

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Senator Labeledz, I appreciate you making my case for me. You kind of took some of my thunder out. That's the point I mentioned in my opening, that it is the responsibility of the counties to pick up this cost. It is in the statute, that's what I've been trying to say, Senator Labeledz. I don't think, in this particular case, that we want it to be a county responsibility. I think, if we're so bound and determined to do this, we should be willing to say the state will cover the cost, the state will cover the cost. And I might add, Senator Labeledz, that we're treating this process not as we would treat any juvenile case whatsoever. And juvenile cases you were referring to there are hearings, there are probation officers, there's investigation, there's input, there's a tremendous amount of information gathering to do what's in the best interests of the child. In the 425 bypass system that you've envisioned in the bill, there is no particular hearing. All there is, there's no adversarial situation at all. There is no information gathering, there is no pooling of resources and minds to the best interests of the child. The only thing you have is the young minor there, in front of the judge, and the young minor can bring whom they want, and they present their case and the judge has to make a decision, and that's it, pure and simple. If the judge goes on and says, I'm not sure that this person is mature enough or informed enough to make a decision, the judge may then go on to appoint a guardian ad litem or counsel. Now we're going to be getting into somewhat adversarial situations. And it really...I find it almost...if it wasn't so serious, I would be almost laughing, to a degree, about the senators' apparent desire to force things on young children, and then to say, oh, by the way, we're not going to fund it, we're not going to put any money into it. We're going to shift that burden to someone else. And, Senator Labeledz, I would think that if you're so on this issue as you say that you are, that you would be more than delighted to not only put 45,000, but you'd punch the green just as easy as you punched the green for \$30 million earlier this morning. And I once again, members of the body, I know it may be getting a little bit more bitter at this particular point, but I want to point out that we already have an A bill unless the Withem amendment is taken off. But even with an A bill, that does not stop the bill from passing. You can still pass the bill and decide not to pass the A bill. So it does not jeopardize the bill at all. The one thing I want to emphasize is that we do not know how much money it's going to cost. Certainly, in Douglas and Lincoln Counties it could be quite substantial. On