

prohibitive, the school districts would have continued and the point is many, many, many did not because they could not afford to do so. Those that have have done so at a very reduced, I repeat, a very, very reduced level compared to where it used to be. In my opinion, what it does is it would force schools at some point to begin meeting a demand and that is not something the Legislature wants to do, would want to do, in my judgment. Senator Cudaback was right as well. He said, you know, schools do a lot of things. They do golf, they do football. Then what's more important than driving? Well, I guess I'd broaden that a little bit and say there are some things more important than driver's ed, in my opinion. Math literacy, science literacy, English, being able to write, being able to do critical thinking are things that are very, very important and what schools should be doing and I think when the Legislature gets into indirectly forcing or causing schools to put programs into effect because of an unintended result from a mandate for driver's education courses that will take money from original budgets to fund these things, it's a mistake. It's a mistake and we ought not to do that. Senator Horgan, I was teasing Senator Horgan a little bit on his comments. He did a very good job but I mentioned he should save that for the seat belt law and he wanted to know how he did and he really did a fine opening, so if he does something similar on the seat belt law, I think he will be successful, indeed, on the program, but that doesn't apply to this particular case. What we have now are parents who are able to take driver's ed for chil...have driver's ed available for their children, it's available now. If they choose to have a safety center do so, they can do it now. There are schools that do offer it and they can take it through those. But schools have said it is not a high priority for them. It is available to students. They still have to pass a competency check before they can get a license. This is something that we ought not to do, we do...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: ...not have to do so because of the ramifications of what it would involve. There are amendments pending, more amendments than we care to deal with on an issue such as this. We have more important things to do. Sometimes we have to do what we try to get our young kids to do on the drugs, we simply have to say "no" and it's best we do it now rather than put off the agony until later. And I urge that we say no on this bill so we can move on to other things. Thank