

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, members. I rise in support of the Pirsch amendment but I do so acknowledging that I also am comfortable with the bill in its current form and the compromise that was reached. But I also recognize that the bill came out of committee in the form that Senator Pirsch is trying to get it to, and that that's a form in which I introduced a bill during the Special Session, and a concept which I do think is good policy overall for the state. The reason is that if you eliminate the cash payment for those that are low income and pregnant you still maintain the food stamps and the prenatal care and the WIC is likely to be accessed. So you get the food assistance and you get the medical assistance, you don't get the cash assistance and that's really what remains to be decided on this floor of the Legislature. But the key for me is that there are several options to look at. To do nothing is to return to a situation where we will pay from the point at which a low income mother is identified and known to be pregnant. She will start getting cash payments, and the cost of that is something like a million and a half dollars a year. So it's important in my view that we move forward. Now if we do nothing, if this bill fails, if we take no action there will be a significant cost and I think that is not an option I want to pursue. The bill as it currently is constituted, which covers 150 percent of Medicaid in the last three months saves a million dollars a year. So in my view, that is significant and continues to be something that we should move forward on. But Senator Pirsch's bill brings us back up to a level where we eliminate eventually the last three months and we get ourselves back up to that larger savings. So that is the third option to go back to that concept. So that's really the three options. The first, I think, is not acceptable because of the cost involved, so the second one the savings are not as great, and the third is the one that is offered by Senator Pirsch where the savings are even greater and you still maintain the Medicaid and the WIC and the food stamps. So you take care of the basic needs of the mother, see to it that her need to have good nutrition and good medical care is provided but the cash isn't there. Obviously, Senator Chambers and others have raised consequences of that, and I acknowledge that. But still the basic things we've talked about will still be maintained. So, with that, again I support the Pirsch amendment and encourage your support as well.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Witek.