

with the other higher education institutions in the state. And the argument that Senator Wehrbein put forth about the property tax is a good one, frankly, because that is a tax source that the other higher institutions of learning in the state don't have. But I think we have to view this in the larger context of the fact that we are looking at cutting back on property taxes and in fact the proposal that we'll be discussing soon in the Revenue Committee's property tax relief package will be reducing the community colleges' levy limit rather steeply over the next few years. Because of that, while I am not in favor of a General Fund shift from property taxes to sales and income taxes, I think in the realm of state aid as applied to community colleges right now which is what we're talking about, that this is a completely justified amendment. That's why I agreed to add my name to it, and I think that by doing this we're doing nothing more than holding the community colleges harmless with respect to the other institutions of higher education in the state. And without getting into a long discussion of how much...how valuable these institutions are, I think we've had that discussion again and again. I think we all know the value of the community colleges, the essential role that they play in the vocational area and in preparing individuals who may want to in fact go on to four-year institutions. And with that, I would simply indicate that this is...certainly this is...we are adding money to the budget but I think at this point this is one that I certainly think is justified. Thank you.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Senator Will. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the body. Senator Hillman and I were just having a discussion and she and I do have a difference of policy how we should handle it. And she certainly was arguing from an appropriations viewpoint, but the bill we're talking about is 247 (sic), which came out of the Education Committee of which the Legislature overwhelmingly supported. And the rationale behind the bill was that when we make a formula change that puts a higher emphasis on heavy vocational education which in essence would shift it away, if you wish, from academic areas, the rationale was that that is going to have an effect on the entire system so the dollars in the A bill on 247 (sic) in a macro sense was to try to keep the system per se held harmless even though there's going to be a shift in priority. That did not ever mean that on