

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 27, 2022

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

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

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

PRESENTATION: **ARPA Relief Funds Update. Alex Adams**, Administrator, Idaho Division of Financial Management, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Adams** described the Governor's budget recommendations for education spending with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (see Attachment 1). He noted that the Governor's recommendations blended ARPA funds and General Fund dollars to enhance teacher recruitment and retention. (See Attachment 1)

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked whether the Empowering Parents grants will be ongoing. **Mr. Adams** responded that the \$50 million recommendation is a one-time ARPA funding. He stated that the Idaho State Board of Education (BOE) will need a staff person to oversee the grant program. The funding for that staff position would come from the General Fund, he said.

RS 29180 RELATING TO EDUCATION: Career Technical School Funding and Eligibility. **Mike Keckler**, Chief Communications and Legislative Affairs Officer, BOE, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Keckler** explained that school districts sometimes jointly contract for goods and services as cooperative service agencies. He advised the purpose of the bill is to add cooperative service agencies to the types of entities eligible for career technical school funding.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 29180** to print. **Senator Blair** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Thayn passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Lent.

S 1238 RELATING TO EDUCATION: Self-Directed Learners. **Chairman Thayn** stated that he took input from multiple stakeholders to craft **S 1238**. He advised the bill creates a self-directed learner designation which will allow students to use education experience to fulfill educational and life goals. **Chairman Thayn** reviewed the methods for a student to achieve and maintain self-directed learner status. He described a student's options for flexible learning. **Chairman Thayn** remarked that strict school requirements stifle innovation. He added that self-motivated students should be rewarded for their diligence.

- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Blair** asked about the effect of the bill on smaller schools and teachers if students are not present in class. **Chairman Thayn** replied that parents should bring ideas for teacher approval rather than asking the teachers to create enhancements. He observed that school districts should develop processes to determine times when all students need to be present.
- TESTIMONY:** **Layne McInelly**, President, Idaho Education Association, testified in support of **S 1238** because it is a creative and innovative approach to diversifying a student's learning opportunities. She said the bill will allow educators to integrate meaningful real world learning experiences.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Nelson** asked whether the bill would add to teacher workload to develop and monitor individual learning plans. **Ms. McInelly** responded that the bill allows educators to work with school districts to implement a workable process for all parties.
- MOTION:** **Senator Crabtree** moved to send **S 1238** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- PASSED THE GAVEL:** Vice Chairman Lent passed the gavel to Chairman Thayn.
- PRESENTATION:** **Community Colleges of Idaho. Dr. Dean Fisher**, President, College of Southern Idaho (CSI), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Fisher** noted that the four Idaho community college presidents work as a team (see Attachment 2). He observed that enrollment remained stable at the four colleges despite challenges created by COVID-19. **President Fisher** thanked the Governor and Legislature for their support of cybersecurity funding. He advised that the eight Idaho institutions of higher learning will launch a platform this summer to share online courses. **President Fisher** commented that the colleges expanded their nursing programs to address a need for health care workers. He stated that CSI hopes to add a cybersecurity specialist and an adult learner unit to provide flexible learning options. **President Fisher** recognized CSI's athletic teams for their successes. He described the expansion of the food processing program to include operations management. **President Fisher** highlighted CSI's community involvement and resources. (See Attachment 2)
- Gordon Jones**, President, College of Western Idaho (CWI), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Jones** provided an overview of his background and experience in the private and public sectors. He stated that the future of higher education lies with community colleges. **President Jones** said that CWI is focused on enhancing its health science programs. He advised that CWI will soon be certified to offer a Department of Defense Cybersecurity Certification program. **President Jones** remarked that CWI needs new facilities to accommodate program growth and consolidate students. He pointed out that CWI's tuition has remained constant for six years. **President Jones** emphasized CWI's ability to deliver affordable, accessible education that translates to employment. **Dr. Michael Sebaaly**, Interim President, North Idaho College (NIC), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Sebaaly** agreed that the four community college presidents work well together. He mentioned that NIC expanded its health science building. He added that NIC will open an on-campus dental hygiene clinic in the fall of 2022. **President Sebaaly** stated that NIC is collaborating with local power companies to provide lineman training. He remarked that a student can earn a four-year bachelor's degree on campus thanks to University of Idaho and Lewis & Clark State College participation. **President Sebaaly** reviewed NIC's budget request for new facilities and a student navigator position. He added that NIC enrollment is down two percent this year. Tuition has remained constant for the past five years, he said.

Dr. Rick Aman, President, College of Eastern Idaho (CEI), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Aman** reported that CEI is the newest community college in Idaho. He mentioned that all community colleges offer associate degrees that transfer to a four-year college. **President Aman** emphasized the importance of workforce training. He observed that CEI used federal funding to create a virtual campus. **President Aman** stated that CEI needs faculty for its math, biology, nursing, and engineering programs. He remarked that CEI seeks funding for a technology building, deferred building maintenance, and staff salaries.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Blair** asked about current challenges facing NIC. **President Sebaaly** responded that NIC experienced a difficult year of change, including the ongoing accreditation review.

Senator Den Hartog asked for more information on the colleges' use of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. **President Aman** replied that CEI used most of its CARES Act funding to deliver online learning and provide services to students in remote locations. **President Fisher** answered that half of CSI's CARES Act funding went directly to students. He added that CSI used the balance for improved ventilation systems, cleaning and sanitation, and classroom technology for distance learning. **President Fisher** noted that CSI set aside some funds for future student mental health counseling. **President Jones** reported that CWI used CARES Act funding for similar purposes as CEI and CSI. **President Sebaaly** stated that NIC spent CARES Act funds to make technology infrastructure upgrades.

Senator Nelson inquired what steps NIC took to address governance issues raised by the Human Rights Task Force. **President Sebaaly** answered that NIC does not yet have any information from the accreditation visit. He said NIC presented a ten-step action plan in October to address the identified concerns. **President Sebaaly** said he has worked hard to improve communication with the trustees and the community so NIC can move forward in a positive manner.

Chairman Thayn asked President Jones for his thoughts on the future of teacher training. **President Jones** responded that online education has historically been viewed as inferior to in-person instruction. He recommended that teacher training place additional focus on delivery of virtual learning. **President Jones** said there was greater resistance to online learning prior to the pandemic. He noted that more teachers have discovered they prefer online learning. **Senator Woodward** asked President Sebaaly the timeline for hiring a new president. **President Sebaaly** reported that trustees will conduct interviews on February 23, 2022. He added that the vacant trustee position must be filled by a resident of Zone 5, who will serve until the November 2022 election.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Katy Morden
Secretary

Jeanne Jackson-Heim
Assistant Secretary