

department is going to need resources, not only for screening but for services, and the feds have said it and I don't know what choice we really have. But to deal with the overcrowding problem and the overall situation, there are a couple of other alternatives we need to look at. One is the EPC concept, emergency protective custody. And, as we talked about earlier, we have now put a little bit of money into community based programs to help alleviate the problem of individuals that are now being jailed, moving them into a setting as the mentally ill need and get assistance on an emergency protective custody basis. If we did more of that, it will free up space at the regional center. We have done that in Lincoln. We have put \$300,000 into an EPC unit in Lincoln. It has freed up beds in Lincoln where we never had beds before. If we set up, as we need to, EPC units around the State of Nebraska, we will then alleviate some of the overcrowding problems that the regional centers are suffering, whether they be in Hastings or Norfolk or, as we have seen already, in Lincoln. This will free up some beds and also serve the function of keeping the mentally ill out of jails and putting them into proper settings when they have the needs for that assistance. So, number one, we could do that. Now that will cost some money and we're going to offer an amendment to do that but that would help a bit with the problem. Secondly, we have an overcrowding problem at the regional centers because we don't have the community based programs for the mentally ill we should have. We have underfunded and ignored for too long the problems of the mentally ill in our communities. We have set them loose from our regional centers and then we have ignored their basic needs. We haven't provided a follow-up, backup service that they need, the housing assistance that they need. There is a bill, LB 363, again costing money but doing the proper thing in putting resources into community based programs, putting the resources in there, again alleviating the revolving door problem we have with individuals out of the regional center, into the community, without support services, having problems, going back to the regional centers, getting some help, going back out of the regional centers into the community, not having the support they need, coming back to the regional centers and again the cycle repeats itself. If you had the community...

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: ...based programs in place as we have envisioned in this other bill, you wouldn't have that cycle.