

education is gaining interest not only in the education community, not only in the health and human service community that I'm familiar with, but in the business community because they understand the need to help children and help them help themselves to develop their skills early on and to then go into schools and succeed in our school system and eventually be able to join our work force and have the sort of skills and abilities that we look for in the work force. And the business community is very interested in this legislation as well as a result of that long term perspective. And it seems like there may be some individuals, and I know I have gotten some letters and maybe you have as well, that are concerned about involvement in early childhood education that we're trying to see the schools and the state and the system reach out and grab children early on and take them away from their parents and families. And, as a parent of two young children, I can assure you that's definitely not my goal or intent or have any desire to see that happen. But the intent of this bill is to provide some incentives in four different pilot projects around the state to where a school district that so desires, and it would be optional, there would only be a few of those that want to pursue this and if they so desired, they would have the opportunity to receive this assistance on a competitive basis, and there they could set up model programs that, hopefully, might be duplicated by other schools around the state. And the idea would be to have this optional for the schools. They come in, they set up a model project. We see how it works and functions. And in this model project we're able to provide assistance to parents, to child care providers, to day care centers, to help them to do the best job possible with our children. And that's a goal I think all of us, despite whatever differences philosophically we have, we do come together, as Senator Ashford said, on the question of children. We all want, I think, the best for our children, and that's exactly what this bill is trying to do. By providing additional training to parents and providers of programs for our young children, we then enable them to do the very best they can. I think everybody tries to do that now but by having this assistance to the system, through these pilot programs, we will be able to do an even better job of helping these individuals. By doing so, I think we build a stronger future for everybody, giving all children an opportunity for the very best experience that they can have as they grow up through their early years and to school and beyond. And so, as a very strong supporter of children's initiatives, I very much support the bill and want to again commend all of those involved but also add that this