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April 3, 2006 LB 709, 1248

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Thank you, Senator Cudaback. Senator Jensen, would you yield?

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Jensen?

SENATOR JENSEN: Yes.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Senator Jensen, we're talking about a lot of people here that work for a living that are on Medicaid. Is that a fair assessment?

SENATOR JENSEN: It all depends on what is "a lot." Yes.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Well, when...during our LB 709 discussions last year, there was a lot of discussion surrounding healthcare, private employer-based healthcare coverage, and comparatively speaking, our state, state of Nebraska, ranks 49th in the provision of privately provided healthcare benefits, with only 43 percent of Nebraska employers offering healthcare benefits to their employees and their families. And, Senator Jensen, as you probably recall, as a result of an amendment which was offered on LB 709 the department released a report relative to the number of Nebraska employers from the public or private sector that have 25 or more employee family units utilizing taxpayer-funded Medicaid benefits, and let me just read little portion of this report, a synopsis of it. This report indicated that there are 9,369 family units of working Nebraskans utilizing the Medicaid system. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the average cost for a Medicaid recipient in Nebraska is \$982.80 per month, or \$11,793 annually. Thus, a conservative projection indicates that Nebraska taxpayers are subsidizing the costs of healthcare for these employers to the tune of about \$110 million, in excess of \$110 million a year. Then as I go through the bill and the committee amendment, Section 5, which is essentially intent language as I understand it, revising public policy provisions with an emphasis upon prevention, early intervention, and it goes down to personal independence, self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, and then number (4) within that Section 5, cooperation with providers of healthcare and related services, public and private employers and private sector insurers, in