

Services for public hearing, advanced to General File. I have no amendments at this time, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker and members, this issue is not a new one to this Legislature. We have dealt now for at least the last six or seven years with the issue of how we provide adequate prenatal care and adequate medical care to our low income mothers in our state, in addition, how we provide safe delivery of those babies and, in addition, provide medical care for them once born as they live in a life of poverty. We have, over the years, made a number of changes in policy to try to reflect the desire in this state to serve our low income families and, as they face pregnancy under those circumstances, provide them with adequate care. As you know, Nebraska I think still is the one and only state that provides Medicaid coverage...actually, we don't provide Medicaid coverage, we provide state coverage that once was provided by Medicaid for low income pregnant women during the first six months of their pregnancy. We are picking that up at total state expense because of our desire for those low income women to have adequate prenatal care and to bring their baby to term in a healthy state. Other states have not opted to do that. We have Medicaid kicking in at a later date in the pregnancy which provides 60 percent of the cost, the state puts up 40 percent of the cost, but this state, I think, rightfully recognized the desire to provide that prenatal care and that assistance early on that it was a wise investment. Well, this bill follows along that thinking in recognizing that we ought to provide the same sort of prenatal care and good quality delivery to our low income women even if they have income up to 185 percent of poverty. Currently, the figure which we cover for this service is 133 percent of poverty. This is a mandate from the federal government. Prior to that mandate, the state had provided the coverage at 100 percent of poverty. So we are asking this Legislature and this state to go from 133 percent under an option provided by the federal Medicaid program to go to 185 percent of poverty. This amount of money involved, I will be right up front with you, is going to cost somewhere close to \$600,000 in state funds and that would meet something close to \$1 million in federal funds because, again, the match is one and half dollars from federal for every dollar in state money. What you get for this money is you have 300 pregnant women in this state that otherwise would not be able to receive prenatal care,