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reflective of local control and local decision making. Allow me to briefly point out a few significant issues that illustrate this point. First, benefit packages do matter in evaluating and comparing compensation. Some districts have far superior packages for teachers than other districts. Second, while the pay for teachers in some school districts is well below the national average, pay in other districts is at or above the national average. And, third, some districts have the financial capacity to pay teachers more but have chosen not to do so, while other districts do not have this financial capacity. So let's roll up our sleeves and work in this legislative session to address this issue. I would suggest, very respectfully, these guiding parameters for our discussion: one size fits all is not the solution; any solution must respect local decision making; cooperation must exist between the local and state government; equalization between districts is an important goal and it should not be abandoned; the solution must fit within our current resources--I will not sign a tax increase; and, where possible, within constitutional parameters, private school teachers should be able to participate in any state level programs. Further, I would suggest that the creation of any plan be guided by the principles laid out by the highly respected Milken Family Foundation through their Teacher Advancement Program. The main tenets of the program are: one, teachers deserve opportunities to advance in their profession and should be rewarded for their efforts; two, compensation should be market driven and provide flexibility to reward performance; third, there must be performance-based accountability in hiring, and advancement decisions should be based upon performance reviews; fourth, there must be continuous professional development; and, finally, we must act to expand the supply of high quality teachers. These are the components for a workable solution that I can support and, most importantly, that will truly address the challenges that we have at hand. The debate should not be about how much money we are spending on education or how much money we should spend. The fact is 52 percent of the state budget is dedicated to education. The debate must be about performance, accountability, standards. The debate must be about raising the bar. I look forward to working with Senator Raikes, the Education Committee, and all members of this Legislature and the