

25 first and second graders from Prescott School in Lincoln, accompanied by their sponsor. We're glad that you came into the Legislature to see us in session today. If you'd all stand, we would like to recognize you and thank you and welcome you. The Chair recognizes Senator Vickers. We are on the Hartnett amendment to LB 722.

SENATOR VICKERS: Mr. Chairman and members, as the individual that attempted this amendment on General File, it may seem rather strange for me to stand up now and say that I'm not going to support Senator Hartnett. But because of the statements that Senator Warner made on General File, because of the statements he made again here on Select File, I think it is appropriate that we leave this language, this intent language in LB 722 so that there will be a number of people across this state, the Department of Education, the providers out there in the school systems, that will, and quite frankly us, the Legislature, that will I think to a degree help keep our feet to the fire a little more and make us really seriously look at this issue, recognizing that we do have some severe problems as far as funding is concerned as we provide special education to the children of this state. I would relate to you, remind you that we will have at least two or three, probably three different studies going on this summer that relate to this particular issue: one, the special committee that is going to be established to carry on the early childhood special education study that we've got the grant from, that I talked to you about the other day; number two, the Education Committee has got a specific study based on LB 714 and the concerns raised by it having to do with the additional costs of special education and the way it is growing. Both of those study groups we intend to have a task force established to really seriously look at this problem. Number three, the other study that we've got going on is for those severely handicapped, for multi-handicapped, and then the school for the deaf and the school for the blind and whether or not us and another state, specifically Iowa, can look at ways to provide those services. Because of these various concerns I think it is appropriate that we send the message that yes, we are concerned, yes, we do not expect to continue to escalate the costs, and yes, it is going to keep not only the Department of Education service providers, but ourselves to the fire a little more to make certain that those studies are carried out, and that in a reasonable fashion that we seriously address this subject. So I rise