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LB 712, 1228, 1229, 1336

SENATOR WITEK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the Legislature. Senator Chambers, I would direct your attention for just a minute to the bill that follows this bill, and it's LB 1229, and it talks about gifted students or high ability students, whatever your district refers to them as. We refer to them as gifted. We passed a bill, or this Legislature passed a bill several years ago, that said that these students have to be identified. It was a bill of Senator McKenzie's, if you remember, and said that we have to identify the high ability learners in every school district. And if you have the money, then you can go ahead and implement this kind of a program. But they do have to be identified and they have to be turned...that information, as I understand it, has to be turned over to the Department of Education with those identified learners. And what this bill following this bill does, 1229, is to take \$6 million and say this money will go into the high ability learner programs, and it's really almost to your advantage to...and that's just the beginning money, 6 million, it'll increase every year as they identify more high ability learners. So you're right, in a lot of cases what schools have traditionally been told is, if you identify a lot of resource students or children with learning disabilities, and this is where the money comes from for these programs and you have a lot of identified students in these areas, then you're going to have, usually part of the problem has been, and I know it's debatable, that more students than necessary have been identified as students with learning disabilities, to receive some of those monies. Well what this does is kind of the exact opposite, in the bill following. It says, if you identify those high ability students, you will get so much money for those high ability students. And as you identify more of those high ability learners you will get more money into those areas. So, I guess, this wasn't...I don't know why this wasn't in, probably because it's a \$6 million addition to the note, but I know we've got several bills now with (LB) 1336 and (LB) 712 and 1228, now (LB) 1229, but these all tie in together in this 1228. And this \$6 million start on the gifted students calls for some additional people within the Department of Education, but the money will go out to the districts for these programs. So it's to their advantage to identify them. And I'm not...I am concerned about some of the issues you've raised about the percentages of students, minority students, who are in some of