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SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Redfield. Senator Erdman, followed by Senator Beutler.

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. As I was reviewing some of the research that I had done, I found some of the similar points that Senator Redfield has made, and I will not reiterate those. But I do find the same research, and I do find the same results, that there is skepticism in the academic community about the benefits of going to an all-day kindergarten setting, and I think it's important for us to at least take a step back and look at this, and I'll reiterate just one thing that Senator Redfield did mention. Again, according to the National Center for Educational (sic) Statistics--this is what Senator Wehrbein was also asking about--studies have shown slight academic advantages for full-day kindergarteners over their peers in half-day programs, but no differences are discernible by the end of the third grade, which is the wash-out effect. And that's done... "Research Disputes the Benefits of Early Education." There is no doubt, there's no doubt that we need to do the best job that we possibly can of educating our students in our schools, but the question is, what is that age-appropriate time? And what is the role...and then Senator Howard, I think, is right. What is the role of the parent in this process? Mandating a requirement that a student attend an all-day program when it may not be in the best interests of that child, or the parents would have an opportunity to provide other opportunities for the children, as I understand it, isn't available here, and I think it's a balancing act between those that need additional opportunities for their own reasons, as Senator Howard pointed out, and those that have an active opportunity to be involved as a parent and have some flexibility, as far as their time, and to be able to meet the needs of their child as they would see fit. And I think that's the balancing act that I have a hard time coming to grips with, the idea of mandating an all-day kindergarten program. One of the other things that I think is interesting, and comes from the same report or the same research article about the benefits of early education and assessing the proposals, is that test scores of American children versus those in schools of Europe shows that the decentralized, flexible, and