

from these people and the doctors. The psychiatrists out there now are really coming to the forefront. Dr. John Baldwin, a Lincoln psychiatrist for you Lincoln people, said for years...in a letter to me, part of his letter, "For years we have had the cult of curability in which people have been discharged from hospitals as cured when they weren't in order to make room for other people. In my opinion, I think, in the opinion of most of the psychiatrists we are at least 100 adult beds short for both acute and chronic care and at least 40 child and adolescent beds short." Patrick Kelly, the Sarpy County Attorney, sums up the problems encountered by other county attorneys, law enforcement officials and other officials. I quote part of his letter. "Anymore it seems we almost always have one, two or three patients on hold at St. Joseph's Center for Mental Health for a bed to open up at Norfolk. We are also committing more people to outpatient therapy than we ought to be because of the bed shortage. The addition of up to 34 beds would, therefore, be seen as a godsend for these patients whose needs are being seriously downgraded to outpatient care or ignored while in holding patterns." The Nebraska Psychiatry Society thought this matter so important at a recent meeting, annual meeting, that they unanimously passed a resolution in which they strongly supported increasing the capacity of Norfolk Regional Center by 34 beds. They said even with this increase in service capacity it may not be sufficient as in recent years a significant decrease in a number of available beds in facilities for emergency admissions over the entire state system has taken place. They pointed out that Norfolk Regional Center has an outstanding professional staff meeting vital, acute and chronic psychiatric care needs. Now this is not just a Norfolk issue. This is pretty much statewide but it mainly is a Sarpy County, Dodge County, South Sioux City clear to Valentine problem. And even with that, the Lincoln psychiatrists and Omaha psychiatrists, where most of them are, are strongly in support of this. DPI's own figures show that the regional center's average cost of care is around \$152 per day as opposed to the average cost of community hospital facilities of \$400 per day. This amendment would recognize both needs and it would allow for a more balanced plan for the mental health system at the lowest possible cost. I strongly endorse...hope you will...I think there are some others will speak in support of this and I ask for your support for adoption of this amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Discussion? Senator Dierks, followed by Senators Hannibal, Hefner and Warner. Senator