

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 11, 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.

**COMMENCED:** **Chair VanOrden** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Shippy** approved the Minutes of February 3, 2025. **Senator Bjerke** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1031 PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICTS - Amends existing law to revise certain powers and duties of district boards of health (District).** **Senator Lenney** stated this bill aimed to restore trust in public health districts by ensuring public health actions were based on science and law while protecting individual freedom. The bill added accountability to public health districts, preventing excessive government power and reaffirming citizens' rights and choices.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** was in favor of "necessary and reasonable" restrictions, but asked what particular state law the bill referenced to dictate District actions. **Senator Lenney** responded this bill placed guardrails on the Districts to not go beyond statute, thus ensuring all actions were justified by science, reason, and necessity. The reference to state law was intended to be general and he would be willing to amend that part in the 14th Order. **Senator Wintrow** inquired if the bill intended to eliminate all preventative health measures. **Senator Lenney** replied that COVID-era mandates demonstrated that Districts had overstepped their bounds in the name of preventative health. **Senator Wintrow** drew attention to 2023 legislation placing County Commissioner as overseer of Districts and wondered if that was sufficient oversight.

**Senator Blaylock** noted her contentment with the Southwest District Health's response to the pandemic. With the County Commissioners now having oversight, she thought this bill might cause more harm than good. **Senator Blaylock** did not agree with the current language and would vote no. **Senator Lenney** remarked that not all Districts acted well and wanted to protect citizens.

**Senator Shippy** noted that slight changes to the language, such as imminent versus immediate, could make the bill more palatable and supported amendment.

**Senator Harris** asked Senator Lenney to talk more about the bill's limits on preventative health actions since that included vaccines and septic systems. **Senator Lenney** wanted to ensure that District actions were rooted in science and reason. It was not his intention to mess with the septic systems.

**Senator Zuiderveld** defended the bill for providing accountability guidelines for

the Districts to ensure protection of civil liberties. She emphasized that closing churches and businesses should only occur if science deemed it necessary. **Senator Zuiderveld** disagreed that changes in the wording would have any substantive effect.

**Senator Bjerke** understood both sides of the issue and thought amending the bill provided most clarity. He asked what had happened to the bill during the 2024 session. **Senator Lenney** responded in 2024 the bill passed near unanimously in the House and died in a tied Senate Health and Welfare Committee vote.

**TESTIMONY:** **Miste Karlfeldt** Health Freedom Idaho, testified in favor of **S 1031** as it restricted District power to only those things necessary and reasonable. She noted a retired commissioner testified in favor of the bill as it increased the public's power.

**MOTION:** **Senator Zuiderveld** moved to send **S 1031** to print with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Keyser** seconded the motion.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** **Senator Harris** made a substitute motion to send **S 1031** to the 14th Order for amendment. **Senator Bjerke** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Zuiderveld** wished to be recorded as voting nay.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the Committee meeting at 3:36 p.m.

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Senator VanOrden  
Chair

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Rebecca Kozlowski  
Secretary