

MINUTES
HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 22, 2016
TIME: 9:00 A.M.
PLACE: Room EW20
MEMBERS: Chairman Wood, Vice Chairman Packer, Representatives Hixon, Perry, Romrell, Vander Woude, Beyeler, Redman, Troy, Rusche, Chew
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Chairman Wood, Representative Troy
GUESTS: Cory Surber, Saint Alphonsus; Ericka Rupp, H&W; Nora Carpenter, United Way.

Chairman Packer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Packer introduced, **Hannah Bergmann**, the committee page for the second half of the session.

Nora Carpenter, President, CEO, United Way, Treasure Valley, shared information on the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Project, a study of financial hardship in conjunction with Oregon and Washington.

Assessing the increased poverty level for children led to a deeper study into the need and pressure for affordable housing, transportation, and a livable wage, which revealed a zip code syndrome. The ALICE Project provided objective data to understand community needs and actual poverty levels.

The project's data collection focuses on persons receiving services, visiting with them at the point of service and analyzing information from a variety of state agencies, including the Department of Health & Welfare.

In Idaho, 87,233 households (15%) live within the federal poverty level (FPL). There are also 130,397 households (22%) families identified by ALICE living above the FPL and struggling financially to afford basic necessities.

These necessities are categorized as survival budgets, the absolute minimum income needed to live in a community. Under survival budgets, housing is presumed to be a rental. Child care, the largest budget slice, is modest, often a family member. Food is low cost and low nutrition. Transportation covers a car payment, gas, and insurance, with no maintenance or upkeep allowance. Health insurance does not exist and any medical expenses are paid for out of pocket. Savings plans, emergency funds, retirement, and any other extras do not exist in the survival budget.

A single adult in this category has an annual income of \$16,660 (FPL is \$11,490), for an hourly wage of \$8.33. A family of four has an annual income of \$46,176 (FPL is \$23,550) and an hourly wage of \$23.09. The household stability budget, which includes home ownership, for the same family of four is \$85,896 with an hourly wage of \$42.95.

Based on the study, Idaho's basic cost of living is higher than expected. It also becomes evident individuals frequently work away from community support.

There are 121,445 new jobs projected in the Pacific Northwest from 2012 to 2022. Seventy-five percent of those jobs will pay less than \$20 per hour.

With the report only one month old, the United Way is sharing the information to bring the issue to light. Meaningful public policy discussions and community leader engagement are the next steps. Those receiving services have asked for better access to existing community services.

Responding to committee questions, **Ms. Carpenter** said the survival budget presumes there are no extra funds to purchase even subsidized insurance. The individuals represented in the ALICE report are employed. The adults expressed pride and accomplishment in their work. Anything the community or state can do to ensure their children are safe and healthy is helpful.

Rep. Perry commented this report highlights the multi-faceted aspects for families just above the FPL. Perhaps shifting DHW office hours to remain open in the evenings one or two days a week is the shift in thinking needed to enhance existing resources and help this population.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Representative Packer
Chair

Irene Moore
Secretary