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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 1248

**SENATOR CUDABACK:** Senator Beutler, to open on your amendment to the committee amendments.

**SENATOR BEUTLER:** Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, this is probably one of the more important bills that we'll look at this session. Let me say first of all that I certainly agree with the fiscal analysis that would indicate we need to be taking some action with regard to the Medicaid program. And let me say also that I appreciate the efforts that Senator Jensen has made in terms of trying to come to grips with the enlarging problem. Let me say thirdly that I am very disappointed with the federal government and our government generally for failing to come to grips with the need for medical insurance coverage for all our citizens. That problem continues to worsen. And in the face of that worsening problem, we are now exacerbating the situation or about to exacerbate the situation by cutting people off from existing Medicaid benefits. So obviously I enter this debate with some very mixed feelings. And my overall feeling is that I want to know what's happening. I want this Legislature to make the decisions about what happens. And I think it should be done in a deliberative, forthright process with all due speed, but without trusting government bureaucracies to do the right thing. We took the responsibility in building this system over the years, and I think we need to take the responsibility in deconstructing the system, if deconstruction is in fact where we want to go in the end. But it doesn't seem to me that we're being responsible as a society to ignore the problem of medical insurance, to allow increasing numbers of people to be uncovered, not covered by medical insurance, to rely upon Medicaid programs, to rely upon our hospitals to give free care, and to continue to ignore the fundamental problem of medical coverage in our society. The amendment that is specifically before you goes to that part of the bill that says this: The department shall, the department being Health and Human Services, the department shall establish premiums, copayments, deductibles for goods and services provided under the Medical Assistance Program. It shall establish limits on the amount, duration, and scope of goods and services that recipients may receive under the Medical Assistance Program; and it shall establish requirements for recipients of medical assistance as a