

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, February 22, 2021

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Den Hartog, Woodward, Johnson, Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nelson

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Lent

**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 Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:02 p.m.

**PAGE INTRODUCTION:** **Chairman Thayn** invited Julissa Melendez, page for the second half of the 66th Legislative Session for the Senate Education Committee to the podium to introduce herself to the Committee. **Ms. Melendez** gave a brief introduction about herself to the Committee.

**S 1115** **Relating to Education; Moves the Public Charter School Commission Out From Under the Office of the Idaho State Board of Education (Board), and Makes It a Separate Agency Under the State Board. Vice Chairman Crabtree** outlined the bill and stood for questions.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if the Board of Education was aware of this bill, and was there any known opposition. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** said there is no known opposition to this bill. **Senator Den Hartog** asked to confirm that the strikeouts in the bill do not impact the other changes the commission is working toward. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** said no, this bill does not impact the commissions work. **Chairman Thayn** asked why the changes are being asked for now. **Matt Freeman**, Executive Director, Idaho State Board of Education, said when the commission charter was originally written there were only a few charter schools. Today there are more than 57 charter schools, so the time was right to change how the commission hires and evaluates their own director. **Senator Den Hartog** asked about page 2, line 32 of the bill, specifically asking if the Governor's Office considers party affiliation in its appointments. **Mr. Freeman** said the Governor can consider party affiliation, but did not know if that was part of the consideration because he could not speak for the Governor.

**MOTION:** **Senator Woodward** moved to send **S 1115** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Johnson** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PRESENTATION:** **Dr. TJ Bliss**, Chief Academic Officer, Idaho State Board of Education, and **Dr. Jonathan Lashley**, Associate Chief Academic Officer, Idaho State Board of Education, presented information to the Committee about Online Idaho (see Attachment 1).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Johnson** asked what the ideal class size was for online learning. **Dr. Lashley** said the answer depends on several factors: affordability, how the course is designed, availability of course sharing, and working with institutions to coordinate online instruction of the courses being offered. **Chairman Thayn** asked what university a student is enrolled in if they use Online Idaho, and how the transferability is handled. **Dr. Bliss** said the students choose the institution and must enroll with the university directly, and all of the classes offered are transferable between Idaho institutions.

**Chairman Thayn** asked how Online Idaho compares with the Western Governors University program. **Dr. Bliss** said Western Governors University is a competency-based model, in which students can take the test whenever they wish, and if they pass the test, they get the credit. Online Idaho would be complementary but is not competency-based. **Senator Den Hartog** asked about ongoing costs to run Online Idaho, and who is paying for them. **Dr. Bliss** said the initial \$4 million came from non recognizable funds and paid for the pilot phase of this three-year program. Before asking for money to continue the program, data will be gathered to ensure the program is on a successful track.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the Committee at 3:45 p.m.

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Senator Thayn  
Chair

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Florence Lince  
Secretary