

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 04, 2020

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Lent, Mathias(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.

PRESENTATION: **Robyn Lockett**, Analyst for Legislative Services Office (LSO) Budget and Policy Division, gave an overview of the budget book, which included a side-by-side comparison of Superintendent Ybarra's budget request and the Governor's budget recommendation (see Attachment 1). **Ms. Lockett** then gave a more detailed analysis of the budget line items, including money to pay salaries of administrators, salaries and benefits for teachers, and health insurance for school employees. She went on to explain the line items for literacy improvement, mastery education, and the Central Services Division. **Ms. Lockett** concluded her presentation with an explanation of the line items for Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind and the Superintendent of Public Instruction's office budget.

Janet Jessup, Analyst for LSO Budget and Policy Division, gave an overview of the State Board of Education's budget, including budgets for higher education, the Opportunity Scholarship, and other grants and scholarships. She explained the formula behind the changes in funding from fiscal year (FY) 2020 to FY 2021. **Ms. Jessup** included the recommendation for funding of a cybersecurity program to be made collaboratively between Idaho State University, University of Idaho, and Boise State University. She also included the funding for health education programs and the programs which are exempt from decreasing their funding by 2 percent, including K-12 funding, scholarships and grants, and health education programs.

SCR 120 **Vice Chairman Thayn** told the Committee that, in creating this resolution, he tried to focus on the core of what was best for Idaho students. He went on that many tenth grade students don't take the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) seriously, and that the legislature should look to either replace the test or address student engagement. He concluded that the resolution doesn't call for immediate action, but for action to be considered.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Andy Grover**, Superintendent of Melba school district, testified in support of the bill and shared that Melba recently acquired an industry business partner to allow students to go straight from school into the workforce. He went on that many students are having issues passing the ISAT and the district was struggling to prepare a curriculum that would prepare students both for the ISAT and for entering the workforce. **Dr. Grover** reiterated Vice Chairman Thayn's point that students are not engaged in the ISAT. He continued that the data from the ISAT was not helpful for assessing where the school needs to focus special attention. He told the Committee that there is no perfect curriculum and focused data allows educators to better prepare their students.

Jeff Dillon, Superintendent of Wilder School District and Principal of Wilder Middle High School, testified in support of the bill. He told the Committee that the Wilder District focuses on teaching students how to learn and gives students the ability to choose a pathway to their career. He shared that students who are engaged in the ISAT are proficient in the ISAT at a rate of 100 percent. However, many students were not engaged because they did not see the ISAT as being valuable to their education.

Ryan Cantrell, Superintendent of Bruneau Grand View school district, shared that the ISAT is not a valuable summative assessment, and asked that Idaho cease the tenth grade ISAT and use the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) instead. He encouraged Idaho to look for ways to measure student achievement in ways other than using the ISAT.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Crabtree** asked if there would be a way to compare new testing methods to ISAT data so that the state would not lose the data gathered from the ISAT. **Vice Chairman Thayn** responded that the SAT had been used for several years and that because student engagement in the ISAT is so low, there were issues with using that data gathered from it.

MOTION: **Senator Lent** moved to send **SCR 120** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

S 1266 **Senator Johnson** explained that **S 1266** simply deleted language related to an account that, at the end of FY 2020, will be paid out and will no longer be active.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1266** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Winder** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

S 1278 **Senator Ward-Engelking** invited Quinn Perry, Policy and Government Affairs Director for the Idaho School Board Association (ISBA), to present the bill.

Ms. Perry shared that the fee associated with getting a driver's license went to a fund for reimbursing schools and districts for driver's education. She went on that **S 1278** would increase the amount per student that school districts were reimbursed because the account had grown to nearly \$5 million but the reimbursement rate had not changed since 1996. The reimbursement per student would grow from \$125 to \$150.

Ms. Perry responded to Committee questions that in FY 2020, roughly 9,400 students were projected to take driver's education classes and that private driving schools could partner with school districts' or charter schools' driver's education classes and qualify for reimbursement, but that they would not qualify for reimbursement for students who simply took a privately offered class.

TESTIMONY: **Fred Birnbaum** of the Idaho Freedom Foundation (IFF) stood to testify in opposition to **S 1278**. He explained that IFF does not believe that the bill will benefit all students equally because it does not apply to students who took a privately offered class. **Mr. Birnbaum** responded to Committee questions that he did not know what percentage of Idaho students went to private driving schools and that he believed that there were certain requirements to move from a learner's permit to a driver's license, which would be met in driver's education.

Nancy Gregory, Boise School District Trustee, spoke in support of **S 1278** and said that because the reimbursement had not increased in so long, school districts were struggling to cover all of the costs associated with offering driver's education classes.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** closed by commenting that where she grew up in rural Idaho, there was no private option for driver's education. She pointed out that many rural areas still did not have private driving schools and that many students did not have the option of waiting to get their driver's licenses until they turned 18 and did not have to take driver's education.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **S 1278** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Mathias** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Thayn** and **Senator Winder** both commented that the bill contributes to the needs and safety of students, and that those things should outweigh the possibility of increasing competition to private driving schools.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **S 1278** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation passed by **voice vote**, with **Senators Crabtree** and **Den Hartog** requesting that they be recorded as voting nay.

S 1279 **Senator Lent** explained that current code regarding annual superintendent evaluations was not very specific. He continued that the quality of leadership in school districts is one of the most essential factors to student success. He went on to explain that **S 1279** was to provide structure to school boards for evaluating superintendents with performance indicators of third grade literacy, eighth grade math, and graduation rates. **Senator Lent** continued that the plan was to work with the State Board of Education to develop a more detailed format for superintendent evaluation in rule, which would be a simple two-page framework.

TESTIMONY: **Rob Winslow**, Executive Director of the Idaho Association of School Administrators (Association), thanked Senator Lent for bringing **S 1279** forward. He told the Committee that Senator Lent shared the draft language with the Association and listened to feedback. He went on that most superintendents have told him that the language is a framework with which they can work.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **S 1279** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Thayn** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:34 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

Morgan Howard
Secretary