

continue if they went into a drug treatment program. Now, here's the problem. That sounds good and it recognizes something that we would all feel is a more positive approach than original amendment which said if an individual had a drug problem, could be fired from their job and then not receive any unemployment compensation, very punitive approach. This is a little more positive in the sense that we encourage somebody to take drug treatment, thus retaining their unemployment compensation benefits. Here is the problem. In the Health Committee we have legislation pending dealing with Medicaid to cover...one of the few things we don't cover in Medicaid is drug and alcohol treatment for inpatients and we find that the very poor amongst us, the very poorest amongst us do not get coverage under Medicaid for this need. In addition, insurance coverage for drug and alcohol treatment has been cut back, very severely curtailed in a number of areas and in other areas because of the cost simply not provided. So there are many individuals out there in the private sector working that don't have drug and alcohol treatment provisions under their insurance and then there are others just simply in that category that fall between those with the working poor, we call them, that are out there that don't qualify for Medicaid and don't have this benefit level that they would hopefully have a wage level that they could afford to have this drug and alcohol treatment. So here is the problem. What are we going to do with those individuals, which is the vast majority of Nebraskans, that have a situation come up and they simply could not afford to have the sort of treatment that costs in this state, four, five or \$6,000. Now we hope very few people have drug problems and we hope that we have an ability to deal with those drug problems, but let's recognize the problem that financially these individuals have, having that problem come to the forefront, having the employer fire them from their job and having them still retain unemployment comp benefits, as low as they are, how do they afford to pay for the treatment program? How do they afford to deal with the problem that they've got? And that is the question I want to raise and I'll get back to it, but I saw Senator Chizek wanted to take some of my time so let me give the rest of my time to Senator Chizek and then I hope to come back and readdress this issue.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Two and a half minutes, Senator.

SENATOR CHIZEK: I have a question of Senator Hefner.