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Special Education Funding Commission

My name is Leigh Dennick, I am the Director of Special Education for Intermediate Unit 1.

Intermediate Unit 1 provides many services to our school districts to support all of their needs which include hearing and vision services.

First, we would like to thank you for the funding changes in 2013 which enacted Act 16 in 2014-15 for the school districts. Today we are going to focus on the increased costs for hearing and vision services. As you review the excel sheet with costs for hearing and vision services over the past four year, you will see how the costs of these services have risen drastically.

The fluctuation from year-to-year can never be predicted because we may have to use an agency when we can't find staff. Also, the amount of services needed per child changes constantly depending on the IEP team decisions. Some of the students may receive just one service while another may receive two or three. For example, Student "A" has hearing services and a full-time interpreter compared to Student "B" who only has hearing services. Now look at Student "F", they have Vison, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and Brailleing services. You see the high cost one year then the cost dropped due to less brailleing needs then rises again the next year due to another change in service needs. In addition, we may need to use three staff to provide three vision services due to staff not having the extra O&M certification or they may not have time to do all of the brailleing.

We believe we need to try to make the reimbursement more equitable across the counties. We believe our costs look high but, when our districts submit for reimbursement for Act 16, very few of them receive it because the rates in other parts of the state are so high.