

that's why you're seeing the federal government, that's why you're seeing the state make that decision that targeting our limited resources is wise to direct it in this area. Now let me also argue on moral and ethical grounds that this is a wise investment that we should not have our poor, pregnant women and our poor children suffering from a system that ignores their needs or is unable to meet their needs. Even if we do care and are concerned, obviously, our system has many gaps in it, is not a comprehensive health care system and these individuals are, in many cases, falling through the gaps and the cracks in our system. We ought to provide for their needs and recognize that, as a society, we have a moral and ethical obligation to care for those that are disadvantaged and particularly our pregnant women and our young children. That's what this bill attempts to accomplish. I also want to note that this bill provides for case management which is, again, an option under the Medicaid program for high risk pregnant women. This bill would require that case management. We think that this component of the bill though very inexpensive, something like \$30,000, is a very, very wise investment and should save a great deal of money as well and be better for the women and children involved to make sure that their needs are met but also not excessively expend money. I want to note I know there will be some who object to the bill on the fiscal grounds and understanding the budget constraints that we're under, I recognize that. I would ask you to support the legislation in recognition of this issue as a priority and I will promise you this that if we are able to advance the bill and the A bill to Final Reading, there it will sit till the budget bills are considered and we can assess whether or not the money is available for this type of program or whether or not we want to make it a priority. If we should choose, at that time under the circumstances, not to proceed with the bill, there are several options available, number one, the 185 percent level is adjustable. That could be reduced to, say, 150 percent or some other level. We could also just target in on the case management element of the bill. But none of those options would be available if we don't have the bill on Final Reading so I'm asking you, even if you have budget considerations holding you back to vote to advance the bill, recognize the importance of the issue and, if possible, I would certainly like to see the bill pass in its current form but I want you to know I'm very flexible and understanding of the budget constraints we have and would be more than happy once we see where we are in the budget to consider amendments to the bill. But my hope is that we will recognize the importance of this bill, the importance of this