

my time to Senator Bohlke, if she would like to complete the opening.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Bohlke, you have four and a half minutes.

SENATOR BOHLKE: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Bromm. This is, I think, a subject that we are all going to have to struggle with. Certainly, since this was introduced into the Education Committee, our committee had many long hours of discussion and debate and I think all of us are trying to come to some determination of what we can do with special education costs and how we possibly start to put a halt to the growth. Now, as we get into this and we're going to have people opposing it, we're going to have all of us that are interested having to pay close attention as to how the funding actually works and what we're talking about, and what we're talking about in the flat year. We will try to do that for you so that we understand. Certainly, part of the arguments that you have heard from people all along were that we...I know I have heard from school districts, is that we could do a great deal if we had some more flexibility. And so it was that intent that we put the waivers in this amendment. Now you will hear that the waivers are going to accomplish very little. What the people who have argued that did not realize, I don't think, or they told me they didn't, was that it also says for related services. That opens up, and I think you'll...we'll later highlight to you what those services may be. And so, as we get into the discussion, certainly up to this point, up to this amendment, I had not had my name on any part of the bill. I traveled with the group to Santa Fe when we first heard about block grants. I was somewhat concerned with that. My option was to look at that over a longer period of time. Other people wanted to bring it forward this session and put it in motion, so we have that part of the bill before us. As you know, I did have an amendment that we adopted that allows different groups to bring other ideas forward, but they all are on getting ahold of the cost of special education. We heard, starting...well, we heard it for many years, but last summer the Revenue Committee had hearings and said there were three things that are driving up the cost of state government most dramatically; that's Medicaid, welfare reform and special education. But we will be hoping to point out to you some of those areas why those costs have skyrocketed and when that begins to happen in a program, when those costs begin to be runaway, when we continually ask and have tried to deal with