

April 19, 1979

LB 226

itely postpone LB 226.

SPEAKER MARVEL: The Chair recognizes Senator Sieck.

SENATOR SIECK: Mr. President, members of the body, you will have to excuse my voice. My nose is as full as can be so I will be fractual once in a while when I talk to you. I have to be opposed to this bill because it means something to my heart. I feel that we have to recognize these children and get to them as quick as we can. It hit at home with me many many years ago and I want to help as many people as I can. Last year before I entered this body the Legislature adopted LB 889, the statute which LB 226 proposes to amend. Quite simply, LB 889 provided for the school districts to be responsible for educational intervention, services for handicapped children from the date of diagnosis and parental referral through age five. The meat of it is the diagnostic part of it. The earlier the age that you can get to an individual, the more stimulation he has to learn and to me this is very very important. As a result of a compromise the implementation date for 889 was put off until July 1 of this year, thus giving the school districts and the State Department of Education time to gear up. Rule 54, resulting from LB 889 has been finally adopted. The program should be ready to go. Now we are trying to do something here which we really have not implemented yet. We are trying to take away part of that program and it is ready to implement. Let's try it out. Now let me deal with some other issues that erode the discussion of LB 889. First, one of the main points of the bill was to get specific assistance to several serverely handicapped children as quickly as possible in order to intervene with their handicapped conditions. This early as possible intervention has been shown to be extremely important and helpful. Mentally retarded preschool age children, many, not all of whom were being previously served by Office of Mental Retardation Programs have been shown to increase their I.Q. by age five as a result of intensive mental stimulation. Without such stimulation the I.Q. tends to decrease. So to me this is the important factor. Now as we were talking before, we have dealt with mental retardation and we have a pretty good program but for the other handicapped we do not and that is the purpose of getting it into the school system so that we deal with all of the children that are handicapped. Now cerebral palsy children who are not receiving preschool services benefits even more. Cerebral palsy children usually have extreme muscle and it is vital to get them at the earliest possible age