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FLOOR DEBATE

May 11, 2005

LB 425

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Foley. Further discussion on AM1600. Senator Thompson, seeing no lights on, you're recognized to close. She waives closing. The question before the body is, shall AM1600 be adopted to LB 425? All in favor vote aye; opposed, nay. The question before the body is the Thompson amendment, AM1600. Have you all voted who care to? Please record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 32 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the adoption of Senator Thompson's amendment.

SENATOR CUDABACK: AM1600 has been adopted.

CLERK: Senator Byars would move to amend with AM1555. (Legislative Journal page 1500.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Byars, to open on AM1555.

SENATOR BYARS: Thank you, Mr. President. Appreciate that and the indulgence of the body. As you know, I offered on General File an amendment to take from General Funds, to increase the General Fund budget, to fund the rate equity program that was started almost 15 years ago by this Legislature and has been moving toward 90 percent of what we assumed, what we were told, was the entry level wage at Beatrice State Developmental Center. As I explained on General File, one of the biggest problems that providers of services to persons with developmental disabilities in this state and across the country are entry level wages. What the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee challenged me to do on General File was, Senator, see if you can find another place if there's somewhere, because we have lapsed funds that we didn't know about before but we found out about as we were visiting about the issue; we have lapsed funds over in Health and Human Services and maybe we can find something that will work other than increasing the General Fund budget. So I called the director of Health and Human Services, Nancy Montanez, and the director of Developmental Disabilities, Rene Ferdinand, and Dennis Loose, deputy director, to my office to sit down to try to figure out how we might fund rate equity, as we have promised to do for a number of years. As we looked at the budget that we