CHAIRMAN JAMES: Dr. Jerry Gentry.

DR. GENTRY: Good evening, Madam Chairperson and commission members. My name is Dr. Jerry Gentry and I serve as the medical director for the Methodist Medical Complex in Robinsonville, Mississippi, located in the northern part of our state.

I'd like to share with you some insights in regards to the effect of gaming on the health care delivery system in Tunica County.

I can tell you from a personal standpoint that the effect has indeed been immeasurable. As a native of Tunica County, I can remember that if you got ill or suffered some sort of trauma either late in the evening or late at night, you either had to drive all the way up to Memphis, Tennessee, which is about 35 miles to the north of Tunica County, or 35 miles south of Tunica County to Clarksdale, Mississippi.

And for either one of those trips, you'd have to fill up the gas tank in your car because the gas stations were few and far between in either direction.

But now, all this changed with the opening of Tunica County's first 24-hour urgent care walk-in medical facility, of which I have the privilege of directing. In the past two years since I've returned home to Mississippi and Tunica County, we've seen an enormous growth in our patient load.

To give you somewhat of an idea, from the year-to-date figures from 1997 to 1998, the difference is approximately from 2,000 to 3,800 patients seen at my clinic. That's a growth of over 82 percent. And of these numbers, about one-half are either from casino employees or patrons.
Additionally, a county ambulance system operates out of our clinic and approximately one-half of those patients that they transport to outlying medical facilities also come from the casinos. But the clinic also serves the Tunica County residents as well.

Approximately 24 percent of our patients are in the pediatric age groups, and additionally, we see a significant amount of acute trauma cases, workmen's compensation patients, as well as chronic care type patients such as diabetics, hypertensives and the like.

I'm not attributing our sole existence to the presence of gaming in Tunica County but I am here to attest to the fact that it has had and continues to have a profound effect on the way the health care is being delivered.

And I think the key to delivering health care in today's society is accessibility, which in our particular area would not be available were it not for the patronage we receive from the gaming industry. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you, Dr. Gentry. Chuck Patton? Is Mr. Patton here? That's the end of our list for public comment period.