

average and then the economy in that area. That is something else that we might think about. But the question that I have, Senator Wesely, is whether or not there truly is a need for annual revision. Is that the required procedure for these kinds of programs in the Department of Social Services presently? And then I would like to talk a little bit more. I will finish this statement and then give you the rest of my time. I am wondering if...and I think I could support a periodic review if that would be possible, and can you respond to that, please, and I will give you my time. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Yes, thank you, Senator Smith, and I appreciate your questions. The annual review was placed in there, and I think typically reimbursement rates are reviewed, hopefully, on an annual basis for a number of other programs, but the reason this is specifically put in there is because of problems we had with forgetting about this program. It hasn't been increased in reimbursement now for eight or nine years, and we fell so far behind. Far better that we do on an annual basis small incremental adjustments if they are necessary or up or down, as you said, versus having to catch up. I mean, that is why this bill is costing so much is we fell so far behind. This would, on an annual basis, help us keep up and not fall so far behind, and one of the things we need to discuss here, I know others have raised this question, is do we fundamentally believe that Title XX reimbursement rates should reflect the market. If we believe that, then encouraging the department every year to do that makes sense. If we don't, if we want to just come back every so often and do this, I guess that is another option, but I fundamentally believe that Title XX reimbursement rates should reflect the market, that we shouldn't have, because you are poor and on Title XX, a lower reimbursement, that those children deserve as good care as any other children and, hopefully, that is a principle that everybody else shares in here, that we shouldn't discriminate against those kids. Now, the annual review can occur and they can look at the market, but it is also a fact that this Legislature must ultimately appropriate the money, and it isn't absolute that this occur without the Legislature having some authority in this area. And so I am not afraid of setting that goal out there. It is a good goal, it is a worthy goal, and on an annual basis reviewing it, but, again, it will also give us the opportunity through the budgeting process to not fund that if we felt that it was inappropriate