

issues here, one of them is whether or not we should be... if we are going to mandate programs, if we provide some reimbursement for those who have to attend those programs as a response to keep their degree or keep their license as a nursing home administrator. It is not the issue of unionization as Senator Johnson argues. That is an issue for federal regulations not this proposal. So I oppose the Higgins amendment even though there is some understanding that this may not be the highest priority that we have, and if we are cutting costs, you know maybe this is a lower priority, but if we are going to do that, Senator Higgins, the preferable way to do that is also eliminate the mandatory educational, continuing educational courses.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Cullan.

SENATOR CULLAN: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, at first blush I think Senator Higgins' amendment sounds attractive but I am not sure that it is. What we are really saying is that it is not a part of medical costs, for continuing education for...I think what Senator Higgins' amendment does prevents physicians from attending seminars and courses on how to keep their skills up and I think that is just important to a patient who is receiving public assistance through the Medicaid program as it is to someone that is paying for it themselves and I think that is a legitimate expense. I think those seminars often brush up people's skills and prevent them from malpracticing on patients and I think that is important. So I guess I think Senator Higgins' approach is attractive initially but I don't think that it is otherwise. Secondly, I think you talk about the issue of unionization, we are going to see increased health care costs in the future, and one of the main reasons we are going to see them are not new facilities, not new expanded or programs, but I think the reason we are going to see it is because people who work in the health care industry, particularly nurses and other people, are going to start demanding more money and they are going to be more effective through unionization. So I think that the costs that Senator Higgins has talked about are costs that directly impact health care costs totally and maybe it pays to bring in those...to teach people how to treat their employees better and avoid unionization. So I guess I disagree with Senator Higgins' approach and think that you should as well.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Higgins, do you wish to close on your amendment?

SENATOR HIGGINS: Yes, Mr. President. First of all, I have