

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, I would, and thank you for not making the remark that you just made to me, previous to that, here on the microphone. It's probably been unjustified, in that case. There...frankly, members, there's very, very little that Senator Abboud said with which I do not agree. It's a matter of how you get to where he would like to get. You know, Senator Crosby this morning was talking about the 85 percent graduation rate, something to be proud of. I'm, frankly, very concerned about the 14.6 percent dropout rate. That kind of thing is just not going to be acceptable. And if it's third in the nation, that means the whole nation has something to be ashamed of. So I'm not...I'm not too negative on what Senator Abboud had to say, or what he's trying to accomplish, it's just the type of changes that he'd like to see take place, those of changing the manner of rewarding teachers are going to take some time to work into. One of the things I learned about education reform, over the last eight years of serving in the body, was that mandating something with a heavy hand from Lincoln, or from Washington, that it be accomplished down in the classroom, and in individual school buildings, is probably not the way to go, because any change to actually be implemented is going to have to take place when that classroom door closes, and that teacher or those teachers are implementing whatever the reform is. And if it's something they're comfortable with, that they've had a part of, that they've worked on, it will happen. If it's something they're resistant to, it may happen, but it won't be a positive experience for them or for the children that they're teaching. I believe, wholeheartedly, that we need to do a better job of paying teachers, that we need to change the manner in which we pay teachers. A lot of us got out of teaching, one of the reasons, not the only reason, incompetence might have been one of the reasons I got out, but we won't talk about, one of the reasons was a concern that I could go along for the next 20 years teaching in the classroom, educating kids, and continue...and doing a good job, really doing, innovating, putting in new programs, working individually with students, working with parents, working on improvement programs in the school, and have a colleague next to me who is doing none of that, doing the bare minimum to keep from being discharged, and that person would be paid, at the end of that next 20 years, would be paid exactly the same thing that I'm being paid, and that's a frustration, and we need to change that system. But forcing a change upon the school system, to this degree, by saying we're going to take away all of your bonus money you got last year. Everything you got in a bonus will be taken away