

adopt in the committee amendments will not completely address the problems. First the question about the CPS and foster care workers, Senator Smith, Senator Coordsen and Senator Morrissey co-sponsored the amendment to bring us up to 22 staff members, instead of the 9 that the committee calls for. The committee did move toward that and will increase it to 18 staff members for next year. But the problem is even whether it's 9, or 18, or 22, we need, if you look at one of the handouts I sent around, 102 more workers. We are 100 people short of having the staff to take care of our abused kids and our foster care kids to make sure that they are protected and cared for in safe and secure environments. So, although we're moving toward the goal of trying to increase staffing in this child welfare worker area, we are so far short of where we need to be that you can be assured that the bill that calls for us to meet those national standards will be brought to you next year, LB 720, and we will try to further address this issue, because what we're talking about here is the inadequacy of staffing to get out and investigate child abuse complaints, to investigate problems in our foster care homes, to make sure that our most vulnerable Nebraskans, our young people, our children are not being hurt around the state. And to a large degree you know how serious a problem this is. We've got something like 7,500 cases, on an annual basis, of abuse that are investigated, and over 4,000 of those cases are substantiated. That means there are 4,000 cases that we know of, of child abuse, in this state. And that doesn't count all the abuse and neglect that occurs that is never reported, and we know that there is a lot of that. Part of the reason people don't report is they're afraid that they won't get responded to, that the staff won't be there to care for them, that the services are not adequate. So, in my estimation I'm very pleased and grateful to the Appropriations Committee work, but we will have to further address that issue. Senator Coordsen and I worked on LB 182, we worked with the judges. You've probably gotten some letters from them. The judges and judicial system knows as well how inadequately we staff in this area and what a problem it is for families and children. So we're moving a step in the right direction. We need about four or five more steps before we actually reach the goal that I think we have for properly staffing child welfare workers. On the issue of Title XX, again I express my gratitude to the committee. The \$2.5 million solution to the problem, which was proposed by LB 678, and also by an amendment to the appropriations bill, is met by about a \$1.4 million proposal by the Appropriations Committee. Title XX, as you recall, is the