

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 24, 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) to order at 3:06 p.m.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Cook** asked for unanimous consent to send **RS 33510** and **RS 33484** to the Senate State Affairs Committee for printing. There were no objections.

S 1290 **Education - Adds to existing law to establish a public school social pass program.** **Senator Kohl** presented the bill which would enable homeschool students to purchase a pass allowing them to attend local school district events. **Senator Kohl** gathered input from numerous stakeholders to draft the legislation and closed that the bill would integrate homeschool and traditional school communities.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** shared her concerns about the bill regarding the fee. **Senator Kohl** responded that the fee was determined with administrative processing in mind.

Chairman Lent, Senator Ward-Engelking, and Senator Burtenshaw asked about the disciplinary process and who had liability in the event a pass-holder broke the code of conduct. **Senator Kohl** answered that districts would have the right to revoke passes if rules were broken and added that whoever was at fault under law would be liable.

Chairman Lent asked whether social activities like field trips would be included. **Senator Kohl** answered that the intention was for one-time events but that it would depend on the specific activity.

Senator Carlson, Senator Woodward, and Senator Zito asked about the proposed amendments. **Senator Woodward** noted that there were contradictions between the bill text and the amendments. **Senator Kohl** answered that the amendments would give school districts the ability to make their own policy with the social pass program and smoothed out the bill language. **Senator Woodward** asked if Senator Kohl would reprint the bill. **Senator Kohl** responded he would be okay with sending the bill to the amending order but not reprinting.

TESTIMONY: **Audra Talley**, Homeschool Idaho, testified against **S 1290**. She stated this issue should be addressed at the local level. **Senator Nichols** asked about students who already participated in local school events, how it was facilitated, and whether there was a fee. **Ms. Talley** answered that activities were facilitated by the school and that it varied. **Ms. Talley** noted if there was a fee, it also varied by school district.

Trisha Gronenthal, homeschool parent, **Jennifer Malone**, homeschool parent, and **Will Malone**, homeschool parent, testified in support of the bill. They testified the bill would allow children to take part in the social aspect of school while being educated by what worked best for the student.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Cook** asked if the testifiers had contacted their local schools to see if their children could attend events there. **Ms. Gronenthal** answered she had not because her child had not yet shown an interest. **Ms. Malone** responded that she had but the school district said the student must be invited as a guest or dual enroll at the school.

TESTIMONY: **Quinn Perry**, Idaho School Boards Association, testified in support of the bill because it would give students an opportunity to experience the social setting in school.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Nichols** asked Ms. Perry to address the concerns the Committee raised. **Ms. Perry** responded the pass was for social events, not extra curricular activities, however, liability was a broader conversation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about the unfunded mandate for schools. **Ms. Perry** answered that it was an important conversation and that policymakers could return to the subject of the fee. **Senator Woodward** asked about the legal perspective on liability. **Ms. Perry** answered that she was not a lawyer so she could not provide a legal answer but would find one. **Senator Woodward** asked if there could be an amendment to add background checks on students getting passes. **Ms. Perry** responded that there could be a recommendation that school districts go through a similar process as having guests for school events.

MOTION: **Senator Zito** moved to send **S 1290** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: **Senator Burtenshaw** moved that **S 1290** be held in Committee subject to the call of the Chair. **Vice Chairman Cook** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Carlson** and **Senator Zito** requested to be recorded as voting nay.

H 608 **Education - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the Public School Facilities Cooperative Funding Program. Representative Rod Furniss** presented it was a clarification bill to 2025 H 338. The bill fulfilled the Idaho Constitutional requirement to provide safe facilities for schools. **Representative Douglas Pickett** walked the Committee through the bill text.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **H 608** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

H 635 **Education - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding investigations conducted by the Idaho Professional Standards Commission. Representative Heather Scott** presented this bill which would require the Professional Standards Commission (Commission) to report when an investigation revealed criminal behavior. The bill clarified that the Commission must report to law enforcement in the event of a crime.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Semmelroth** asked if the bill was in response to a specific incident. **Representative Scott** responded the bill was to clarify Idaho Code.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **H 635** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

H 636 **Education – Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the School District Facilities Fund.** **Representative Soñia Galaviz** said the bill allowed for schools to pay for the leasing of school buildings after their bonds and levies were paid off.

TESTIMONY: **Derek Bubb**, Superintendent of the West Ada School District, testified in support of the bill, stating it would give districts an incentive to reduce debt and address facility needs.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to send **H 636** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:24 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary