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SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Robinson. Senator Warner.

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I guess I have a question for Senator Bernard-Stevens. This mandates...this mandates a program which previously was optional with whether or not it was to be funded, I take it. Last session we funded it, but it was not mandated, it was optional.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Well, to my knowledge, what we agreed to do is with the intent language we had in the appropriations package and what we agreed to in the amendment, that it was...this was a program that we were going to set up and we were going to fund.

SENATOR WARNER: Yeah, but it was optional, and now it's mandated. Is that correct?

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: That would be my understanding...correct understanding, yes.

SENATOR WARNER: My question then, can you, if you can answer, or Senator Wesely, does this mandate something over and above what was put in as an optional program? I don't object to the program, I just want to know if it's mandating more coverage or more liability or the coverage of liability than was done on a voluntary basis or optional basis and obviously the question rests with the fact that if we're short of revenue and this is an important program, that's not the point, but every time we put in something mandated and then we have cut issues, why then the mandated program becomes something you can't even look at because it's mandated to be done. I understand it's important but all of us have had contact from foster parents and the problem but can you answer if this mandates something more in the way of coverage or cost than what would have been the case with the optional and why would it be necessary to mandate it to be done if it can remain optional?

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Bernard-Stevens, or Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: The answer to your question, Senator Warner, is if the committee amendment had been adopted it would have been more than what was adopted last year. That's why Senator Bernard-Stevens and I suggested we reject the committee amendments. So now we are parallel to what was adopted and funded last year. There isn't anything more required than we