

PRESIDENT: The Haberman amendment is adopted. Do you have any other amendments?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, I have nothing further on the bill.

PRESIDENT: Okay, Senator Withem. Senator Ashford, on the bill.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. President, and members, I'm going to only make a few brief remarks on the bill. Senator Withem adequately described it. I just would make a comment. It's interesting, I know I had my daughter, three-and-a-half-year-old daughter down here this week and Senator Labeledz has her grandchildren here today, and Senator Haberman, and I have had my son here on a couple of occasions. And I think what's interesting, at least from the time I've been here, is the one thing that stops us cold and makes us smile is when we have our children here, and no matter what...or grandchildren, and no matter what we're discussing, whether it be the most controversial issue or not, there is something about, obviously, about children and their presence here that make us realize why we're here, actually. And we're here, really, for no other reason other than to make certain that we provide for our children so that as they develop and grow that the society that they will develop and grow and live in will be a society that is better than the one that we have grown up in. So whenever we get to these kinds of issues and when we think about why we're here, I think it's pretty difficult to find anything particularly wrong or negative about early childhood education, about these kinds of measures because it really gets at the essence of why we're here and so many of the other things that we do do, that industry brings in or labor brings in, or certain other special interest groups bring in here. We, as legislators, are bound to argue them and discuss them but once in a while we get things in here that seem to me to be really beyond real significant debate and one of these is early childhood education. One of the areas that I have been working in in the Legislature is the area of Aid to Dependent Children and it's been extremely gratifying for me to see some of the changes that we have been able to accomplish in the area of Aid to Dependent Children in the last couple of years and, hopefully, this year we will do more in that area. There are at-risk children in our society, we all know that. Many other states and the federal government have tried to deal with