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FLOOR DEBATE

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lost a fairly significant number of hospitals throughout Nebraska, but because of this critical access hospital portion, those hospitals are able to stay in existence, maintain a viability financially, and so we're able to give care to citizens across this state. So it is a very important segment in the care of all of our citizens in the state, and this is just one portion. We had a few hospitals that were on a bubble, as Senator Byars mentioned, and of the six that were on that bubble, these two feel that they can become critical access care hospitals; very important to those communities. As you know, they're in some rural areas, somewhat...whether you call it sparse or not, but without those hospitals being there, people would have to travel greater distances for those cares...for that care. Also, a critical access care hospital has another hub hospital of their choosing to go to because there's a 96-hour requirement that they, if somebody is to stay there longer than that, they must be transferred to a larger facility. So it's very important to the community, it's very important to the state of Nebraska, and I would also urge for the adoption of the amendment and of LB 664. Thank you, Senator Janssen.

SENATOR JANSSEN: Thank you, Senator Jensen. Those wishing to speak on the committee amendment, Senator Johnson.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, first of all, I do want to support the E clause amendment. This is very important. It may look like the deadline is the 1st of January of next year. In reality, it is the 1st of September this year, so that you could accomplish the things that need to be accomplished in order to qualify. So I think in this case the E clause is particularly important. I think the other thing that we want to do is to compliment the six hospitals that were on the so-called bubble here. Four of these hospitals have chosen to go in a different direction, as it is good for them and good for their communities. In these two instances, Lexington and Broken Bow, what they have done is evaluated their demographics, how their population is shifting and these type of things, and they came down with the predictions that they are at the line now of the critical access category and will easily fit into this in the coming years. So I think all of these six are to be complimented for working out what is best for their