

that our predecessor...or our successors, I should say, in the next few years don't have to stand up here and build even more of these things, because this, for me, was the single hardest vote of anything in this whole budget. So I guess I would ask you to leave it in but let's all walk away from this more committed to try to find some reasonable solutions and let's address some of the things that Senator Chambers is raising because I think he raises some valid points. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Hannibal, would you care to discuss it?

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Mr. Speaker, I would yield my time to Senator Chambers.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, thank you, Senator Hannibal, and, Senator Scofield, I appreciate what you said. If you all got as many letters and requests for help from female inmates as I do, and I don't have an answer for them in a lot of instances, you would see that there is a serious problem. In many instances, these women are the sole parent in a one-parent family. When they're taken and put in York many times they run the risk of losing their children. The society should look at the impact overall of these kinds of things that we do. Nobody has ever indicated that the women in York...and I'm not saying that there are not instances where maybe incarceration is justified for women, but that is not where the terrible danger to society inheres. I'm sure we could find other ways to deal with a lot of these women. Many of their crimes are of an economic variety. Some of them are sentenced for what's called cheating on welfare and the dastardly deed is done by getting a job and not reporting it and continuing to receive assistance from the state to rear children. And when it is found out that they were trying to get on their feet but, because of the way the laws are constructed they did something that we have labeled a crime, examples must be made of these mothers and they must be locked away and their children must be taken and placed in foster care. Sometimes parental rights may even be terminated. And what is the purpose of all of this? To punish. To punish. And the Legislature, I think, has an obligation if in so many other areas we talk about trying to preserve the family, salvage people who are salvageable, we need to look at those things right at a point