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FLOOR DEBATE

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the other communities of Scottsbluff, Gering, Sidney, have all joined in to providing services. And it's working, and it's working very well. North Platte has reduced their admissions now by 40 percent, that's my understanding. That's working well. That is a direction we need to go. And with that type of services available, also they tell us in the Homeward Bound in Region I, they have less EPCs than they've ever had before. They're reducing that number. Why? Because the services are there. The services are there before people get into the crisis mode. We want a system that keeps people out of the hospitals, not keeps people in the hospitals. We have a system right here in Lincoln. Last Thursday, a group of senators went out here to BryanLGH. They're in the latter stages of their construction project, adding 77 brand-new beds to that facility. They have a triage that will accept patients right out of the emergency room; so early diagnosis so they can determine where those services need to be. They have a separate section for children, a separate section for adults, adolescents. They can move people where they need to go for those services. They also, by the way, have one room that they have set up for telecommunications, tele-psychiatry, if you will, so they can reach out to the rural communities that can't afford those kind of services, and do consulting work with those. I was just more than pleased to see that happening right here in Lincoln. And once that is up and once it's operating, they're going to be able to take more people in. There was some mention of law enforcement, and their concern. There is in the budget, aside from the \$1 million a year going...or coming from LB 692, the tobacco settlement dollars, the trust fund that we set up, \$1 million for EPC, we are adding to that another \$2 million. So we're going to have dollars for EPC that we've never had before, that we can expand those services. And by the way, law enforcement does a wonderful job, but law enforcement don't take people to regional centers. They never have, they don't now, they won't in the future. They first take them to EPC, where they are...first they go through an evaluation process, they try to stabilize them. Then there is a mental health commitment board that meets, and they make the commitment. And we'll have a bill later on, if...hopefully we'll get to it, in LB 1083, that will address that particular portion of the commitment process. But we've done...we have come up with a plan, first