

crux of the matter is that by recognizing nurse anesthetists as directly reimbursable health professionals, we would be taking advantage of a tested cost-effective option. Are you all aware that costs continue to climb in health care? I think you are. Recognition would inject the element of economic competition into the delivery of anesthesia services with resulting lower cost. This is not a new idea. Nationally as of 1983, over 30 percent of Blue Cross-Blue Shield programs reimbursed nurse anesthetists directly. Eight states reimburse through Medicaid programs. Fifty-seven percent, yes, that is correct, 57 percent of private insurance plans surveyed indicated that they could provide direct reimbursement. In addition, direct reimbursement was and is available under the Champus program covering active and retired military personnel and their dependents. If you will look at the amendment, you will see that we already provide for direct reimbursement for dentists, psychologists, optometrists, podiatrists, chiropractors, and osteopaths. The major arguments made against nonphysician direct reimbursement, for example, that direct reimbursement is hard to administer or that it results in poorer quality care or that it is costly cannot be raised in this instance. Nurse anesthetists do not come in that category for the following reasons: First, nurse anesthetists provide a discreet easily identifiable item of service which can be listed separately as an item of charge under private plans. Second, nurse anesthetists must always practice in a setting where a physician is present and a physician is supervising. In addition, hospitals exercise quality control by virtue of their ability to grant or to withhold hospital privileges. Third, the services of nurse anesthetists are not subject to limitless demand which the nurse anesthetist can stimulate since physicians control whether or not there will be an operation. Another factor to consider is that direct reimbursement to nurse anesthetists would generate complete accurate and current data related to anesthesia care providers, the consumers they serve, and the cost associated with that care. In addition it would eliminate confusion on the part of consumers with regard to who provides their anesthesia care. For these reasons, I urge you to support this amendment.

PRESIDENT: Senator Nichol.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Mr. President, I would like to have a ruling on germaneness on this. I think there is a bill in,