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the bill. It is clear we have a shortage of nurses. The anecdotal evidence is "unrefutable". We need to...what we need is more facts and more data before we can tell where to begin to address the problem from policy perspective. The Nebraska Center for Nursing is a board consisting of 16 members from the health care industry. It is charged to obtain the data and make the appropriate policy recommendations to the public, the Legislature, the health care industry, nursing employers and to nurses. It's based on similar legislation adopted by the North Carolina legislation (sic) in 1991. To address this issue effectively, the state needs to work together with the private health care sector and the center creates that partnership. The amendment also is added to the committee amendments. Just for your information, in 1998, when Medicaid needed to ask for a nurse or to rent a nurse, they spent...the state spent \$5 million that year in 1998. The following year in 1999, to do the same thing, because of their lack of nurses, they had to spend \$10 million, so it was doubled in one year. I think you ought to keep that in mind. The fiscal note on this now is \$60,000 to get this information and so we're paying out \$60,000 to save a fiscal note of \$5 million or possibly more. So would appreciate it if you would adopt this amendment, and I'll be glad to answer any questions, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Suttle. (Visitors introduced.) On with discussion with the Suttle amendment to the committee amendments, Senator Crosby.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Mr. President and members. And Senator Suttle, I think I followed everything that you've said. I've been trying very hard to watch and see and understand because I have said before and I'll say it again, the nursing profession and the nurses themselves are the backbone of the medical profession and of the health scene that we have right now everywhere in the United States, and particularly here in Nebraska. And I do know we have a shortage. I want to recall a little bit to some of you that are interested in nurses, eight years ago probably by now, or more, Senator Schellpeper did try. He brought a bill and we all worked...a lot of us worked very hard on it to give incentives. So when you go back to the scholarship thing, this is why I want to mention this today, Senator Suttle, it was an incentive to get their education, help