

During the February 16, 2026 regular board meeting the board voted unanimously "to fully join the Cabinet Mountain Cooperative." The problem is that there were two paths for Plains to fully join the co-op. Taylor Salmi proposed the second path for full membership about a year and a half ago, in an August 14, 2024 informational meeting. Since Plains already had a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) on staff, the school could fully join the co-op with an exemption for Lisa's position. In this arrangement Lisa would remain an employee of the Plains school district and the school would retain about \$7000 in Qualified Educator payments for her Masters Degree and for her being a specialist. So the choice of words "to fully join the Cabinet Mountain Cooperative" was an intentional decision made by the board to remove Lisa from the school and it was worth costing the school \$7000 per year.

But why would they do that? I believe that the board chairman told us. At the Feb 16 board meeting the public was informed by Lana that "We are not in compliance with special education and funding currently." (February 16, 2026 Regular Meeting; 53:05 ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oeval9FnJ1s>) At the time, everyone focused on the compliance problem but I will be focusing on the funding problem. The funding issue she is referring to is Medicaid billing. Specifically it is Medicaid billing for speech therapy services.

There is a unique relationship between Medicaid and a school based SLP like Lisa. Medicaid gives the SLP special powers that no one else in the school has. They can submit billing for speech services and, as long as the paperwork is correctly filled out, Medicaid will by default assume that the bills are valid and write a check for the total billed amount. The SLP can make judgments on things like medical necessity, whether students qualify for billable services, and if the actual session with the student qualify as billable. With these powers come many additional responsibilities such as ensuring that services are truly medically necessary, ensuring that services are NOT educational or instructional in nature, and ensuring that services are actually improving the medical condition being addressed. This may come as a surprise to you but the SLP is basically a stand alone billing system for Medicaid and as such legally NO ONE can order a SLP to bill Medicaid for anything in a school. This is a feature not a bug. Medicaid has set this up this way to prevent fraud and remove the ability to blame shift to another party. If there is a problem with a student's Medicaid bill the school may have to repay Medicaid with interest, but it is the SLP that get in trouble. In essence the SLP has a dual obligation: one to Medicaid to ensure everything meets their requirements for billing and another to the school to ensure they get to keep the payments. Forcing a SLP to bill Medicaid is analogous to forcing a business manager to double bill Medicaid. The key federal statute is the [False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)](#). It states that any person who "knowingly presents, or causes to be presented, a false or fraudulent claim for payment or approval" to the United States (which includes Medicaid claims because of federal funding) is liable. So forcing an SLP to bill for unnecessary services makes the person applying the pressure liable for "causing" the false claim.

Now let's look at a hypothetical situation. Say a superintendent has ordered their SLP to bill Medicaid for a group of students that had already been shown to not qualify for billing. The SLP still says no to billing which upsets the superintendent. This continues on for months. Eventually the superintendent, with some additional legal help, report the SLP to the school board for being insubordinate and costing the school thousands of dollars. The board may have even felt that their authority was being circumvented due to things like [board policy 7210](#) which states: "The District will seek and utilize all available sources of revenue for financing its educational programs, including revenues

from non-tax, local, state, and federal sources.” In this scenario there has been no formal disciplinary action taken against the SLP and all of the funding loss that is being discussed is from fraudulent billing.

This seems like a far fetched story. If I now said that I possessed information that showed that even part of this was true, the board would immediately shut me down and I might get a request to join them in an executive session. You would think that this would be my goal so I could freely discuss my information. The problem is that at the end of the executive session the school attorney would tell me that this was now a “personnel matter” and that I was forbidden from discussing it any further. Executive sessions are where truth goes to die.

Instead I would like everyone to go to elcdesign.com to see what facts are available and you can see my non cryptic opinion on what has really happened in our school.