

February 13, 1996 LB 1050

SPEAKER WITHEM: You're welcome. To address the Bohlke amendment Senators Brown, Bernard-Stevens, Bohlke, Abboud, Wickersham, Hartnett, Bromm, and Stuhr. Senator Brown.

SENATOR BROWN: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I am supporting this amendment. But before I get into a discussion about the amendment, I want to respond to some of the things that Senator Bohlke said in her opening on the bill, because we are talking about equalization today, and we are talking about equity for children. And as a person who spent a lot of time working on issues around children, I want to remind us that we all should be concerned about the education of every single child in this state. And I would harken back to something that Senator Chambers said when the first of these bills, LB 1059, was being debated, that it should be, it should be about the education of children and not just the funding of districts. And I really do believe that the only way that we are going to have that equity for education of children is if we do make sure that we have the equalization formula adequately funded. But I also am very supportive of choice because I believe that it is the way that we get at incentivizing some of the quality aspects about education. So we have two values here, we have equity on one side, and quality on the other side. And what we're trying to do is make sure that we are addressing both values. I've never quite understood how we ended up with the funding for choice coming out of the equalization formula. I don't really think that that was probably a good decision in the first place. It makes much more sense to have the funding for choice coming out of the income tax. I might even support a more direct method of the money following the child, but at this time we're discussing this amendment and I support this amendment. I do agree with Senator Bohlke that we need to have incentives for districts that are providing extra services, that are doing things that people do want involved in their children's education, and that we provide an incentive for those districts to be able to have these children come into their district and participate. It is about competition, it's about being market driven, it's all the things that we've discussed about choice, and yet we initially funded choice out of equalization, which is the other half of the equation that we're trying to get at today, which is the equity part. So I will be supporting this amendment and I really hope everyone else does, too. Thank you.