do in the area of audiology, that certainly this was also something that would be at the same level, but that the Department of Ed should provide, and that the Department of Ed should come to the Appropriations Committee, which seemed to us the path that they would follow, for this appropriation. And I think that I had some discussion with Senator Wehrbein along the way that this is what we had recommended. And I would tell you that the Education Committee did write the Nebraska State Board of Education and I can get a copy of this letter in a few moments that said that the Education Committee held a hearing on LB 950, which provides for the braille instruction for visually handicapped children. As a result of the unanimous vote of the members of the Education Committee, at our Executive Session on the 23rd, I have been directed to inform you of the desire of the members that every effort be made by the State Board of Education to facilitate the expressed outcomes of LB 950. Individual members of the committee indicated their willingness to use their capabilities to accommodate the department in any way that would be helpful and advantageous in providing programs for this particular citizenry. And then it goes on to talk about that the committee members are reluctant to impose further mandates on school districts. In light of the process that is in progress, in regard to special education, we do not wish to jeopardize the advancement of the work of the Special Ed Accountability Commission. Therefore, we have indefinitely postponed LB 950. However, we are convinced of the validity of the arguments that this group of citizens about their right, not only...not...their right to not only have an adequate education but an excellent one. Braille seems to be a lifelong learning tool that visually impaired persons would have available to them. And in committee, we did have the discussion about programs that we do for the acoustically impaired student, and it would be very difficult to say that that's available to those students, and that this is not available to those who are visually impaired. And so our recommendation was that it was something that the department should have in their budget, and that they should go to the Appropriations Committee. And so that's, I hope, a helpful history as to where the Education Committee has been on this issue. Thank you.