

situation over the years where the Mental Health Commitment Act which has been in vogue for the mentally ill and for the alcoholic person who is dangerous to themselves or dangerous to the public is committed and placed in a regional center and their needs are cared for there and they are protected from themselves and the public are protected from them if they are dangerous to the public. That procedure has been around a long time. There is a number of safeguards, patient rights that are available to people. It is a system that has worked well. There has been a problem though because sometimes a person may not be an alcoholic and maybe they are not mentally ill, but they use drugs and as a result of the use of drugs, abuse those drugs and are dangerous to themselves and to the public and need to be committed and cared for. Right now there is a commitment act that is available that is a cumbersome one and one that is not being utilized effectively and because of this program now, the commitment law now that we have for the alcoholic and the mentally ill, and it has worked so well, we are asking to add to it the drug abusing person so those people that use drugs and abuse drugs and needed help and assistance could be committed and cared for in a regional center through the Department of Public Institutions. Anticipating what Senator Chambers might be asking, we do have information from DPI and did request concerns about the rights of these people that might be committed and I can assure you that I believe anyway their rights are protected and they do have the opportunity to not have their personal rights violated through the commitment law. And again, all we are doing, we are not changing the Mental Health Commitment Law whatsoever in the process and procedures, all we are adding is one more type of individual who could be committed under that act as it presently is constituted. We think this is an important bill and the Public Health and Welfare Committee did introduce it on behalf of DPI and I ask your support at this time to advance it to Select File.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, I hate to be the one on these kind of bills where I think there is a good intent and a desire to help people who are perceived as needing help, I hate to be the one to stand up and raise questions and issue warnings. Whenever a society begins to accept the attitude that persons who for whatever reason are engaging in conduct that