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

April 4, 2005 LB 709

affecting the availability and adequacy of medical assistance benefits to Nebraska residents under the program. True. As a result of such increased expenditures, the medical assistance program has become fiscally unsustainable. Now, there's an assumption that we can talk about. Has become or may become? I'm not sure what the correct verbiage is. it's a problem, in any event. And again, I'm thinking we should be talking about why these expenses have increased so dramatically, as well as And fourth, it says: simply focusing on the end result. of the medical assistance program is Fundamental reform necessary in order to ensure future sustainability of the program for the benefit of Nebraska residents. No doubt, if we look at such areas as...we will hopefully find some things that can be reformed, and programs that can be cut or reduced or restructured. The additional findings that I'm offering...not substituted a findings. They're not replacing it; they're just adding on to the findings. And they talk about, essentially, the benefits of the Medicaid program. And there have been enormous benefits, especially to rural Nebraska, which is having such a struggle at this point in time, and will continue to have a struggle for some time into the future. But they are basically this: The Medicaid program provides essential healthcare and long-term care coverage to low-income children. pregnant women, and families, individuals with disabilities, and senior citizens, serving over one in ten Nebraskans. We should be cognizant of the scale of this program and how many people actually rely upon it. The Medicaid program covers one in four children in rural areas. The Medicaid program is the largest single purchaser of maternity care, and pays over one-third of the births in the United States each year. Medicaid is America's single largest purchaser of nursing home services, and other long-term care, covering the majority of nursing home residents. And that's something that's often misunderstood. Everybody thinks long-term care is under Medicare. But a good portion of that is under Medicaid, which is what we're talking about here. In Nebraska, the elderly and individuals with disabilities comprise 23.3 percent of the Medicaid population. and represent 67.2 percent of Medicaid expenditures. Nebraska, low-income children and their parents comprise 76.7 percent of the Medicaid population, but 32.8 percent of Medicare expenditures. These figures indicating to you that the