

bill.

**SPEAKER BARRETT:** Thank you. Senator Schmit, followed by Senator Scofield.

**SENATOR SCHMIT:** Mr. President and members, it's not very often that I disagree with Senator Wesely in an area where children are involved, but I do disagree with him in this instance. And I know that he has spent a lot of time on this area and has devoted a considerable amount of his waking effort to trying to improve the lot of children. But I do believe that sometimes, and this is not just a peculiarity of this agency but other agencies, but I do believe that sometimes there needs to be some different kind of action taken that might be considered to be remedial and, hopefully, supportive, in fact, of the department. I do not condemn the department, I do not know enough about the operation of the department to do so, or to be critical. But I have had, as others have mentioned here today, some concerns and some complaints and, in my instance, it boils down to the fact that I have I suppose to go on record in support of the county court system, in this instance, to protect the children. It is not normal, of course, that we concern ourselves with the immediacy of a problem as much as it is in this case. In this case, you have the lives of children, many times very small children, that are at stake, and these children are in their formative years and the treatment or lack of treatment that they receive can be very, very crucial to their development as they grow up. I believe that notwithstanding the often times good intentions of the department, I believe that the discipline that goes with the court system can be helpful. Senator Nelson mentioned the cost, and I believe, and again I'm not certain of it, maybe Senator Wesely or someone from the Appropriations Committee can comment on it, I wish they would, I believe the cost that is mentioned here is more than twice the amount of money that is presently being spent on these programs. If that's not true, I hope that I can be corrected. But I do want to point out that I think this is a critical bill, I think the bill does signify a change in direction, a change in responsibility and one which I think we ought to try. I would hope that we would not indefinitely postpone the bill. Again, as I said this morning, it's a new program, a new method of addressing this issue, and I think it's one which we need to address, and in this instance I believe that we have to remember that the individuals we are trying to protect have no one to speak for themselves and, in this case, I believe that I would