

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 25, 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 3:01 p.m.

WELCOME: **Chair VanOrden** welcomed the Full Circle Health Family Medicine Residents to the meeting.

H 62 **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE - Amends existing law to provide for the exchange of certain information between the State Tax Commission and the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) for investigation of fraud.** **Jared Larsen**, Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Chief, DHW, explained the bill allowed DHW to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Tax Commission for the investigation of benefits fraud, particularly for programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANIF). This agreement removed reliance on subpoenas and complicated bank data which simplified the DHW process for conducting investigations. **Mr. Larsen** continued that the Tax Commission voiced no concerns about the bill and already had similar agreements with various other organizations.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** inquired about the costs and benefits of investigating fraud. **Mr. Larsen** stated such investigations maintained program integrity by enforcing limits. He noted that **H 62** lessened the impact on DHW as it no longer required piecing together bank statements.

Senator Harris asked if this created more work for the Tax Commission. **Mr. Larsen** assured that the Tax Commission did not express any concerns about costs in the initial conversations.

Senator Bjerke wondered if benefits fraud could result in eligible individuals not receiving assistance. **Mr. Larsen** agreed that was likely the case in many instances, though he did not have specific examples.

MOTION: **Senator Keyser** moved to send **H 62** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** noted the importance of transparency and accountability with taxpayer money. She thanked Mr. Larsen for bringing forward this bill.

VOICE VOTE: The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 202 **HEALTH AND WELFARE - Amends, repeals, and adds to existing law to remove provisions previously related to the Department of Health and Welfare that are now assigned to other state agencies.** **Mr. Larsen** stated this bill removed outdated language and administrative responsibilities governing DHW, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (IDJC) and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to reflect structural changes that occurred over two decades previously. It also transferred the authority for certain regulations, such as plumbing, HVAC, and public pool oversight, from DHW to the appropriate agencies, including local public health district boards.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** asked if this bill would be impacted by the passage of **S 1031** which limited the authority of public health district boards. **Mr. Larsen** explained there was an established path for health districts and did not believe this bill would be negatively impacted by **S 1031**.

MOTION: **Senator Lenney** moved to send **H 202** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Bjerke** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI).** **Beth Cunningham**, Administrator, provided an overview of ICBVI services including vocational rehabilitation, skills training, and education (Attachment 1). She discussed the College Preparedness Program that assisted young people transitioning to independent living and the Business Enterprise Program which provided job coordination and experience for those able to work in the community.

Steve Archibald, Independent Living Coordinator, noted ICBVI services were divided into two categories: those 54 years old and under, and those 55 years old and older. In all, they had served over 2,000 Idahoans through classes, assistive technology, and sight restoration services.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** asked about the source of ICBVI funding and potential consequences if federal grants halted. **Ms. Cunningham** responded that approximately 80% of the budget came federally from the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. The State assisted with funding corrective eye surgeries and provided an additional 20% of the budget, but if there were an interruption to federal grant money, ICBVI would be unable to provide services to thousands of Idahoans across the State.

Senator Bjerke asked if ICBVI had noticed an increase in services due to the changing population. **Ms. Cunningham** responded there had been an increase in services for those 55 years of age and older. The funds to care for older residents had not increased proportionate to the demand which presented a unique challenge for ICBVI moving forward.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:39 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Rebecca Kozlowski
Secretary