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LB 407

grade, teenage pregnancy, criminal justice, and welfare dependence. This spending then is an investment that will pay dividends over the long term for the state by avoiding increased expense of other kinds. Early childhood spending, like many programs, has been reduced already during the current biennium. Further reducing the program by 10 percent will eliminate services for 100 to 135 more children under the program and, as I indicated, one of my primary motivations and willingness to offer this amendment was the fact that we will be jeopardizing our ability to qualify for matching funds. Although we need not feel bound by polling data, I know that on other questions we've shared some polling data with you that has indicated that public opinion surveys have indicated that early childhood education is one category that people are interested in supporting and not in favor of cutting to the extent that they would cut other things. For all of these reasons, I think this is a relatively minimal investment, but an important investment, and I would urge your adoption of the amendment and be available for any of your questions that I can answer. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Brashear. You've heard the opening on AM1827, offered by Senator Brashear to LB 407. Open for discussion of that amendment. Senator Raikes.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President, members. Senator Brashear I think has made the case very well. I enthusiastically support his amendment. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Raikes. Any further discussion on AM1827, offered by Senator Brashear? Seeing no lights on, Senator Brashear, did you wish to close on your amendment? I'm sorry. Senator Beutler's light just came on. I'll let you speak.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, early childhood education is a program that I've wholly supported because times have been good and we've been able to make progress in that program. It's a relatively new program in terms of the history of various programs, and I would like to support it again. But I really don't think any case has been made for it in the sense that we are cutting programs for the