

# Idaho Academy of Family Physicians

## 2022 Legislative Report

Weeks 1 & 2 January 10 – January 21

### **Welcome to the 2022 Idaho Legislative session!**

The 2022 legislative session convened on Monday, January 10, 2022 with Governor Little delivering his State of the State Address.

Unlike most states, the state of Idaho comes into this session with a healthy budget surplus above what the legislature had predicted for the fiscal year. At a record \$1.9 billion, the surplus is larger than expected and is an indication that the economy of the state is doing quite well despite the pandemic.

In his address, the Governor outlined his key policy and budget priorities for this coming year. Key priorities include continuing his efforts to strengthen education, provide tax relief, and invest in infrastructure such as transportation, law enforcement, broadband, and agriculture and water.

The Governor reflected on this past year and the many hardships Idahoans, along with the country have faced. In doing so, he acknowledged lives lost and thanked healthcare workers, educators, first responders, and Idahoans for their resiliency during these unprecedented times.

### **Key items of interest to IAFP**

Governor Little's budget proposal includes a number of items designed to strengthen health care capacity in the state:

Health profession education:

-Adds \$729k in 14 new medical residents to address the shortage of physicians in the state and continue implementation of the 10-year Graduate Medical Education plan.

-Expands the capacity of health profession programs at Boise State University (\$1.5 million) and the nursing program at Idaho State University (\$773k).

-Proposes \$10 million in the health professions building at the College of Western Idaho to increase the healthcare program's new student capacity by 64% for nursing, occupational therapy, and medical assistants, among other health professions.

-Returns a net of \$94.5 million of taxpayer dollars to the General Fund from the Medicaid program. The Governor's proposed budget also invests in Medicaid cost containment strategies such as enhanced staffing in the Medicaid fraud unit overseen by the Attorney General.

-Proposes reinvesting \$25 million of Medicaid savings into the state's High Risk Reinsurance Pool, which will lower premiums on the individual market by an estimated 7%.

-Provides \$5 million to **senior centers** to ensure essential services can be delivered across the state, and \$720k for respite services for vulnerable seniors.

-Enhances the **child welfare** system by augmenting staffing with 21 social workers and 3 psychosocial rehabilitation specialists, while providing a 7% equity increase for safety assessors and case managers, to address current staffing challenges in the child welfare system.

### **Health and Welfare Committees**

The Senate Health and Welfare committee began their annual rules review process. Senator Fred Martin remains the Chairman of that committee. In week two, the Idaho Medical Association organized a presentation to that committee focusing on physician and healthcare worker burnout and the effect of COVID in this regard.

The House Health and Welfare committee also began their rules review process and a couple bills were introduced (see below). Fred Wood remains chairman of that committee, and every indication is that he will do the minimum necessary to get critical and required work completed, he is not likely to tolerate frivolous or pandering-type legislation in his committee this year.

## **New Legislation Introduced this week:**

**H 446: Controlled substances, nabiximols**, by Rep. Wood, Sen. Martin

This bill exempts nabiximols from the definitions of marijuana and tetrahydrocannabinols under the state's Uniform Controlled Substance Act.

Nabiximols is currently undergoing the FDA approval process and is being studied for use in Multiple Sclerosis and other neurological disorders.

*Status: introduced in House Health and Welfare on January 18, awaiting hearing*

## **Looking Forward:**

The Joint Finance Appropriations Committee is scheduled to hold hearings on the health education programs next week on Tuesday, January 25 (Boise Internal Medicine Residency, Psychiatry Residency), Thursday, January 27 (FMRI, University of Utah, and Eastern Idaho medical residencies), and Friday, January 28 (WWAMI).

We expect to see a large number of bills introduced this year related to COVID, mask mandates, vaccine mandates and the like.

This year is an election year in which all 105 seats in the legislature will be up for election, as well as all the state Constitutional Offices. This will be the first election after the Dicennial redistricting process. Based on what we already know about members running for other offices, choosing to retire, and potential changes due to redistricting and election losses, we can expect a turnover in the Idaho Legislature to reach as high as 30% for 2023.

We look forward to working with the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians during this legislative session. We will continue to track activity of interest to IAFP and provide weekly reports throughout the session. We stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

Thanks,  
Ken Burgess, Partner  
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