

of Nebraska. So, this bill will do two things. It will help families maintain themselves and keep together with their disabled child and, number two, it will help the handicapped work and earn income and just provide that little bit of extra assistance that they now do not receive so that they can do that. It encourages family maintenance and it encourages work. Now I think those are two elements that we can all agree to in this Legislature but the cost of the program is something that perhaps will have some people concerned. Well let's talk about that for a second. The cost of this program the first year will be about, oh, \$225,000 is estimated. Then the next year we are not certain, but we do have that cap of a \$500,000 maximum of any one year and again, this program will only go for about four years before it would be terminated. It is a pilot program. We are trying to just get it started, see how it works and if it isn't viable, then we will eliminate it in that four year period. But at the same time I am going to predict that this program is going to be successful. It is going to be well received and in the future years you are going to find that this is one of the best steps that the Legislature ever took to deal with this problem. Now why is that? It is because that the investment that we make with this bill, the \$250,000 next year and the \$500,000 perhaps the following year is going to be money well spent because it is going to keep people out of institutions that are going to cost much more to the State of Nebraska. We are going to be helping families to take care of their own children and keep them in the home at a cost of a maximum of \$300 a month for that family. That is a bargain because the family is going to be providing the assistance. They are going to be helping to take care of that child and all they need is every once in a while a little bit of help. Somebody to come in and spend the weekend with their child, so that they can go off and visit their relatives or just get away from the home every once in a while. The burden of caring for disabled children in the home is a heavy burden. It is not an easy thing to do and what we are trying to do here is to encourage those families and provide that minimum of help, just that little bit of help that will make the difference between keeping that child at home and placing that child in an institution. As far as the employable handicapped, this assistance that we would provide them is far and away an investment that will be returned many times over. These individuals will have work. They will be contributing to society. They will be paying taxes. They will be supporting themselves and again, that little bit of extra help that they need to take care of themselves in a way that they can maintain themselves in an independent living situation is so vital to those people. So, the investment of the dollars here