

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Hall, thank you, Senator Jones, and I appreciate, Senator Jones, that is where I'm coming from on the sunset because we need to have some type where we say there's not going to be 5.8 in the next biennium, you know, add...whatever the word is for infinity, infinitum or ad nauseam, I'm not sure which one I wanted to use. The other thing I want to make sure that everyone is aware of is that this is not, and I don't want to say the word General Fund money because that's not accurate as well, but this money comes from the Equalization Fund. So when we look at the fund that we, when we're all talking about we need to fund at 45, try to get up to 45 percent or we're trying to get the dollars so that we have better equalization, this monies is about \$3 million, 5.8 million each biennium that's coming out of the equalization if, in fact, school districts choose to do this, will be coming out of Equalization Fund into the coffers of those districts that have applied for it. And in discussions we've had with the superintendents, they're obviously, they were aware that that's dollars that they would not receive, but they were willing to go along with that. They were willing to say we understand it means we may get less, but we think the effort to consolidate or to reorganize is well worth the cost of doing so. So I don't want people to get concerned that if it's coming out of equalization that there might be a lot of school districts against it, there may be some, but those that we have talked to and they've been basically statewide, that we have, have been very supportive of that concept and I appreciate, Senator Jones, your time.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Withem, your light is next.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Yeah, I'm going to add, try to add either more clarification or confusion, depending on which way I feel like going as I get through my remarks here. Senator Bernard-Stevens I think is appropriately raising the cost issue, but I'm afraid there might be an inaccurate picture painted here that somehow this is \$2.9 million that is going to be expended each year. It's \$2.9 million that's part of the overall equalization pool. It is money that would have gone to these school districts had they not reorganized. We're just saying it's going to continue to go to them for a number of years after they have reorganized. So it's not necessarily taking money out of equalization and doing something else with it, it's going to be distributed