

SENATOR MCKENZIE: Thank you, Senator Bromm, and Madam President. Please look at the top of page 4, if you have this handout in front of you. According to the special ed directors who were interviewed, in addition to general enrollment increases, interviewees cited the verification criteria currently in Rule 51, the lack of services in regular education to meet students' special learning needs, the attitude and training of regular educators, state caseload requirements, specialized certification and staffing and enhancements in early education...early intervention programs as some of the reasons for the increased student numbers. All of these things fall under the waivers. That's the area that changed my mind. If, in fact, we could not look at caseloads, if we couldn't look at verification criteria in a waiver process, then I would agree we could not do it. But if we are going to be serious about looking for ways to reform and ways, you know, to get the 10 percent growth under control, I believe that we have in the amendment two things; number one, a first hard look at what can be changed at the local level, and, secondly, an opportunity, if, in fact, that can happen, to appropriate additional monies next year so that we do not force serious cuts in services to kids who need it, those kids that are the hard handicaps, the ones that we know cost a lot. Senator Bromm, I will yield the remainder of your time back. Thank you.

SENATOR BROMM: Senator McKenzie, thank you for all that information. It is very helpful in understanding I think some of the processes that we all had go through on this. I am absolutely committed to providing services to the kids that need it and that deserve it, and as long as I'm here, I will fight to do that. But I think that we have reached the point where you have to take a deep breath, you have to look at everything very, very hard. We had contacts with a number of schools, of course, and when they got that fax that someone mentioned, the phone really started to ring because it was a pretty alarming fax that was sent out last Thursday night or so, and some of the superintendents' comments were we need to take away from the schools the excuse that the state made us do it. Just eliminating that and putting in the opportunities for allowable waivers will help in some respects. Another superintendent said, I agree that we need to revisit the regulations regarding identification of students, which is what Senator McKenzie was talking about, as I agree that we have some students that are receiving services that probably should not qualify for special ed. All you have to do is look at the numbers in the speech