

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Marsh.

SENATOR MARSH: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Legislature, I would like to express several concerns and one is that many, many members of the PTA across the State of Nebraska have contacted me and I would like to read from a letter. "The Hartley PTA has voted to oppose LB 270, the legislative bill which we believe will seriously undermine the regulations governing homebased child care in the State of Nebraska. As parents, we are particularly concerned that each child be cared for in as safe an environment as possible. The current regulations make an effort to insure this. Parents who need and want to place their children in a child care home deserve to have the assurance that their children are protected from household poisons and fire hazards. While it may be possible for parents to know their child care provider, it is much more difficult for a parent to conduct an inspection to determine if there is adequate protection from hazards. Who among us knows the conditions of our neighbor's furnace or what combustibles may be stored near it and who knows how many places cleaning supplies are kept? We feel that children are the most precious and vulnerable of our state's resources. They need and deserve a safe environment to grow. Parents can protect their children at home but parents and children need to have the assurance that their away from home care is equally safe. LB 207 is a major step backward in protecting the health and safety of the children of Nebraska. Passage of this bill, even with the amendment, would be an abdication of state government responsibility." The Child Care Director of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, the Junior League of Nebraska State Public Affairs Committee, there are many arguments put forth in support of the bill but what do they really say, that government should not interfere in private homes? Licensure of day care homes is not a case of government interference in homes but rather a case of government regulation of business. Citizens have historically looked to the government for protection from poor business practices. We find regulation of beauty shops and dog kennels in homes acceptable and necessary and we have zoning laws which tell us what types of businesses we may operate in our homes. These laws are designed for the protection of rights, health and safety. It is the legitimate goal and the legitimate role of government to set some standards of health and safety for those in the business, I underline, for those in the business of child care. The government is making no attempt with the present law to interfere with the authority of the parent. The parent has the final decision on whether to place the child in a day care home, to place the child with a relative, or