

meet to be licensed as such. But we did not require that anybody have to have these titles and have to meet these training requirements to practice in this particular scope of practice. So, under the licensure practices we have in place for health professionals, this would be a midlevel activity. This bill, LB 669, takes it one step up from that and says these individuals shall have a scope of practice that shall not be invaded, so to speak, by anybody else who doesn't meet these qualifications. So it becomes a much more exclusive scope of practice and certification process for these individuals. So that's an important step to understand that there is this important change that will occur. In addition, we add marriage and family therapists under these regulatory measures and that would be an area that has not previously been licensed or regulated by the State of Nebraska. In addition, the amendments that we have besides taking this additional step in the licensure process in heightening and strengthening the licensure process for these individuals, we also combine the boards, set up subcommittees to regulate these three fields and bring them under a mental health practice board, under the Department of Health. So that's essentially what we're trying to do in the committee amendments and in the bill itself. We define what the practice of mental health is. We talk about a definition of mental health practice and health practitioner. We do go through a number of things related to the particular issue. The thing I want to emphasize is this is a major change. It's an important bill. There was a major amount of work done to try and bring a consensus to the issue. I think those parties that were involved had a general agreement to it. There was some opposition, as I said, at the hearing, but I think in some ways the opposition was that the bill didn't go far enough and wasn't clear enough and not in the general thrust of the bill. So the committee did, again, as I say, work with the introducers and the other proponents and I think with the committee amendments we've gone a long way toward addressing some of those concerns. So I would ask for support for the committee amendments and be happy to answer questions.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Mr. Clerk, amendments to the committee amendments.

CLERK: Mr. President, I have a series of amendments to the committee amendments. Senator Bernard-Stevens, as introducer, has priority status. Senator, the first amendment you have on file is AM1710.