

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, March 02, 2026

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

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair VanOrden, Senators Harris, Bjerke (Bjerke), 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 3:05 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Zuiderveld** moved to approve the Minutes of February 09, 2026. **Senator Shippy** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**H 591** **INDIGENT ELIGIBILITY - Repeals existing law related to financial assistance eligibility.** **Senator Harris** explained this bill was straightforward housekeeping legislation that would remove an obsolete provision from Idaho Code. He stated § 31-3502 Idaho Code established criteria for the county medical indigent program. The entire program was repealed in 2022 through H 735. The code **H 591** would repeal was intentionally left in place to handle the program's final administrative tasks and that process was complete. He stated the emergency clause provided an effective date of July 1st, 2026, and ensured proper timing for the repeal. There was no fiscal impact, this bill simply removed code that no longer served a purpose.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** asked why the indigent fund was repealed. **Senator Harris** explained the fund was made unnecessary when Medicaid expansion was created.

**TESTIMONY:** **Toni Lawson**, Idaho Hospital Association, testified in support of the bill. She explained the rationale for removing these services was that the majority of patients who received assistance through the indigent programs would qualify for Medicaid under expansion. The county indigent programs and the state catastrophic fund would no longer be responsible for these individuals. Since 2021, uncompensated care for state programs had risen by over 16 percent. Un-reimbursed care due to bad debt, had increased by 61 percent and the amount hospitals provided in charity care had more than tripled. She stated hospitals supported Medicaid expansion knowing some of the burden for this population would fall to them, but it was more important to expand access to coverage for thousands of Idahoans. This bill clearly acknowledged the current situation. In discussions around Medicaid expansion, it was important to note the previous safety net no longer existed.

**MOTION:** **Senator Shippy** moved to send **H 591** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

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Senator VanOrden  
Chair

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Madyson Crea  
Secretary