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LB 540

SENATOR SNOWIECKI: Thank you, Senator Cudaback. Members, I rise to support Senator Bourne's amendment. I do think it's a simple amendment. I think it makes sense. I think philosophically we can all agree with it. It is a logical approach for school districts to implement as they embark on the budget cutting that we are now embarking on as a legislative body, and just urge the support of the amendment, of Senator Bourne's amendment. Thank you, Senator Cudaback.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Snowiecki. Senator Raikes.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I oppose Senator Bourne's amendment. I think he brings the amendment with the best of intentions. Let me give you a little background. Our current law states that it is legislative intent that budget reductions affect classroom expenses as a last resort, and I think that's entirely appropriate. But to go to the next step which mandates that school systems cut...make their cuts in certain areas and are mandated thereby to make cuts in other areas or, in effect, limited in the amount of flexibility they have to deal with budget issues is, I think, a wrong step, a very wrong step. There are a number of problems presented with this kind of an amendment. You have to...the classroom expenses are defined. It includes, for example, programs and courses offered as part of the curriculum and the cost of teaching and administrative certificate employees needed to offer the program. Who decides if the certificated employees are needed to offer the program? For example, what if not as many certificate employees are needed this year as were needed five years ago because enrollment has declined? What if not as many certificated employees are needed if more paraprofessionals are used? Hopefully, this gives you some kind or some indication of the kind of difficulties you get into with imposing these sort of restrictions on an entity, on a management body if you will, a school board, a school administration that has to deal with adjusting to an environment of reduced resources. Unfortunately, we have no choice but to put school systems in that environment. Hopefully, we won't further hobble them or further punish them by limiting the ways they have in which to