

MINUTES
JOINT FINANCE-APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 04, 2026

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room C310

MEMBERS PRESENT: Senators Co-chairman Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke (Bjerke), Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Co-chairman Tanner (14), Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

CONVENED: **Co-Chairman Grow** called the meeting of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (Committee) to order at **8:00 a.m.** with a quorum present.

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **FY 2027 Endowment Fund Investment Board, LBB 4-029 Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, Legislative Services Office (LSO)**
Ms. Jessup presented the budget before the Committee. The Endowment Fund Investment Board is responsible for managing the investments of the Land Grant Endowment funds, the State Insurance Fund, and other moneys as required by law. She stated the only enhancement requested by the board was \$3,700 for OITS hardware improvements, including one high-end laptop computer.

MOTION: Moved by **Senator Cook**, beginning with fiscal year 2027, JFAC program maintenance budget, I move for fiscal year 2027 for the Endowment Fund Investment Board, an additional \$3,700 from dedicated funds; seconded by **Representative Miller**.

CARRIED: **Ayes: 17**
Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Galloway, Ward-Engelking
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green
Nays: 1
Senator Zuiderveld
Ab/Ex: 2
Senator Wintrow
Representative Manwaring

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**.

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

**FY 2026 Supplemental: Department of Lands Restoration of Fire Moneys
- Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, LSO**

Ms. Jessup presented a FY 2026 supplemental budget for the Department of Lands before the Committee. She stated the Department of Land includes six budgeted programs which span from business services to forest management, trust land management, fire protection, and minerals and scaling practices. She stated the supplemental was listed as item 3 on the agenda, but would be taken up prior to item 2 on the agenda.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT:**

Requested by **Senator Cook**, and granted by unanimous consent, the order of the agenda was changed to move item 3 to item 2.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Jessup stated the supplemental would add back \$125,000 to FY 2026 to the Forest and Range Fire Protection program within the Department of Lands. She stated reductions that were taken for FY 2026 included a reduction of \$357,400 to the Forest and Range Fire Protection program. This action would add back \$125,000 of that onetime for fiscal years 2026.

MOTION:

Moved by **Representative Miller**, for the Department of Lands for fiscal year 2026, the addition of \$125,000 onetime from the General Fund for the Forest and Range Fire Protection program for fire preparedness; seconded by **Senator Bjerke**.

DISCUSSION:

Representative Petzke spoke against the motion. He stated that in previous years the Legislature had given the Department of Lands \$1.25 million for firefighter bonuses, but after reviewing the spending, he felt frustrated. He said only about a quarter of the awards went to temporary firefighters, while much of the money instead went to higher-paid office staff, including bureau chiefs and administrative roles. He questioned why additional funding should be allocated for firefighters if the department had already redirected those funds away from them.

FAILED:

Ayes: 7

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Ward-Engelking
Representatives Miller, Manwaring

Nays: 12

Senators Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway

Representatives Tanner, Furniss, Petzke, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green

Ab/Ex: 1

Senator Wintrow

Chairman Grow stated having failed to achieve a majority vote in the House, the motion failed.

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

**FY 2026 Supplemental: Department of Lands Navigable Waterways
Fund Shift OT, LBB 4-038 – Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, LSO**

Ms. Jessup presented the FY 2026 supplemental for the Department of Lands Navigable Waterways fund shift before the Committee. She explained that the Department of Lands' FY 2026 supplemental request reduced 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 from the Abandoned Mines Lands Fund and shifted the same amount to the Navigable Water Waste Fund. She said both were dedicated funds and that the change was meant to align spending with statutory requirements. She added that the request stemmed from legislation passed the previous year requiring most reclamation funds to be used for direct mine site engineering, so the personnel and funding were moved to ensure they could be paid from the appropriate source.

MOTION:

Moved by **Senator Hart**, for the Department of Lands for fiscal year 2026, a reduction of 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 from the Department of Lands fund, an additional 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 onetime from the Navigable Water Ways Fund; seconded by **Representative Miller**.

CARRIED:

Ayes: 19

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Green

Nays: 1

Harris

Ab/Ex: 0

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion is passed and without objection we'll carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**.

