

and Human Services Committee and signed by its members. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 18, referred to Health and Human Services. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments pending by the Health Committee.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President and members. I want to send immediately my appreciation to Senator Baack for putting this bill in special order. It does deal with the longstanding problem that will also be dealt with with an amendment that I will offer and that is the question of how we discipline health professionals in the State of Nebraska. Currently, the current provisions of this bill, LB 456, deal with the particular issue of drug and alcohol addiction. I think we've all recognized recently that there has been an increased concern in Nebraska and across the country in health professionals that have drug and alcohol problems. We have seen this, a problem, in our society across the board in general, increased concern about drug abuse. This problem is not left at the doorstep of those who are in health professions but, in fact, has been a problem there as well. The current process that we have in dealing with this problem has been one to be found very faulty. We have individuals that, and I'll get into this as we get into the main function of the bill, but I want to give you this background so we can get to the committee amendments. But we have individuals who do not report or self-report or report others with this problem because the current system is a large sledgehammer that comes down on individuals and does not recognize the differentiation between those who are health professionals with drug and alcohol problems that can be addressed and dealt with and resolved and those that have drug and alcohol problems that are endangering individuals and need to be disciplined or license removed. And so this bill, and I'll get into it as we get to the main bill, makes a differentiation in that and sets up a program through the Department of Public Institutions, a Licensee Assistance Program, and if you're familiar in private sector, these are referred to as Employee Assistance Programs. I know in my own business, I work in Lincoln Telephone, we have references to an Employee Assistance Program. This would set up a similar type of program through the Department of Public Institutions for health professionals that have drug and alcohol addictions. Now we clarify in the committee amendments that this is...we use the term "active addictions" because there is a