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LB 577

to have hours similar to the instructional hours for kindergarten or fewer hours. You remember, we used the grant program as a gatekeeper for entry into the aid formula, if you will. We have schools that offer full-day kindergarten and some that offer only half-day kindergarten. The priority in the original bill was to say you prioritize those that the early childhood program matches what's available in kindergarten. We're sticking with that, except we're saying that if you have full-day kindergarten then you shouldn't be...receive a lower priority if your proposal is to have an early childhood program that has only half-day kindergarten. You can't go the other way. You can't have a full-day early childhood program and only a half-day kindergarten program, but the other way would be okay. It requires operating budgets to demonstrate that the programs will continue to receive at least 50 percent of the funding from other sources for continued grants...for continuation grants and state aid. This is an important point. Keep in mind now that the requirement is being placed on the community that receives the grant program, the early childhood education grant program or state aid, that they must match the amount of money that comes from the state through either state aid or the grant, with funds from the local community. And experience is that Head Start sometimes provides that, other community sources, and so on. So this...that requirement is still in place and emphasized. Finally, the point is, an unusual one, it divides a very long paragraph to improve readability. I wouldn't say that often we do that in statute, but that's our effort right here. So, at any rate, these are provisions of this amendment. I would ask for your adoption of it. While I am...have the floor for a moment, I would also call your attention to the fiscal note on LB 577. There's one, a new one, a revised one. Some excellent work I think has been done to prepare it. This not only goes through the details of LB 577, explains to you how it operates and so on, but lays out clearly the financial implications of LB 577. I will mention quickly at this point, there is no A bill with LB 577 because it does not make any demand on General Funds during the biennium that we're now budgeting for. It would, however, provide, again, two things. It provides a prioritization of the grant money in the upcoming biennium, and it also would include early childhood programs in the aid formula in the out biennium. So,