

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 27, 2023

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Den Hartog, Nichols, Carlson, Herndon, Lenney, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

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 Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Vice Chairman Toews** moved to approve the Minutes of January 16, 2023. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the Minutes of January 30, 2023. **Vice Chairman Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Herndon** moved to approve the Minutes of January 24, 2023. **Senator Lenney** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Herndon** moved to approve the Minutes of January 18, 2023. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Education Excellence: Idaho Business for Education's (IBE) Registered Apprenticeships Program.** **Paula Kellerer**, Vice President, IBE, described her organization as the leader in education advocacy for over 250 businesses in Idaho that endeavored to support youth and advance workforce development in the State. **Ms. Kellerer** reported IBE, in partnership with Workforce Development, were able to be one of 14 states to secure a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to increase access to apprenticeships and Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities for youth aged 16 to 24. To advance this goal, IBE partnered with the Idaho Department of Labor, which helped in-state employers register for the program. IBE also helped with the creation of the Apprenticeship Idaho Coalition, members of which included: the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Idaho Department of Corrections, Idaho Division of Veteran Services, Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, all community colleges, College of Western Idaho (CWI), College of Southern Idaho (CSI), College of Eastern Idaho (CEI), and North Idaho College (NIC). Participants in the program were eligible to receive wages and class credit while they gained valuable work experience. Upon completion, participants received a certificate. **Ms. Kellerer** highlighted the success of the program, which had placed nearly 200 youth in a two-year span, while they maintained a 91 percent retention rate. Her primary hope for the future was to expand the program to include apprenticeships for teachers.

Soda Springs High School Principal Jess McMurray, students Max Hamilton and Avery Horsley, Adam Doolhoff with Fresca Mexican Foods, and Middleton School District Superintendent Marc Gee spoke to the importance of the IBE apprenticeship program. The students expressed an eagerness to further develop

their skills, learn hands-on, and earn money while they received class credits. The employers and school district personnel were grateful for the program, IBE, and its partners for the work they had done to address worker shortages and support for the future workforce.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Lent** asked Max Hamilton, Soda Springs High School, if he was getting paid for his apprentice work with Rigby Plumbing and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC). **Mr. Hamilton** confirmed he was.

Chairman Lent asked Ms. Kellerer if the program was connected to any labor group programs. **Ms. Kellerer** said, in Max's case, Rigby Plumbing and HVAC was not affiliated with any trade group or union, but there were apprenticeships that did have that connection. **Chairman Lent** asked what the future had in store for the program, how to increase the number of placements, and what the Legislature was able to do to help IBE achieve its goals. **Ms. Kellerer** said there were two positions open to every one person that sought employment in Idaho. She suggested the Legislature was able to create incentives for employers to increase apprenticeship offerings and raise awareness for the program amongst fellow community and business leaders. **Chairman Lent** asked if the program had the ability to become self-sustaining if a point came where federal funding was no longer available. **Ms. Kellerer** said several State departments and agencies already had the ability to continue some of those efforts, but it was more difficult for school districts or not-for-profit groups to operate without that support. She reiterated the importance of awareness and coalition-building to work towards a more sustainable model.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Meet and Greet.** **Maria Lorcher**, Advocacy Chair of Idaho PTA, presented the PTA's priorities and accomplishments for the Committee. She said, first-and-foremost, the well-being of students was always the organization's priority. For 2023, the theme for PTA was family engagement. Ms. Lorcher reported that, following COVID-19, family engagement in the education sphere had rebounded, and PTA National had over 40 years of data that supported the fact that engaged families led to improved academic achievement for students. Their state organization made it their focus to improve family engagement in over 100 schools across the State, which they said felt attainable with their 4,500 and growing membership. One of the main strategies to accomplish that goal was to host events across Idaho that focused on bringing parents, students, and teachers together and improve relationships. Another element of the PTA's work was to administer grant programs and award them to local schools and school districts. Some of the grants they had awarded in Idaho in recent years focused on: healthy lifestyles, mental health, technology improvements, and travel for members to attend the annual Day at the Capitol event.

Ms. Lorcher announced that 2023 was the first year of its scholarship program that awarded qualifying students with \$1,000 for tuition to attend an Idaho college or university and pursue a degree in education. Their National organization was working on securing federal dollars for increased access to mental health resources in schools and had advocated for maintained nutrition standards and enhanced breakfast and lunch programs. She wanted to recognize some challenges that stressed the education system in Idaho, most of which she attributed to economic conditions that made it difficult for bonds and levies to pass. She said symptoms of this were overcrowded schools, underpaid/overworked teachers, and high rates of teacher attrition. She suggested solutions be pursued that addressed those problems and improved education outcomes. Some of those solutions included improved compensation, creation of mentorship programs, training programs, and coaching for teachers.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Nichols** asked Ms. Lorcher how much influence PTA National had in Idaho. **Ms. Lorcher** said the national organization served in a role of support, while decision-making for the group was the responsibility of the State's chapter.

Senator Semmelroth clarified for Ms. Lorcher that the Idaho State Board of Education (SBE) had several alternatives to the Praxis test for aspiring teachers to be certified, one of which was a reciprocity agreement with other states that allowed teachers that were certified elsewhere to have their certification recognized so they were able to get back to teaching after a move. **Ms. Lorcher** expressed concerns about the certification process because the ability to test well or being a subject-matter expert did not necessarily translate to someone being a competent educator.

Senator Ward-Engelking said she shared a lot of the same beliefs that were highlighted in the presentation and appreciated Ms. Lorcher's thoughts on solutions for teacher shortages and other problems Idaho schools faced.

Senator Nichols asked to what degree PTA National's decision-making affected local chapters and their priorities. **Ms. Lorcher** said their national group just created the framework under which the local chapters operated, while they also offered grant and scholarships.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 3:57 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Linette Grantham
Secretary

Kieran Sprague
Assistant Secretary