

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 06, 2024

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair VanOrden, Senators Lee, Harris, Bjerke, Zuiderveld, 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: **Chair VanOrden** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:02 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Taylor** moved to approve the Minutes of January 30, 2024. **Senator Lee** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Lee** moved to approve the Minutes of February 1, 2024. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

Chair VanOrden moved **H 578** to the top of the agenda.

H 578

ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE - Adds to existing law to prohibit religious discrimination in adoption and foster care cases. **Representative Blanksma** explained that during the rules review process, under adoption and foster care placements, there was nothing that could prevent discrimination regarding placements. The bill established provisions in code to ensure that both adoption and foster care placement were free from religious discrimination. The legislation outlined that it would prevent the government from discriminatory actions such as altering tax treatment, loans or grants, contract agreements, scholarships, or employment conditions. She stated a discriminatory claim could be brought no later than two years after the action presumably took place.

In response to questions from Senator Wintrow, **Representative Blanksma** responded that the government could not discriminate against someone because of their religious beliefs that there could be no retribution.

TESTIMONY: **Eric Gironda** asked if this pertained to adoption agencies. **Representative Blanksma** stated there was no language in the bill that addressed adoption agencies, it was only about placement.

Amy Dundon, American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho testified in opposition. She stated the bill was harmful and unconstitutional. Bills that permitted discrimination in welfare and social services, including adoption agencies, were not about religious freedom. These bills should be understood as part of a broader, coordinated attack on the civil rights and liberties of LGBTQ+ people (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: A discussion ensued between **Senator Wintrow** and **Ms. Dundon** on the meaning of sections two and three on page three.

In response to Committee questions, **Ms. Dundon** explained there were concerns about exclusion of certain people from being considered for adopting or fostering. There were concerns about harms that might come to the child because of who they were.

- TESTIMONY:** **William Mitchell**, Legal Voice, testified in opposition to **H 578**. He felt the legislation unconstitutionally legalized discrimination based on race. The bill permitted an agency to refuse placement based on a sincerely held religious belief.
- In closing, **Representative Blanksma** stated that there were none of the intended motives that were expressed in questions and testimony in the bill. The bill was about retaliation by the government if they did not agree with a someone's religious affiliation. This was not talking about families discriminating based upon who they were willing to take into their home.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Taylor** inquired why the bill was only about religious beliefs. **Representative Blanksma** explained that the foster care placement rule was very vague and she was beginning with religious discrimination.
- MOTION:** **Senator Harris** moved to send **H 578** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** still sought to understand section three. **Senator Zuiderveld** felt this was opening the door to provide more homes and a better answer than Airbnbs. **Senator Lee** that agreed this was the first step and that more was needed.
- VOTE:** The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senators Wintrow** and **Taylor** voted nay.
- H 542** **Amends existing law to establish terms for a provisional license to practice medicine for graduates of medical schools located outside of the United States and Canada.** **Representative Wheeler** stated the legislation created a three year provisional license for an internationally trained physician, who had immigrated legally to the United States. The physician had to have completed medical school and medical residency in another country that was substantially similar or better to the United States medical training. The physician would work under a supervising Idaho physician. The physician would be eligible to complete the United States Medical Licensing Examination stage three and become fully licensed after the three years.
- DISCUSSION:** In response to questions from Senator Bjerke, **Representative Wheeler** confirmed the legislation was completed last session for refugees and this change was expanding the eligibility.
- MOTION:** **Senator Lee** moved to send **H 542** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.
- S 1393** **WASTE TIRES - Amends and adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding waste tire recycling.** **Roy Eiguren**, Liberty Tire Recycling, explained this was draft legislation. It was not ready for this session, but had decided to present it to the Committee to get feedback and he would bring the bill back next year for consideration. **Mr. Eiguren** explained the need to deal with the problem of abandoned waste tire piles around the State. There would be a request for a small fee for partial reimbursement towards the costs of transporting, processing, and recycling waste tires (Attachment 2).
- Craig Hunter** President and CEO, Tire Reclaim in Caldwell, Idaho stated there was a need to recycle tires. His business shredded tires and recycled the rubber. He explained that the track at Borah High School was made from the recycled rubber.
- DISCUSSION:** In response to Committee questions, **Mr. Hunter** explained that the steel was liberated and recycled. There was another company interested in the nylon referred to as fluff, which was a tire-derived fuel. He stated it would cost the company too much money to pick up and transport tire piles from across the State.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Lena Amoah
Secretary