

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 8DATE 3-2-05BILL NO. HB-83

Senate Education Committee:

My name is Julia Lillethun and I am the Assistant County Superintendent of Schools for Yellowstone County. I am concerned about taking the tuition away from the county superintendents and placing it solely with OPI. If OPI is the only agency that looks at and questions tuition payments, then who would check or detect any errors on their part until their audit is completed? OPI stated that we overpaid tuition in FY04 by \$1,388.00 but when I figured it out it was actually \$1,607.76 (which I went over and confirmed with OPI). Most of the overpayment was for students that turned 18 during the school year (which OPI has determined are residents when they turn 18 and the schools are no longer entitled to tuition reimbursements for them).

The \$28,237.60 amount stated as a questioned payment for FY03 in OPI's spreadsheet for Yellowstone County was for one student. When the tuition laws were changed, we received the tuition agreement for this student. I promptly questioned this agreement as it was a parent placement into a group home and the tuition/gas receipts, etc. costs were high. I spoke with Joan Anderson and was told OPI had determined that if a state agency or court were involved, the students would have been placed by the agency or court anyway. This is a severely disabled youth and the cost for two aides, transportation (special van), etc. were in the student's IEP and were ok to pay. I don't understand why this was represented as a questioned payment when our office questioned it not OPI. We take our jobs seriously and work hard to ensure we are good stewards of our tax dollars.

Why not change the due date of the tuition payment report (FP-7)? We are required to send copies of the tuition agreements with the report. If it were due say in September, OPI would have three months in which to review them and determine if the proposed payments are correct before the first tuition payment is due on December 31st. Then OPI would have a chance to review the cases before payments are made so there would be no need for corrections.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Lillethun, Assistant County Supt. of Schools, Yellowstone County