

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 07, 2023

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman VanOrden, Vice Chairman Zuiderveld, Senators Lee, Harris, Bjerke, Wintrow, and Taylor

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 VanOrden** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:26 p.m.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Senator Harris** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of **Debra Hetherington** to the Board of Health and Welfare to the floor with the recommendation that she be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Senator Lee** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of **Tom Stoesser** to the Board of Health and Welfare to the floor with the recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Caregiver Alliance. Dr. Sarah Toevs**, Director, Center for the Study of Aging, Boise State University, explained in Idaho, 40 percent of the Medicaid budget went toward caregivers that were not a spouse, as Idaho did not allow a spouse to be a paid caregiver. The Alliance wrote into all three grants the sustainability for the statewide coalition, and that money was used as a one time source to get it established (see Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lee** asked why they were not applying for the grant. **Judy Taylor**, Director, Idaho Commission on Aging, replied those grants were highly competitive. After those grants were awarded, the assumption was that the State or the community was going to continue to sustain the Alliance.

Senator Wintrow inquired what could be done to keep the Alliance moving forward. **Ms. Taylor** answered she did not know if there was anyone giving a significant money around that issue.

Senator Bjerke asked if there was a projected date where a spouse could be a paid caregiver, and what the strategies were to deal with that population. **Ms. Taylor** replied there was an application where the State could submit a Medicaid waiver to allow for spousal coverage. The Alliance developed their own certified family home program, which received money from the State.

Chairman VanOrden asked if a spouse would qualify as a paid caregiver under Idaho law. **Ms Taylor** answered only an existing parent would qualify, a spouse would not.

H 213 **HEALTH - Adds to existing law to establish a rural nursing loan repayment program. Representative Healey** explained this was an incentive program to attract nurses to work in rural areas in Idaho. This would appropriate a \$25,000 maximum payout over a 5 year period to both new and current registered nurses.

Senator Harris asked if there were other nursing educational programs that would make certain applicants ineligible for the rural nursing loan repayment program. **Representative Healey** answered yes, as the language in the bill would not allow for double dipping.

TESTIMONY: **Fred Birnbaum**, Idaho Freedom Foundation, testified in opposition of **H 213**. He stated his concerns about using taxpayer money to pay for that loan. He further stated If that standard applied only to counties that did not independently contain a city, then that would cover three fourths of the counties in Idaho.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Taylor** inquired if there was a suggestion to help fix the shortage of nurses and medical professionals across the State in both rural and urban areas. **Mr. Birnbaum** replied there was a shortage across the U.S., not just Idaho.

TESTIMONY: **Michael McGrane**, Idaho Nurses Association, registered to testify in support of **H 213**. He stated currently there were an estimated 2,000 open positions in the State of Idaho. 1,500 of those positions were covered by traveling nurses, who were under contract at a very high premium price and come from out of state on a temporary basis. There was no commitment to the community, which was not a sustainable solution to the shortage problem.

Robert Vande Merwe, Idaho Health Care Association, registered in support of **H 213**. He stated the problem was not in attracting nurses, it was more about where they went to work when they graduated, as more urban areas pay more than rural.

MOTION: **Senator Lee** declared a 39H.

Senator Lee moved to send **H 213** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Vice Chairman Zuiderveld** and **Senator Bjerke** asked they be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Michelle Tierney
Secretary