

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 01, 2022

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Thayn, Senators Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Blair (Johnson), Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Vice Chairman Lent

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 Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Nelson** moved to approve the minutes of January 19, 2022. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 29340: **Relating to Education; Empowering Parents Grant Program.** **Senator Den Hartog** outlined her proposed bill on creating a grant program to empower parents. She explained that this Routing Slip (RS) was changed due to some feedback that was received. Modifications were made to the RS including adding clarifications and definitions to the language.

MOTION: **Senator Cook** moved to send **RS 29340** to print. **Senator Crabtree** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1247: **Relating to Education; Career and Technical School Funding and Eligibility.** **Clay Long** State Administrator, Career and Technical Education (CTE), outlined the scope of the bill. This bill relates to career technical school added cost funding. **Mr. Long** pointed out that cooperative service agencies are not included in the list of eligible recipients; therefore, the need for additional cost funding.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Thayn** made a comment that he is the chairman of a career technical education charter school and this added cost funding is quite helpful and essential. **Senator Den Hartog** inquired if the schools that were not considered eligible in the past, had received any funding. **Mr. Long** explained that the schools that were not considered eligible prior had received funding all along, hence the need for the language change. **Senator Den Hartog** pointed out that this example of a distribution of funds without authorization in Idaho code that may have been avoided if there were a funding formula in place.

MOTION: **Senator Nelson** moved to send **S 1247** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Nelson will sponsor this bill.

**PRESENTATION
AND
DISCUSSION:**

Jenn Thompson, Director, gave a presentation on the **Idaho Public Charter School Commission's Annual Report**. **Ms. Thompson** went over the growth of charter schools over time, the transition of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission (Commission) into its own agency, and the performance framework of standards, goals and accountability. The statewide accountability goal of minimum standards includes a five year operating term, which have to be renewed based on the terms of the contract. Those schools that are not meeting minimum standards are worked with very closely to meet goals for a renewal decision. **Chairman Thayn** made an inquiry on what type of schools the data is compared to, whether they are public schools or other charter schools. **Ms. Thompson** replied that they are a mix of traditional schools and charter schools using the demographic makeup of the school, the percentage of economically disadvantaged, the percentage of special education, and schools with a similar grade range. **Senator Cook** requested more information regarding those schools that proficiency levels had made gains over any other schools. **Ms. Thompson** explained that this particular school had been working with mentorship programs and implementation during COVID 19 with an almost entirely economically disadvantaged student population which may have led to higher proficiency levels.

Ms. Thompson further explained that the performance framework looks not only at academic measure, but also at financial and operational measures. Governing board members are empowered to look at this information to make local decisions with given measures.

Senator Cook had a question regarding charter schools that didn't meet the proficiency levels within the five years. **Ms. Thompson** explained that the commission itself has the authority to make decisions to approve or deny new charter school applications. After the five years has expired, they can make decisions to approve or deny renewal applications. She further explained that they understand that they have resources available to assist them if they are not meeting the standards and metrics within that timeframe. **Senator Thayn** requested clarification on the different charter schools and how the demographics were measured. **Ms. Thompson** clarified that the Commission is required by statute to establish a performance certificate with a framework that outlines measures and metrics that a school must achieve in order to continue operations. The school is required to perform well or better than its comparison group with most schools being compared to the district in which they reside. **Senator Den Hartog** asked a question regarding the renewal process, and if there was an opportunity to adjust what the school or student thought they were going to achieve. **Ms. Thompson** replied that the performance certificate, which is the operational contract, can be modified at any time either in-house or at the Commission level. (See Attachment 1)

PRESENTATION: A **Virtual Charter Schools Update** was presented by **Kelly Edginton**, who is a the Head of School for the Idaho Virtual Academy (Academy). The Academy is authorized by the Idaho Public School Commission (Commission). These schools are accredited by a cognition which is the same agency that accredits other Idaho public schools. **Ms. Edginton** explained that the number one reason for enrollment is bullying, followed by students who are academically ahead or behind. Additional reasons include alternate schedules for student athletes, or personal beliefs in which the virtual school environment is felt to serve better. Virtual schools also serve a population of students that would otherwise not graduate due to the pandemic. She pointed out that there is a difference between emergency remote learning and an established virtual teaching environment. The virtual teachers go through a rigorous training process and receive continuing professional development and mentorship. Virtual schools also have an established intervention program as well as special education models.

Irene Shaver, Treasurer and Board of Directors member of Idaho Virtual Academy

provided background on her own personal success story with her grandson serving as his learning coach.

Senator Thayn asked Ms. Edginton a question regarding the different metrics that schools use to compare similar demographics and how this would relate to virtual schools. **Ms. Edginton** replied that the alternative framework is applied, and the Academy works closely with the Commission. **Senator Den Hartog** expressed appreciation for all of the enrollment increases that the Academy has taken on given the uncertain times that were experienced over the last year. (See Attachment 2)

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Katy Morden
Secretary