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FLOOR DEBATE

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whatever money was in the fund and whatever loans would be paid off, return all of that to the General Fund. The problem, obviously, with the mechanism that's in place is that you would have, under that scenario, school systems that had in good faith applied for the grants, done the work, were in the process of preparing the bills for reimbursement, and would not be reimbursed. So, in an effort to cover that base, we did the following. We said, all right, the money in the fund from here forward will, in fact, go to the General Fund. So, in large part, the effort of the Education Committee was to agree with the Governor's request, but simply to try to honor good faith commitments made by school systems. What we...the way we did that, as I remember, is we said, okay, if you applied for the grant before September, I believe of the year 2000, and...or, excuse me, after the year 2000, and the work had been completed by last July, then your request for reimbursement would be honored. We weren't, at that time, particularly worried about school systems that had applied before August of 2000, because our presumption was probably, even though they were awarded the grant, they had decided not to do the project. If they had intended to do the project, they would have gotten it done, would have submitted a request for reimbursement. Well, we, I, in particular, was wrong about that. There were some school districts that had, in good faith, undertaken projects based on these grants; were in the process still of completing those grants, had applied for the grant before that cut-off date, were in the process of completing those grants but, for good reason, had not yet gotten to the point where they could submit a request for reimbursement. This bill would remedy or revise that in the sense that it would cover anyone who had, in fact, applied for a grant, been awarded the grant, and had completed the project by, I believe, July 31 of 2002. We feel this is necessary because, given the way the program is structured, it's simply the state honoring a good faith commitment by a school system to undertake a project in anticipation that they would be reimbursed for the costs of that project. So this bill does, in fact, reinstate the request, if you will, for grant funds from some school systems that, at least in my opinion, the grants were applied for before August 1, 2000; had not yet, for good reason, been completed. Without this bill they would be not funded; with this bill they would be funded. The fiscal note on