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FLOOR DEBATE

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Legislature, LB 242 is a small bill, 176 pages, and it is a bill that comes from the Nebraska Health and Human Services System as part of the Nebraska Credentialing Reform that really started in 1997. And we've had several bills, there's been at least two others, passed by the Legislature under NCR since 1997: LB 819, in the year 2000, which dealt with licensing healthcare facilities; LB 1021 in 2002, which dealt with continuing competency for healthcare professionals and occupations. LB 242 changes the way credentialing and other related fees are established for healthcare professionals and occupations regulated by the Health and Human Services Systems Regulation and Licensure. Existing provisions of the law relating to fees are deleted and new sections are added to replace them in the Uniform Licensing Law. The bill provides intent that the funding for the credentialing system administered by the department come from cash funds, federal funds, gifts, grants and fees from persons or entities credentialed by the department, and from General Funds. The bill lists all of the individuals and entities subject to the credentialing system, and there has been a sheet that was passed out, hopefully, that will explain that to you. The bill directs the department to determine the costs of credentialing system for all of the regulated professions and occupations by calculating the total for all of the base costs that are common to all professions and occupations, variable costs that are described in Section 24 of the bill, and any adjustments to costs that are described in Section 26 of the bill. The bill then would spread those costs equally across the total number of credentials issued by the department. Currently, the department issues over 114,000 credentials, and for the vast majority of professions and occupations, the cost of their credentials would actually go down underneath this bill. Testimony to the committee was very supportive of the bill and focused on the intensive stakeholder input gathered by the department in developing the legislation. There were at least five stakeholder meetings carried out throughout the state for this, and at the testimony that came in from some of the stakeholders, they were very pleased with the extent that the department did go through to ensure that everyone knew what was going into the bill and how it was going to be handled. Concerns were raised by some who testified in a neutral capacity about the effect that the new structure would