

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

April 6, 2004 LB 1083

in the state, on those individuals needing services and also what kind of services that they do need, the appropriate services. And we're going to continue with that. Now, the data through all that is a very important part. If you'll remember, within this bill we're going to have a chief mental health officer, we're going to have also a chief clinician, and then we're going to have an Office of Consumer Affairs that I guarantee you are going to be following up on this very intently, which they should do. So I think we have enough follow-up and backup to ensure that this goes smoothly, again, with that promise that we will not close a bed in a...a hospital bed until we have a bed available within the region to service that individual so that they won't go without services. The money situation...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Time. Thank you, Senator Schimek and Senator Jensen. Senator Tyson.

SENATOR TYSON: Thank you, Mr. President. And, Senator Schimek, thank you for bringing up the next subject that I was about to bring up when I ran out of time the last time. There is a bill in Judiciary that we didn't get to because of press of other business and lack of time. It is a bill introduced by Senator Chambers. It relates directly to the need for psychiatric care in the Department of Corrections. And now to your question, how many. I don't believe that Director Clarke has a firm figure on how many, or the two psychiatrists that I talked to after that hearing. We do know, though, that they have over 4,000 people in the system and nationally the figure runs from 20 to 40 percent. So you could say that there's from 800 to 1,600 people who are currently incarcerated, who will be walking out at some point having served their time or been eligible for parole, and one of the things that has to be done in the future which is not being done in this bill or, for that matter, in Senator Chambers' bill would be to have a smooth transition between people who are getting mental health treatment in the penitentiary or in the correctional system now and segueing them into mental health treatment now. If you wanted a stricter definition, perhaps, of mental illness, you could probably say that there may be more than that. There are certainly more than that in the various places of incarceration in the state, and it