

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Friday, February 14, 2020

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman Clow, Vice Chairman Kerby, Representatives Shepherd, Boyle, Mendive, DeMordaunt, Moon, Ehardt, Goesling, Marshall, Raymond, Wisniewski, McCrostie, Abernathy, Berch

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Tracie Bent, OSBE; Harold Ott, Rural Schools; Clark Corbin, Idaho Ed News; Greg Wilson, Governor's Office; Marilyn Whitney, SDE

Chairman Clow called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

MOTION: **Rep. Raymond** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2020 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 470: **Rep. Mendive** presented **H 470**, which opens the door for students to access books that were previously unavailable, by putting them online.

Kate Haas, representing Renaissance Learning, presented further on **H 470**. She stated research shows better access to books improves literacy growth, but smaller, rural districts struggle with access to print books in their school libraries. This bill creates an online, digital library, which will increase access and give teachers and staff a statewide resource. This library would include both fiction and nonfiction books, all of which must be vetted and appropriate for a student's level. She clarified the fiscal note assumes starting with a pilot program and using existing funds. The program is designed to grow based on funding and demand from districts.

In response to Committee questions, **Ms. Haas** explained the pilot program is the anticipated model of contract, but is not specified in the bill. She noted the State Department of Education (SDE) uses this model of contract for other programs.

David Lanz, Renaissance Learning, presented further on the bill, as someone representing a company that would be able to provide a digital library, if selected. He explained a digital library could link with LiLI (Libraries Linking Idaho), just like the other databases it contains. This would not conflict because while LiLI allows users to search for books in local libraries across the state, a digital library would provide access to digital books. He stated the books would be vetted by schools and libraries, and schools would have the ability to remove or restrict access. He gave an explanation of the lexile reading level framework and noted the digital library would be adaptive, taking student interest and reading level into account, then making specific recommendations.

Rep. Marshall stated he favors providing digital materials across the state, but is not anxious to contract with a particular company, as he believes SDE could do this.

In response to Committee questions, **Ms. Haas** stated the initial cost would likely be \$100K-300K. This cost would be ongoing and then progress at the level of usage, with a maximum ongoing amount of \$1.5 million. The digital library is designed to help school libraries enhance access, but kids could access books anywhere with an internet connection, or download them to read later.

Mr. Lanz explained that for older students, the digital library would provide access to the most commonly used classics for high school and middle school, with those books and others available in Spanish. He said there are many books available with a high interest level and lower reading level, for students reading below grade level. He noted schools currently subscribe without statewide funding and his company does not look to "Common Core" for their textual resources. The proposed digital library is nonfiction focused, which is an asset to students interested in Career Technical Education.

Ms. Haas clarified current literacy dollars are targeted to remediation in grades K-3. She noted many districts have used the majority of their literacy dollars for staffing. She clarified the bill language about authentic, nonfiction, personalized texts, noting the digital library is not exclusively nonfiction. SDE can currently put out a contract for such a digital library service, but she testified she recommended her client to work through the germane committees, for the most transparency.

Rep. Boyle stated she was not in support of opening this topic up for a statewide contract.

Marilyn Whitney, Deputy Superintendent for Communications and Policy, SDE, stated many districts use this particular vendor, but they do not have a statewide contract. This is based on past direction of the legislature to minimize statewide contracts and instead push the money out to districts to use as they see fit.

ORIGINAL MOTION:

Rep. DeMordaunt made a motion to send **H 470** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. She spoke of the power of this particular program to address all levels, from remediation to accelerated readers. She noted charter schools have particular challenges stocking their school libraries and confirmed the current literacy dollars are narrowly targeted. A digital library would also provide information to parents and teachers on how students are reading and what materials are most appropriate for their level.

Rep. Kerby spoke **in support** of the original motion, noting this is an exception to his preference to give money directly to schools. He stated schools will not have enough money to spend on all levels of readers, with materials matching their interest level and he believes many schools would use this tool.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Rep. Marshall made a substitute motion to **HOLD H 470** in Committee, because the bill is too nebulous.

Rep. Moon spoke **in support** of the substitute motion, saying she did not have enough information about the number of schools currently participating and the cost. She noted many books are already available online.

Rep. Berch spoke **in support** of the substitute motion. He would like to hear more from SDE about what they would like to maintain state control over and what items they prefer to outsource.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Motion failed by a vote of 7 AYE and 8 NAY. Voting in favor of the motion: Reps. Shepherd, Boyle, Moon, Goesling, Marshall, Wisniewski and Berch. Voting in opposition to the motion: Chairman Clow, Vice Chairman Kerby, Reps. Mendive, DeMordaunt, Ehardt, Raymond, McCrostie and Abernathy.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION:

Motion carried by a vote of 8 AYE and 7 NAY. Voting in favor of the motion: Chairman Clow, Vice Chairman Kerby, Reps. Mendive, DeMordaunt, Ehardt, Raymond, McCrostie and Abernathy. Voting in opposition to the motion: Reps. Shepherd, Boyle, Moon, Goesling, Marshall, Wisniewski and Berch. Rep. Mendive will sponsor the vote on the floor.

MOTION: **Rep. Goesling** made a motion to give **Tracie Bent**, Chief Planning and Policy Officer, State Board of Education, a letter of recognition for her hard work on presenting Administrative Rules to the Committee. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:15 am.

Representative Clow
Chair

Erica McGinnis
Secretary