

services in Nebraska. This system would include a team of individuals to work within the region, to develop a plan, to identify current activities, identify gaps in services, and to come back with the services and support that were needed for that particular region to meet its public health needs. Now there are a number of public health departments in the state. They are county and city, and I have passed out from the report Senator Lynch did a map that shows the regions that are involved, there would be six, and a map that indicates what current city and county health departments are in place. And what you find is, very quickly, that most of the state has no public health services, that it is unable to access public health care outside of perhaps what the local hospital or the local physician may be willing to provide which we find is inadequate, in our estimation. What we are saying is that why should the urban areas of this state have this ability to access public health and not the rural areas of the state. So we have set up a system that I think will very much meet the needs of public health in Nebraska. The cost of the bill is somewhere around \$600,000. It would set up a core team in the six regions. It would provide for an opportunity to work within those regions, to identify, again, what services are being provided, what gaps exist. It would help bring our rural areas of the state into a full bloom of public health access. Now you know we talked about rural renaissance and talked about rural health care as part of that renaissance. You have got to have healthy people to have a successful region, and our rural areas of the state cannot sustain in a city or a small town or a county of small population a health department. They need to team together in these regions. The state needs to be part of that, and one of the other handouts indicates that our state has been very lax in state support for public health. We have just not kept up with what most states have done in this area. So to bring the state up to where other states are, to help our rural areas, bring them up to where our urban areas are, this piece of legislation I think is a very good effort to deal with that problem. In addition, indigent care is a very big issue and this, of course, would provide public health services to individuals who could not otherwise afford these services, and so it will help that problem. And if ever you have a good investment I think in health care, it is to have preventive, health promotion type services, where you get out there and help people stay healthy. You will save more money than it will cost you and I think in the long run is in the best interest of the whole state. So even though Senator Lynch and I are from