

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 24, 2025
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW54
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair VanOrden, Vice Chairman Bjerke, Senators Harris, Shippy, Blaylock, and Wintrow
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senators Lenney, Keyser, and Zuiderveld
- 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 to order the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) at 3:05 p.m.
- RS 32442** **Relating to the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact - Unanimous Consent Request for Referral to a Privileged Committee for Printing.** **Senator Ward-Engelking** discussed this legislation permitted Idaho's participation in the Interstate Compact of Respiratory Care. She would return for a full hearing to discuss the bill at length and respond to any questions.
- MOTION:** **Chair VanOrden** requested unanimous consent to send **RS 32442** to a privileged committee for printing.
- PRESENTATION:** **Idaho State Independent Living Council (SILC).** **Mel Leviton**, Executive Director, discussed SILC's work improving community access, housing, transportation, and healthcare for people with disabilities (Attachment 1). Their initiatives were based on a statewide needs assessment, which highlighted the gap in community-based services which permitted individuals with disabilities to participate in the community instead of residing in nursing homes. **Director Leviton** highlighted SILC's policy advocacy, particularly promoting financial independence through the proposed Idaho ABLE program.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** pointed to the words integration, inclusion, and equity from her presentation, and asked about SILC's work educating the public on accessibility. **Director Leviton** highlighted both small and large accessibility needs, from staff removing the podium during her presentation for wheelchair access to creating infrastructure for children to participate in school activities. **Director Leviton** emphasized that terms like integration, inclusion, and equity had long been central to disability advocacy and meant equal access to systems, opportunity, and content for everyone, regardless of ability.
- Senator Wintrow** asked how the Legislature should respond to the January 2025 Department of Justice report highlighting Idaho's segregation of adults with disabilities in nursing homes. **Director Leviton** acknowledged Idaho's progress, but expressed concerns about the Aged and Disabled Medicaid Waiver, remote certified family homes, and insufficient two-hour case management limits for residents transitioning out of nursing homes. She highlighted the critical shortage of accessible housing and direct support, which had led to more people under the age of 50 entering nursing homes. She raised concern about the high costs of nursing home care compared to in-home and community-based services, and emphasized the potential harm of block grants and Medicaid cuts on these services.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:34 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Rebecca Kozlowski
Secretary