

bit off the track, because first of all, we're talking here about a lack of nurses in Nebraska. We're talking about a critical shortage in the rural areas in particular, but not only in the rural areas, in the urban centers as well. We're talking about the fact that this is an incentive for people to come into the profession and it is also an incentive for them to upgrade their professional degrees and their expertise, and you know why this is so important? I can...if I talk about only one thing, and I do talk about aging in here often, nursing homes now and even more so in the future are becoming filled more and more with people who are living longer, who are becoming more frail, more at risk and in much, much more need of skilled medical care. These people cannot provide the kind of care presently that these people are...that the aged or anyone else who is ill is needing. So as our society, and particularly in Nebraska, ages, we are going to see an increased need for more and more skill on the part of our professionals. And if we're talking about the fact that this does not provide for a need, and we're talking about people can afford to go in and pay for these...the increased...the level in their degrees and so on, we need to keep in mind that nurses as a whole are not those people that you would think of as affluent in society. They are people that are, from all the information we have gathered, usually older, they are people that are family people. Sometimes they are one parent providers for a family, but in a lot of cases, especially in rural Nebraska, they are a family member which is a working person along with the husband in order to support the needs of the family. They can't afford to move away from where they are at. That is why we have the expanded use of programs throughout the state. So those programs are now in place for these people to use. We talked about this before. This is not a new issue. Remember when we put in place the nursing program out in Scottsbluff. We have now the contract for other kinds of nursing programs at the technical community colleges and Hastings College is an example in my area. The programs are there. We knew there was a need. We've been talking about a nursing shortage for some time. Senator Nelson and I have been dealing with this issue of nursing degrees, nursing programs and the nursing shortage for a year. She has taken the lead, she has done a marvelous job in keeping on top of it. I'm here to support that fact, that there is indeed a need in rural Nebraska. We have programs that are now in place. We need to, first of all, provide incentive for those who can't afford to go back otherwise, who are working people, who can only go to school on a part-time basis to increase their skills because,