

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, January 28, 2020

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Lent, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking

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 Mortimer** called the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m. **Chairman Mortimer** told the Committee that they would hear the Minutes approval from January 13, 2020, and **RS 27455** before proceeding with the rest of the agenda.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Buckner-Webb** moved to approve the Minutes from January 13, 2020. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 27455 **Senator Dan Johnson** presented the RS and explained that it cleans up unnecessary language and eliminates language dealing with the higher education stabilization fund.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 27455** to print. **Senator Lent** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **John Watts**, Partner at Veritas Advisors, representing Idaho Central Credit Union (ICCU), gave a brief background of the need for financial literacy. He then introduced Michael Watson of ICCU (see Attachment 1).

Michael Watson, Chief Marketing Officer for ICCU, began his presentation with a brief overview of the history of ICCU. He explained ICCU's commitment to community involvement. He detailed ICCU's involvement in schools, giving guest lectures on credit scores, budgeting, and financial responsibility. **Mr. Watson** expressed that ICCU was impressed with STUKENT's Mimic Personal Finance Curriculum, and that ICCU agreed to provide a grant for any high school in Idaho to obtain the curriculum.

Stuart Draper, Founder and CEO of STUKENT, gave a history of STUKENT. He told the Committee about the development of Mimic Personal Finance. He then explained to the Committee how the curriculum simulates real-world finances.

DISCUSSION: The Committee commented on the importance of the program and encouraged the presenters to express the Committee's gratitude to their companies for the program. **Mr. Draper** responded to Committee questions that they had received very positive feedback from the teachers who had used it.

PRESENTATION: **Christine Stoll**, Executive Director for IDeal College Savings Program (IDeal), explained the items that money in a 529 fund can be put toward. She then explained how the 529 fund operates with stocks and bonds. **Ms. Stoll** explained that students with a 529 fund are four to seven times more likely to complete college. She concluded by sharing that 68 percent of adults surveyed did not know what a 529 fund was (see Attachment 2).

Ms. Stoll responded to Committee questions that accounts can be set up for one beneficiary or for several, but that withdrawals need to be made in the name of a specific beneficiary. She also responded that gifts can be set up to be made automatically each month.

S 1238

Senator Jim Patrick presented **S 1238** and expressed the lack of knowledge in adults about government operations. He called on Alexandra Dominguez to explain the bill in greater detail.

Ms. Dominguez, representative of the College Board, explained that only two in five American adults could name the three branches of the American government. She explained that the College Board is working to ensure that students have access to enrichment in both technology and civics education. The College Board offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses in technology and in civics and that the courses emphasize applied knowledge. **Ms. Dominguez** told the Committee that the bill allows students to work toward their requirement to take a civics exam through the AP Civics and Government course.

Senator Patrick explained his personal connection to the civics requirement and asked the Committee for a do pass recommendation. He responded to Committee questions that there is already a state-appropriated fund for AP classes, and that this course would be paid for through this fund. He added that the bill does not add or remove requirements, but only adds another option for the fulfillment of the civics and government requirement for high school graduation.

Tracie Bent, Chief Planning and Policy Officer for the State Board of Education (Board), explained that AP classes are offered by teachers who have been deemed by the College Board to be able to cover the material at a college level.

MOTION:

Senator Den Hartog moved to send **S 1238** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Lent** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**, with **Senators Crabtree** and **Woodward** requesting that they be recorded as voting nay.

S 1239

Vice Chairman Thayn began by introducing his wife as well as Ashley Walton and Tiffany Anderson. He explained that the bill allows elementary students (K-6th grade) to advance a grade level ahead and negotiate a flexible attendance schedule and stay home from school one extra day per week.

Vice Chairman Thayn shared the comments of his son, Tyler Thayn, detailing how a flexible schedule had benefited Mr. Thayn's children. He said that the time at home allowed Mr. Thayn and his wife to pursue subjects with their children that were not being covered in school, such as teaching the children Spanish.

Senator Thayn shared the comments of Lani Rembelski, Superintendent of Challis School District #181. These included that the school district had determined if Mr. Thayn's children were eligible for a flexible schedule based on multiple test scores, classroom academics, and teacher input. It was also included that the children's missed days did not affect the teacher's schedule, because the missed days were preplanned.

Vice Chairman Thayn explained that, in drafting the bill, he focused on avoiding a greater burden on teachers, recording the students as present for funding purposes, and ensuring that students would still attend school 55 percent of the time. He explained how teachers and parents would determine if a student was 1 year or grade-level ahead in each subject area.

- DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Thayn** responded to Committee questions by reiterating that, in addition to the testing requirement, a student's teacher must agree that a student is proficient or advanced to obtain the flex schedule. He continued by explaining how he had come to the evaluation requirements.
- Vice Chairman Thayn** responded to questions that the students who had already tried the flex schedule were staying in the same grade level rather than advancing a grade, and that social and emotional development are not measured in the school system.
- Vice Chairman Thayn** responded to reservations about a law that encourages absences by stating that students who do well are doing so because their parents are helping them advance, and that the bill demonstrates trust between school districts and parents.
- TESTIMONY:** **Tiffany Anderson** stood to testify in favor of **S 1239**. She explained that as a parent, education is the largest schedule block for her children. She shared the story of her son's elementary education, and that he became disengaged from public education by high school. **Ms. Anderson** then shared that her foster children's needs were not met in public education because they moved from school to school so often that they had fallen behind. She concluded that **S 1239** allows teachers to treat children as individuals rather than as a group.
- Layne McInnelly**, President of Idaho Education Association (IEA), testified in favor of the bill. He expressed IEA's opinion that the bill relies too heavily on standardized testing and went on that IEA is still in favor of the bill.
- Ashley Walton** testified in favor of **S 1239**. She explained that because her family farms, they are extremely busy with farm work in the summer, and that this bill would allow her family to spend more time with their children in the months when the farm labor is less intense.
- DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Thayn** concluded that the bill incentivizes family cooperation. He addressed the concerns raised by Mr. McInnelly with a reminder that standardized tests are only one component of eligibility determination. He responded to Committee questions that he anticipated less than 2 or 3 percent of students to initially take advantage of the allowances made in the bill, and that it would likely take over ten years for 20 percent of students to take advantage of the allowances. **Vice Chairman Thayn** responded to Committee concerns about excessive student absences by stating that the schedule for student absences must be agreed upon by multiple people in the student's education system.
- MOTION:** **Senator Crabtree** moved to hold **S 1239** in Committee, subject to the call of the Chair. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion.
- SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1239** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Vice Chairman Thayn** seconded the motion.
- DISCUSSION:** The Committee expressed that the concept of the bill is valuable and agreed that there were some concerns in the execution of the concept.
- ROLL CALL VOTE:** **Chairman Mortimer** called for a roll call vote on the substitute motion. **Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, and Senators Den Hartog and Lent** voted aye. **Senators Crabtree, Woodward, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking** voted nay. The motion failed.
- VOICE VOTE:** The motion to hold **S 1239** in Committee, subject to the call of the Chair, passed by **voice vote**, with **Senators Lent and Den Hartog** requesting to be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

Morgan Howard
Secretary

Juanita Budell
Assistant Secretary