

**Idaho Academy of Family Physicians  
2018 Legislative Report  
Week 3 January 22 – January 26**

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**Unemployment Insurance Tax reduction on the fast track:**

*UPDATE: This bill passed unanimously out of the Senate on Wednesday this week after a previous unanimous vote in the House. It now goes to the Governor, who is expected to sign it.*

Anyone who pays unemployment insurance taxes will likely see a reduction in that tax beginning January 1, 2018. It is estimated to reduce employer's unemployment taxes approximately 30% over a three-year period beginning in 2018.

Given the state of the economy and low unemployment rates over the last few years, the trust fund that collects this unemployment tax is flush with money as fewer unemployment claims have been made. Directors of the fund believe this reduction is sustainable into the foreseeable future without risking the fund balance.

**HB 338: "Idaho Health Care Plan" dual waiver bill hearing**

The plan to pursue federal waivers to partially address the uninsured held an informational hearing before the House Health and Welfare Committee this week. Chairman Fred Wood expects to hold a hearing for committee discussion and a vote sometime the week of February 5.

The waiver being pursued by the Department of Insurance would allow an estimated 35,000 people who currently don't qualify, to receive subsidies for the purchase of health insurance through the Idaho exchange. A concurrent federal waiver being sought by the Department of Health and Welfare would allow some of the more chronically ill individuals to be moved to Medicaid for their coverage options. The Department estimates between 2500-3500 individuals could qualify in this scenario.

Assuming the waivers are indeed granted, the estimated cost for this program is about \$29 million (Governor Otter recommended utilizing \$17.4 million of general fund money and \$11.4 million from the Millennium Fund to cover this cost).

**Medical Education:**

This week was "Education Week" in the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) which includes programs within the State Board of Education (including budget presentations for WWAMI, U. of Utah, and the Idaho Residency programs).

The coordination of presentations by Drs. Barinaga and Seegmiller (WWAMI), Dr. Chan (U. of Utah), Dr. Hagman (Boise Internal Medicine Residency), Dr. Aaland (Psychiatry residency) and Dr. Epperly (Family Medicine residency programs) painted a clear picture of the physician education "pipeline" and how those things work together to attempt to address Idaho's physician shortage. (You all understand this quite well, but legislators need to be constantly reminded and educated on this process and these programs)

### **Graduate Medical Education Ten-Year Plan:**

Dr. Epperly has previously presented an overview of the GME ten-year plan to the JFAC committee and this week focused on the beginning steps of that plan for this next fiscal year. A total additional funding request of \$5.2 million would be used to expand the Boise Internal Medicine Residency Program; Expand the Psychiatry Residency Program; and enhance the salaries paid to those residents and the Family Medicine residents in Idaho; additional funds would be used to lay the foundation for new residency programs at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center and Bingham Memorial Hospital.

Disappointingly, Governor Otter did not include full funding of the first year of the plan in his budget recommendation – including only a total of \$1.1 million toward the plan in his recommendation. The JFAC committee members now hold the key to determining the level of funding for this first year of the plan in FY19. Dr. Epperly, the Idaho Medical Association, and others are working hard to convince those legislators of the value of this first, important step.

### **Rural Physician Incentive Program (RPIP) presentation:**

An additional presentation from Susie Pouliot of the Idaho Medical Association and Mary Sheridan from the Department of Health and Welfare on rural physician incentives was conducted in the House Health and Welfare committee this week. The Idaho Medical Association is taking the lead on this initiative. Their original concept was to use this session to introduce the concept and pursue the matching funds in the 2019 legislative session, but a number of legislators would like to pursue those matching funds in this year's session.

As you know, the current RPIP program is funded through fees paid by state sponsored students through the WWAMI and University of Utah programs. The IMA is seeking state matching dollars for this program. It is a debt repayment program for physicians who practice primary care in a federally designated health profession shortage area. Up to \$100,000 of repayment over a four-year period can be allowed. Given the physician shortage challenge in rural Idaho, the IMA is in the process of drafting legislation for state matching funds for this incentive program at a 2 to 1 match from the state.

### **Health and Welfare Committee actions**

#### **Idaho Board of Pharmacy Pharmacist Prescribing Protocols:**

Both the House and Senate committees approved the rules drafted by the Idaho Board of Pharmacy for pharmacist prescribing despite significant concerns expressed by the physician medical community. The Board of Pharmacy is hosting a meeting to develop protocols to guide pharmacist prescribing practices and physicians are invited to participate. The meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 7, from 6:00-8:00 pm**, at the Idaho Board of Pharmacy, [1199 Shoreline Lane, 3rd Floor](#).

#### **HB 353: Immunity for Physician Volunteers**

*UPDATE: IMA lobbyist Ken McClure presented this bill in House Health and Welfare committee this week. After a number of questions, the committee agreed to move the bill for full House consideration with a "Do-Pass" recommendation.*

This bill will provide additional immunity for physicians and other healthcare providers who volunteer at community screening events. Currently, many physicians' professional liability insurance does not cover them for volunteer screening events offsite from their regular practice. To encourage more volunteerism, IMA is seeking limited immunity for volunteer activities.

**Legislation to watch for:**

Additional legislation is being considered on dental coverage for adult Medicaid recipients and insurers covering hearing aids for children.

Legislation to increase the age to buy tobacco products to 21.

**IAFP Legislative Reception:**

The IAFP sponsored a legislative reception on Wednesday this week that was very well attended by legislators from all over the state. It was a great opportunity for legislators to have individual conversations with family physicians, residents, and students. IAFP President, Jonathan Bowman, led a discussion that included some information in the economic impact of physicians in the state, and a good reminder of the medical education “pipeline” (because you can never remind them TOO much!), and another pitch for the desire to begin the process of the ten-year GME plan. Overall, it appeared to be a very successful legislative reception.

If at any point you would like to have more detail on any of these items, beyond these short descriptions, we would be happy to provide those for you.

We will continue to track issues that directly affect IAFP members.