

the amendment and, first of all, this was a...replacing the override that was done a year...or not the override, the veto that was done a year ago and so it has been in our plan to move gradually up from 75 to 80 percent, and I have become convinced that it's necessary to do that. I realize some are reluctant to do that, but the wage scale being what it is, it's becoming increasingly difficult for providers to find people to work and I think that's the practical side of it, let alone the fairness issue that we have talked about many times before. It's getting increasingly difficult to hire workers at the wage scales that are a part of this bill. This is a commitment that we made last year to increase those scale...those pay rates and I think it's...so we have made that commitment. It is not something that we brought in particularly this session. It's something that we felt was necessary and decided as a committee to go ahead and fund this. It's also true that it's idealistic to say let's go ahead and provide the services, but the fact is, as Senator Brown said, you can't...we are doing it as fast as it can be done anyway, so adding more money for services will not necessarily make a large impact on the waiting list. The other thing is concerning the federal funds. Perhaps it is something to consider that we'll have some cuts. It appears to me, most of us at least, that there's not going to be any significant cut made now...cuts until after election next year and I assume it will go into the next calendar year. So we really can't anticipate what there's going to be. It seems to me Nebraska has a commitment that should be kept here to those providers and we should go ahead and keep our commitment at this point. Next year, obviously, we'll be discussing it again, but I think it's shortsighted to keep these pay scales to where we can't. We will not be able to make that function as we should in this area for those that are providing these services. There's lots of competition out there now for jobs, especially in the Omaha area, with other sources of employment, and I think it's necessary for Nebraska to keep its commitment to these providers with an adequate pay scale, and so I would urge opposition to Senator Avery's amendment.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Schmitt announces that the following guest is visiting the Legislature: Larry Donner is here from Burwell. He's sitting under the south balcony. Mr. Donner, will you please stand and be recognized. And Senator Coordsen announces that the following guests are visiting the Legislature: there are 13 students here from