

be so much pressure to reduce spending on other priorities that the bill will have a less likelihood possibly of passing. So in order to...that is why I'm going to be voting no at this point. I think it needs to be an Appropriations process, needs to stay there and if for some reason the Appropriations Committee would continue to say no, Senator Crosby certainly would be free to add an amendment to the committee amendments at the proper time of that Appropriations process.

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

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Madam President, members of the Legislature, I rise in support of the bill and urge you to support it as well. I know a lot of questions are being raised about the expense of the bill and the implications of the bill. I think this first bill out is getting a lot more scrutiny and attention than you would normally give to a bill and I can assure you that there is no hidden problems in the legislation that I think now that with the committee amendments that were adopted, that will end up causing us concern in the future. There is a specific problem. It has been brought to our attention for several years that people cannot get services that they need for mental health, for alcohol and substance abuse when they have a hearing impairment. They have come in. There was some effort made. The Department of Public Institutions says everything is fine. I can tell you at the hearing and I can tell you from previous hearings that things are not fine, that we do have a problem, that this is a problem that will not go away and I'll tell you exactly what I think is going to happen if you don't advance the bill and pass this. You're going to find out that some day down the road you'll be back down here and wishing that you had taken this modest step forward to try and address the needs of the hearing-impaired because I think we have a liability here under the ADA, under the federal law, that will eventually cause us to spend a lot more money than we're talking about here. If we refuse to take this step, if we refuse to recognize this problem, and I could tell you from the hearings that I heard, I was very impressed with the testimony that we heard and about the severity of the problems that are being faced and the barriers that are being faced that fly in the face of the ADA. And I don't see why somebody out there, if they make the good faith effort here with this bill and this Legislature rejects it, why they wouldn't take us to court. I think ultimately, you know, it's up to the