

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

February 23, 1998 LB 1063

Legislature, this is the bill that would provide health insurance to the children of the working poor. As defined in the Legislature, those would be children living in families earning below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. I wanted to thank Senator Wesely and the Health Committee for all the work they've done on this issue, not just this year, but going back many, many years. This has been a topic on the table in one form or another for a large number of years because, I believe, there's been an existing need for action in this area for a large number of years. And I appreciate the fact that Senator Wesely has allowed me to have such a heavy participation in this bill, notwithstanding the fact that he knows more on the subject and he's worked on it longer. I also want to thank Deb Thomas and the people in the Health Department who have put in an enormous amount of time on this bill in the last few months. I'm discovering as I get into other areas that there are great civil servants, not only in the Department of Water Resources and in the Natural Resources Commission and Game and Parks, but also in the health divisions of government. And finally, I would like to thank the Governor for taking an interest in this and in prioritizing this in terms of the financial aspects of the bill. The Governor is committed to this bill, and that is very much appreciated. It is, of course, introduced at the request of the Governor. I indicated that the basic purpose was to provide health insurance to the children of the working poor, and that that is defined as children living in families earning below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Your first question, of course, would be, what is the federal poverty level and how is that gauged and analyzed? And to the end of informing you on that particular subject, you have passed out to you, or will have shortly passed out to you a chart that says at the top "Current Medical Eligibility Levels for Children by Age". And at the bottom of that chart it shows you exactly, as it is laid out per number of people involved in a family unit, exactly what 185 percent of the federal poverty level is, and it even goes on down to show you what 150, 133, and 100 percent would be. Above that basic chart it shows you the stairstep kind of Medicaid eligibility program that we now currently have in effect in Nebraska, and it shows you, with a dotted line above that stairstep, what the effect of this particular bill would be in the sense that the coverage that is essentially added by this bill is represented by the white area