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

FY 2027 Department of Lands, LBB 4-035 - Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, LSO

Ms. Jessup presented the FY 2027 appropriation enhancements for the Department of Lands. The first enhancement was \$225,000 from dedicated funds to replace and upgrade radio communication equipment. She noted that Enhancement #2 appeared as zeros across the board, but it included a reduction of 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 from the Abandoned Mines Land Fund, along with a corresponding increase to the Navigable Waterways Fund. She stated that the change aligned expenditures with statutorily allowed uses and was similar to a supplemental action previously taken by the committee. Enhancement #3 requested \$195,000 from dedicated funds to construct a vehicle storage facility near Priest Lake for equipment storage. Enhancement #4 requested \$24,200 from dedicated funds to purchase a three-passenger utility vehicle for use by timber program staff in the MICA supervisory area. Enhancement #5 was a net-zero shift in appropriations to align personnel costs for legal counsel with anticipated fund sources. This change included a reduction of 1.00 FTP and \$147,200 from the Endowment Earnings Administrative Fund and an increase of the same amount to the Navigable Waterways Fund. Enhancement #6 was requested by the agency but was not recommended by the Governor, as it sought CEC and inflation adjustments for timber protective associations. The agency also requested \$930,800 in replacement items, and the Office

of Information Technology Services recommended an additional \$756,700 in replacement items.

DISCUSSION: **Representative Petzke** he wanted to apologize to the committee in advance as his motion was on the fly. He stated he received information about firefighter bonuses the prior night and didn't have a chance to talk to the work group, but he would make a change to the motion in the packet.

MOTION: Moved by **Representative Petzke**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC program maintenance budget, add \$225,000 onetime for fire radio equipment. Reduce 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 from the abandoned mines fund. And add 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 to the Navigable Waterways Fund to shift personnel costs. Add \$195,000 onetime for vehicle storage. Add \$24,200 onetime to purchase a UTV. Add 1.00 FTP, and \$147,200 to the navigable waterways fund. And reduce 1.00 FTP and \$147,200 from the Endowment Earning Administrative Fund to funds for legal counsel with anticipated workload; add \$145,000 onetime to support the Idaho Geological Survey; add \$930,800 onetime for replacement items at \$756,700 for OITS hardware. In total, for FY 2027 for the Department of Lands an additional \$2,276,000 from dedicated funds, for a total of \$2,276,700; seconded by **Representative Harris**.

DISCUSSION: In response to a question from **Chairman Grow**, **Representative Petzke** stated he intentionally was not adding the General Fund portion at \$145,000 from the General Fund for fire preparedness. **Chairman Grow** asked the motion maker to speak to the motion and highlight the differences from what was in the motion provided in the packet.

Representative Petzke stated the difference is his motion is not including the restoration of the two percent cuts for fire staff. He said his motion was from his frustrations with how bonuses were paid out last year that went to office staff instead of the intended firefighters.

Senator Woodward acknowledged concerns about how last year's bonus money was spent but said he wanted clarification. He asked whether the intent of the rescission and the FY 2026 supplemental was to ensure firefighting staff were hired and prepared for the upcoming fire season, and whether the Idaho Department of Lands would still be able to do so without the additional funding.

Representative Petzke stated there was clearly some flexibility within the agency on how its using their funds and it didn't make sense to add additional General Funds at this time for this purpose.

Representative Manwaring stated he understood the funding was intended to support seasonal firefighting and suggested adding language to ensure it was used for that purpose. He stated he would not support the current motion and would wait for another proposal, but emphasized that the intent was for the funds to go toward seasonal firefighting and to restore the Governor's original request.

Director Dustin Miller, Department of Lands stood to address the Committee. He explained that the funding supported the Eastern Idaho Forest Protective District, which had been established a few years earlier with legislative support to better protect forest resources and endowment lands in eastern Idaho. He said the district was created after changes to the master fire agreement with federal agencies, which required the state to take on more responsibility for protecting its own lands. General funds were used to establish the district, hire firefighters, and pay seasonal firefighters when they were not assigned to active fires. He also noted that the governor had authorized fire bonuses for Idaho Department of Lands employees involved in firefighting to remain competitive with federal agencies. He explained that the department relied not only on primary and seasonal firefighters but also on foresters, administrative staff, and other qualified employees who supported firefighting efforts. Most bonuses went to primary fire staff, but others were included to encourage continued participation in the program.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Moved by **Senator Cook**, beginning with fiscal year 2027, the JFAC program maintenance budget add \$225,000, onetime for fire radio equipment, reduce 1.25 FTP and \$160,000 from the abandoned mines fund and add \$1.25 FTP and \$160,000 to the navigable waterways fund to shift personnel costs. Add \$195,000 onetime for vehicle storage, add \$24,200 onetime to purchase a UTV, add 1.00 FTPs and \$147,200 to the Navigable Water Ways Fund, and reduce 1.00 FTP and \$147,200 from the Endowment Earnings Administrative Fund to align funds for legal counsel and anticipated workload. At \$140,500 from the general fund to partially restore the base reduction for the fire preparedness in eastern Idaho. At \$145,000 onetime to support the Idaho Geological Survey, add \$930,800 onetime for replacement items, and \$756,700 for OITS har

