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FLOOR DEBATE

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predators. Ours is a goal that cannot be accomplished simply or easily, but no parent needs to be reminded of the cost of complacency. We've come a long way in dealing with sexual predators, yet more can and should be done. We want Nebraska's children to enjoy their schools and neighborhoods without fear. We want parents to worry about their children getting good grades in math and science, not whether their children will come home safe. I have confidence in (sic) Senator Bourne's experience and leadership in this arena will be met with success, as it was a year ago with the enactment of Nebraska's tough, anti-meth legislation. Last year, this body passed LB 117 and I am pleased today to share with you that our law is already making a substantial dent in the problems posed by domestic meth labs. During the first 90 days of implementation of LB 117, our state has seen a decrease of more than 60 percent in reported meth labs over the same period just one year ago. Yet there is more work to be done. We need to discuss the next step in the fight against methamphetamine. Meth addiction has destroyed families. That's why it is so important that we come together to confront this problem. An independent study says we need to fund a meth treatment facility, and I agree. In addition to these important public safety aims, we need to examine how Nebraska serves the vulnerable young people who have become our state wards, and especially the job that we are doing for those in foster care. That's why my budget proposes an independent study of how our system is performing and of how our state can improve its effort. This independent study needs to analyze all of our efforts, from the Health and Human Services System to the courts, from the Foster Care Review Board to other service providers. We need to identify whether there are more efficient and effective ways to organize Nebraska's foster care system. Another challenge our state faces in addressing the health and well-being of Nebraskans is the rising cost of funding Medicaid. If we do not address this issue soon, we will have no room left in the budget for other important priorities, including the education and economic vitality of our state. I have directed our Health and Human Services System to begin the steps necessary to provide community-based Medicaid services as an alternative to institutional care. We have already achieved significant budget savings by encouraging the use of generic drugs and prior authorization, and seeking similar opportunities