

quickly. First, it sets up a quality review team in each of these six regions so that this team can examine the quality of the programs, look at the quality of life, do a quality of life survey and know how the individuals involved are being served and the kind of lives that they are leading. So the quality review teams are set up. We better coordinate among our state agencies work in this area. We do not create a new department. We do not consolidate but we do coordinate and that is far better than having those situations that we have in the past with various agencies not working together as they should. We do set up a case management system that is more independent. The state will provide for more consistent case management statewide and we believe it will improve that function. We do provide for transition services for individuals in our special education programs so that they will, before the age of 16, be prepared to move out of our schools and into our communities and able to meet that change in life that they will be facing. As most of you know, we currently mandate...the federal government has mandated an entitlement to all individuals with the developmental disabilities to special education services through our school systems through the age of 21. So we already do entitle individuals to services through these...through this initiative. But one of the other items the bill follows up on is that that entitlement ends at the age of 21. These individuals that we have spent all this amount of money in special education on are then dumped off into these community regional programs and not entitled to services, waiting in some cases for years to get into programs. All the advancement, all the initiatives, all the accomplishments we've made through the special education programs and the money we've invested in it and the work that's gone into it can be lost as a result of this wait. It makes no sense. If we entitle these people to services through the age of 21, we should entitle them beyond that and this legislation will provide for that so they can move in a smooth transition into the community, out of the schools, and not lose what they have gained through the special education programs. We also broaden the definition of who is to be served by these...by this service system. We now only cover those persons with mental retardation. We need to include all persons with developmental disabilities. They have similar disabilities. The impact is similar. There is no reason some should be included and others excluded when their conditions are the same in many respects. Those that have autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and spina bifida, in particular, these are what are considered developmental disabilities and in addition to the