FAILED (SUBSTITUTE MOTION):

Ayes: 10

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Furniss, Manwaring, Green

Nays: 8

Senators Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld
Representatives Miller, Petzke, Mitchell, Bruce, Harris

Ab/Ex: 2

Senator Galloway
Representative Price

Chairman Grow stated having failed to achieve a majority vote in the House, the motion fails and the Committee will go to the original motion. In total, for fiscal year 2027 for the Department of Lands and an additional \$140,500 from the General Fund and \$2,276,700 from dedicated funds for a total of \$2,417,200; seconded by **Senator Ward-Engelking**.

**CARRIED
(ORIGINAL
MOTION):**

Ayes: 14

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld
Representative Tanner, Furniss, Petzke, Mitchell, Bruce, Harris, Green

Nays: 4

Senators Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Miller, Manwaring

Ab/Ex: 2

Senator Galloway
Representative Price

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

FY 2026 Supplemental: Department of Parks & Recreation, LBB 4-048 - Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, LSO

Ms. Jessup presented the Department of Parks & Recreation FY 2026 supplemental budget before the Committee. The supplemental request allow the agency to transfer funds between programs beyond the usual 10% cap. She said this was necessary because the Committee had eliminated the management program the previous year, leaving no place to allocate carried-over grant funds, so the change would allow those funds to be moved into park operations and properly accounted for.

DISCUSSION:

In response to a question from **Representative Harris**, **Ms. Jessup** stated executive carry forward is allowed when there is a commitment for the funds made and they just don't make it out the door in time. She stated that in this case, the grants funds were provided and were appropriated for in FY 2025 and just did not get out the doors until after July 1st. **Chairman Grow** stated it was just a timing issue.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Senator Zuiderveld** and granted by unanimous consent, the following language was adopted:

LANGUAGE

EXEMPTIONS FROM PROGRAM TRANSFER LIMITATIONS.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 67- 3511(2), Idaho Code, trustee and benefit payments appropriated to the Department of Parks and Recreation allowing transfers between programs for the period July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Legislative appropriations shall not be transferred from one fund to another fund unless expressly approved by the Legislature.

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

FY 2027 Department of Parks & Recreation, LBB 4-045- Janet Jessup, Principal Analyst, LSO

Ms. Jessup outlined the Department of Parks and Recreation's FY 2027 enhancement requests before the Committee, noting that all were funded through dedicated or federal funds, not the General Fund. She described requests for additional personnel, including converting part-time roles to full-time and adding staff for new and existing parks, as well as seasonal workers and equipment for trail maintenance. She also detailed multiple capital and grant-related requests, including funding for park improvements, staff housing, interpretive displays, a new park entrance, RV campsite expansion, and pass-through federal grants to local communities. She added that the agency also requested funding for replacement items, including computer equipment.

MOTION:

Moved by **Representative Manwaring**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add 0.95 FTP and \$48,900 to convert two part-time positions to full-time administrative support positions; 2.00 FTP and \$359,000 for positions at a new park near Salmon and operating expenditures; \$180,000 for trail maintenance staff and equipment; \$120,000 for a new excavator; \$1,877,500 onetime for a land and water community grant; \$1,113,500 onetime for staff housing at Lake Cascade State Park; \$750,000 onetime for interpretive displays at Billingsley Creek Campground; \$1,500,000 onetime for construction at Farragut State Park; \$9,500,000 onetime for RV campsites statewide; \$2,581,000 for replacement items; and \$100,000 for OITS replacement items. In total, for FY 2027, for the Department of Parks and Recreation, an additional \$13,913,900 from dedicated funds and \$4,216,000 from federal funds for a total of \$18,129,900, and an additional 2.95 full-time equivalent positions ; seconded by **Senator Cook**.

DISCUSSION:

Representative Manwaring spoke in favor of the motion. He stated the amounts were from dedicated funds and federal funds. In addition, he stated the Department of Parks and Recreation had received significant funding in recent years and said he was impressed with how effectively they had managed and spent those funds. He added that their performance gave him confidence in their ability to responsibly implement and use the additional dedicated and federal funding.

In response to a Committee question, **Department of Parks & Recreation Director Susan Buxton** stood to address the Committee. She provided further detail on the Land and Water Conservation Community Fund Grant, Coast Guard funds for boating programs, as well as grant funds for replacement items.

