

it, it says we may do it up to the seventy-fifth percentile. I'd try to answer any questions on that if you have to, but if I...if you have questions on that. Thank you.

**SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS:** Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. You've heard the opening on the ninth division. We have Senator Wesely followed by Senator Chambers and Hall. Senator Wesely, you are recognized.

**SENATOR WESELY:** Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I rise in support of the amendment but I must say I do say reluctantly. The effort to try and keep the child care reimbursement at a reasonable level is one of the concerns that the committee addressed and included in the committee amendments. I'm passing out right now an article that indicates a recent survey was done in terms of occupations in this country and ranked out from highest to lowest in terms of pay. Right there at the bottom, bringing up the rear were child care workers. They're the very lowest paid of the workers in our country right now under this survey. At the high end were the lawyers so we understand that. But the thing that I think we miss constantly is this 75 percentile is based on an extremely low pay to begin with so I would prefer that we were at the 75 percentile. We were once at that percentile. We've dropped now. I think we're going to be down to 60 percentile and that will drop even further by the time we get to 1997 when this amendment takes effect. I had hoped that we could at least not lose ground any further. I would like to have language that said we stayed at 75 and every two years we adjust it to keep it that, but that does not seem to be something we can achieve so I'm willing to accept this amendment so at least we have an adjustment every two years in some regard to try not to lose any further ground even though we don't make up the fact that the child care workers in this country are woefully underpaid. Teachers, we talk about teachers and how difficult it is to have good teachers, that we need to pay them better and have good retirement and what have you. Child care workers are as important and maybe more important than teachers because child care at an early age is the point at which the values and the perspectives and a lot of the things that make people what they are are achieved in those first three, four years of life. That's where the child care workers are and right now in our state, Lincoln has got the highest percent of women with young children in the work force. I think it's like 67 percent. There is no city in the country that has a higher percent of our