

we will take it up with all the other issues that we'll have in May. But as I said, it's difficult to argue against this, like many programs that we have like this, and we are going to end up having to set those priorities later on. But I would hope that each of you will have in mind how you're going to handle that because, in this case, 71,000 or 80,000 is nearly, it's over 20 percent of the budget and an expansion, so if you're dealing in percentages, it's a significant percentage increase that will have to be taken away somewhere else ultimately if we put it in. And, with that, I was interested in the amount of people that it perhaps will serve in the state and I would be trying to get more information on that that is more accurate even though that may not be entirely appropriate. But if it's 6,600, it's quite a bit difference than 170,000 across the state which I would think was quite high. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator. The Chair recognizes Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body, I rise to echo what Senator Wehrbein has stated and actually I wanted to tell Senator Crosby that I support the concept but I'm going to be voting no and the reason I'm voting no is not because I don't want the program. In fact, I do, but I do believe that it's best to be served at this point in the Appropriations Committee. As many of you probably do not know, the Commission on Hearing Impaired has asked this same request and it is before the Appropriations Committee. Traditionally, the Appropriations Committee, as Senator Wehrbein was talking earlier about, will say no to these types of expansions which in this case the Appropriations Committee has said no, but not because they're saying no, we'll never do it, but no, we want to hear more about it and the commission will come in, talk to the Appropriations Committee and explain why this expansion is going to be something we need to do at a time when we're having to reduce spending. And I would feel more comfortable if the Appropriations Committee were, in fact, to agree to do this particular proposal, then it's within a budget that is balanced. Otherwise, if I were on the Appropriations Committee or certainly I think some of the others on the Appropriations Committee would think, is that if this bill advances, we don't need to put it in the budget because there is already a bill out there, we'll talk about that later. And then when you get to the end of the session when we finally get to this in May, because this bill will hold up because of the A bill, there will