

\$4.5 to \$5.5 million that will be available in federal block grant money to improve child care. We need to have in place a plan by this fall to deal with that initiative and we need to also have some parameters for the Department of Social Services to move forward in addressing those needs. This legislation will accomplish that goal by setting up a Child Care and Early Childhood Education Coordinating Commission. This commission will be charged with developing a three-year plan. That's why we need to get this legislation through, passed and signed and implemented as soon as possible so that they can go to work on that plan which is required again this fall by the federal government. This coordinating commission will then also work beyond that to address a number of other issues facing the state in child care on an ongoing basis, but at this point they have an immediate need to move forward to address the federal mandates that we're facing. Now let me run through the rest of the bill and there is some clarifying amendments that we have. First off, there is a training provision in the bill. We have done studies around the state dealing with the question of family day care training and have found a need and desire to have greater training for our home day care providers. This bill calls for four hours training which is, I think, a very small amount to ask for this important work. This training will be provided through the Department of Social Services, through contracts and other arrangements across the state. There are grants, \$200,000 through the legislation for the training programs to be made available for these providers and so we think this is a very major and important aspect of the bill to try and provide for some minimal level of training for these important people. We do provide a toll-free hotline for providers to call to get information about any questions they have or concerns that they have to try and provide assistance to those providers. We do provide for voluntary registration for the home day care providers. This voluntary registration will allow these individuals to meet qualifications that would then allow them perhaps to receive funding through the federal food program which is assistance to try and make sure our young children are adequately fed. In addition, these new federal programs funding might become available. It looks like if these individuals are voluntarily registered, it looks like they need to be in some form or another registered or licensed and so this would open up those doors so we do provide for voluntary registration for those people that don't meet those minimum registration requirements in the bill. We do set up the commission, I mentioned before. We do deal with zoning concerns