

doing the same, looking on page 5, and I have, you know, I have no quarrel with having qualified people to do this type of activity, but as I read the same fiscal note on page 5, at least, within I believe it is Corrections on this one that I am looking at, indicates that none of the 20 mental health counselors currently employed would qualify, together with only two of the five psychologists would qualify, and then it indicates that the qualifications move them up to higher pay grades. I mean, obviously, this is all General Fund, but it would appear that there is an estimated about six, seven hundred thousand increase in time. Am I reading that correctly? And I am not raising the issue because of objecting, I assume they are qualified people to be reimbursed, but I assume there is a General...long-term General Fund impact, even if it is six years off. I understand the bill, itself, doesn't take General Fund for the licensing, itself, but...well, perhaps at this stage, it is too late to talk about it, but I'd be curious to know, if there is a long-term impact here, that at least we ought to be conscious of in the enactment of it. The offset, I assume, is more qualified people who will provide better service.

SENATOR WESELY: If I could respond, this very issue came up when we took this step in '86, I believe it was, to certify social workers and counselors, and what we did then, you will find on page 54, Section 42, where we said, and I can remember doing this, saying that the state doesn't have to hire these individuals. Nothing under those acts that we passed would require that we had to have those individuals, that we could continue to have who we have in place, or additionally, and that provision is still in this statute, but as I understand it, it may be superseded by this additional language on page 38, which requires that within six years that people meet the standards that we apply here. So you were hitting at a very key point. There is the phase-in to meet the standards. We had the exemption from the standards last time. That, I guess, is going to go away under this. I guess this is something we need to clarify, but the phase-in was to recognize the cost and the training implications, and so, hopefully, because of that, it will minimize the fiscal impact and should be a natural evolution that will occur out across the state anyway. But I do think that the very point you are raising is also, and I think Senator Robinson as well, was a point we looked at a few years ago when we looked at this, and maybe we need some further review, and I think we can get some information to answer your questions further.