

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

January 15, 2004 LB 1083

up against his will and keeping him indefinitely." The court went on to hold--and I'm quoting again--"There is...no constitutional basis for confining such persons involuntarily if they are dangerous to no one and can live safely in freedom." Yet our state's own 1999 study reached this conclusion--quoting again--"Over half of the persons being served at the three regional centers could be served at a less restrictive, lower cost in the community." In other words, many people at the regional centers are ready for less restrictive care, but continue to be held in our institutions simply due to the lack of community-based services throughout our state. The financial aspects are just as disconcerting. Federal Medicaid rules preclude regional centers from receiving federal funding even if the patients otherwise qualify. Approximately \$9 million in federal funds are left on the table each year. If these citizens were in community-based services, we could access those funds and finally acknowledge the life-changing advances in treatment. We would, in effect, extend a long overdue invitation to many deserving citizens who share a common desire to contribute to their communities. The legislation before you is the right thing to do. It commits us to a course of recovery for these citizens in their communities, near their support system, whether it's a church, an AA meeting, medical professionals, friends, or family. It draws on our medical centers to create a system of statewide excellence. It accesses federal Medicaid dollars that we have left behind year after year. I realize that there are few things more concerning to a community than knowing that government jobs they've come to rely upon must be retooled. But I've also come to realize what this initiative means to citizens with mental illnesses. When Senator Jensen and I met with consumers from across the state, they applauded him for his courage and declared that this proposed reform gives them the first real hope for a better system and more productive lives. Ladies and gentlemen, with that in mind, I have never been more committed to an initiative. I fear that if we lose this opportunity to reform mental health services, it will be lost for years to come. So I ask for your help. Pass LB 1083, and I will sign it into law. The second reform that I hope we can accomplish together pertains to the way we finance K through 12 education. Education is deeply valued in this state. A 2003 ranking shows we are sixth in the