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FLOOR DEBATE

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we never did get to this point. I hoped we could have a compromise and we'd get to the floor of the Legislature; we could all agree and then go home. And I would like to also commend Senator Jensen and his staff, and Senator Johnson, Senator Byars and others for working with this. They worked very hard. I can't count the number of meetings that we've had in the last two or three weeks to get to this point. We just couldn't quite get there. So right now we're going this route and hopefully we can continue to still talk after today. But I, too, agree with LB 1083 in concept. LB 724, that paved the way for this bill, came before the Health Committee last year and I was one of those senators that voted for that bill and I believe it passed unanimously because we all realize we have a major mental health problem in Nebraska. And the first thing that needs to be taken care of or addressed is what's best for the consumers and we all agree with that. But my problems first started during the debate of LB 724. I had some...maybe not constituents of mine, but some people up in the Norfolk area that had some concerns on LB 724, and at that time I guaranteed them, I absolutely gave them my word that we would...they would be at the table, we would sit down, it would be talked about. Everybody would be included in the discussions. I gave them my word. They didn't need to worry about it. I remember telling them that Norfolk has the lowest cost per patient, lowest cost per patient. You may be the lone regional center left if we do end up losing two regional centers, but I absolutely guaranteed them. And to my surprise, and to their surprise, there was an announcement in the press that Norfolk and Hastings were the two regional centers going to close. And somebody can correct me if I'm wrong, but from where I stand, those people in Norfolk and Hastings, no one had talked to them at that point. No one had talked to them. Now there's reasons that they came up with that idea that Norfolk and Hastings was going to close, but no one talked to Hastings and Norfolk, and that needed to happen and that's a big reason that we're here today. So as much as I am for LB 1083, I believe in community-based services, I believe there's areas in my district that we could have community-based services, but I firmly believe we're getting the cart ahead of the horse. And as I said earlier, and I'd like to list some of the people that worked...I guess I did list them. Senator Bromm was also very instrumental in working with us, and Senator