

SENATOR HILLMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members. I would like to continue just a little bit with a dialogue with Senator McKenzie, if I could.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Senator McKenzie, would you respond to a question, please.

SENATOR HILLMAN: Senator McKenzie, going back to the idea that there is a school district within a service center in this particular instance of services for mental health in adolescents, and if that school district finds that it has an influx in their district of special needs children, do they have a choice as to whether or not they can take those children?

SENATOR MCKENZIE: Senator Hillman, I am not certain that I know the answer to that. I would say, in philosophy, I would say, no, but that may not be accurate.

SENATOR HILLMAN: Okay, and I'm not sure of it either is why I asked. I have been somewhat told that they really do not have a choice, and in most cases, it is not that they don't want to, that they don't want to deal with the children; it is that they just don't have the resources to do that. But assuming they would take the children because there is no place else for them to go, and they would accept that child, recognizing then that the resources have to come from someplace, have we then, as in your opinion, as policymakers made some decisions early on about bringing particular children from out-of-state placement because of cost and deinstitutionalizing and scattering those kids around to different service centers in the state, have we then, for the most part, shifted the cost of educating that child from what was a state responsibility that will now be a local one through property taxes?

SENATOR MCKENZIE: I think in many cases that was true, partly depending upon allowable excess costs and what kind of reimbursement that district did receive, and the ability of that district to pick up whatever the bill was this year hoping for the reimbursement next year. In many cases, those...those costs are supported by the local district property taxes.

SENATOR HILLMAN: Thank you. And I guess in trying to work through this, in my opinion, there are some dynamics that are