

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 2026

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Woodward, Nichols, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

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: **Chairman Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) at to order 3:01 p.m.

H 531 **Epinephrine Delivery Systems - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the use of epinephrine in schools. Senator Blaylock** stated it would update and modernize the statutory language methods of giving epinephrine during an allergic reaction in schools. The bill changed the terminology in Idaho Code.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Carlson** asked if the bill had anything to do with professionals keeping epinephrine on hand. **Senator Blaylock** responded no, just the method of delivery.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to send **H 531** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

AT EASE: The Committee went at ease.

TESTIMONY: **Alicia Jordan**, School Nurse, **Alexis Morgan**, Idaho Parent-Teacher Association, and **Brittany Shipley**, Idaho parent, all testified in support of the bill. They reasoned the bill would reduce the risk of giving epinephrine via injection and allow children to receive quick medical attention in an event of a reaction.

S 1288 **Education - Adds to existing law to provide for the establishment of the Idaho High-Needs Student Fund. Senator Blaylock** presented the bill which would create a fund for educating Idaho students who needed additional specialized education and whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) costs exceeded \$30,000 annually. The fund was structured as a reimbursement program and would go through the State Department of Education.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Woodward** asked about the reimbursement program and if a portion was not used by rural schools whether it would be transferred to urban schools. **Senator Blaylock** answered yes and from her understanding it could work in the opposite direction. **Senator Carlson** asked if there could be clarification since it was not stated in the bill. **Senator Blaylock** asked for Superintendent Debbie Critchfield to come up and answer the question. **Superintendent Critchfield** answered the intent was to allow for the fund to work both ways so all available dollars could be used. **Senator Carlson, Senator Blaylock,** and **Superintendent Critchfield** discussed the issue at length.

Senator Carlson asked about the \$80,000 reimbursement the school district could receive. **Senator Blaylock** answered that the school district must contribute

\$30,000 of its own monies to be eligible for the reimbursement, anything paid after the \$30,000 and up to \$80,000 could be reimbursed to the school district. **Senator Nichols** asked what was expanded and different from the 2025 version. **Senator Blaylock** responded the bill previous went up to \$15,000 annually, so it was changed to \$30,000. She continued that the bill would utilize \$3 million from the General Fund and the new version would take \$5 million out of the Department of Education budget. **Senator Nichols** asked what services were changed. **Senator Blaylock** answered she would get back to the Committee.

TESTIMONY: **Quinn Perry**, Deputy Director at Idaho School Boards Association, **Wendy Landon**, Director of Bonneville School District, **Robert Bradley**, Idaho Education Association, **Paula Mason**, Interim Administrator at the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind, **Melissa Vien**, Education Director of Idaho Parents Unlimited, and **Angela Lindig**, Executive Director of Idaho Parents Unlimited, testified in support of the bill. They testified that the bill supported teachers in educating students and closed the special education gap while allowing students to stay in their home districts.

Senator Zito asked Ms. Mason if the braille books were written in the prisons. **Ms. Mason** answered that there was a partnership if there was a large quantity of books needed but they first check with other states and libraries. **Senator Zito** asked if the costs were the same sending them to the prisons versus other vendors. **Ms. Mason** responded that the cost was much higher going through additional vendors. **Senator Zito** asked if the prisons were able to provide the service, why was it not the first choice. **Ms. Mason** responded that they start in house and then look at other states who might have the book.

MOTION: **Senator Cook** moved to send **S 1288** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSIONS: **Senator Carlson** asked about the special education shortfall. **Superintendent Critchfield** answered that funding came from school district operation funds and the long term goal was to adjust the funding formula. She continued that there was a gap of \$100 million.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **S 1288** to the floor with do pass recommendation passed by **voice vote**.

H 624 **Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding virtual public education in Idaho.** **Representative Douglas Pickett** and **Representative Soñia Galaviz** presented the bill which allowed Idaho Home Learning Academy (IHLA) to be included in state standards. **Representative Galaviz** walked the Committee through the bill and highlighted what each section accomplished. She closed by saying the bill was a collaboration between stakeholders and that virtual education was a choice that Idaho families wanted. **Representative Pickett** concluded by remarking that it was innovation in education and gave more opportunities to students.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Burtenshaw** asked about the Idaho residency requirement and if there were geographical boundaries for school districts. **Representative Galaviz** answered that virtual schools had different boundaries than traditional school districts, so their boundaries could be statewide and it was possible a virtual education student could be outside of the boundaries of their home district.

TESTIMONY: **Nicole Trakel**, IHLA parent, **Terri Sorenson**, Executive Director of IHLA, **Jen Bayer**, Superintendent for Boundary County School District, **Scott Woolstenhulme**, Superintendent of Bonneville School District, testified in support. They testified that the bill was the next step for IHLA and providing alternative methods of education to Idaho students. **Senator Semmelroth** asked how education service providers worked with their district. **Mr. Woolstenhulme** answered that education service providers gave the district content standards and learning management systems so teachers could monitor student progress.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **H 624** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion to send **H 624** to the floor with a do pass recommendation passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Thank you to our Page, Deacon Davis.** **Chairman Lent** gave a summary of Mr. Davis' time in the Committee and gave him a gift from the members.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:23 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary