MINUTES
Approved by the Committee
Idaho Health Insurers Working Group
Tuesday, August 11, 2026
11:00 A.M.
Room WW55
Boise, Idaho

Members in attendance: Cochair Senator Harris and Senators Cook, Bjerke (via *Zoom*), and Keyser (via *Zoom*); Cochair Representative Manwaring and Representatives Wheeler, Rasor (via *Zoom*), and Galaviz; Legislative Services (LSO) staff: Frances Lippitt and Jennifer Kish.

Others in attendance (SIGN IN): Ric Boyce - Mental Health Specialists; Sean Weatherston - American Physical Therapy Assoc. of Idaho; Toni Lawson - Idaho Hospital Assoc.; Laura Scuri - Access Behavioral Health Services; Mark Baker and Linda Rosenwinkel - Ada County Paramedics.

Presentations and handouts provided by the presenters/speakers are posted to the Idaho Legislature's website https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2026/interim/ and copies of those items are on file at the Legislative Services Office in the State Capitol. Recordings of the meeting may be available under the committee's listing on the website.

Opening Remarks

Cochair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m., noting that a quorum of working group members was in attendance in-person and via *Zoom*; a silent roll call was taken. Cochair Manwaring read a prepared statement that spoke to the focus of the working group, the number of anticipated meetings, and prospective presentations or guest speakers. Cochair Harris added his comments.

Office of Group Insurance (OGI) Presentation

At 11:09 a.m., **Faith Knowlton**, Administrator for the Division of Insurance and Internal Support, provided a presentation from the Office of Group Insurance.

- Cochair Manwaring inquired as to why medical denials were not tracked and pharmacy denials were. Ms. Knowlton clarified that the division does track both medical and pharmacy denials but not at the level initially requested by the working group. She added that data would now be collected quarterly at the level requested by the working group for both claims and denials. Cochair Manwaring inquired as to whether the division had difficulty receiving the data requested from Regence. Ms. Knowlton responded that Regence was very cooperative in gathering any data requested.
- Cochair Harris asked about the severity of financial penalties on insurers. Ms. Knowlton noted that such information was actually confidential to the insurer per the contract, but she would ask for it to be disclosed to the members.
- Rep. Wheeler inquired whether any experience gained in the negotiations with Kootenai Health could be applied to the current contract dispute in southeastern Idaho. Ms. Knowlton responded that the difficulty with the current dispute was in negotiations with the private equity firm that purchased the hospital system who wanted a larger increase. Rep. Wheeler inquired about the monthly cost of having the 3,000 members currently operating as "out-of-network." Ms. Knowlton noted that the cost was shouldered by the members, so she could not provide that data. She added that there were other in-network providers in that area and that any emergency treatment would be considered in-network.
- Cochair Manwaring inquired whether either the hospital or Regence had asked OGI for assistance in the negotiations. Ms. Knowlton stated that OGI provided assistance through Regence but was

not directly involved in the negotiations. She encouraged the Legislature to assist, if possible. Rep. Galaviz asked how the Legislature could assist. Ms. Knowlton noted that there were 3,000 members in that area and that Idaho State University has a medical school there from which students are placed in this hospital system.

