

**SPEAKER WITHEM:** Okay, we're back to consideration of AM4481. Senator Chambers.

**SENATOR CHAMBERS:** Mr. Speaker, I yield my time to Senator Wesely. The reason I want to state it like that, I want to be very careful in what I say. I'm not yielding everything, I'm yielding my time at this point to Senator Wesely.

**SPEAKER WITHEM:** So noted.

**SENATOR WESELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. I'm actually trying to buy some time for Senator Chambers to draft an additional amendment that will help clarify some concerns. Let me run through again the status of what this amendment would do. First off, it clarifies the studies would include a job availability study which is very important for us to analyze since ultimately we want to have people move off the welfare system into a job. What exactly are we talking about in terms of jobs, what kind of pay, benefits, location? I think that's an important element that we had assumed would be there but now is clarified. We do have any number of additional terms and concepts required to be specifically identified by the Department of Social Services and brought back to the Legislature before we meet next session and we've added to that a number of additional amendments from Senator Chambers dealing with what self-sufficiency would be and some other concepts that we need to have very clear before we proceed. We also changed on the "learnfare" concern that Senator Schimek and Senator Crosby and others have in terms of the reduction of benefit. Now we've added through Senator Chambers that we will not reduce anybody that has a resultant extreme hardship and I think that's reasonable and in keeping with our intent. That would not be a productive result. So that is now part of this amendment as well. We talk about the hearing process that Senator Rasmussen amended into this and there will be a bill and a hearing process. We always thought that, but not clearly in this language. That would be required next session. We talk about an independent appeal and mediation process so that we can get around the fact that there are some concerns with the department in terms of conflict of interest in any sort of appeal process in trying to get more independent review of that. In keeping with that, we also add an ombudsman position for welfare services in the Legislature's Ombudsman's Office to keep an oversight function for the Legislature to monitor problems with the welfare system and to oversee for the Legislature changes in