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FLOOR DEBATE

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decrease the demand for the drug, through public education. Recently we have seen the effects of public education and prevention programs as it relates to the dangers of tobacco. It is clearly evidenced through the decrease in smoking that public opinion trends...that education of the public works, and public opinion is powerful. Here's an example of what I'm talking about. The community of Hastings has developed a methamphetamine task force. The task force meets regularly, involves many sectors of professional and public populations, with the goal of providing preventative education. Task forces similar to those coalitions are scattered around the state. They could apply for these funds. According to the Department of Correctional Services it costs about \$29,000 to incarcerate an offender in Nebraska for a year. The cost to build a prison is about \$90,000 per cell. Contrast that with programs, substance abuse treatment programs, \$15,000 a year; outpatient programs are around \$2,300 a year, and the very good drug court program costs about \$2,500 a year. Statistics show that for every dollar spent in prevention programs we can save from \$7 to \$9 in treatment costs. Rehabilitation statistics are troubling, because a small percentage of those who go through treatment will remain sober for any length of time. Preventative education is cost effective. Preventative education efforts are paramount to effectively combating meth. Public prevention efforts must be the starting point for a continuum of care that is inclusive to the population that, to this point, has remained overlooked. My proposal targets an overlooked population by the recent recommendations of the Community Corrections Council, the public. Prevention education targets those individuals naive to the criminal justice system and to the effects of experimenting with this drug. Nebraska is facing major issues with regard to meth abuse treatment. Those issues are adequate funding and the recruiting and retaining of qualified substance abuse professionals. I believe that by directing funds to coalitions for public education purposes will educate the public and save money. The other reason I introduced this amendment is because in 2001, the Legislature created the Methamphetamine Awareness and Education Fund. We put \$10,000 of seed money in there, with the intent that it would be funded by private contributions. Today, that fund is zero for fiscal year '05. So I think it's time that we put our