

the second thing I want to indicate to you is that that standard of need, that level on which we think somebody is so poor they should have assistance through the welfare program, from figures I just got from fiscal office, for a family of three, our standard of need is about a third of the poverty level. Now let me emphasize that point to you, because what we're saying is that you not only are poor but you have to be among the lowest third of the poor before we provide you any sort of assistance through the ADC program. Now, you have higher income levels that are available for food stamps and some other assistance so it's not that you don't get some of the aid perhaps in your poverty. But, for this program, for this cash assistance and the other benefits that go along with it, you're not just poor, you're the poorest of the poor. And the point is that we have fallen so far in the years, over the years, and again, the lessons of history ought not to be forgotten and thus repeated. This committee, the Health and Human Services Committee, this Legislature should recognize that falling in a hole only makes it harder to eventually do the right thing and so, systematically, updating, as the...

SPEAKER WITHEM PRESIDING

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: ...CPI goes up, the standard of need is only the logical thing to do. It takes it out of our hands and puts it as an administrative function, which it should be, and keeps in our hands the payment level, and that's where it should be. The payment level is the key point and that remains the Legislature's to determine. The standard of need, the level by which we recognize the poverty that is in need of help ought not to be something that is left to fall so drastically over the years as it has in our state. So, again, there were inaccuracies in what was handed out. I want to emphasize once again this is...this is not the payment level, it's the standard of need level and that's the qualifying level, and I think that, clearly, we've fallen so far behind we ought not to fall further and this committee amendment will help us with that. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Pirsch, on the Witek amendment.

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the body, I do have a question for Senator Wesely, if he would