

obviously, enough people believe that that we are going to continue the process in some form, but the problem is that we have yet to get a grip on the overall question of health care costs, and one of the reasons is we don't know enough. We don't have the information. We don't know exactly what is happening out there. Now a bill a couple of years ago that I sponsored came out and it did a couple of things. It allows the 20 most frequently utilized DRGs to be publicly made known what the cost of those are by each hospital over, I think, a hundred beds, and this is an attempt every six months to let people know what costs there are to provide for some comparisons, and this did for awhile provide for some public disclosure, but it really hasn't functioned as well as we hoped it would. In addition, that bill also provided an individual could come in and request an estimate on what it would cost to get a certain surgery they needed from a hospital so that they could go from one to another hospital and get an idea of what it would cost, again an attempt to provide for some consumer input, but that hasn't really been utilized very much either. So we have not been able to make much progress on the question of knowing what is happening with our health care costs, knowing about the quality care that our health care consumers are receiving, and for quite some time, I have attempted to do something about this issue and have not succeeded outside of that one piece of legislation I mentioned. This amendment would provide for the sort of information that I think would help us get a better handle on health care costs and quality. There would be a health care cost index that would be developed by the Department of Health, give us an idea of what cost were occurring and giving us an idea of where those costs were, and perhaps giving us some idea who was more expensive and who was the least expensive in providing for different types of surgeries and services. By doing this, we get more competition. If we want competition in the health care marketplace to reduce cost, the consumer has to know what is happening. Right now it is so nebulous and it is paid for primarily outside...by outside sources, third party payers, that we end by government or private insurance companies, that the consumer out there just doesn't have the information, and in some cases, just does care, makes decisions based on whatever the doctor tells them. And I think in the long run we have got to bring the consumer more into this decision-making process, have them think more about it. What are the costs? What are the quality issues that they should be addressing? And in my view you can't expect the consumers and the public of this state to make those decisions on any rational basis when they don't know what is happening.