

MINUTES
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & DEFENSE COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 04, 2020

TIME: 1:30 pm or Upon Adjournment of Afternoon Floor Session

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Palmer, Vice Chairman Shepherd, Representatives Gestrin, Kauffman, Youngblood, Dixon, Harris, Holtzclaw, Monks, DeMordaunt, Syme, Blanksma, Addis, Ricks, Wintrow, Gannon, Davis, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Addis

GUESTS: Fred Birnbaum, ID Freedom Foundation; Jeremy Pisca, Amazon; David Cameron, IBT; Brian Adams, BMWED; Jason Hudson, AFL-CIO; Robert VandeMeare, IHCA

Chairman Palmer called the meeting to order at 2:49 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Gannon** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2020, meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 485: **Rep. Goesling** presented **H 485**. This bill authorizes the Idaho Division of Veterans Services to provide a student loan compensation program for nurses employed at the Idaho State Veterans Homes. Rep. Goesling said a loan repayment program will help in the recruitment and retention of these difficult to fill positions. The program will be available to existing nurses and add incentive in recruitment of new nurses. This added incentive will broaden the candidate pool and make it easier to recruit and retain top talent.

Fred Birnbaum, Idaho Freedom Foundation, spoke **in opposition** to the bill. His primary concern was that public funds would be used to pay off private debt. In answer to committee questions, he suggested increasing salaries in areas where there is high turnover rather than debt repayment.

Marv Hagedorn, Chief Administrator, Idaho Division of Veterans Services, addressed committee questions relative to the existing barriers to increasing nurse salaries and offering bonuses. He said student loan repayment is not a new idea. Programs similar to this have been used in previous years to recruit doctors and psychiatrists. He emphasized the fact that if he has more nurses he can take care of more veterans.

Robert VandeMere, Idaho Health Care Association, testified **in support** of the bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Syme** made a motion to send **H 485** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Reps. Monks, Harris, DeMordaunt and **Blanksma** spoke **in opposition** to the motion. They agreed this is a narrow approach to a big problem. They suggested they could support a pilot program rather than a five year program. They would support removing barriers to offering higher salaries and signing bonuses.

Reps. Kauffman and **Youngblood** spoke **in support** of the motion. They agreed similar programs have been offered before. Nurses are in great demand and there is a high turnover rate in elder care facilities. This is a good way to address the problem.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Rep. Syme requested a roll call vote on **H 485**. **Motion failed by a vote of 6 AYE, 9 NAY, 3 absent/excused. Voting in favor** of the motion: **Reps. Kauffman, Youngblood, Syme, Wintrow, Gannon, Davis. Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Palmer, Shepherd, Gestrin, Dixon, Harris, Holtzclaw, Monks, DeMordaunt, Blanksma. Reps. Addis, Ricks, Rubel were absent/excused.**

H 566: **Jeremy Pisca**, representing Amazon, brought **H 566** to the committee. This legislation amends the definition of "personal delivery device" and allows devices to weigh no more than 200 pounds, rather than 80 pounds.

MOTION: **Rep. Blanksma** made a motion to send **H 566** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Palmer** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

Representative Palmer
Chair

Joyce McKenzie
Secretary