

will accept the reimbursement which is reduced tremendously over what is paid on the open market. If you don't allow for them to be reimbursed, the cost is \$12 million, so be it, it's a small price to pay when you look at the overall benefit that potentially can be derived from this kind of change in our system. As Senator Wesely stated earlier, we're at 75 percentile right now. We're paying at 75 percentile right now, it just happens to be the percentile from a market survey that is five years stale.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Time. Before we continue we do have observing us in the north balcony, 39 fourth graders and three sponsors from Northern Hills Elementary in Norfolk, Nebraska. They are guests of Senator Day's today. Would you please stand and be recognized? Thank you for being here today. Senator Wehrbein, followed by Senators Maurstad, Witek, Beutler, Chambers and Robak.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members, I'm going to rise briefly to strongly oppose Senator Chambers' amendment. There may be some other medium ground here, but this is not the answer at all, going to 75 percent. We're presently at 60 percent of the market survey based on the 1995 survey. The point of this as Senator Bohlke mentioned, this is a \$12.5 million increase if we would reach this 75 percent level as offered by Senator Chambers by 1998. We've had lots of discussion about our mandated costs and this is one of those and I do not think it's realistic to expect that we have to have this in there at a mandated level. We have done fairly well in most of these areas by trying to keep up. That's the reason with the market survey and I think it's legitimate to keep doing it that way. We know that we cannot fall too far behind in many of the areas that are coming...that keep coming up that we have to make gradual increases. I agree that it's wrong to have to make up overnight several of those areas of expense that we tend to fall back in. That's one of the reasons we have a 3 or 4 percent increase in salaries in areas like that so we can keep up. There is no reason to expect we can't do that in this area and we've tried hard but some years we can't do it. Some years you can do more, some years you can do less and this year we have tended to do a little more to some people's chagrin. I understand that. But that is part of it and certainly if we lock this in at this point at 75 percent and come up with a \$12.5 million increase next year, someone isn't going to like that very well and I think it's nearly everyone in here. So I strongly oppose