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LB 909

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voice in the system as our center-based programs have. In fact, when we tried to integrate them into a single commission, they spoke out quite loudly this year that they wanted to keep their identity, and the committee recognized that and pulled that out of 909 to maintain that important status that they have in terms of a direct communication with the Department of Social Services, which does provide oversight to what they do. The ABC bill, at the federal level, primarily focused on dollars going straight to the private childcare providers and supporting families as they try and meet the costs of childcare. We've done a lot in the last few years to recognize the importance of childcare providers. I know in Omaha, just this Sunday, the Omaha Foundation has a whole process of selecting the childcare provider of the year and will be honoring that person this Sunday, and the Childcare Fair that happens in Omaha now that draws thousands of people to focus on the whole issue and importance of what's going on in the early years for our children. So, although the state as a whole doesn't fare well in comparison with other states about how many dollars we actually put into early childhood, I am pleased that Senator Pirsch has brought this resolution to recognize the tremendous role that childcare providers play, and that I hope we will continue our commitment, both to the center-based programs, both public and private programs, as well as those who care for the children in the privacy of their own homes. Again, I thank you, Senator Pirsch, for bringing this resolution. I, too, want to support Senator McKenzie's resolution on the D.A.R.E. program. There are always those critics who say it doesn't really change that much in the lives of our children, but I think that even though they may be small steps, they are significant ones in impressing upon our young people the importance of staying drug-free, and that includes the legal drugs, Senator Crosby, as well as the illegal ones. And I applaud the efforts of those folks that are doing the fine work in that program. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Rasmussen. Senator Witek.

SENATOR WITEK: Madam Chamber (sic), members of the body, I, too, rise in support of Senator Pirsch's resolution. And we discussed this when she was considering putting it up here. I don't know if any of you read an article, and editorial article in the World-Herald in the last few days on some of the childcare provisions at the federal level. But there is a concern here of a lot of people on government childcare, and where we're going to go, and how it's going to be regulated.