

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 03, 2015

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Heider, Vice Chairman Martin, Senators Lodge, Nuxoll, Hagedorn, Tippetts, Lee, Schmidt and Lacey

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

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 Heider** called the meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:05 p.m. and welcomed Dr. Sarah Toevs to the podium to introduce **SCR 111**.

SCR 111 **Dr. Sara Toevs**, Director, Boise State University Idaho Caregiver Alliance, Center for the Study of Aging, presented **SCR 111** relating to family caregivers. The concurrent resolution calls for the Idaho Caregiver Alliance, a statewide consortium led by the Idaho Commission on Aging and the Boise State University Center for the Study of Aging, to convene a broad group of stakeholders to identify policies, resources and programs available for family caregivers and encourage additional innovative means of support.

Dr. Toevs said caregiving has become an increasingly complex lifespan challenge and an immeasurably important part of the State's and the nation's, healthcare delivery system.

Dr. Toevs said the value of the support provided by unpaid caregivers is estimated at \$2 billion annually, and every month's delay in the need to send an individual to an assisted living facility supported by Idaho dollars saves state resources. She said the average cost of an assisted living facility in Idaho is about \$3,200 per month, and that cost doubles in a skilled nursing facility.

Dr. Toevs said the concurrent resolution will bring together diverse agencies and organizations, public and private, to discuss methods of working together to support caregivers. She said the resolution also connects legislative policymakers as an important component of the overall program.

In summary, **Dr. Toevs** said the task force will explore and develop cost-effective ways of helping individuals of all ages continue in their role as unpaid caregivers. She asked for the Committee's support of **SCR 111** and stood for questions.

Senator Nuxoll asked why there was not a monetary value placed on the fiscal note. **Chairman Heider** explained the situation and said a specific monetary value, if any, has yet to be determined.

Committee members asked questions about education, resources and reimbursement to legislative participants. **Dr. Toevs** addressed those questions and explained that individuals testifying would also clarify any concerns. **Senator Lee** commented that the new language in the resolution is consistent with what the Committee had requested.

TESTIMONY: **Alyssa Aldrich**, Eagle, Idaho, testified in support of **SCR 111**. She represented herself as the mother of a disabled child. **Ms. Aldrich** described the difficulties imposed on families who provide round-the-clock care and said she is on a mission to help fill the gap for caregiver respite needs. She is cofounder of a nonprofit organization toward that end.

Tracy Warren, Program Specialist, Idaho Council on Development Disabilities testified in support of **SCR 111**. She described the 23-member volunteer council appointed by the Governor to promote access to quality supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. She said the need most often identified by caregivers is access to information on resources and programs to enhance the quality of life for loved ones and provide respite to caregivers. **Ms. Warren** said this concurrent resolution will provide an entity that focuses specifically on these needs.

Jill Harriss testified in support of **SCR 111**. She is the caregiver for her husband who was diagnosed in 1999 at age 29 with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and has required round-the-clock care for the past 11 years. **Ms. Harriss** described the difficulties attendant with round-the-clock care and said the family has paid \$85,000 out of pocket to private caregivers. She said burnout, financial strain and government assistance may have been avoided or diminished if information on resources and support had been available.

Joe Loiacono, Executive Director, Inland NW Chapter, Alzheimer's Association serving north Idaho, testified in support of **SCR 111** as a veteran and as someone whose mother has Alzheimer's disease. He asked the Committee to consider veterans who are dealing with this issue, either as a caregiver or as a disabled individual. He said Idaho needs to prepare for the growing numbers of veterans who have returned home from recent wars with traumatic brain injuries and stressed that this task force will be part of that preparation.

Peggy Munson, a volunteer with the American Association of Retired Persons Idaho (AARP) and former geriatric nurse and caregiver, testified in support of **SCR 111** and answered earlier questions concerning available educational material and other resources. She said AARP regularly publishes information on many of these resources which is available to the public. She stressed the importance of preparation and said an entity that will bring together these needed resources will be of immense value.

Dr. Toevs summarized her presentation and asked the Committee to support **SCR 111**.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Martin** moved to send **SCR 111** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Lee** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Vice Chairman Martin will carry the resolution on the floor.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business, **Chairman Heider** adjourned the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

Senator Heider
Chair

Erin Denker
Secretary

Jeanne Clayton
Assistant Secretary