

broader context have had difficulty and problems and so a task force was formed by the Health Department two years ago to look at this issue and legislation was introduced last year. It was studied further over the interim and this legislation, it took the form of LB 387 and was amended by committee, and if you're interested you can take a look at 387. What we're trying to do here, let me just run through this very briefly is, again, there are something like 65,000 health professionals licensed in this state. There is something like 250-300 complaints filed annually against these individuals that require discipline review. About 50 petitions then are followed up on where these individuals are taken to court or acted upon in the discipline procedure to remove their license or revoke their privileges under the health licensing legislation that we have in place. Now what we've found from this review from the task force and what we've looked at in this study that has occurred, is that the system now in place is too slow and it does not mesh together the different elements in the best fashion. The different people involved are the Attorney General's Office, the Health Department and the professional staff there and then the examining boards involved in the particular area. And what we have found is and what is proposed through this bill is that the examining boards that are now involved in the process at the end of the system need to be brought to be involved early in the system where they can provide further knowledge and expertise and have input earlier on into the system we now have in place. At this point, it has been determined, by those that have worked most closely with this, that this would speed up the process and more effectively utilize the process to investigate discipline cases and take action upon them. This is the primary concern here and primary change that is proposed under the legislation, changing the board of examiners role, whether it be early or whether it be late, this amendment would have that role be more early. In addition, we also have our boards to send what are termed letters of concern. Letters of concern stop short of lifting a license but send a clear message to an individual that may have taken some questionable action that the board has investigated and found a problem, the problem if not rectified or dealt with, will be taken with more active steps, but at the point at which the department reviews the situation and the board decides that a letter of concern can deal with the problem, they have that option now. In some ways, the judicial branch took this step, I recall, not too many years ago where it seemed as though the only option was to remove a judge, but we did allow them through a constitutional amendment the ability to