CARRIED:

Ayes: 17

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow

Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Bruce, Harris, Green

Nays: 2

Senator Zuiderveld

Representative Price

Ab/Ex: 1

Senator Galloway

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

AT EASE: The Committee went at ease at **8:49 a.m.** and was back in order at **9:00 a.m.**

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **FY 2027 Department of Health and Welfare (DHW)- Public Health Services, LBB 2-059 – Morgan Poloni, Senior Analyst, LSO**

Ms. Poloni presented the FY 2027 DHW Public Health Services budget before the Committee. She stated the Division of Public Health Services' FY 2027 budget included about \$105.7 million and 214.22 FTP across four programs. She said the division requested seven enhancements, all recommended by the Governor. These included restoring funding for the Idaho Home Visiting Program and the Immunization Assessment Fund, adding federal funding for disaster planning and training, shifting toward more fee-for-service laboratory testing, and continuing several multi-year ARPA grants. She also noted additional funding requests for HIV and hepatitis prevention and surveillance efforts to expand testing and reduce the spread of disease.

MOTION: Moved by **Representative Bruce**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add \$4,237,200 onetime for the Idaho Home Visiting Program; \$28,020,000 onetime for the restoration of the Immunization Assessment Fund; \$200,000 for Fee for Service Laboratory Testing; \$6,633,700 onetime for ARPA Funded Multi-Year Grants; \$478,700 onetime for HIV Prevention and Surveillance; \$299,600 onetime for Hepatitis Prevention and Surveillance; \$19,000 onetime from the General Fund to restore funding to the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Program; and reduce 3.00 full time equivalent positions and \$4,242,800 to move the Idaho Home Visiting Program to the Division of Early Learning and Development. In total, for FY 2027, for the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health Services, \$19,000 from the General Fund, an additional \$28,298,400 from dedicated funds, and \$7,328,000 from federal funds for a total of \$35,645,400, and a reduction of 3.00 full time equivalent positions; seconded by **Senator Bjerke**.

Representative Bruce spoke in favor of the motion.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Moved by **Senator Cook**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add \$4,237,200 onetime for the Idaho Home Visiting Program; \$28,020,000 for the restoration of the Immunization Assessment Fund; \$822,100 onetime for Disaster Planning and Training; \$200,000 for Fee for Service Laboratory Testing; \$6,633,700 onetime for ARPA Funded Multi-Year Grants: \$478.700 onetime for HIV Prevention and Surveillance; \$299,600 onetime for Hepatitis Prevention and Surveillance, \$500,000 to restore the Idaho Home Visiting Program and reduce 3.00 full-time equivalent positions and \$4,242,800 to move the Idaho Home Visiting Program to the Division of Early Learning and Development. In total, for FY 2027, for the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health Services, \$28,298,400 from dedicated funds, and \$8,150,100 from federal funds for a total of \$36,448,500, and a reduction of 3.00 full time equivalent positions.; seconded by **Representative Furniss**.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Cook spoke in favor of the substitute motion. changes, such as funding for suicide prevention and allocating \$500,000 for a home visiting program. He expressed concern about growing state budgets and pressures on systems like Medicaid, prisons, and courts. He argued that investing in early, home-based support for families and children could help address these issues long-term, noting that while much of the program was covered by Medicaid, some was not, which justified the reduced \$500,000 funding level.

Representative Bruce stated he understood the argument for funding the home visiting program but clarified that it was already receiving about \$4.2 million in funding. He noted that the previous statement made it seem like the program wasn't being funded, and he wanted to emphasize that it was still fully funded and not being eliminated.

Senator Zuiderveld stated she would support the original motion.

Senator Wintrow stated the program had multiple funding sources, but without the General Fund portion, fewer families could be served. She said that cutting \$1 million would result in about 200 families losing services statewide. She emphasized that while some funding would remain, the reduction would increase need and waiting lists, and she argued the program was a worthwhile investment to support vulnerable families.

In response to a question from **Chairman Grow**, **Ms. Poloni** stated the original \$1,000,000 amount was taken out as part of the 3% reduction by the Governor. The substitute motion would be a budget restoration of half of that.

Co-Chair Tanner stated he had looked into the issue and met with the DHW Director to review it. He explained that the funding was being shifted and supported with federal funds, allowing the program to draw down those funds instead of relying on General Funds. He stated that he was not concerned and did not believe the changes would cause the problems others had suggested.

Senator Wintrow stated she disagreed with Co-chair Tanner's assessment and questioned the accuracy of the funding explanation. She explained that the department had chosen to meet its 3% reduction by cutting \$1 million from pass-through funds intended for public health districts. She said she had proposed a smaller reduction as a compromise to lessen the impact, noting that doing so would allow more families to continue receiving services. She emphasized the importance of supporting prevention efforts and reaching more families despite limited funding.

