TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE Transcriber's Office FLOOR DEBATE

May 11, 2005 LB 425

\$10 million request that we talked about on General File. thing is, everything is consistent with or builds upon programs that are now in place. We are not...we are not creating any new program. We are funding special ed, which of course is an existing program. We are using part of the money, the \$10 million, for the longer-term objective of increasing the state's effort in the area of early childhood education, specifically the early childhood grant program, which is a collaborative program; been in existence for, I believe, about ten years, maybe a little bit longer. There are about 27 or so grants, but we'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. Specifics: What I'm proposing here is that, in a nutshell, we increase special education funding 5 percent in the first year of this biennium, we increase it 6...or 3 percent in the second A 5 percent increase in the first year costs about \$3.2 million, in addition to what the Appropriations Committee has recommended. That leaves about \$1.8 million, just a little bit short--and these numbers are spelled out in some detail on this handout -- available to fund an expansion of the early childhood education grant program. The total for that first year of that biennium then of those two is \$5 million. In the second year we have a 3 percent increase in the special education base and also about a \$1.7 million or \$1.8 million amount of money to provide funding for continuation of those early childhood grants that were begun in the first year of the biennium. The sum total then is \$5 million in each year, for a total of \$10 million for the biennium. So again, I remind you that the budgeted number, the targeted number, if you will, of \$10 million is being honored. We are focusing certainly on special education, but we are focusing both on the immediate up-front needs for reimbursement by schools, and we are also focusing on the longer-term issue of funding early childhood programs which, among other things, lead to a reduced identification of students for special ed services. A little bit more detail: I mentioned the early childhood grant program that has been in place for a number of years. There are 27 of those, I believe, currently in the state. They are scattered all across the state. They are in some urban communities, some rural communities. There are some at the far west end of the state, and there's some at the east end of the state. So it has been a fairly good representation of the entire state.