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LB 709

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Thank you, Senator Pederson. (Visitors introduced.) We have Senators Burling, Byars, Chambers, and Johnson. Senator Burling.

SENATOR BURLING: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor and members of the body. We have had excellent discussion. I've appreciated all of it. Everyone makes good points on this issue and it just points up to the fact the complexity of it and the difficulty that we're facing. As I study the figures and project them forward, I see a very sobering picture. My first reaction is to, well, just, you know, turn my back and maybe it will go away, and let the young folks like Senator Erdman deal with it, but I decided that's not very responsible. As state policymakers, we can't afford to turn our back on this issue. We are obligated to direct prudently the use of our citizens' tax dollars. And I agree that we need to look at all areas of our budget, not just the Medicaid area, but this is the fastest growing portion of our budget at this time, so I think that's why we need to look at it now. I do support AM1049 and the underlying bill. I do believe we have abuse and fraud in the system. Some recipients of Medicaid falsely declare their income levels or purposely keep their income at a certain level so they could be eligible for Medicaid. Medical science, as been...as has been stated, allows us to live longer. Wonderful what the things...what they can do. Average life expectancy is rising at a fairly rapid pace. Are we, as a society and as a Legislature, going to react responsibly, or turn our backs and hope that it goes away? My experience is that something like this does not get better if left alone to itself. I applaud Senator Erdman for bringing this bill. I appreciate the discussion, and I believe that we can, through this study, give direction to a better future for Medicaid in this state. I believe the time is now and AM0772 is the best vehicle I've seen so far to accomplish that. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Thank you, Senator Burling. (Visitors introduced.) Senator Byars.

SENATOR BYARS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to vote yes on AM1049. I'm going to do it because I think it's better than what we have. And, as I've said before, I applaud Senator