

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 17, 2026

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

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair VanOrden, Vice Chair 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 3:08 p.m.

**S 1292 LICENSING - Amends existing law to provide for additional training requirements for foster parents.** **Senator Shippy** explained this legislation was to follow up 2025 S 1034 which moved foster care licensing administrative rules into statute. Former Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) Director Alex Adams reduced training requirements for licensure and instead used IDHW discretion to determine if training was required. This legislation set a statutory requirement for 10 hours of foster parent training unless exempted by IDHW. Allowable exemptions included family placements or foster parents who were licensed in another state with similar requirements to Idaho licensing standards. The bill outlined training concepts required but the amount of time spent on each topic was left up to IDHW. The intent was to create consistent minimum expectations while reducing barriers to entry. He stated this legislation aimed to effectively equip foster parents and protect foster children.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Bjerke** asked what was considered when licensing a foster parent. He clarified that 10 hours of training was not the only requirement for licensure. **Senator Shippy** stated this legislation only addressed the training requirements. IDHW also conducted a home study, interviewed individuals, and ran a background check before licensing prospective foster parents.

**Chair VanOrden** asked if this legislation took administrative rule and put it into statute or if these requirements were new standards set forth by IDHW. **Senator Shippy** explained the training standards are currently being utilized, however the training was not currently required to obtain a foster parent license. The training was currently recommended and this legislation would set basic expectations to ensure foster parents were prepared to receive a foster child.

**Monty Prow**, Deputy Director IDHW, stated former IDHW Director Adams set a goal to double the ratio of foster parents to children who required support. Today there were 104 foster families for every 100 children in need, a 42 percent increase in 18 months. IDHW believed training would increase retention of foster families and the quality of care provided to children. He stated training was always required prior to placement of a child with complex needs. IDHW offered a suite of trainings to foster families and this legislation codified what was learned from experience, that training supported retention of foster families and kept children safe.

**Senator Wintrow** stated she supported this bill and thought it would help parents as well as foster children.

In closing, **Senator Shippy** stated this legislation was important because caring for a foster child was vastly different from raising a biological child. He explained this legislation aimed to prepare foster parents while decreasing administrative burden.

**MOTION:** **Senator Blaylock** moved to send **S 1292** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Keyser** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1293** **PUBLIC BENEFITS - Amends existing law to provide that verification of lawful presence is not required to apply for or receive crime victims compensation.** **Senator Wintrow** stated this legislation aimed to remedy an unintentional problem caused by 2025 H 135 in which crime victims compensation (CVC) was included in the definition of public health benefits. This caused confusion and created a backlog in crime victims compensation and claims. This legislation exempted crime victims compensation from the definition of a public health benefit. She explained the eligibility requirements for CVC included: the crime occurred in Idaho, it was reported to law enforcement within 72 hours of the occurrence with some exceptions related to extreme circumstances, the victim cooperated with law enforcement, could not have any involvement in the crime, and could not anonymously report. The majority of cases reported to CVC were child and adult sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, child physical abuse, and child neglect. **Senator Wintrow** stated these were very traumatic crimes. She asserted the importance of this program and the need to exclude CVC from the definition of a public benefit to ensure victims continued to report crimes and received support.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lenney** clarified the confusion and backlog was created because CVC could not verify applicants' legal citizenship status and asked if before 2025 H 135 anyone who applied received CVC. **Senator Wintrow** explained the individual must meet the criteria she outlined in her presentation. She stated the backlog was caused by the red tape created when CVC was interpreted as a public benefit, which required verification of citizenship on the front end of applications and created processing delays. **Senator Lenney** clarified this legislation would simply reinstate the process used prior to the passage of 2025 H 135. **Senator Wintrow** stated he was correct.

**Senator Blaylock** asked how many victims were denied due to the confusion caused by interpreting CVC as a public benefit. **Senator Wintrow** did not believe any one was denied rather, it caused a backlog of claims. She added it was brought to her attention that a hospital may have billed a sexual assault victim for a forensic exam for the collection of criminal evidence. **Senator Blaylock** asked if any victims compensation had been distributed since 2025 H 135 was enacted. **Senator Wintrow** stated claims were processed but had been significantly delayed.

In closing, **Senator Wintrow** stated this legislation was a simple fix and she had consulted the Attorney General. She requested support for **S 1293** in order to make the process easier for crime victims moving forward.

**MOTION:** **Senator Harris** moved to send **S 1293** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chair Bjerke** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

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

---

Senator VanOrden  
Chair

---

Madysen Crea  
Secretary