

part of the integrated system that we have so the nurses have gone from basically being completely independent without any basic contract or agreement with physicians to backing off a bit with a bill that came in to now where they're still considered part of that integrated system. So this amendment is definitely moving toward the position of the physicians; and in fact, I think with the adoption of this amendment without any further amendments we'd have a bill that would be acceptable to the physicians in the state. That is not something that, as Senator Withem said, is I'm completely comfortable with because I do believe there have been some problems here. And maybe I should back off before going through some more of the actual amendment. Why are we even here in the first place with this proposal? And I did not introduce it. Senator Day introduced it and actually Senator Jessie Rasmussen introduced it at first and then Senator Day picked up the ball and now Senator Withem. But from the beginning, I've been very concerned about the reasons that we have the bill and I think they've been justifiable reasons for advancing the bill and why the committee picked it as a priority bill. What you have is you have a hundred or so advanced practice nurses, these are nurses that have additional training beyond what the vast majority of nurses have, there are, what, 16,000 or so nurses across the state. This is a very small group. These are nurses with, as indicated, advanced training and have the capability of doing more than other nurses do. And the potential is there for them to help supplement primary care delivery now provided largely by physicians and also PAs, but now with advanced practice nursing would allow nurses into that area as well. And we all know we're having a shortfall of personnel in primary care and the need is there in particular in our rural areas to get more individuals into primary care. These nurses would be able to fill some of those gaps that we have in the system. The nurses came to members of the Legislature and came to others and said, we have got a problem. We would like to practice, we're trained to practice, we're ready, willing, and able to practice, but we can't get doctors to sign these agreements so that we can practice because of the arrangements that we have and the statutes that we're trying to amend. And so there was story after story of nurses ready to serve in primarily rural Nebraska that we heard of who had to leave the state because they couldn't set up practice here. So that's why the original proposal through 407 came in to say if the doctors in some cases will not cooperate and allow us to practice then let's sever that umbilical cord. Let us allow the