

already there, so what the money is for is just to open this ward that is already there. We put money into a lot of different projects here on 813, and I think that there is nothing more important than our health, and we need to help some of these people that are less fortunate. So I think this is an amendment that is really needed. I realize that it is over a half million dollars, but if you want to put your money where it would do you some good, I think this is a place where it would really do some good. So I certainly support the amendment. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Wesely, please.

SENATOR WESELY: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I did participate in a meeting with Senator Peterson and Senator Smith and Senator Hartnett and we did discuss this whole issue. I appreciate that Senator Peterson's has come back and now is requesting additional funding, and not diverting funds from other mental health programs because of the lack of mental health funding in so many areas in the state, and so I do plan on supporting this amendment and I recognize that we do have a problem. One of the things I'd note, however, is that in the letter from Mike Nolan...to Mike Nolan from the Chief of Police in Norfolk, they talked about EPCs. If you remember earlier this morning, the Appropriations Committee did put 300,000 additional dollars for EPCs in addition to 300,000 that was already in the budget, in addition to 300,000 we had already appropriated. This problem in Norfolk is a problem found elsewhere across the state, and when we get some money into EPC units around the state, you will have less pressure on the Regional Centers. You will have an appropriate placement for these individuals, and so maybe part of the thing that this unit might be able to take care of is that EPC problem up in Norfolk where we are putting people in jail that don't need to be there. That would be one way to look at it, but in addition, we also have to understand the interconnection of mental health services and how it all fits together, and definitely once we get EPCs in place, that should ease up some of the problem at the Regional Centers, but that is a different function, though, than what some of the function of the Regional Center, and so we still have concerns about appropriateness and adequacy there. But I do think Senator Peterson is approaching this in a much better fashion so I do plan on voting for it here on Select File.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Warner, please.