

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 26, 2019

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman Clow, Vice Chairman Kerby, Representatives Shepherd, Boyle, Mendive, DeMordaunt, Moon, Ehardt, Goesling, Marshall, Raymond, Wisniewski, McCrostie (Nash), Abernathy, Berch

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained with the minutes in the committee secretary's office until the end of the session. Following the end of the session, the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

Chairman Clow called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

MOTION: **Rep. Goesling** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2019 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Kelly Edginton, Head of School, Idaho Virtual Academy (IDVA), presented data on online schools. IDVA has been certified since 2005 and expects to be recertified this year; it employs 57 Idaho certified teachers. Their student population is highly mobile, a significant portion is credit deficient and the percentages of economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities is higher than brick-and-mortar charter schools. She noted in 2018, IDVA's high school students outperformed the state in Math, English Language Arts and Science ISAT scores and their at-risk groups consistently outperform the state average. She stated IDVA has a higher percentage of special education students because of the individualized support they provide to these students.

Monti Pittman, Head of School, Idaho Technical Career Academy, gave an update on ITCA. The school was founded in 2014 to meet the labor needs of business and industry and offers four career pathways: agricultural manufacturing/food processing systems, business/marketing management, health science/pharmacy tech, and web development and digital communications. He discussed their student demographics and noted a large number of students enroll during the second semester, indicating a highly mobile population. He noted 41% of ITCA students live in a rural location. Mr. Pittman also highlighted ITCA's above average scores on a national, technical skills assessment.

Chairman Clow asked the next two reports be delayed until a future date. Time expectations of the bill hearing would not allow more than the planned twenty minutes.

H 120: **Rep. Ehardt** presented **H 120**, legislation which changes the current system of sexual education from parental opt-out to opt-in. She stated the bill is very limited in scope and addresses parental rights and consent, not curriculum content. She gave an overview of the statutes that define parental rights and discussed "Reducing the Risk", a sex ed program used in several schools. She stated this program covers material beyond the scope of Idaho statutes and bypasses parental consent. She noted several neighboring states have changed to opt-in systems for sex ed and stated this change will empower parents to direct their children's education.

John Paulton, Family Policy Alliance of Idaho; **Rep. Bryan Zollinger**, District 33; and **Christian Welp**, Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, spoke **in support** of the bill. They stated parents hold the primary responsibility for sexual education, not schools, and this bill gives parents more control and information. Rep. Zollinger also noted parents do not have time to stay up-to-date with school board curriculum meetings and it will be easy for schools to notify parents about how to opt-in their children.

Quinn Perry, Policy and Government Affairs Director, Idaho School Boards Association, testified **in opposition** to the bill as written. She stated the bill creates areas of redundancy and conflict with current law. She discussed the process school districts follow to adopt curricula and noted the public is able to attend all relevant meetings and share their comments. She noted the bill does not define "sexuality" and expressed concern this could impact other courses, including biology and anatomy. She also expressed concern about the bill limiting schools' ability to disseminate information on harassment and bullying. She stated the bill is lacking an accurate fiscal note and will create an unfunded mandate at the local level.

Sabine Englert, Student from District 15; **Isabella Hill**, Student at Boise High School; **Sarah Pearce**, Student at Boise High; **Zoe Kenney**, Student from District 20; **Lydia Christensen**, Citizen; and **Liam Neupert**, Student, spoke **in opposition**. They stated this bill adds barriers to students receiving sexual education and learning about their own bodies. They noted many students have parents who are not very present in their lives or open to conversations about sexuality and these students will be at a disadvantage if the program becomes opt-in. They also raised concerns about homes where sexual abuse occurs and noted an abusive parent would be shielded because the child would be unable to learn about healthy sexual behavior. They stated parental approval is not needed for other subjects and sex ed should not be singled out.

Lori Burelle, Idaho Falls Progressives; **Lori Gash**, West Ada School District; **Stacy Falkner**, Idaho Education Manager for Planned Parenthood; **Cody Hafer**, Community Outreach Educator for Planned Parenthood; **Kathy Griesmyer**, American Civil Liberties Union; **Sylvia Chariton**, American Association of University Women; **Nirmala Sandhu**, National Organization for Women; and **Annie Hightower**, Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, spoke **in opposition**. They too stated the bill places intentional barriers between kids and factual information. They argued there are already adequate opportunities for parental involvement and the current system has shown beneficial results. They expressed concern about the reliability of kids returning permission slips and the delay this could cause in material being taught. They also expressed concern about the burden added to teachers to track which kids can receive what instruction. Ms. Hightower also expressed concern about the bill limiting information on how to report sexual assault.

Sara Fry, on behalf of herself and doctors from the Idaho Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; **Reverend Sara LaWall**, Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; **Janet Kaufman**, Educator and Parent; and **Carolyn Casey**, Parent, spoke **in opposition**. They stated kids need multiple sources of information regarding sexual health and parents and schools should work together. They noted not all parents are available or comfortable discussing sex ed with their children and changing to opt-in penalizes the majority of families who already participate in the program.

Due to time constraints, **H 120** will be carried over to the meeting of March 1, 2019 at 9:00 am.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:58 am.

Representative Clow
Chair

Erica McGinnis
Secretary