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LB 724

centers, community agencies, et cetera, the present mental health system is not working well. In fact, it's not a system at all. It is like an orchestra of fine musicians without a conductor, or like a corporation with no CEO or COO. There are many critical issues, some tactical, some strategic. But all demand more integrated policy, planning, and investment. It is often said that Nebraska is infamously forty-ninth among the states in public mental health. This is not true. We are forty-ninth in outpatient investment, but actually in the middle in overall spending. That clearly demonstrates that we are not investing wisely. Hospitals are not only the most expensive level of care, but state-run hospitals cannot leverage Medicaid dollars. Nebraska must spend its few mental health dollars much more wisely. Both consumers and taxpayers deserve a better return on investment. I agree with Dr. Wilson's statement. LB 724 focuses on a need for reform, and provides specific legislative intent for reform. And it requires the drafting of legislation to implement that reform. There are four fundamental aspects of the current system that focus on LB 724: one, the state regional centers; two, the county regional governance system; three, the state-level coordination and funding for the system; and four, the Nebraska Mental Health Commitment Act. LB 724 as amended by the committee contains findings and legislative recommendations in each of these categories, and requires me to draft legislation or amendments to legislation to implement those recommendations. There is being passed around a sheet which describes much of the mental health system in the past, and in many studies that have been taken in the past, all the way from the legislative task force study in 1992-93, a mental health adult system search conference held in March of '94, a Nebraska mental health performance improvement conference which was convened in July of '94, substance abuse planning was undertaken by Vision 2000 from July through October of '94, and the Governor's child and family medical health search conference held in July of '94. The Department of Health and Human Services subsequently undertook an initiative known as Behavioral Health Redesign Project. A task force study of the system was mandated by this Legislature in LB 1354 in '98. And in 2000, Health and Human Services Committee conducted a behavior health interim public hearing, with a number of invited witnesses. The Department of Health