

denied because we didn't meet the criteria that they are looking for. That would have been one of the most costly errors that we ever made. We can't be penny-wise and pound-foolish. This is an important institution and it brings in a great deal of federal money and if we don't put up the state money to make sure they do an adequate minimal level of care, we can jeopardize long term the whole institutional setting that we have for these people. And, again, half the money we're talking about is state aid money going back to the regions. These regions were cut dramatically last session. They had waiting lists that they were trying to fill. We were trying to get them more money and they got cut back. Those waiting lists are longer than ever. They serve very well. Their efficiency has been noted nationally. It seems to me that it is a good system that doesn't need, at this point, to be jeopardized again on the good work that they are doing. It's not an extravagant system. It is a cost effective system and it is one that cares for the people that I think we all care about the most. If you've seen the polls done by NASIS, that is out of the University of Nebraska, they poll Nebraskans every year about different questions. The number one priority for Nebraskans in terms of state's services have always been care for the retarded and disabled and the handicapped, the very people DPI serves. That gets 99, 98 percent of the Nebraskans saying, yes, I believe that's important; yes, I believe tax dollars ought to support those people. It is almost universal in this state to care about those individuals. We've never seen any problem with support for mental retardation, mental health and for alcoholism services. That's one thing Nebraskans can agree about and so it seems to me Nebraskans have spoken time and again on this issue. We ought not to cut this budget further than what the Governor proposed. I strongly oppose this amendment by the committee to cut it further.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Warner, please. Then Senator Labeledz. Senator Warner. Okay. Senator Labeledz.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of the amendment and we're talking again, as Senator Nelson says, of people that can't help themselves and I will always rise in support of the handicapped, the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, the elderly because we're talking about people. Yesterday we talked at length about what we should do with the Department of Roads as far as the