

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 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 3:08 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Blaylock** moved to approve the Minutes of February 19, 2026. **Senator Keyser** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 863 **MEDICAID - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding provider payment. - No further testimony will be taken on H 863.**

MOTION: **Senator Zuiderveld** moved to send **H 863** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Shippy** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** stated she could not support the motion. She stated the audit and rate decrease should be two separate pieces of legislation. She agreed an audit was needed and would support the workforce, however, a cut of almost \$22 million at once would destabilize the program and hurt responsible providers without addressing the bad actors. She was concerned this legislation would harm the population that utilized home and community-based services.

Senator Zuiderveld stated the Governor's Office asked the Senate Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) to decrease the Medicaid budget by \$22 million. JFAC reviewed many programs and had to make difficult decisions. Even with the reductions included in this legislation, this budget had significantly increased from the 2022 budgeted amount. This legislation would create transparency and oversight in the Medicaid program while leaving home and community-based services intact.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chair VanOrden passed the gavel to Senator Harris.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lenney** criticized the proposed cuts for targeting essential services while leaving expansion populations untouched, describing it as misdirected. He suggested considering broader, more balanced reductions.

Senator Zuiderveld responded there were budget items that could not be reduced unless the Legislature repealed Medicaid. She stated small reductions to each program would not generate enough savings. She cautioned that any reductions would negatively impact individuals and noted that Idaho had become reliant on programs that the State could not sustain without federal funding.

**ROLL CALL
VOTE:**

Senator Lenney requested a roll call vote on the motion to send **H 863** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senators Harris, Zuiderveld, Shippy, Blaylock, Acting Senator Bjerke (Bjerke), and Chair VanOrden** voted aye. **Senators Lenney, Keyser, and Wintrow** voted nay. The motion carried.

H 730

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - Amends and adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program integrity measures and verification. Senator VanOrden explained this legislation required the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) to enter into a data matching agreement with the Idaho State Lottery Commission to identify households with lottery winnings of \$3,000 or more, refer certain cases for investigation, and disenroll ineligible households. It also required IDHW to conduct regular data crosschecks with records relating to vital health statistics, out-of-state electronic benefit transfer (EBT) transactions, incarceration status, and federal sources of earned income, supplemental security income information, beneficiary records, earnings information, and pension information. The bill required quarterly income reviews and asset limits were reduced from \$5,000 to \$3,000. Additionally, the legislation would restrict Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for illegal aliens in accordance with federal law and require IDHW to submit information to the federal government when they were unable to verify citizenship status. Lastly, the legislation would prohibit the State from using asset and income limits in excess of the federal standard.

Doug Taylor, Foundation for Government Accountability, provided background information on the reason for this legislation. He explained reforms to address waste, fraud, and abuse in the welfare system, were required by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), or H.R. 1, passed by the U.S. Congress in 2025. OBBBA imposed penalties if a state had an error rate above 6 percent and Idaho was at about 3 percent.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Wintrow asked if the additional bureaucracy needed to enact this legislation was necessary, since Idaho already had a low error rate of 3.59 percent. She was concerned that quarterly reviews without additional staff could increase the error rate. **Mr. Taylor** state this legislation would proactively ensure Idaho never had a high enough error rate to incur a penalty. **Senator Wintrow** asked **Mr. Taylor** why he was interested in this legislation. **Mr. Taylor** stated his client worked with the White House on the development of OBBBA. Therefore, he was involved in helping states draft legislation to implement the resulting reforms.

Senator Blaylock asked if IDHW could handle integrating additional data into their systems. **Mr. Taylor** responded the fiscal note reflected the additional resources IDHW required to implement this bill. There would be software changes needed and up-front costs, but he also anticipated savings. **Senator Blaylock** asked if he anticipated the costs would be absorbed by the savings. **Mr. Taylor** responded there were one-time costs for software integration, and ongoing costs for additional staffing. They initially believed existing staff could handle the added work, however, IDHW believed additional staff were needed which was reflected in the fiscal note. **Senator Blaylock** asked if the additional mechanisms to catch errors could raise the error rate. **Mr. Taylor** responded he did not believe more consistent verification of eligibility status would lead to a higher error rate, and if it did, that meant they were already making errors, but not catching them.

