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FLOOR DEBATE

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that's been broken for a long time. And I kind of apologize for getting up here. But I did want to weigh in on it, that...and probably one of the quotes that is my favorite is one from Mo Udall, who said, everything's been said but not everybody's said it yet. So I wanted to just take a moment to be supportive of this work. It's going to be difficult, and it's going to be hard, because it's going to require a lot of change from a lot of people. But we will end up with a better system. And I think this is one of the biggest contributions as a Legislature that we can make in the next two years. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Thompson. Senator Smith, on the committee amendments to LB 724.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I rise in favor of LB 724 and the committee amendments. And I don't claim to be an expert on this at all. But I want to share with you an experience that has persuaded me a great deal, in watching a project take place in Nebraska, that, as Senator Johnson pointed out, has been helpful to patients primarily. And the win-win scenario is that it has saved money across the board. But let me share with you some comments that I'll share from a letter here. In an effort to control the state costs associated with behavioral health services and the lengths of stay by committed patients, Region 1, together with Regional West Medical Center, have developed the Homeward Bound project. This project is a positive, seamless solution, providing cost-effective yet patient-effective behavioral health care in western Nebraska. Through the Homeward Bound program, we have seen the average length of stay reduced from 55 days at the Hastings Regional Center to 28.5 days at Regional West Medical Center. Post-commitment days have been reduced from 44 to 2. And in just six months, we have seen 67 inappropriate EPCs diverted, resulting in 536 saved hours for law enforcement. The savings amount is remarkable. But the largest benefit of Homeward Bound is that committed patients of the Panhandle no longer have to travel out of their community, away from family and support systems, to receive the quality mental health care they deserve. And this points out the fact that it's a win-win scenario, and perhaps a win-win-win scenario. When you look at the many entities that are involved, whether it's the health care center,