

problems that we needed to address. And there was a proposal at that time for the state to take over the mental health system that we have. It was decided not to do that, that there would be second chance, so to speak, for the mental health regions to clean up their act. And they ended up doing so at that time. We then looked at other efforts. We, at the time we took over welfare, talked about taking over the...well, we did take over Medicaid and we took over welfare for the counties, we also talked about taking over general assistance and indigent care, that was in the early 1980s, but decided that we had too much to take over at that time and we stopped short of the other elements. We also, Senator Lynch had legislation to, to take over the indigent care responsibility back in 1990. And in 1990, also, we did a task force study on mental retardation, developmental disabilities, where we considered the state taking over the regional systems and mental retardation, developmental disabilities and, again, backed off of that. But in exchange, we had agreement with the counties to work with the Legislature to study the question of whether or not the regional system worked and if the counties should continue to be a part of it, what should their proper funding role should be or whether another change should occur. So we had studies in '92, '93, '94, and then the '95 study is the one that has resulted in this bill. The study in 1993 was chaired by Senator Byars. The study in 1994 was chaired by Senator Vrtiska. And we did look at and raise the question, if, in fact, the current structure of delivery of health and human services, which has the state paying the bulk of the expense along with the federal government, and the counties paying very little of the expense though controlling the systems through the regional governing boards and the hiring and firing of the staff that actually run the programs, if that is a situation where the counties pay 2-8 percent but have a controlling interest with a minority interest in terms of the money funded, is that really the system we want? And the conclusion was one of two things, either the counties pay more in exchange for the control that they have administratively, or the step be taken that we are recommending here, that the state take over the funding and have the counties no longer play a role in the governing structure of these systems. The timing of this is, of course, very appropriate in light of the discussion on LB 1044. LB 1044, which hopefully will pass here in the next couple of days, is an attempt to bring the state agencies that we have in health and human services together to get a united, unified, coordinated system