

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. Senator Ashford and I have wrestled with this problem now for about a year. It deals with a entity called Equilibria up in Omaha and there has been a problem because the federal law has allowed them an exemption from the Pharmacy Act dealing with methadone usage, but our state statutes haven't allowed for that. There have been concerns about the operations up there at Equilibria, and a number of cases have been brought to our attention about concern about operation. In this particular area, pharmacists have recognized the desire to try and work with them. The Pharmacy Association has been looking at the possibility of a voluntary effort to work out the problem. And what this amendment does is have a one-year period where the problem of the pharmacist having to be in there to dispense this is stopped, so that in the meantime the Pharmacy Association can work out the problems involved here and, hopefully, at the end of this one-year period, we will have in place some sort of mechanism with volunteer pharmacists working with Equilibria to dispense, and we won't need this exemption from the Practice of Pharmacy. The Pharmacy Association still has concerns and, in fact, opposes this exemption. But, again, it is a one-year not a permanent exemption and I also want to indicate that there are concerns with the activities up there in Equilibria, and this does not affect other types of concerns and other types of intervention that could occur by law enforcement and others, doesn't block anything. It just deals with one particular problem that we think, in a way, can be resolved, if time is given, and that time was given through the Ashford amendment. So I don't have any objection to the amendment.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Any other discussion? Senator Ashford, do you wish to close?

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate Senator Wesely's explanation and the cooperation of the Pharmacy Association and the Department of Health and Dr. Jack Lewis and others who are associated with Equilibria and, hopefully, this will resolve at least for the interim the problems that exist up there and we can try to work on some of them. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Ashford. You have heard the closing. We will now vote on the amendment offered by Senator Ashford. All those in favor vote aye, opposed vote no. Have you all voted on the amendment by Senator Ashford?