

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 23, 2015
- TIME:** 9:00 A.M.
- PLACE:** Room EW41
- MEMBERS:** Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel
- ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None
- GUESTS:** Evelyn Johnson, Decker Rolph, Mary Jo Surges-Prokop and Kate Haas, Lee Pesky Learning Center; Matthew Weatherley-White, Caprock Group; Robin Nettinga, IEA; Lorrie Baer and Rev. Christina Thompson, United Methodist Women; Sen. Bob Nonini; Beth Oppenheimer, Idaho AEYC; Jane Whittmeyer, Coalition Charter School Families; Phil Homer, IASA; Harold Ott, Rural Schools; Michael Chartier, Friedman Foundation; Rod Gramer, IBE
- Chairman DeMordaunt** called the meeting to order at 8:59 a.m.
- H 170:** **Sen. Nonini** said Idaho's reading by 3rd grade success rate is unacceptable and **H 170** is an attempt to improve successful reading by the students of Idaho, pre-K through third grade. He said it is a new concept and he wants it to work in all areas of Idaho.
- In response to a question from the committee regarding goals for the program, **Sen. Nonini** said the goal is to improve reading and to involve the private sector in the endeavor. To a further question concerning the proficiency goal such as raising the percentage of those third graders reading proficiently, he said all programs should reach for a higher percentage. If 71% of third graders are reading at grade level, why not 85% or up to 100%, probably unattainable, but it is better to have a higher goal. To a question concerning the risks of outsourcing core government functions, he stated the contracts are set by the State Department of Education (SDE) and would meet high standards. To other questions, Sen. Nonini said the program would not preclude use by pre-K classrooms or daycare. It could be used for any number of items including professional development.
- Rep. Harris**, co-sponsor for **H 170**, said this legislation provides an alternate means for fostering innovation in our schools and provides an alternate means for financing. It will give SDE another tool in their toolbox. He stated it would allow SDE to enter into an agreement with a private company with the company bearing the full financial risk of the program. As part of the contract, the parties agree to a specific set of metrics to measure the effectiveness of the program.
- Kate Haas**, Kestral West, representing the Lee Pesky Learning Center, described Pay for Success Contracting. She explained the program is a data-driven approach that reduces the need for state spending on reading remediation. She said their evidence shows that children who are taught to read by a Pesky-trained adult have better reading scores than similarly situated children who do not receive that support.

She explained the legislation would allow private-sector investors to fund the programs with a promise of compensation from the education General Fund. She also explained the inner workings and responsibilities of the model including the investors role and the roles of the SDE, the 3rd Party Administrator, the Service Provider and the External Evaluator.

Evelyn Johnson, Idaho Business for Education (IBE) spoke **in support of H 170**. She said the Pesky program is platform agnostic.

Responding to questions from the committee, **Ms. Haas** said the emphasis is on training all adults with young children to teach using traditional and online methods. She stated Boise State University College of Education is the current choice as an evaluator. She indicated the 10 years of collected data from the Pesky Learning Center is proof of the program effectiveness. She also said investors are willing to wait the three or more years to assess progress toward the benchmarks and to be reimbursed as per terms of the contract.

Rod Gramer, President, IBE, testified **in support of H 170**. He said IBE endorses this market-driven approach.

Sen. Nonini was called upon to close discussion. He said the legislation will give the state an additional tool to achieve reading proficiency for Idaho children.

MOTION:

Rep. Kerby made a motion to send **H 170** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Members of the committee expressed concern regarding the external evaluator. It was suggested an Idaho university be designated as the external evaluator. Strengthening the administrative staff at the SDE to negotiate contracts, was also suggested.

VOTE ON MOTION:

Chairman DeMordaunt called for a vote on the motion to send **H 170** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Harris** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Michael Chartier, State Programs Director, Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, spoke to the committee on the subject of school choice. He explained charter schools, school vouchers, tax credits for private schools, Tax Credit Scholarships and Education Savings Accounts. He gave examples of school choice programs available to students and parents across the United States. He said schools of choice are more rigorous, align better with parental values and offer better college preparation.

A discussion was held considering parental choice and limited choice availability to Idaho parents. There is some evidence suggesting parents with college educations are the parents looking for an alternative education for their children. Studies also say there is no negative impact on those students remaining in a traditional public school setting. It was suggested competition between traditional public schools, public charter schools and private schools has been beneficial for students.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jean Vance
Secretary