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FLOOR DEBATE

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what the Appropriations Committee originally had put into the bill. And I've been led to believe that the committee agrees with this change. Everybody now is more or less aware of how devastating HIV, the virus, is, and how much worse full-blown AIDS is. The HIV, for the record, stands for human immunodeficiency virus. So people shouldn't say "HIV virus," because they would be saying human immunodeficiency virus virus. But we understand what they mean. When that virus ravages a person's immune system to such an extent that certain of these opportunistic diseases and afflictions can take hold and full-blown AIDS is in the picture, that becomes a death sentence. AIDS is incurable. HIV is treatable. The medications that are being used can reduce the level of the virus in the system, so it can stave off full-blown AIDS. People who have been treated who have HIV continue, in many instances, to be productive citizens. I think something like 64 percent of the people in Nebraska who have been diagnosed with HIV are working. What is needed is this amount of money to eliminate a waiting list. There had been federal funds, and will continue to be federal funds, but, like with other things, that funding is not going to keep pace with the need. So this amount will make it possible to eliminate the waiting list and provide the medicines that people need. To be inadequately medicated, if you have HIV, is to not be medicated at all. So I'm asking that you support this amendment, and I will give you a fact or two that will let you know what it is we're talking about. To qualify for assistance under this program, a person cannot be more than 200 percent above the federal poverty line. That person has to be uninsured or underinsured. That person will have to have exhausted first any possibility of aid from any other source, including Medicaid. So what this program represents is the last stop on the road to perdition. It would be as if a person were on an ice-covered slope at the bottom of which is the lip or rim of a cliff. To get from the rim of that cliff down to the ground would be 1,000 feet. The only thing between the person sliding down that slope and going over the edge is the trunk of a tree. If the person can grab it, the person at least has been saved from going over the edge. But can the person be pulled back up the slope to where that person originally was? If a person has HIV, it is highly unlikely. But the person can be prevented from going over the slope and