

mediator who will determine whether or not child abuse is going on, but rather simply to report it. And it is those people who have the expertise and the authority that will explore and determine whether or not those allegations are accurate. They are, the mediators are not the enforcers of the abuse but simply as every other citizen is required to do in this state, and that is to report if there is an suspicion of abuse going on. I think Senator Hohenstein really stated it well the last time we were debating on this when he said what you have is two competing interests here, and that is whether or not we are going to promote the success of this mediation process or protect children, and the most important one, from my perspective, is the protection of the children, even if it is at the risk of the success of the mediation process. I think it is also critical to recognize simply what Senator Ashford said, and that this is a voluntary process. It is offered to people who are going through divorce, recognizing that it is going to work for some people and not work for others. But for many people, it gives them an opportunity to focus on their relationship as a parent, one that will continue forever, even though the marriage is disrupted at this point. The amendment that Senator Ashford offers I think is in line with what is appropriate practice and still maintains the integrity of our abuse reporting laws and I would urge you to oppose the Chambers amendment and give consideration to the amendment that I believe Senator Ashford will offer later. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Rasmussen. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, Senator Hohenstein and I were discussing something that might be possible, and that would be if this allegation or disclosure of abuse were to occur, since the matter is before a court anyway, perhaps there could be an immediate in camera hearing or in the judge's chambers with the judge and the parties to make some kind of a determination. That would keep it from going through the ordinary or usual law enforcement channels and maybe disrupting the process that might have these people work together. Remember, this is just what we were discussing. It hasn't been put into the form of amendatory language. But if that concept were to be adopted and the intent was to allow mediation to continue, it would be necessary to change Senator Schimek's amendment because hers said there shall be no mediation once there is a revelation of abuse. That amendment was adopted the other day and I was trying to read the