

job does not provide wages and benefits for the recipient family equal to or greater than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, if the recipient accepts the available job which does not provide such wages and benefits, the state shall provide an appropriate combination of health care, child care and cash assistance to bring the wage and benefit level of the recipient family up to that 185 percent of the federal poverty level. In Nebraska we have a lot of jobs that are in the \$6 to \$7 an hour range, but few in the \$8 or \$9 per hour. The reason for choosing the 185 percent for the federal poverty level is that this level is commonly accepted as the minimum amount for actually bringing self-sufficiency. It's already used for transitional Medicare and Medicaid and for child care benefits. Here's how it would work, this is just an example. A woman and one child is at the end of the two-year assistance, the mother's working, for instance, at a telemarketing company making about \$6.50 an hour. She's within the grasp of self-sufficiency but not quite. This bill, in its current form, takes away the cash assistance at a point when she and her family are doing just what we're asking them to do. And then we cut them off. The amendment doesn't drop them at this crucial point, but instead the state would make up the difference by providing an appropriate combination of health care, child care and cash assistance to bring the wage and benefit level equal to 185 percent of the federal poverty level, a level that is commonly accepted as a self-sufficient amount of income. Then as the family wages increase the state's assistance would decrease. I think that the people who have been working on this bill are very familiar with the concept and actually from the beginning they talked about this particular thing. It recognized...they all recognize that it would really be meaningful...that this would bring the person who's getting the assistance to meaningful employment. Actually, I think that explains the amendment. I'd be glad to answer any questions, if you have any. I do think, as I said when I opened, it's a good amendment because my whole opposition to the two-year thing is that it's arbitrary and there's no transition. It's easy enough to say, well, we'll take this money away from people, but we don't give them anything to survive on if they aren't quite to the point where they can survive. I know that all of us would like to reform the way services are delivered and to be sure that families are using the money the way they're supposed to. But I do think that we need to help them. So, I would be glad to, as I said, to answer any questions. That's the amendment and I hope that you'll support it because I do think it will do