

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, this is a compromise amendment worked on with Senators Byars, with Senator Rasmussen, other senators, Bernard-Stevens, and other members of the Health Committee that have been working on this legislation. The major concerns with the bill, I haven't yet even gotten to the major elements of the bill that are in here, but the major concerns that have been expressed in opposition to the bill have been twofold. Primarily the main concern has come from the counties who are opposed to the increases in funding that are required of the counties under the legislation. I have discussed, previously, my desire to see the counties increase the amount of money they contributed to this program, and have felt, since the counties have control of the program, they should have a greater financial stake in the program, a greater financial contribution to the program. We have had hearings across the state. We found disparity in what the counties contributed. We have found problems in this area that originally led to the task force recommending that the counties be removed, the regions be removed from the service system, and instead the state take it over completely. That is not what the original bill called for, but it did increase the contribution required of the counties, the counties objected, we reduced it by the committee amendments, they still objected. And, at this point I will concede to their concerns, primarily because of the fiscal crisis that we're in in personal property taxes. Because of the personal property tax situation no one is certain what property tax base is available to the counties. They face mill levy limits, they face uncertainty with their own budgets, they face a limit on their budgets that is in place by previous legislation. And, as a result of all those factors, I can understand why the counties have got a concern. And so rather than fight that battle during this legislative session, this amendment would eliminate any increases to the counties in terms of their funding requirements. So that concedes point number one. Point number two has been a concern that this bill also requires an entitlement to services for persons with developmental disabilities in 1994. Of course, I believe that we ought to entitle these people to services. If you have a developmental disability it seems inequitable and unfair that you have to wait for services while others are able to achieve some level of services to meet their needs. We don't make children wait for services to get into our school system. We