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LB 312

need to recommit to committee, but I would like to engage the body relative to some provisions within the bill, particularly within the first floor amendment of FA236, as it relates to the job quality thresholds. And I agree with the other speakers that this is a good thing. We're moving in the right direction and so forth, relative to this. However, I think that what we're doing here is essentially allowing the job credits on a sliding scale, and as it correlates with the average weekly wage of the state of Nebraska--and according to the Department of Labor statistic, we're talking about \$8 an hour job, an \$11 an hour job, \$14 an hour job. And again, I agree with the direction, in putting in some criteria, some thresholds relative to the jobs that meet the thresholds or the criteria to get credits for. However, even at the high end, at the 100 percent of average weekly wage, the \$14 an hour job, I think all of us realize and understand that one trip to the emergency room would deplete a family's asset base. I mean, if we don't have a health insurance provision that attempts to address the deficiencies in our system, in our private healthcare base, our private health insurance carrier systems relative to health insurance, if we don't try to correlate our undertaking relative to economic development and our crisis, as I would call it, our crisis with our Medicaid spending, you know, I don't think that's good economic development overall. Again, these kind of jobs, if you're...we keep hearing about LB 775 benefits and how they have brought to the state some good-paying jobs, but yet we're still, at the same time, trying to find answers relative to the Medicaid crisis in our state. This year alone, 2005 appropriations for Medicaid--\$470 million General Funds. The kind of money we're talking under LB 312 is peanuts compared to the global Medicaid spending that goes on in the state of Nebraska: \$470 million General Funds; cash funds \$20 million; the federal contingent of our Medicaid spending is \$910 million; \$1.4 billion in Medicaid spending, total, for the state of Nebraska. I think it would be good strategy, in terms of economic development, if we can attempt, as much as we can, to incentivize the expansion of private-based health insurance coverage for Nebraska workers. I think that while...as a public policy perspective, our best direction is to incentivize a package that attempts to perpetuate the offering, and incentivizing the fringe benefits for our Nebraska workers is