

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, January 13, 2025

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

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair VanOrden, Vice Chairman Bjerke, Senators Harris, Zuiderveld, Lenney, Shippy, Blaylock, Keyser, and Wintrow

**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 2:59 p.m..

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment of Alex Adams of Eagle, Idaho, as the Director of Health and Welfare** term commencing June 5, 2024. **Mr. Adams** provided an overview of his background and vision for the Department of Health and Welfare (Department) which centered on increasing child welfare and decreasing regulations. **Mr. Adams** distributed handouts to the Committee (See Attachments 1, 2, and 3). He shared his motto "less is more," and his intention to sharply focus on a handful of matters, including foster care. **Mr. Adams** celebrated an increase in the proportion of foster homes to foster children over the past year.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lenney** voiced concerns about misappropriation of funds within the Department as evident by the Community Partner Grant ineligible expenses in 2022, 32 million duplicate payments in August 2023, and \$2.5 million misallocated to cover employee salaries. **Mr. Adams** replied budget is a law, not a suggestion and promised increased transparency through oversight at multiple levels. **Senator Wintrow** invited Mr. Adams to share his highlights of working at the Department and the decision to focus on child welfare. **Mr. Adams** responded that internal reports and legislation had shown foster care to be an important topic with room for improvement. He enjoyed listening to and working with foster parents and was pleased by the Department's progress. **Mr. Adams** shared that though child welfare was the focus, his work as Director meant supporting employees from all fields. **Senator Shippy** volunteered that he was a foster parent and thanked Mr. Adams for the great changes within the Department. **Senator Zuiderveld** inquired about the Department's plans for areas outside of foster care. **Mr. Adams** stated increasing cost effectiveness and encouraging employment to decrease individual dependence on the state were at the top of his list. There being no further questions, **Chair VanOrden** announced that the Gubernatorial Vote for Mr. Adams would be held during the following meeting.

**PRESENTATION:** **Lauren Smyser**, Deputy Chief of the Division of Financial Management, presented on the administrative rule making process (Attachment 4). She outlined the Constitutional authority of the Senate to review rules and the four main types of rules: proposed, pending, final, and temporary. **Vice Chair Bjerke** petitioned clarification on temporary rules. **Ms. Smyser** replied a temporary rule would remain in effect until the pending rule became official on either July 1, 2025, or a specified date. She shared tips on accessing and reading the rule books, and concluded by inviting the Senators to use Townhall Idaho, an online forum, to access all Idaho public meetings.

**DISCUSSION:** Per Chair VanOrden's question, **Ms. Smyser** relayed there will be someone from her department to assist during Committee meeting the following day. **Vice Chair Bjerke** thanked Ms. Smyser for the presentation.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m..

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Senator VanOrden  
Chair

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Rebecca Kozlowski  
Secretary