

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

March 23, 2004 LB 931, 1083

Department of Economic Development and the Department of Health and Human Services. It was prepared by Hanna-Keelan Associates on Community Planning and Research, and it deals with extremely low-income persons with serious mental illness. The conclusion of that study, from all partners and providers, was that the pressing need within the state of Nebraska was for affordable appropriate housing, including all types of housing options for those with mental illness. We know that 49.1 percent of people with serious mental illness have been homeless at some point in their lives, and that currently 18.1 percent are homeless. People who are mentally fragile often find that the stress of daily life can become overwhelming. Imagine what it is like when you do not have a home to lay your head in. So we are adding that simple line to LB 931 that becomes AM3059, and I ask for your advancement of the bill. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Redfield. You've heard the opening on the Redfield amendment, AM3059, offered to the seventh component of the divided committee amendments. Open for discussion. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I did want to comment. This is such an important amendment to this bill and also to the state of Nebraska. Hanna-Keelan did a very exhaustive study, actually Senator Synowiecki brought me into this last, oh, November or December, where I heard the report on this. And certainly as we look around our major cities and we look at those people who are street people, people that are homeless, so many of those, matter of fact a very large portion of those, have mental illness and are chronically...have trouble finding houses. This would allow that to happen. Again, the Appropriations Committee has included some dollars in their budget to provide for this. But it's amazing. Also a number of these homeless people, or these people that are chronically homeless, are vets, and I always think what a tragedy it is that we have people that have served this country and yet we don't take care of them afterwards. According to the people that are chronically homeless, 40 percent are veterans, 40 percent are African-Americans. They tend to be older. About 76 percent are male. So hopefully, this will help address that situation. It's not building new houses; it is subsidizing of rental units