**FAILED
(SUBSTITUTE
MOTION):**

Ayes: 7

Senators Woodward, Cook, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring

Nays: 11

Senators Grow, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Mitchell, Price, Bruce

Ab/Ex: 2

Representatives Harris, Green

Chairman Grow stated having failed to get a majority in either house, the motion fails and the Committee will move onto the original motion.

**CARRIED
(ORIGINAL
MOTION):**

Ayes: 17
Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway,
Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price,
Bruce

Nays: 1
Senator Hart

Ab/Ex: 2
Representatives Harris, Green

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent, to hold the language for the home learning program until the Committee takes up the budget on early learning.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent to accept the following language:

LANGUAGE:

Section __. REQUIRING A REPORT FOR THE SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS PROGRAM. The Department of Health and Welfare shall submit a report to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2026, identifying outcomes and return on investment for moneys appropriated for the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Program. The format and content of this report will be determined in consultation with the Budget and Policy Analysis Division of the Legislative Services Office.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent to accept the following language:

LANGUAGE:

Section __. REQUIRING A REPORT FOR THE HIV PREVENTION AND SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM. The Department of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Districts shall submit a report to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2026, identifying outcomes and return on investment for moneys appropriated for the HIV Prevention and Surveillance Program. The format and content of this report will be determined in consultation with the Budget and Policy Analysis Division of the Legislative Services Office.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent to accept the following language:

LANGUAGE:

Section __. REQUIRING A REPORT FOR THE HEPATITIS PREVENTION AND SURVEILLANCE. The Department of Health and Welfare shall submit a report to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2026, identifying outcomes and return on investment for moneys appropriated for the Hepatitis Prevention and Surveillance. The format and content of this report will be determined in consultation with the Budget and Policy Analysis Division of the Legislative Services Office.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent to accept the following language:

LANGUAGE:

Section __. REQUIRING A REPORT FOR THE IMMUNIZATION ASSESSMENT FUND. The Department of Health and Welfare shall submit a report to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2026 identifying the vaccine utilization rate and a cost savings analysis for the State of Idaho and service providers regarding vaccines purchased using the Immunization Assessment Fund. The format and content of this report will be determined in consultation with the Budget and Policy Analysis Division of the Legislative Services Office. SECTION __. CONDITIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS. Appropriations made pursuant to this act are subject to the conditions, limitations/ and restrictions specified in this act.

DISCUSSION:

Representative Bruce stated he had received feedback from legislators in both chambers regarding the Immunization Assessment Fund. They wanted to ensure that Idaho was getting good value when purchasing vaccines and questioned whether the process might be more effectively handled by the private sector. He emphasized the importance of confirming that both the state and healthcare providers benefit from the program.

Senator Wintrow stated the Immunization Assessment Fund was supported by private entities, such as insurers, which contributed funds to help the state purchase vaccines in bulk at lower cost. She suggested that information on savings was likely already available and could be obtained immediately without waiting for a formal report.

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

FY 2026 Supplemental and FY 2027 DHW- Early Learning and Development, LBB 2-019– Morgan Poloni, Senior Analyst, LSO

Ms. Poloni presented the FY 2027 budget for the Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Early Learning and Development, outlining its three programs: Early Learning and Development services, the Idaho Child Care Program, and the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center. She reviewed the division's maintenance budget and staffing levels, as well as two requested enhancements recommended by the Governor, including expanded child care capacity funding and oversight positions. She also described a onetime equipment request, a population forecast adjustment for court-ordered evaluations and treatment, and the proposed transfer of the Idaho Home Visiting Program into the division.

AT EASE:

The Committee went at east at **9:31 a.m.** and was back in order at **9:33 a.m.**

MOTION:

Moved by **Senator Cook**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add 5.00 FTP and \$16,000,000 for Idaho Child Care Program Capacity Year 2; \$20,000 for Replacement Items; \$600,000 for population forecast adjustments; and add 3.00 FTP and \$4,242,800 to move the Idaho Home Visiting Program from the Division of Public Health to the Division of Early Learning and Development. In total for FY 2027, for the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Early Learning and Development, an additional \$600,000 from the General Fund, \$14,500 from dedicated funds, and \$20,248,300 from federal funds for a total of

\$20,862,800, and an additional 8.00 full-time equivalent positions; seconded by **Representative Furniss**.

