

confusion both in the Department of Social Services and the Department of Education as to how these children would be treated, these students would be treated. For the most part, they are placed in these group homes. Many of them are placed their by courts or they are...and it is unclear as to whether or not they would receive special education funding; if they would, to what extent. These are all issues that Senator Withem raised and I believe he will have an amendment, at least I have seen an amendment that creates a commission to look into this, which I think is a valuable idea. In any event, this is a cut of, as Senator Moore described, for the first year of \$813,000. I would like to also relate to the body the hard work that Liz Hruska has done in putting this together. She has worked on this project now for nine months. She has become a real expert, if she was not before that, and I believe the numbers that she is presenting to us are absolutely accurate. After having worked on this as hard as she has, the program, it will get a good look-see, and I think that's important. There is a cut in this proposal, and I think it is a responsible cut, and it would become a little bit irresponsible to go beyond that at this point because of the lack of information that we do have on the status of these individuals who are living in group homes and other like institutions. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would support the Moore amendment.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Ashford. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, very briefly, I am reluctantly supporting the Moore-Ashford amendment. The reason I am doing that, first of all, the reason it is reluctant is because the more I get into the issue of wards of the court, wards of the state funding for educational expenses, the more I am convinced that it is a mess and that we, as the policymakers, really don't have any handle at all on what is going on. As a matter of fact, it was real frustrating to me in visiting with people about this. I think a lot of the policy implementers at the state level don't have a particularly good handle on this. I don't mean that as any criticism of any individuals. I heard as much frustration from them as we are attempting to create this with the fact that they are not all that comfortable with what really happens. I am a sponsor of the bill because I was asked to carry the bill. I guess I am the foster parent of the bill. Senator Baack is the sponsor of the bill but he has lost custody of this bill through inattention so I am the foster parent to this particular measure