

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker and members, I am going to continue to oppose and I...I am not clear as to what the potential costs of this are. I wasn't aware that it was coming on until yesterday, so I probably don't know as much about the background, but it is an issue. We've got braille being taught in the Nebraska City School for the Visually Handicapped. That is one of the strong I...strong points, I believe. This puts it, I understand will be ultimately a mandate to have local school districts provide this. I understand the need for that. I think, though, at this point we really don't know what the long-term cost of this is going to be. I think this properly should be a bill on its own, or a bill that the...I would much prefer to have more comment on, know what the long-term cost implications are going to be to school districts; to me, that is a terrific unknown. If we simply train teachers, can they adequately teach braille? Can they do it as part of their regular job, or will it have to be focused only on doing that? I guess I'd like to have the answers to that, and I...because I simply don't know. As I said earlier, it's something we did not consider an emergency, or wouldn't consider an emergency. As far as the Appropriations Committee, we did not have this specific issue, so I'm caught a little off guard as to how to...to respond or discuss this. But I think properly I guess that the Education Committee killed it, and if it hasn't been anywhere else, it is showing up here as a floor amendment and it's hard to respond to.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Avery.

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Mr. President. I, too, I guess, I am sympathetic with the idea, but I...I have some concerns. Here we are establishing something. I think we have the School for the Blind that has this equipment. Has it ever been looked into? The potential partnership, instead of buying a duplication with the Department of Education utilizing what we have, and a mechanism where we can utilize some of that equipment. We are looking into the department...the School for the Blind costs are continually rising because we are limiting the number of students. Is there a mechanism there where we can utilize and bring the teachers and have a staff that utilize that day in and day out to do some of the training, instead of starting another program in the Department of Education. I don't think that's been fully looked into, and we're duplicating