Senator Shippy asked about the potential cost savings related to data sharing. **Mr. Taylor** explained the goal was to incentivize states to proactively ensure the programs ran well. They believed that there would be cost savings as case loads decreased, ineligible individuals were identified, and the program was run more efficiently.

- TESTIMONY:** **Randy Ford**, President and CEO, The Idaho Food Bank, **Kendra Knighten**, Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy, and **Jessica Molina**, The Hunger Coalition, testified against **H 730**. They shared concerns about what would happen if Idahoans lost access to food and SNAP benefits and believed this legislation would result in a higher error rate, and as a result, a higher cost to Idaho taxpayers. **Mr. Ford** requested the certification verification sections in this legislation be adjusted to reflect what Idaho's SNAP program was already doing.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** asked Mr. Ford to explain food insecurity or food needs in Idaho. **Mr. Ford** stated that the Idaho Food Bank served over 216,000 individuals each month and had the opportunity to serve people without verification, because they were donated goods. **Senator Wintrow** stated if something increased need for the Food Bank, whether the Food Bank would be able to address the increased needs. **Mr. Ford** responded the Food Bank did not have the capacity to help more individuals and that error rates were not just related to over-payments, but also under-payments.
- Senator Wintrow** asked Ms. Knighton what could increase the error rate. **Ms. Knighton** responded the increased number of times IDHW had to complete the eligibility process increased the opportunity for error, which could be either an overpayment or underpayment. She stated that the certification periods and the data sharing in this legislation went beyond what was required by OBBBA.
- TESTIMONY:** **Scott Centorino**, FGA Action, and **Fred Birnbaum**, Idaho Freedom Foundation, testified in favor of **H 730**. They explained the benefits of OBBBA and expressed hope that the bill's financial incentives would motivate states to reduce waste, prevent fraud, and lower error rates. Both addressed the debate over whether the legislation resulted in increased costs or cost savings. **Mr. Centorino** stated several states implemented these measures with zero cost and he offered to provide statistics and examples of where states saved money.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** stated Idaho already did not allow SNAP benefits for non citizens. **Chair VanOrden** stated this legislation went above and beyond the OBBBA and that the intention of this legislation was not to take eligible individuals off the program, but to ensure the program was responsibly administered to the Idahoans who met eligibility requirements and needed support.
- MOTION:** **Senator Zuiderveld** moved to send **H 730** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Keyser** seconded the motion.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Blaylock** stated she was struggling with the implementation cost of \$1.7 million and addition of 10 IDHW staff.
- Senator Zuiderveld** stated she was also struggling with the implementation cost, but the federal government was shifting more of the costs for the SNAP program to the states, so it was time to start ensuring this program was as efficient as possible.
- Senator Wintrow** shared her concern about the cost to implement this legislation, people losing benefits by accident, and fluctuating error rates that would increase costs.
- Senator Shippy** stated he would support the motion, but he wanted to acknowledge the incredibly high administration cost of entitlement programs. He emphasized that Idaho should move away from relying on entitlement programs and towards charitable programs.
- Senator Lenney** mentioned that SNAP benefits went to households, not individuals. Therefore, illegal aliens could apply for and receive SNAP benefits on behalf of their legal children.

Senator Wintrow stated she believed in the SNAP program was a necessary safety net.

**ROLL CALL
VOTE:**

Senator Harris requested a roll call vote on the motion to send **H 730** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senators Harris, Zuiderveld, Lenney, Shippy, Acting Senator Bjerke (Bjerke), and Chair VanOrden** voted aye. **Senators Blaylock and Wintrow** voted nay. The motion carried.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Madyson Crea
Secretary