

SENATOR HILLMAN: Thank you.

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Senator Hillman. Senator Schimek.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Madam (sic) President, members of the body. I probably could have had this conversation with Senator Beutler off the floor, but since he's busy redrafting an amendment, I just wanted to insert a few comments to think about. First of all, I think Senator Warner's suggestion is a good one. I do think that we need a definite date put on this because the way the amendment is drafted on to the committee amendment, it seems to me, and I may be wrong, but it seems to me that we would be mandating this process every two years and I don't think that's what we would want to do; that assuming that the process had been held once and counties had decided to merge functions or merge counties, I don't think we'd want them to have to come back in another couple of years and do it all over again, although we shouldn't prohibit it either. So I think that is a very good point. I'm a little hesitant about going forward with this on a broad scale. You know, my preference would be to work on the amendment and do it on Select File, but if we are going ahead with it, Senator Hillman's suggestions I think are well taken. I don't know if we actually need to write it in. I think that's what...the kind of help that counties are going to need. They're going to have to probably pay for it, but in the long run it would be very beneficial to them to do so. So I really...I do support the concept that Senator Beutler is trying to promote here. At least it would get people to the table and get them talking. I know that here in Lancaster County in the last couple of weeks the school board has sat down with surrounding school boards to talk about...just talk about the idea of merger, but more than that and what seems to be coming from that discussion is the idea that they really can cooperate on some services. For instance, the whole idea of vocational education, which is very expensive, the schools are starting to talk about maybe using the Southeast Community College facility and being able to have a number of schools go together and allow special education or vocational education students to go to Southeast Community College for hours. It would be a savings to each school district in that they wouldn't necessarily have to buy some of the expensive equipment that continually has to be updated. So I think just sitting down at the table and talking has very positive benefits, even if no