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LB 126

ideas to help, further, and improve LB 126. So I would encourage a vote on LB 126,...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you...

SENATOR LOUDEN: ...and on the amendment to LB 126. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you for the review, Senator Louden. On with discussion of AM1217. Senator Smith, followed by Senators Fischer and Raikes. Senator Smith.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I rise in support of Senator Louden's AM1217, and the efforts of the rural senators who have worked very hard in coming up with a response to LB 126. I can only speak for myself, but I can say that I have put in more time on this issue than any other issue in my seven years in the Legislature. I never thought that I would feel so strongly as I do about a topic. And especially in a passive sort of way, given the fact that I am responding to LB 126, rather than advocating for a bill in and of itself, in a reverse fashion as of LB 126. Some of the most moving stories that I've heard regarding Class I schools--and this is not an isolated scenario; it's come multiple times--but it comes from parents who say that in the larger school setting their child was in a special ed track. They opted their child, not out of bitterness, but they saw the Class I school setting outside of town a little ways, and they saw the smaller class sizes, the two grades per classroom, perhaps. But merely another option to education, to public education. So they moved their child, who was in special ed in town, to another setting. In the new setting, they weren't a special ed student. Extra funds were no longer required. This has happened multiple times. And if we are really wanting to stand behind our word of quality education, we will replicate Class I schools, not eliminate them. Why do Class I schools work? In my opinion, it's because of the autonomy. I am willing to support a compromise of LB 126, as long as there is at least some sort of autonomy. And I'm not looking for taxation. I'm not even looking for bottom-line budget autonomy. I'm looking for operational autonomy, operational autonomy within the Class I setting, where those parents, community members, school board members come