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FLOOR DEBATE

April 6, 2004            LB 1083

has long been accepted by both criminal justice people and mental health people that when we run out of room in the regional centers, in the hospitals for the mentally ill, we don't have a problem with the overflow. We keep them in prison. A lot of those people that are in the state penitentiary right now, if you want to look at from a standpoint of diminished ability because of mental health, they should be in mental health treatment now rather than in the penitentiary. So the question you asked Senator Jensen is...does not have a firm answer, to the best of my knowledge. The thing that concerns me is that there's not going to be money enough to handle simultaneously the various avenues that have to be traveled. A case in point, Faith Regional in Norfolk, has staff. They do have a 13-bed EPC unit. This is not the same thing as the community service spoken of in LB 1083. If you are going to set up 16 to 20 beds, and that is the plan, throughout the state in various hospitals, you have to be talking about a different physical facility because some of these people, as they're brought in, you can't pump them full of Thorazine and forget about them. If you're going to treat that illness, you're going to have to have the physical facilities. Right now, those physical facilities are being handled by the regional centers, including the one here in Lincoln. But some of the people that they're going to pick up and put in those facilities should probably never hit the streets again. Right here in Lincoln, I don't know if it's your district or not,...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR TYSON: ...Senator Schimek, we have people that should never again be allowed to be in public, Simants is one of them. And there are a number of other people, MDSOs, mentally-disturbed sexual offenders, and that's a constant. That's what Lincoln is going to be for. That same type of individual, however, will be appearing in these community services and they're going to have to be handled. They are escape risks. They are risks to the faculty, to the staff, and that has to be taken care of and I think, and it's my worry, that the money is going to run out. The money won't last as long as the good intentions. That's the thing that...that is the thing that concerns me about this. The transition is the