

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Mr. Speaker and members, this amendment would add \$75,000 to the Legislature's budget to pay for assistance in a study that was introduced by the Health and Human Services Committee yesterday to look at the mental retardation system in the state. You'll find that on page 1514 of the Legislative Journal. I think you all realize the great concern that we have in this state regarding the current circumstance of the mental retardation system. We had a number of problems arise in the late fall and some meetings to try and resolve those problems. We recently adopted an additional amount of money to go into the system and have recognized a great deal of conflict and tension in our mental retardation system. Our mental retardation system has been recognized, nationally, and internationally is one of the best in the world. But it's come across some difficulties, lately, and particularly difficult are the relationships between the state and the regions and the federal government's interjection of the waiver has caused some great disruption. That has occurred in the last few years. And that new waiver policy has led to communication problems, difficulties in understanding budgets, difficulties in understanding roles and responsibilities, and we need to take some time and evaluate the situation. So the committee did introduce the study resolution. But, in examining the number of issues that we need to look at, we found 27 just immediately, and there are more that we need to look at, as well, and we simply don't have the resources to do that without bringing in some assistance. So we're asking for the 75,000 to bring outside consultants in to work with us. And one of the reasons we want to do that is that the tension has led to some distrust and difficulty in bringing people together on this issue at this point, some hard feelings have resulted and we don't need that. We need to have people be able to sit down, talk and work with one another once again. So, having somebody from outside able to sit down, work with these people, evaluate the quality of programs, evaluate the cost of programs; we are now doing a study, by the way, Lloyd Ross, on the cost model, which is costing us 128,000 out of the DPI budget, and that's the first phase. So we are looking at the cost model, and we need to take that start and then work on further examination of the different issues involved with mental retardation. We spent like \$46 million on that system, and it's been a long time since we took a good, hard look at it. So, with that, I think clearly it's justified. I'm probably