

Juvenile Justice Act. She does add language about best interests of the child and requires that to be part of the act. But the act applies to state agencies and other entities but does not include the courts, and we thought that that was part of the problem with the implementation of the Family Policy Act and the committee amendment adds the courts to the list of those entities that are to follow the Family Policy Act so that you have state government departments, agencies, institutions, committees, commissions and courts. And that is what the committee amendment does. I'd ask for your support for the committee amendment.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Wesely. For discussion on the committee amendment, Senator Witek.

SENATOR WITEK: Madam Chairman, members of the body, Senator Wesely, if you would yield to just two questions.

SENATOR CROSBY: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WITEK: Since you added the courts to this, then I assume you'd be wanting the judges to do something or make this part of their decision. What will the judge then be...what change would this make in their decisions?

SENATOR WESELY: Well it is to...the Family Policy Act was an attempt, in '87, to try to intercede earlier on and help families deal with whatever problems they had and keep the families together if possible by not waiting till it got so bad you can't do anything. The problem is, as Senator McKenzie will talk about when she gets to the bill, is that sometimes we try too hard to keep them together and then the children suffered and so she is adding the "best interests of the child" has to be played into it. So the hope is that the courts will pay more attention to this thrust and in their decision-making, keep it in mind more than they had been in the past.

SENATOR WITEK: Okay, and then in Section 2 of the bill itself it says that children can request assistance then and if you're adding courts, does that mean children can go ahead and ask to go into a court of law without any knowledge of their family knowing that or...

SENATOR WESELY: No. This...