

somebody has to have the financing to pay for the program and that's where I rise as Chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee, having dealt with this problem, Senator Nelson and I have a bill that raises the alcohol tax with the idea of putting money into greater support for drug and alcohol treatment programs. We have legislation that I introduced in the Health and Human Services Committee that expanded the Medicaid program to provide for inpatient care for alcohol problems, alcohol and drug rehabilitation. We have got gaps in the system, gaps that are very hard especially for working people to qualify and get into treatment programs. If you are a very poor individual, you do qualify under Medicaid, but as I said, Medicaid is very limited currently in what it provides in support in an inpatient basis so that isn't really working very well. We do have some state programs available out in Hastings in particular that are available, but backlogged and logjammed and having trouble getting individuals into there, if you can get in at all, sometimes having to wait months and months at a time when, in fact, you need to get in there with immediate attention. So you have those individuals and those problems. Then you have the fact that for the working individual that is out there in the work force, there is some coverage of this sort of problem in private insurance plans, but there are many different companies cutting back or even eliminating coverage of alcohol and drug treatment programs under their private insurance, if they have it at all. There are many employers out without any coverage whatsoever. So what do you do with those employers, employees I should say, that are working for employers that don't have the coverage, that don't have personal wealth to pay for drug and alcohol treatment programs that I have been told cost in the range of three, four, five, maybe \$6,000 for an adult. How do they pay for this treatment that we want them to have? This amendment says that if you are out of a job as a result of a drug or alcohol program, if you go into a treatment program, you can get your benefits under the unemployment comp, but the employer must either have insurance that covers the cost of the treatment or pay for the cost of the treatment. I mean, it's a two-way street here. If we're concerned about employees getting their drug and alcohol problem taken care of as employers, then we have to look at the reverse and suggest that employers have a responsibility as well to provide for health insurance and coverage to care for their employees' needs when it comes to these drug and alcohol treatment programs. Employers concerned about their employees have a responsibility as well as the employee to deal with this problem. The employees, hopefully,