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their costs have averaged over 5 percent, closer to 5.5 percent. What this bill does is change the cap on the spending from 3 percent to 5 percent. And what is the justification? One of the main reasons, certainly, has to do with the number of students. We have seen a growth in the number of students in special education. I'm sure all of you can reason as to why that may be. Medical advances, a number of advances have caused us to have more children entering our schools who need those special education services. In addition to that, schools are now required to do a number of medical procedures that they had not been able...that they had not been required to do before, and Senator Price will speak to that issue. A few years back, actually it's been quite a few years, we have had a mandate from the federal government that we provide the least restrictive environment to students. Large schools had been doing this for a number of years. But, if you are a smaller school and you hadn't had a large number of special education students, what does "least restrictive environment" mean? It means that you must provide the services for the student, either provide the transportation or the services in that school district, in their home school, that would be required, whether that be a physical therapist, whatever in that IEP that would require the education benefit of that special education student. Many times it means that you can no longer do a pull-out program, but you must provide those services in the regular class room. That means then often times you have a one-on-one person in that class room, a paraprofessional, with that individual student throughout the day. That indeed has caused the cost of special education to significantly increase. And so what has happened since 1995, we were reimbursing school districts at about a 90 percent level. Currently, today the reimbursement from the state for special education is 83 percent; last year it was 86.8 percent. So just in one year we have dropped to 83 percent. When we drop that percentage, where do schools go to get the money to provide the education that is mandated for special education and that the special education students certainly need? They have to either go to increasing their levy or they have to go from their General Fund, which would actually be their regular class room. And so we're beginning to see the ramifications of schools having to make up that percentage drop, that they are facing, from what they may be providing in the regular class room, if they do not want to increase their