CARRIED:

Ayes: 18

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow

Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Green

Nays: 1

Senator Zuiderveld

Ab/Ex: 1

Representative Harris

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Representative Mitchell requested unanimous consent to accept the following language:

Section_ The department shall engage in an open, competitive acquisition process for Idaho STARS to manage childcare provider eligibility, develop and implement the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provide and maintain an online childcare finder tool for families, and provide technical assistance and resources to providers and parents. The department may engage in an open, competitive acquisition process for statewide professional development services. An emergency existing therefore, which emergency is hereby declared to exist, section X of this act shall be in full force and effect on and after passage and approval.

OBJECTION:

Senator Wintrow objected to the unanimous consent request.

MOTION:

Representative Mitchell moved to accept the language, seconded by **Senator Zuiderveld**.

DISCUSSION:

Representative Mitchell spoke in favor of the motion. He stated the contract has been non-bid for decades and a bidding process is long overdue.

Senator Wintrow spoke against the motion, stating the proposed intent language would overstep JFAC's role by getting too specific about procurement decisions. She warned that narrowly written directives—such as requiring certain tools or services—could unintentionally favor a single vendor and create conflicts with procurement rules. She cautioned that this approach could raise legal risks, including potential lawsuits.

In response to a Committee question, **Juliet Charron, Director of the Department of Health and Welfare** stood to address the Committee. She stated the current contract for the Idaho Stars system is held with the University of Idaho and has not been competitively procured in some time. She confirmed that the department has the authority to open the contract to a full competitive bid, including both universities and non-university entities. She noted that the contract expires in June and agreed that it is appropriate to seek new bids. Regarding proposed language directing the department to engage in an open competitive acquisition, she advised the Committee that the specific name "Idaho Stars" may need review by an attorney, but clarified that language

describing the system's functionality—such as provider lookup, quality measures, and technical assistance—could be included without legal conflict.

Senator Cook expressed that JFAC was overstepping its role, noting that the matter seemed unrelated to the budget and was more appropriately a procurement issue for the germane committees

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Senator Wintrow stated she would like to make a substitute motion to remove the language.

POINT OF ORDER:

Representative Manwaring called for a point of order, stating a substitute motion was not needed, rather just a vote on the language.

WITHDRAWAL OF SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Senator Wintrow withdrew her substitute motion.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Senator Woodward moved to hold the language in Committee, seconded by **Representative Manwaring**.

CARRIED (SUBSTITUTE MOTION):

Ayes: 13

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Green

Nays: 7

Senators Carlson, Galloway, Zuiderveld
Representatives Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Poloni explained the Division of Public Health included reporting language for the Idaho Home Visiting Program, requiring the agency to submit a report identifying outcomes and return on investment, and noted that the proposed language was before the Committee.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST:

Requested by **Representative Bruce**, and granted by unanimous consent, the following language was adopted:

LANGUAGE:

Section __. REQUIRING A REPORT FOR THE IDAHO HOME VISITING PROGRAM. The Department of Health and Welfare shall submit a report to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2026, identifying outcomes and return on investment for moneys appropriated for the Idaho Home Visiting Program. The format and content of this report will be determined in consultation with the Budget and Policy Analysis Division of the Legislative Services Office.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST:

Requested by **Representative Mitchell**, and granted by unanimous consent, the following language was adopted:

LANGUAGE: Section __. REAPPROPRIATION AUTHORITY FOR THE IDAHO CHILDCARE PROGRAM. There is hereby reappropriated to the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Early Learning and Development any unexpended and unencumbered balances appropriated or reappropriated to the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Early Learning and Development for the Idaho Child Care Program in FY 2026, in an amount not to exceed \$14/000/000, to be used for nonrecurring expenditures for the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. The Department of Health and Welfare shall confirm the reappropriation amount, by fund, expense class, and program/ with the Legislative Services Office prior to processing the reappropriation authorized herein.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST: **Representative Mitchell** requested unanimous consent to accept language related to the Idaho Child Care Program.

OBJECTION: **Senator Wintrow** objected to the unanimous consent request.

MOTION: **Representative Mitchell**, seconded by **Senator Zuiderveld**, moved to accept the following language:

Section __. IDAHO CHILDCARE PROGRAM CAPACITY. (1) Of the amount appropriated or reappropriated for year two of the Idaho Child Care Program Capacity through the Cooperative Welfare (Federal) Fund, the Department of Health and Welfare shall prioritize: executing contracts, programs and grants to expand the availability of licensed, license-exempt and unlicensed home-based child care, out-of-school child care programs or center-based child care. No less than \$9 million shall be reserved for home-based care, out-of-school childcare programs and underserved children. For the purposes of this funding, underserved populations are foster children, children with disabilities, infants and toddlers, children needing non-traditional hours care, homeless children, and school-aged children. After all qualifying providers are approved, the department may make available to all childcare providers unused funding from the set-aside. The funds shall be used to start or expand capacity for such programs and may not be used to supplant existing costs.

