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FLOOR DEBATE

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this very issue was discussed. And as much as I hate to admit it, my seatmate here to the left, Senator Bourne, specifically during floor debate questioned Senator Redfield relative to the thought of diverting these funds and not giving them to the Department of Economic Development for the housing component of mental health reform, but rather wouldn't these funds be better situated with Health and Human Services given their more or increased or enhanced familiarity with this population? On the floor last year, Senator Bourne, in having a dialogue with Senator Redfield, indicated again his ongoing concern with giving this money for the housing component of mental health reform Department of Economic Development. He indicated that perhaps if, and I quote, agreeable to maybe an amendment on Select File if it seems if I can make a compelling argument to you that this is a more appropriate place for this, meaning HHS-run homeless assistance fund, rather than an economic development tool. That was a question to Senator Redfield. Senator Redfield's response on the floor was, I think that it might be preferable to wait until next year when we increase the documentary stamp tax and create that as part of that package. That would give us an opportunity to look at how the different departments are handling the funds and address it then so that it's in the right place. Well, I think Senator Redfield hit a home run in terms of her analysis of the situation for us to wait to see exactly how these funds are being spent and if they're done so appropriately and if they're getting in the pipeline to the consumers of mental health services, to kind of be cautious with this. Well, what we have learned is a year later now, more than a year later not one penny, not one penny of that \$2 million, which we very appropriately designated for the housing component of mental health reform, not one penny has gotten to a consumer. I think that the history on this has taught us that we need to streamline these things. We need to get these monies in the pipeline and we need to expedite this. We have consumers of mental health services that are now at our regional centers, particularly Norfolk Regional Centers, that are not being held there for therapeutic reasons. They're being held there essentially because they're homeless and they have nowhere to go upon their discharge from the facility. So I want to again thank Senator Redfield for bringing this, for getting it on our radar screen again.