

members of the body, just in closing I want to reiterate that the bill, as it is now, 145, deals with state employees as well. It also deals with the private sector in the amended form that the committee version has which is 100 employees or more. I don't believe that that has the number of votes to make it through Final Reading and passage, but I believe very strongly in the concept of family medical leave. I offer this in good faith as to the body...to give the body a choice. If we really believe in the concept of family medical leave, if we really believe in the concept of having parents be able to be at the...be able to bond with the children at the most important...maybe one of the most important events of the family, that would be their natural birth itself. If we believe in those concepts, one thing we can do is do it for state employees. So this would simply say that the family medical leave would not be in the private sector but we would take care of the state employees at this point. The cost would not be insurmountable. The cost is estimated somewhere around 200 to \$260,000. It can be higher, obviously, if there are more replacements. Actually, how it would work, there would not be an A bill with it. They would simply...the agencies that it would apply to if, in fact, they had to pay out the sums of monies that they did not have or could not find from other sources, they would come back in deficit appropriations. So it would not affect the A bill side this session. It would not affect the General Fund as far as the green sheet is concerned. But it certainly would have an affect as monies were being paid out later. The issue is, do we believe in family medical leave, number one? Number two, do we want to go, as Senator Wesely wants to do, full fledged forward with 145 only to end up, in my judgment, with absolutely nothing? Or should we come away with something? Should we try to come away with something that says we believe in the concept, we believe in it enough to put our own employees under the concept, we believe in it enough to show an example to business, what can happen. We believe in it enough to show that it can, in fact, be a savings. We believe in it enough to know that employees will be a better, more confident, a happier employee, they will be more productive. We believe it because we know that, in the long run, it will save the state money. We believe it because we know in our hearts it's good for families. Are we willing to take that step alone? And I think we are. I think we are ready to take that step and this amendment offers the body to take the one step that we can take this session and, in my judgment, it will be this step or no step at all. And I think that would be a shame. And, with