(2) The director of the Department of Health and Welfare shall not allocate funds:

(a) for construction or major renovations as defined in 45 CFR 98.2;

(b) for activities prohibited by 45 CFR 98.56;

(c) for minor remodeling; (c) to a school district;

(d) to any provider who is currently under investigation by the department, the attorney general, or a county prosecutor for fraud or the misuse of public funds; or

(e) to any provider who has admitted or was previously found by a court, administrative tribunal, jury, or other neutral fact finder to have committed fraud or misused public funds.

For purposes of paragraph (d), a provider shall not be deemed to be under investigation solely on the basis of having received a civil investigation demand requesting information, where no subsequent investigative or enforcement action has been taken.

DISCUSSION: **Representative Mitchell** spoke in favor of the motion. He explained that the measure directed the Department of Health and Welfare on how to spend the allocated funds, noting that \$14 million had been appropriated the previous year but only \$2 million spent. He said the language provided guidance on infrastructure spending and prohibited distributing funds to providers who had misused previous funding

Senator Woodward stated he supported the language in principle but raised a concern about a provision that barred funding to any provider currently or previously under investigation. He noted that being investigated does not imply guilt, and the current wording could unfairly disqualify providers who were cleared. He suggested revising the language and moved to hold the item per the chair's call until it could be addressed.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: **Senator Cook** moved to hold the language to the call of the chair, seconded by **Senator Wintrow**.

DISCUSSION: In response to a question from **Senator Woodward** about the definition of underserved children, **Representative Mitchell** stated there is language throughout law and sections of code that explains what underserved is.

FAILED (SUBSTITUTE MOTION):

Ayes: 9

Senators Woodward, Cook, Hart, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Green

Nays: 11

Senators Grow, Bjerke, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris

Ab/Ex: 0

Chairman Grow stated having failed to get a majority in either house, the motion fails and the Committee will move onto the original motion.

DISCUSSION: In response to a Committee question, **Juliet Charron, Director of DHW**, stood to address the Committee. She stated the Idaho Child Care Program is not codified in Idaho law. She stated it is her understanding that legislator in the Senate Health and Welfare committee is intending to bring a bill. She stated her department has worked with the chairs in both legislative health and welfare committees during the session on developing language to codify the program. But given that it is not codified, there is no definition in Idaho law specific to this program for underserved. She stated underserved children are referenced in different capacities in the childcare state plan that is submitted to federal regulators, but there is not legal definition for this program in current state law.

Senator Woodward stated there is uncertainty in how to interpret the language and where to spend the money.

Senator Wintrow stated that if a separate bill codifying the program moves forward, the current language might be unnecessary or should be held to avoid conflicts, since the bill could override JFAC's language. She also cautioned that barring providers who were previously investigated conflicted with the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" and could unintentionally penalize providers who were later found compliant.

Further questions were asked by Committee members about language definitions. **Chairman Grow** stated he would hope these issues would have already been addressed in work groups.

**CARRIED
(ORIGINAL
MOTION):**

Ayes: 12
Senators Grow, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris
Nays: 8
Senators Woodward, Cook, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Green
Ab/Ex: 0

The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:**

Senator Wintrow requested unanimous consent to request the following language:

Section __. TRANSFER LIMITATION EXEMPTION. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary, I the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Early Learning and Development may transfer personnel costs pursuant to Section 67-3511, Idaho Code/ for the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

"Section __. CONDITIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS. Appropriations made pursuant to this act are subject to the conditions, limitations, and restrictions specified in this act."

OBJECTION:

Representative Harris objected to the unanimous consent request to accept the language.

MOTION:

Senator Wintrow moved to accept the language, seconded by **Senator Cook**.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Wintrow spoke in favor the motion, stating it was based on work group discussions about granting the Department of Health and Welfare's director the same budgetary authority as other state agency directors.

Representative Harris spoke against the motion, stating policy needed to be passed to make such changes.

CARRIED:

Ayes: 12
Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Green
Nays: 7
Senators Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld
Representatives Price, Bruce, Harris
Ab/Ex: 1

Representative Tanner
The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

**LSO STAFF
PRESENTATION:**

**FY 2027 DHW- Family and Community Partnerships, LBB 2-027 –
Morgan Poloni, Senior Analyst, LSO**

Ms. Poloni stated the DHW Family and Community Partnerships Division's primary role was to provide prevention services to help keep children safely in their homes. She outlined the FY 2027 maintenance budget and staffing levels, and described a recommended enhancement to align ongoing federal funding for the Kinship Navigation Grant, which supports relatives and close family friends caring for children to help prevent foster care placements.

