

the public as a sort of Soviet Union type tactic. In fact, it is just the opposite. The concept of the Mental Health Commitment Act is one of a progressive nature. In fact, when it was first enacted it was hailed as an effort to try and decriminalize mental illness because the alternative is this, if you didn't have this act, these people are still going to be acted upon by our authorities. If they are a threat to the public, if they are a threat to themselves, there are laws that we have that can be invoked. These people can be charged with those crimes and placed in jail. That is exactly what was happening. That was felt to be inhumane and inappropriate. So the Mental Health Commitment Act was adopted many years ago to try and recognize that when these people, through mental illness, alcoholism or now drug abuse through this bill, really in a sense factors outside of their own control, that is to say there is something wrong with them, that maybe they don't really have an ability to control themselves or to control that problem and they need help. So rather than put them in jail, the thought was we will take these people, not charge them with a crime, but work through a process. I must say that I've got information here about that process that has rights for these people, gives them an opportunity to defend themselves and to present their case. It is not just a snatch off the street and place them somewhere and forget about them situation, at least in my estimation. It is an attempt to recognize that these people need treatment, need to be cared for, and in some cases, yes, they need to be protected from themselves and the public protected from them as well. But these are not attempts to harm these individuals or to punish these individuals, it is to help these individuals or to help the public, one way or the other. I have passed out a memorandum from DPI, I hope you have a chance to look at. You can see that what I'm saying is exactly what their viewpoint is. The drug abuse commitment law, that we are repealing under this bill and replacing with this new provision, is a cumbersome act that leaves only one alternative, that is to take these drug abusers and put them at one of the three regional centers, that is it. The department's attitude and those involved in the drug abuse area feel that that is too limited, that we should, in fact, utilize the Mental Health Commitment Act which not only would allow the placement of these people in a regional center but in a local, community based program or some other types of programs, including an involuntary commitment, to help these people get the treatment that they need for their