

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Ashford, followed by Senators Landis and Lynch.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Madam President. I just would like to second what Senator Wesely has said. We've worked all summer on this Medicaid Task Force. And the recommendations that we have made, on page 5 of the handout, center primarily on managed care and on enhanced preadmission screening. What will happen, at least in my area of the state, in Omaha, if, in fact, we cannot do a managed care plan, is, as Senator Wesely suggests, maybe in the agreement. What we will have in my estimation from my discussions with hospitals in our area is we will have more and more divisions within the hospital community. We will probably have a provider tax, and we will not have the ability to bring the hospitals together into a plan that will have long-term cost benefits. So it's somewhat precarious business and dangerous to argue about an agreement that one has not seen, and I have not seen, obviously, the agreement. But I can tell you the resolution which calls for the Legislature to...for the department to put together a managed care plan is going to be somewhat superfluous and useless piece of paper if, in fact, we are...have made an agreement with St. Joe's and others not to put forth a managed care plan. What it does, in summary what this...as I said, what this will do is it will dig deeper and deeper troughs within the hospital community. We already have a rural-urban division in the hospital community. We will then, by doing this, we will divide even further the urban hospitals, the nonprofits and the profit hospital within our community, and the university hospital, and it will discourage the kind of community effort that is needed to resolve this long-term problem. So, as we vote for this resolution, which we...and I believe we should do it, I hope it's not just something we're...I hope we're not just blowing in the wind here. I hope we're actually don't something of substance. And I hope that after we pass this resolution, or I trust after we pass this resolution the Department of Social Services will not be precluded from going forward with this because of some agreement, because of the agreement on the hospital lawsuit. Having said that, I'm sure the hospital lawsuit settlement was extremely difficult, and the numbers look better than certainly what the potential liability was. But it was my understanding from talking to Senator Wesely that that agreement would not include any prohibition against managed care planning. And if, in fact, it does, that's a significant...it's going to be a