MOTION: Moved by **Senator Wintrow**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add \$180,000 for Kinship Navigation Services. I move, for FY 2027, for the Department of Health and Welfare, Family and Community Partnerships an additional \$180,000 from federal funds for a total of \$180,000; seconded by **Representative Furniss**.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** spoke in favor of the motion, stating the program was valuable because it helps prevent children from entering foster care or ensures that, if they do, they are placed with relatives, strengthening family connections.

CARRIED: **Ayes: 17**
Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Carlson, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green
Nays: 2
Senators Hart, Zuiderveld
Ab/Ex: 1
Representative Mitchell
The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **FY 2026 Supplemental, DHW- Youth Safety & Permanency, LBB 2-010 and FY 2027 DHW- Youth Safety & Permanency, LBB 2-007– Morgan Poloni, Senior Analyst, LSO**

Ms. Poloni presented the FY 2027 budget for the Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Youth Safety and Permanency, noting its responsibility for child protection, foster care, and adoptions, and that it was previously known as the Division of Child Welfare. She outlined the division's maintenance budget and staffing levels, and explained that while no budget enhancements were requested, three pieces of exemption language were recommended by the Governor were before the Committee.

DISCUSSION: In response to a Committee question regarding the designation of funds as onetime or ongoing, **LSO Budget & Policy Division Manager Keith Bybee** stood to address the Committee. He stated that historically the distinction between onetime and ongoing funding is clarified when a motion is made, and since no motion had been made yet, it was unclear in this case. He noted that budget packets typically specify this, and said it would be up to the motion maker to determine and include that detail.

MOTION: Moved by **Senator Cook**, beginning with the FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget: add \$431,900 ongoing to restore funding to the Foster Care and Assistance Program for post adoption services; and \$250,000 ongoing to restore funding for safety assessments. For FY 2027, for the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Youth Safety and Permanency, an additional \$681,900 from the General Fund; seconded by **Representative Furniss**.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Cook** spoke in favor of the motion. He stated the department and Division of Financial Management had requested restoring funding for two programs that were previously removed. He emphasized that these programs focus on child safety and family stability, including quickly assessing situations to return children home when possible and providing post-adoption support through contracted services. He noted that the programs serve many families and are a worthwhile investment in addressing issues early, and he urged support for restoring the funding.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Moved by **Representative Bruce**, beginning with FY 2027 JFAC Program Maintenance Budget add \$431,900 to restore funding onetime to the Foster Care Assistance Program for post-adoption services and add \$250,000 onetime to restore for safety assessments. For fiscal year 2027 for the Department of Health and Welfare Division of Safety and Permanency, add an additional \$681,900 from the general fund; seconded by **Representative Price**.

CARRIED (SUBSTITUTE MOTION): **Ayes: 16**
Senators Grow, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
Representatives Tanner, Miller, Petzke, Manwaring, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green

Nays: 3
Senators Woodward, Cook
Representative Furniss

Ab/Ex: 1
Representative Mitchell
The majority of each committee having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed and without objection will carry a **DO PASS** recommendation. There being no objection, it was so ordered by **Chairman Grow**

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST: Requested by **Senator Cook**, and granted by unanimous consent, the following language was adopted:

LANGUAGE: Section _ . TRANSFER LIMITATION EXEMPTION. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary, the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Youth Safety and Permanency is hereby exempted from the provision of Section 67-3511(2), Idaho Code, allowing unlimited transfers into the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center (SWITC) Program for all moneys appropriated to it for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST: **Senator Cook** requested unanimous consent to accept the following language:

Section __. TRANSFER LIMITATION EXEMPTION. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary/ the Department of Health and Welfare, Youth Safety and Permanency is hereby exempted from the provision of Section 67-3511(2), Idaho Code, allowing unlimited transfers into the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center (SWITC) Program for all moneys appropriated to it for the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

OBJECTION:

Representative Harris objected to the unanimous consent request.

MOTION:

Senator Cook, seconded by **Representative Furniss**, moved to accept the language.

FAILED:

Ayes: 11

Senators Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow

Representatives Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Green

Nays: 7

Senators Hart, Carlson

Representatives Tanner, Miller, Price, Bruce, Harris

Ab/Ex: 2

Senator Zuiderveld

Representative Mitchell

Chairman Grow stated having failed to reach a majority in the House, the motion fails.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business before the Committee, **Co-Chairman Grow** adjourned the meeting at **10:30 a.m.**

Senator Grow
Chair

Linsy Heiner
Secretary