

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, March 15, 2021

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Martin, Vice Chairman Riggs, Senators Heider, Lee, Harris, Zito, Stennett, and Wintrow

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Agenbroad

**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 Martin** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Stennett** moved to approve the Minutes of March 8, 2021. **Senator Heider** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**Senator Zito** moved to approve the Minutes of March 9, 2021. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**HCR 11**

**Stating Findings of the Legislature and Recognizing 988 as the Universal Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Crisis Phone Number.** **Representative Laurie Lickley**, District 28, presented the resolution to formally recognize 988 as the new mental health crisis phone number, equivalent to 911 for mental health, effective July 2022.

**Stewart Wilder**, Co-Chair, Idaho Suicide Prevention Action Collective (ISPAC), introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Wilder** advised that President Trump signed legislation in October 2020 to designate 988 as the national number for mental health crises. He reported that ISPAC, the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and other mental health partners are working together to implement the 988 number in Idaho. **Mr. Wilder** said the 988 system will direct callers to appropriate mental health resources, and relieve pressure on law enforcement and emergency first responders. He stated the stakeholders' goal is to develop recommendations for funding the 988 system for full implementation in 2022.

**Senator Wintrow** asked how **HCR 11** differs from **S 1125**, a bill that the Committee previously considered. **Mr. Wilder** replied that **S 1125** involved taxation and should have started in the House, so the bill cannot advance.

**Chairman Martin** inquired if the resolution is the first step in a process that will be completed with legislation next session. **Mr. Wilder** answered yes.

**Lee Flinn**, Executive Director, Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline (Hotline), provided a brief history of the Hotline. **Ms. Flinn** explained that the Hotline's purpose is to keep a caller safe until the caller can access appropriate mental health services. She described the actions taken by the Hotline responders when a call is received.

**Ms. Flinn** advised that 988 will replace the present national toll-free suicide prevention lifeline phone number. She reported that, under the present system, a caller with an Idaho area code who calls the national number is routed to the Hotline. **Ms. Flinn** noted that the 988 system will utilize existing infrastructure, and be easier to remember and dial. She stated that call volumes to the Hotline in February 2021 increased 30 percent over February 2020, with the youngest caller age 6 and the oldest age 92.

**Chairman Martin** asked whether talking about suicidal tendencies is helpful or detrimental in a crisis situation. **Ms. Flinn** replied that it is a common misconception that discussing suicide makes a situation worse. She said it is actually helpful because it demonstrates caring and gives the person an opportunity to engage about their feelings. **Chairman Martin** requested statistics on Idaho suicide. **Ms. Flinn** reported that most current numbers reflect that 421 Idahoans died by suicide in 2020, an increase from 362 deaths in 2019. She remarked that the 2019 suicide rate was 41 percent higher than the national average.

**Senator Wintrow** asked if the Hotline tracks data on the number of homicides related to suicide. **Ms. Flinn** responded that she does not have the data but will try to find it. **Senator Wintrow** commented the data would be helpful in knowing whether suicide intervention can prevent crossover crimes.

**Representative Lickley** advised that Idaho has an opportunity to make a difference and join with partners in other states to identify solutions to implement and fund the 988 system. She added that 988 will also replace the Idaho 211 number.

**MOTION:** **Senator Lee** moved to send **HCR 11** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** said that suicide is a difficult topic and thanked the presenters for their efforts. She encouraged using demographic and correlational data to prevent suicides instead of simply responding to them.

**Senator Lee** thanked the partners for their hard work and commented it is exciting to see progress on this issue.

**Chairman Martin** advised he first heard about a national three-digit number 10 years ago, and he appreciates the people who work tirelessly on the cause of suicide prevention. He noted the annual number of suicides averages more than one per day in Idaho and the numbers are not publicized. **Chairman Martin** mentioned that suicide impacts many families, and he expressed the need to raise awareness and identify resources to achieve a goal of zero suicides Statewide.

**VOICE VOTE:** The motion to send **HCR 11** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation carried by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Martin** adjourned the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

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Senator Martin  
Chair

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Jeanne Jackson-Heim  
Secretary