- Sen. Cook lamented that OGI did not have immediate access to the data requested and stated that the information should be accessible by the state for study purposes. He asked whether Regence was out of compliance with its contract for failing to provide a required amount of service. Ms. Knowlton explained that, according to the Department of Insurance (DOI) regulations, Regence was not out of compliance; however, attorneys were analyzing the contract to determine whether there were any other reasons it would be in violation of its contract. Sen. Cook inquired as to how continuity for members was being fulfilled at this time. Ms. Knowlton explained that OGI directed members to Regence to find other service options.
- Sen. Cook asked if OGI knew the reimbursement rate Regence paid to each hospital. Ms. Knowlton responded that she did not and did not believe that data would be disclosed. Sen. Cook surmised that there be some manner for others to verify whether an imbalance in rates existed without publicly disclosing the data. Ms. Knowlton stated that she would make the request for that data for the members.
- Rep. Wheeler inquired whether unpaid claims were the main issue of the dispute in southeastern Idaho. Ms. Knowlton stated that some claims were delayed due to lack of proper data, which is not unusual. Rep. Wheeler inquired whether the rate of unpaid claims complaints had increased since Regence took on the state contract. Ms. Knowlton responded that she was not aware of an increase. Cochair Manwaring inquired whether OGI received reports about complaints from members and about accounts in arrears. Ms. Knowlton responded that OGI did receive quarterly reports on complaints but not on late payment information. Rep Wheeler asked how providers' complaints were tracked. Ms. Knowlton responded that a request on that data could be made to Regence.
- Rep. Galaviz asked how OGI determines whether a rate increase is warranted. Ms. Knowlton explained that the plan is fully insured, however OGI carries a contractually required reserve equal to 10% of the annual premium to maintain lower premium costs. The OGI provides end-of-year data of its pay-out rates to an actuary who then provides a recommendation of the rate to be implemented; all employees pay the same rate.
- Cochair Harris asked about the minimum duration for payment. Ms. Knowlton responded that it typically would be paid within 30 days on a "clean claim" and others would vary depending on any missing data.
- Sen. Cook asked for clarification about the state's insurance model. Ms. Knowlton explained that Idaho identifies as a hybrid model; it is fully insured but operates as a self-insured model.
- Sen. Cook inquired whether OGI had data on the 22 performance guarantees the state required of Regence. Ms. Knowlton responded that OGI received that data quarterly. Sen. Cook noted that he was meeting with representatives from Regence that afternoon and that other members were welcome to join that meeting. Cochair Manwaring asked that Sen. Cook provide a summary of the meeting to members.
- Sen. Bjerke inquired how this recent contract issue was different than previous ones, such as with the Kootenai hospital system. Ms. Knowlton could not speak to that as the state was not directly involved in the negotiations. Sen. Bjerke asked whether any Regence member in attendance could speak to the issue. Ms. **Adrean Cavener**, Government Relations Director for Regence/Blue Shield of Idaho, explained that there were differences between the two disputes, specifically that Regence/Blue Shield of Idaho was negotiating with a third-party, out-of-state entity and that the requested rate increase was severe.

- Rep. Wheeler proposed that the representatives from the Idaho Department of Insurance be invited to speak to the working group. Cochair Manwaring agreed and proposed that a list of questions be provided to the department prior to the next meeting.

Discussion of Prepared Questions and Timeline

At 11:57 a.m., Cochair Manwaring directed the group to the lists of questions provided to members prior to the meeting. He noted that the lists had overlapping and duplicative questions and asked members to help pare down the questions and identify who should receive which questions.

- Rep. Galaviz asked how the committee can best obtain the data and information requested. Cochair Manwaring advised the members to create very specific and focused questions and expected to have the opportunity to make additional requests for information after the initial round was obtained.
- Rep. Wheeler emphasized the need to ask insurers what has prevented them from implementing measures that they have advocated for and whether the Legislature was an impediment to the measures being adopted.
- Sen. Cook asked to include a question on how the state of Idaho/Legislature could assist in the reduction of health care costs.
- Cochair Manwaring discussed the timeline to have the questionnaires distributed (August 21) with time to summarize the responses, and scheduled the next meeting for September 15. He expressed a desire to allow public comment during upcoming meetings or an opportunity for written comments to be received. A discussion occurred as to whether the public should have questions of a certain focus or be open to any response; members encouraged the responses to be directed at the working group's charge. A two-week period was also assigned to the collection of public comments. Cochair Manwaring commented that the cochairs could vet those responses and invite individuals to speak to the members directly, if certain cases warranted.
- Sen. Cook inquired whether the Portneuf Medical Center would be asked to speak to the members. Cochair Manwaring stated that the center would be contacted to respond to the questionnaire and, if necessary, the center could be invited to speak.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.