

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Martin, Vice Chairman Riggs, Senators Heider, Lee, VanOrden (Bair), Zito, Stennett, and Wintrow

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Harris

**NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

**CONVENED:** **Chairman Martin** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI).** Gubernatorial Appointment of Mark Watkins of Rexburg, Idaho, to serve a term commencing December 17, 2021 and expiring July 1, 2023 at the pleasure of the Governor. **Mr. Watkins** introduced himself to the Committee. He provided details on his upbringing being legally blind. As a new board member, **Mr. Watkins** said he had been learning and continued to strive towards being a useful member of the ICBVI board. (see Attachment 1)

**DISCUSSION:** In response to questions from the Committee, **Mr. Watkins** responded that he had not been part of the ICBVI long enough to know what Idaho had been doing well or what would be helpful going forward. Given a little time he would be able to answer that question. As for how he had been able to help others succeed, he explained that he encouraged them to not find excuses for their disability rather identified challenges and found solutions.

**Chairman Martin** stated that the Committee would vote on the appointment at the next meeting.

**Chairman Martin** stated the Committee will move on to **S 1287** while technical issues were resolved with the remote testimony for Britt Raubenheimer.

**S 1287** **Rural Nursing Loan Repayment Program - Adds to existing law to establish the rural nursing loan repayment program.** **Randall Hudspeth**, Executive Director, Idaho Center for Nursing, introduced himself to the committee. He stated he was also a member of the Healthcare Transformation Council of Idaho (HTCI). The outcome of research done on the Idaho nursing workforce showed that nurses were moving from rural areas causing nursing shortages. He stated there was a crisis for rural hospitals, long term care facilities, and other agencies that rely on rural nurses. HTCI believed the loan repayment program would assist in keeping rural nurses. The program utilized the existing model for rural physicians, dentists, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners managed by the Department of Health and Welfare (see Attachment 2)

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Stennett** stated the increase of travel nurses due to better pay and more control of their hours was not affected by this bill. **Mr. Hudspeth** agreed but provided that long term it was not sustainable to keep on paying travel nurses the higher wages. **Senator Lee** asked about the inclusion of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) along with Registered Nurses (RN). **Mr. Hudspeth** explained that assisted living facilities utilized LPN's and Nurse Assistants (NA). The need for LPN's was equally as great as RN's outside of the hospital setting. **Senator Lee** inquired about the funding source. **Mr. Hudspeth** answered through legislative appropriation from the Governor's office. **Chairman Martin** questioned the mechanism for repayment if the nurse became ineligible. **Mr. Hudspeth** explained that the balance of time was worked in advance of the funds being paid out and it was possible for repayment to be necessary if service ended before completion of the requirements. **Senator Wintrow** asked how this program was marketed. **Mr. Hudspeth** responded that the hospitals were using this as a recruitment tool and the nursing schools had been made aware as well.

**MOTION:** **Senator Heider** moved to send **S 1287** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Zito** requested that she be recorded as voting nay. Senator Riggs will sponsor on the floor.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.** Gubernatorial Reappointment: Britt Raubenheimer of Sandpoint, Idaho, to serve a term commencing July 1, 2021 and expiring July 1, 2024 at the pleasure of the Governor. **Ms. Raubenheimer** introduced herself to the Committee. She explained how she suddenly lost her vision 20 years ago. The ICBVI sent a counsellor to her home and provided training. **Ms. Raubenheimer** stated she had been on the board for the past 15 years.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lee** asked what the Committee was doing well and what could be done better. **Ms. Raubenheimer** expressed expanding programs and performance evaluation along with continued support for the aging community. She added continued technology advances are also helpful.

**Chairman Martin** stated that the Committee would vote on the appointment at the next meeting.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Martin** adjourned the meeting at 3:43 p.m.

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Senator Martin  
Chair

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Lena Amoah  
Secretary