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LB 312

Synowiecki. We'll get this right yet. Senator Synowiecki.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Thank you, Senator Cudaback, members. AM1609 may be a little bit different approach to this. I think it's safe to say that this is much, much more acceptable philosophically with the business community. I'd welcome you to have a dialogue with them relative to this. This amendment centers purely on incentivizing health insurance, and no mandates whatsoever relative to this. As LB 312 sets out, there are categories of wages. And based upon the wage in each of them categories, there is a credit given back to the corporation or company for them wages. A 3 percent credit is given for any wage that represents 60 to 75 percent of the Nebraska average wage. A 4 percent credit is given back to the corporation or company if the wage under the jobs applied for are anywhere from 75 to 100 percent of the Nebraska average weekly wage. And then from there, a 5 percent credit is given for a wage which represents 100 to 125 percent, and a 6 percent credit back for wages that are in excess of 125 percent of the Nebraska average weekly wage. AM1609 simply takes these bottom two tiers, the 3 percent tier and the 4 percent tier, the 60 to 75 percent average wage tier and the 75 to 100 percent average wage tier, and incents that if the employer provides an appropriation to the premium for a healthcare package, as defined in other areas of statute, that they will be, in essence, bumped up to that next percentage. So if you have a corporation or a company that's claiming credits under LB 312, and their salary is anywhere from 60 to 75 percent of the Nebraska average wage, if they additionally provide a health insurance package to that employee and contribute a minimum of 50 percent to the premiums, they will qualify for a 4 percent credit. Likewise, if a corporation or company is claiming benefits under LB 312 that pays 75 to 100 percent of the Nebraska average wage, if they, on top of that, provide a health insurance premium appropriation of a minimum of 50 percent, they will in turn be bumped to the 5 percent credit category. I hope that the members will give this serious consideration. I think Senator Beutler was quite eloquent in his description of the need for some type of healthcare involvement with LB 312. I'd just like to remind members, our General Fund expenditure for Medicaid for 2005 is \$470 million. You take these kind of wages, \$8, \$9, \$10 an hour