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LB 312

the best way to do this. And quite frankly, an hourly wage, I think, is best left to the private marketplace to determine. I think what we could do, as state government, is incentivize the percentage of that hourly wage, whatever it might be. In other words, if you offer 25 percent of fringe benefits, particularly healthcare benefits, as part of your hourly wage, that you get this criteria of benefits; 35 percent, you get this; upwards to 40 percent. If you offer 40 percent of your hourly wage in collateral fringe benefits, again, particularly health insurance, then you meet the criteria and threshold to receive some of these tax incentive benefits. This, I think, is something that we should think about. I think we should have a dialogue about this. I think we are at a crisis relative to Medicaid spending in the state of Nebraska--again, \$470 million alone in General Fund spending. And I, quite frankly, I think the hourly wage, that will be taken...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: ...care of in and of itself. We've had a lot of discussion today relative to the good-paying jobs that LB 775 has brought in. I think the deficiency in LB 775...and in my discussions with Health and Human Services in identifying employees that are on our Medicaid rolls, the deficiency is the lack of health insurance benefits accorded Nebraska working families. And the hourly wage is not necessarily the issue. So I'd hope that, as we continue to discuss LB 312, that this issue of incentivizing private health insurance for Nebraska workers and securing health insurance as a part of the criteria to receive benefits, state benefits relative to taxes, that this be a part of our dialogue. I don't know if the recommit to committee is necessary. Hopefully, if there's enough synergy on this issue, perhaps we can amend something on the floor...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Time, Senator Synowiecki.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: ...and get health insurance benefits included in this package. Thank you, Senator Cudaback.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Synowiecki. Senator Beutler, followed by Senator Chambers.