

taking any action at all to encourage the minor child to attend school, then the potential is there to reduce cash assistance. So I think it's very much different than the original version of the bill which is, if the child does not attend school, there shall be a reduction of cash assistance. This goes from "shall" to "may" and again, if the parent does make efforts to encourage the attendance at school, there would be no reduction in assistance. So I think the "learnfare" language is much more acceptable to a lot of people and that's where we're at with the language now, Senator Schimek.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. I think we all needed that refresher course because there had been quite a bit of discussion. I'm still not entirely happy with the way this has been amended because the part that I object to is still in there and that's that the cash assistance to the recipient family may be reduced when the parent or parents have failed to take reasonable action. And I even considered introducing an amendment that said any person receiving payments from a government entitlement program shall comply with the same educational requirements as those established in the Welfare Reform Act relating to persons receiving assistance under this act, because there are a lot of people who receive assistance from the government and their children do not fall under these provisions. So to my mind it's sort of treating people who have to rely on welfare at some point in their lives like second class citizens and my amendment that is being passed out now, however, just simply strikes the sentence in this paragraph on page 18 of AM5732, strikes the line that says the cash assistance provided to the recipient family may be reduced when the parent or parents have failed to take reasonable action to encourage the minor children of the recipient family ages sixteen and under to regularly attend school and inserts, "it is important that children of recipient families regularly attend school and that parents make every effort to see that they do." And then it goes on to say, of course, in the existing language, it is the intent of the Legislature that a process be developed to ensure communication between the case manager, the parent or parents and the school to address issues relating to school attendance and then my amendment would insert "for children sixteen years of age and younger". And this puts back on the table the argument that if children are not attending school, perhaps we need to fine all the parents whose children are not in school and not just those of welfare recipients. So with that I'd be happy to try to answer any questions and I would