

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, March 08, 2021

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

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

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Woodward

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 3:07 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Chairman Thayn** informed the Committee that due to time limitations, the minutes approval for the Committee meeting on February 24, 2021, was postponed until Thursday, March 11.

H 175 **Relating to Education; Provides Students With Access to In-Person Instruction Where Safety Requirements Can Be Developed at the Local Level.** **Sherri Ybarra**, Superintendent, Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE), and **Marilyn Whitney**, Deputy Superintendent, ISDE, outlined the bill and provided additional supporting documentation to the Committee (see Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Crabtree** said most districts are already opening which would seem to make this bill unnecessary. **Ms. Ybarra** said most districts are open for in-person instruction; this bill will inform the rest of the districts that reopening safely is their number one priority. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** asked how this bill changes anything the districts are already doing. **Ms. Ybarra** said the bill will force the districts to have discussions with any parent who wants in-person instruction, but school districts would maintain local control as to whether they open or not.

Chairman Thayn informed the Committee that page 2, lines 23-28 is the heart of the bill. **Senator Cook** said he still does not see the purpose of this bill since it does not require districts to open for instruction. **Ms. Ybarra** said this was the only bill brought forward this Legislative Session to prioritize reopening schools.

TESTIMONY: **Kim Glineski** and **Tiffany Grant**, parents of children in Idaho, testified in support of **H 175**. They recounted that in-person instruction is very important for special needs students and the mental well-being of all students.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** mentioned **H 67**, a bill the Governor recently signed that gives school boards authority, in conjunction with health districts, to reopen districts. Senator Ward-Engelking asked if **H 175** would undo that bill. **Ms. Whitney** said this bill is complementary to **H 67**, giving authority to the locally elected board. **Chairman Thayn** said this bill gives parents leverage to talk about in-person instruction for their students. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked how do we reopen in-person learning if schools are closed for safety. **Chairman Thayn** said lines 23-28 of the bill gives direction on how to change from in-person instruction to online or hybrid learning, but leaves open the option for parents to ask for in-person learning where it can safely be provided.

MOTION: **Senator Johnson** moved to send **H 175** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**, with **Senator Cook** and **Vice Chairman Crabtree** voting nay.

H 203 **Relating to Public Schools; to Address the School Bus Driver Shortage and to Allow Qualified Drivers to Be Re-Employed While Still Collecting Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) Retirement Benefits.** **Representative Ron Mendive** outlined the bill.

TESTIMONY: **Don Drum**, Executive Director, PERSI, spoke in support of **H 203**. Mr. Drum informed the Committee that many retired bus drivers are able to work for other organizations as drivers and still collect their PERSI retirement benefits. This bill will allow retired drivers to be able to continue to drive a school bus and collect their benefits.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **H 203** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Cook** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Florence Lince
Secretary