

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 17, 2000 LB 1436

especially with regard to the funding question, which is important. But, to me, the first thing you have to do is to decide whether this program is experimental in nature or whether it has that depth of validity which would cause us to make it an ongoing program. You need to listen to Senator Bohlke. We need to listen to other people and decide on the basis of the merits, in the first place, whether this program is so new and lacking in expert...lacking in experience that we should think of it in our minds as a grant program, or whether it has such a solid basis from experience in other states that we should think of it as an ongoing program. If you think of it as a grant program then clearly, I think, it should go through the Excellence in Health Care Grant Program, because this is what...this is what it's all about really. And I'm sorry that Dr. Michels has written a letter, as he has, with respect to this bill because it seems to me inappropriate that a person who's head of the grant program should be commenting one way or another on a bill that might be subject...or on subject matter that might be a part of a grant program. If you don't think of it as a grant program, if you think it's a solid, ongoing program that should be there, then it seems to me that there are two options. First of all is Excellence in Health Care Fund and the second, of course, is a cigarette tax, and I guess I don't view it as such a traumatic matter, as has been described to you, whether you go one way or the other and let me tell you why. If you take it out of the Excellence in Health Care Fund, I think it is one of those programs that in a year or two's time the Health Committee is going to define as being part of the Excellence in Health Care Program. In other words, they are looking at preventative health, they are public health systems. They have got to establish a sector for ongoing programs and when they do that this is one type of bill that is most certainly going to be within the circumference of that definition because it deals with tobacco and these are tobacco funds, because it's preventative in nature and what they're looking at in terms of ongoing programs are preventative programs. So I don't think it would be a big breach, I think this bill can be distinguished from all others in terms of whether the Excellence in Health Care Program should be viewed as a funding mechanism. It is difficult to talk about a cigarette tax in a situation where money from cigarette smokers is sitting there in large amounts. If this Legislature wants to bite the bullet and increase the