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FLOOR DEBATE

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Treatment Fund Act. It was heard before the Health and Human Services Committee on February 1 of this year. It advanced to General File with 6 voting affirmatively, 0 of the members voting against the measure. There were several proponent testifiers at the hearing. There were no opponent testifiers and no neutral testifiers at the hearing. LB 1086 would create funding for the treatment of individuals involved in prostitution related activities. This would be a first for our state. Nebraska, especially within the Omaha metropolitan area, is unfortunately experiencing an increase in the incidence of prostitution related activities. Between 2002 and 2004, the Omaha city prosecutor's office filed over 1,800 prostitution related cases. While it may be difficult to ascertain precisely the cause for this enhanced prevalence, there is considerable evidence that the methamphetamine epidemic and other drug dependency issues have played a significant role. Prostitution has evolved into the revolving-door criminal activity, particularly in our metropolitan area. Those consistently involved in prostitution activity, mostly women, repeatedly recycle through our justice systems, often never having the ability, due to lack of resources, to access needed services. Prostitution related activities have many negative externalities that are harmful to our communities and our neighborhoods. Prostitution contributes to the incidence of crime, the fear of crime. It depletes local law enforcement resources. Residents and businesses within geographic proximity to concentrated areas of prostitution have to deal with noise, litter, harassment, and are financially impacted by declining property values. Individuals involved in prostitution often use this activity to support drug and alcohol addictions. In addition, many of these individuals suffer from significant mental health disorders that lead to an increased dependency on drugs and alcohol. Many prostitutes are also subject to physical and psychological abuse by panderers. To assist in mitigating the overall negative implications of prostitution activities, I believe Nebraska must enact a comprehensive package. LB 1086 is the first component of a multifaceted approach that I introduced this legislative session. In addition to LB 1086, I introduced LB 1253, which, as amended, requires that individuals convicted of prostitution complete an appropriate mental health and substance abuse assessment, and would increase the penalties for solicitation.