

motion to the committee amendments. There's really no intention of dealing with the committee amendments, and if we could move to that amendment, I'd appreciate it.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Abboud would move...Senators Abboud and Lindsay would move to amend the committee amendments. The amendment is on page 1324 of the Journal. (See AM3463.)

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Abboud.

SENATOR ABOUDD: Yes, Mr. President, colleagues. What this amendment does is it strikes portions of...all portions of the bill and we're left with this one amendment. The Banking Committee heard a great deal of testimony in regard to the CHIP program, and I think we're all aware of the ever escalating cost of health care and how you solve one particular problem in this health care puzzle. And that is individuals that are unable to have insurance, they are described by insurance companies as uninsurable. So a number of years ago Nebraska, along with a few other states, took the lead in dealing with this very serious problem, and they provided that individuals that were without health care, they were dropped by their health insurer, that the state would help these individuals. And we helped them through a program known as CHIP. And this program provides, it is a state program, or the state helps with the premium payments so that these individuals do have health care. As you might imagine, this program has grown astronomically. And at the original time when we passed this legislation, we felt that it was adequately funded by taking, in a sense earmarking the funds that would be used to pay for this program from the premium tax of insurance companies. And this worked out just fine in its initial years. But we ran into a problem with the program as it grew, and grew, and grew in that instead of these insurance companies just paying, offsetting from their premium tax that would go directly into the state's General Fund, it...these insurance companies had to pay an additional assessment. And that's where we ran into the problem. And that they had to pay an additional assessment, above and beyond what they had to pay for the premium tax, I don't believe, and other individuals don't believe that that was the intent of the bill when we originally passed it. It was the idea that it would be coming from this particular area, but it was General Fund money. So that really describes and gives background as to the amendment. The amendment provides that an insurer should not be subject for any additional liability, or additional assessment by the state