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those problems. More than 100 protection caseworkers were hired in 2004, for example. More remains to be done. Those improvements almost certainly will replace additional state tax dollars. Sound decision making on those...on the future long-term commitments is essential. The proposed comprehensive review of the child welfare system would help ensure that it's done the right way. I think it points out several things. Number one, we would have an independent body making this evaluation, and certainly we haven't had that yet. We hear from one agency, then we hear from another agency, and it never...it never really coalesces, and we need to have some independent party that's evaluating. Let's face it, there are competing interests in this. Everybody thinks...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: ...they've got the right answer, and somebody needs to evaluate the various segments of the program and bring it together, and we haven't had that. So we don't like to spend \$500,000, as you can tell. We're not enthused at that at all. But we have a program dealing with the most vulnerable of our children in this state, and we need to have a system. It's easy to say let's just go out and do something, but it's more important to go out and know what you're doing before you start doing it. For that reason, I think they need this study. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Pederson. Further discussion on the Howard amendment? Senator Smith, followed by Senator Redfield and others.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. As we look at the big picture of the budget and tweaking half a million here and a half a million there, and maybe getting back at someone here and getting back at someone there, I'm just trying to get a grasp of what the real issue is here. And I know that there's been criticism that this budget provides for a study of yet...it's perceived to be perhaps duplicating prior efforts, and I can't really speak to that. But I am somewhat curious what Senator Howard's intent is, and if she would yield to a question.