

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

May 21, 2003

LB 608

of reasons. In fact, it has problems of the nature...of such a nature that the Census Bureau itself states the official poverty measure should be interpreted as a statistical yardstick rather than a complete description of what people and families need to live. And so it's saying, in short, what people have known for a long time, that the federal poverty standard is completely inadequate. It says the most significant shortcoming of the federal poverty measure is that for most families in most places it is simply not high enough; that is, there are many families with incomes above the poverty line who, nonetheless, lack sufficient resources to meet their basic needs, and as a result many of the assistance programs use a multiple of a poverty standard to measure need, a multiple of the poverty standard to measure need. For example, depending upon the state, Medicaid is extended to families with incomes at or below 30 to 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold. So the federal poverty standard doesn't even make sense to the people that use it, in terms of the absolute standard. The standard is increased to measures between 30 and 200 percent, and recognized in most states...it's recognized in most states that Medicaid is not adequate simply at the poverty level for those who need medical care. In Nebraska, children are eligible for Kids Connection up to 185 percent of the poverty level. Now the minimum wage here in Nebraska doesn't bring you anywhere near 185 percent of the poverty level, so all of our workers out there who are not high school kids but who have minimum wage, who are at minimum wage or thereabouts, in fact, you can see that just with regard to Kids Connection we recognize that they can be on a state program even though they're out there working 8 hours a day, 40 days...40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. And, in fact, a great many of them who have two or more kids to support and who may have been one of a great many people who have been visited by a divorce and are single parents, are being forced into situations where they have to have more than...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR BEUTLER: ..one job in order to get to a livable level for their children. And you can imagine that when you force Americans who are already pretty hard working into situations where they're taking care of kids and having to hold a second