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LB 425

SENATOR BYARS: ...entry-level staff, all of the quality issues are going to jump up and bite us. Now I know it's a huge money issue, but it's also a fairness and equity issue. It's quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. It's quality of life for those entry-level workers. And it's a provision of services that we, that we as a state have promised. And I think that we need to keep in mind that this is as equally important in providing for the protection of the citizens of our state as business incentives and other dollars that we have in our budget. And I would ask for your approval of AM1440.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Byars. You've heard the opening on the Byars amendment, AM1440 to the Appropriations Committee amendments. (Visitors introduced.) On with discussion of the Byars amendment, Senator Synowiecki, followed by Senator Don Pederson and six others.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Thank you, Senator Cudaback and members. First of all, very sympathetic to what Senator Byars is attempting to do. Obviously we want to maintain a certain level of parity with the state employees relative to our provider rates, particularly the good work that those that work with developmental disabilities. I'm sure Senator Pederson will also shed some light on what the Appropriations Committee approach to provider rates were. Number one, this represents, this subject represents one of the greatest divergence with the Governor in terms of spending is provider rates generally. And the methodology undertaken by the Appropriations Committee, albeit very simplistic and maybe oversimplistic, but I thought it made some degree of sense in the sense that we took a group of providers that has had no increase since 2001 and then we had another group of providers that have received increases, albeit small, but increases every year since 2001, and we divided these two groups--those that had not received an increase since 2001, and they, as you can see in your budget book, were given the 3 percent each year increase; and those that received small increases, but have received increases subsequent to 2001, received the 2 percent increase. Essentially all of these increases, the 2 and 3 percent group, were substantially above the Governor who, for the most part, zeroed all the provider