

Health and Welfare Committee killed that bill also. I believe the Chairman and some of the committee members at that time thought the closing of the Norfolk Regional Center was imminent and that the funding and the operation of the mental health programs should be taken over by the state. As you are aware, this did not happen. The Norfolk Regional Center is alive and still in operation with no signs of being closed at this time. I believe Chairman Cullan would still like to close Norfolk and feels that if legislation such as is in LB 635 is passed, it may hinder the efforts to accomplish this goal. I do not condemn Senator Cullan if this is the way he feels but I don't feel it is right for a committee vote of only four members of this 47 member body, and this is a seven member committee, to stop or cripple the progress of the mental health program in Nebraska. I also feel this is the only way to bring out the bill to the full Legislature that we will have a chance to discuss this issue and at least be made aware of the problems across the state. I believe the quickest and best way to do this is to read to you the statement of intent that was prepared by me and read as the bill was presented to the Public Health and Welfare Committee. I hope you will open your bill books to LB 635 and try to follow along with what the bill says along with what I say in it. The bill retains the basic principles of seventy-five percent state funding and twenty-five percent local funding of the mental health regions. It allows fees, third-party payments and private donations to be considered part of the local share in addition to tax revenues. Under this legislation, those sources could constitute up to sixty percent of the local share with county and local taxes making up the remainder. I am proposing this legislation because I am very concerned that in the future the counties might not be able to meet their twenty-five percent obligation as it is currently defined. As it now stands, any future increases in state funding will thrust upon the counties an obligation that can only be met with tax revenues that could prove difficult or impossible given the seven percent lid they are operating under. Allowing the counties to consider fees, third-party payments and private donations as part of their twenty-five percent share is reasonable and consistent with similar funding statutes concerning, and get this, concerning alcoholism programs found in 71-5027 1980 Cumulative Supplement. I believe one of the keys to this approach is that private funds could also be used for this match. I believe that we are going to have to learn to help ourselves more, especially as federal funds dry up. This bill would allow private funds to make up part of the match money along with the fees that are collected by the agencies. If you will look at line 23, page 2, you will see that no county could reduce the funds it is now providing for this purpose and I can't stress that enough. It is