

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

March 19, 2002 LB 479, 543, 692

for discussion on the bill, LB 479. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I just thought I might make a few comments on this situation in that we have made some improvement as from the passage of LB 692 last year. Of course, there was a million and a half dollars that was put into emergency services and, however, those have not really begun to take effect. We are in the process of setting up community services to help with the circle that we have, that vicious circle of not having enough room in the regional centers, so that these individuals can go to. And then we don't have enough community services out there so the people coming out of the regional centers can find a home. But we are making improvements. And I don't know how many of you have received the mental health substance abuse service expansion and the progress report on LB 692 and LB 543, but there is some good information in there, and there is progress being made. Will progress eventually get to the point where it will solve Senator Hudkins' situation here in Lancaster County? I don't know. We'll just have to wait and see. But some of the things that...the strategy, the primary strategy that came out of LB 692 and LB 543 was to decrease "postcommitment" days in the region. That's exactly what Senator Hudkins' bill is trying to do, but I think we will get to that point and reduce them somewhat. It will decrease the number of EPCs. Now, we had emergency shelters a year ago with kids in them that were there for 120-180 days in some cases. The department have been working on that very intently...intensely and they have reduced that now to about 30 days, even to the point that we've had some providers who have called me and said we don't have kids anymore; this is a problem. Well, to me that's a good problem in that we are moving the kids into treatment much quicker and not allow them to sit there. Out in the Panhandle they have an operation going on out there called Homeward Bound where Region I is not asking for any more dollars. As a matter of fact, they say that we think that we can even return dollars back to the state by a consortium of providing services, the appropriate services, at a lower cost. That's exactly where I hope the whole rest of the state will go. And Region I in the Panhandle in Scottsbluff, along with Region (sic--Regional) West Hospital (sic--Medical Center), are doing an excellent job out