

proceed with parental termination of rights. In a study conducted by the Child Welfare League of America, if a child is not reunited with their family within 18 months, it is very unlikely that reunification will ever occur so we are at the outer edge of the chance of success of the reunification of families. But it is critical to make sure that we get children placed permanently so that their lives have structure and boundaries. Currently we do a six-month court review, but that is to focus on the permanency of the child. It's different and this is to see to it whether or not there is a likelihood of any reunification of the family or whether or not it's appropriate to proceed with termination of parental rights in the case of the child so they can be placed in a permanent setting. DSS has 1,379 wards who've been in care for 2 years or longer; 600 of these children are under the age 12. In addition, there are 97 who are under the age 2 who have been in care for 50 percent of their life or longer. Eighteen months for a child in their development is a very long time. And for that reason, we need to focus our attentions on the permanency of children. I would urge the adoption of the amendment. And I know at one time there were going to be a lot of us who were going to speak in favor of it; but given the lateness of the hour and if there are no objections, I hope we'll be succinct in the covering for this material. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Landis. On the Landis amendment, Senator Chambers. Senator Wesely on the Landis amendment.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. I'm looking at the amendment now. You said this is exactly as it came out of committee, correct? Okay. With that provision, I would rise in support of the amendment. The committee did hear the bill, 1062, and was impressed by the concern expressed by Senator Landis and the proponents of the bill. There was, however, a concern expressed by the Department of Social Services and others about the measure. And one of the concerns was after the 18-month period, what real initiative had taken place to work with the family to deal with their problems and also some of the language on presumption of the need to place the child outside of the natural home was changed by the committee. And I think we made it more of a review with an expectation that the department, in the 18 intervening months, will work with the family to provide services and try to correct problems and certainly within that 18-month period, after that