

urge your support of Senator Schimek's amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Day. Senator Bernard-Stevens to speak to the Schimek amendment.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mis...Madam President, and members of the body. I rise to support the Schimek amendment, but I am not going to take the time right now to talk about the amendment. It speaks for itself. It is a reasonable amendment and I hope the body adopts it. I want to just talk about the bill in general, and at this point, I think I want to emphasize in the beginning that I think I have been...well, I don't think, I know I have been a very ardent supporter of Foster Care Review...the Foster Care Review Board throughout...ever since, well, since I've ever been in the Legislature, helped lead the fight for legal standing. We certainly have fought for funding issues, and we've had a lot of battles that we've won making the Foster Care Review Board the successful group that it is today, and it plays a very meaningful role. And I say that because I'm very ardently going to oppose this bill, and I don't do so lightly because when we all ask the final questions of all the things we talk about, what is in the best interest of our children? And I have really been struggling with this issue as it relates to reviews by various groups. I want to...I wish people would take the time to see me, if they get a chance, to read the final recommendations for reducing duplication in the case review of children in foster care. It is a long history but, basically, we had a task force that was members of the Appropriations Committee, of which Senator Crosby, myself, and Senator Hillman represented, and we also jointly met with the Health Committee, along with Ed Schulenberg, who had the position that Jes...Senator Rasmussen, former Senator Rasmussen has now. And one of our...and our only, the only concern of the task force was trying to find a way to reduce the number of reviews that take place. We were inundated with reviews and yet there were areas of children who were not getting any reviews at all, and we were trying to find a way to become not only more efficient, but trying to find a way in which we could end the duplication of the number of reviews. And if you go and look at that document that senators got quite awhile ago, certainly you have the Social Services review on the department, and I've got a lot of concerns with how they are handling their role in this area. Foster Care is doing about 60 percent, I believe, of a lot of the reviews, and certainly the courts have their review