

at what a lot of the other states were doing successfully, not only in helping on the budgetary costs, but also shoring up the programs that they had so that monies flowed better into the areas, children were getting more specifically the needs that they had, the system was streamlined and actually they found they were doing more for their children in special education than they were previously. We then took those ideas and the ideas that were before us in LB 623 and met with many of the education people throughout the state, as we could at least, here in Lincoln, brainstormed, met with others, did rough drafts, ran it by other people certainly within the education field, the special education task force, members of the Department of Education and so on. And we ended up with the amendment that we have before us. So it really has been very much a collaborative effort. It's been very much an effort designed not only to try to get a handle to be more effective in how we spend our monies, but more importantly to protect and to make more effective the programs in the treatment...not the treatment, but the education of those students that have special needs. And I wanted to try to get that historical concept at least into the record. The idea, for the most part, is that we wanted to have the most efficient special education program that we can have and the best quality that we can have. We're not about trying to take people out of programs, we're trying to help transfer costs and administer costs in a way that will improve the type of education that we're giving to these students and that is the goal. At the same time we believe we can do so and make those changes that will be necessary to try to get some type of control on costs as well. I also want to mention that there obviously is a time where we're going to have to answer the question, are we going to be able to give the schools enough flexibility and are we going to be comfortable that the programs of quality will be...will not be diminished in any way...

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: ...and still be able to work under the...under the cap or lids that we may have on spending? And quite honestly, those decisions will be made, I would think, next year. And we may decide that we can't continue to go in this particular direction. But at the same time we have to move in a direction, we can't stay where we are now. We believe that this is a way that we can go that will take us into a better position, not only in finance, but in the areas of education.