

## 2024 Legislative Session – Week 1 Report

The 2024 Legislative Session kicked off this week with the Governor's State of the State address on Monday. The Governor's primary legislative initiatives includes \$75 million for the Idaho Launch program, \$200 billion over ten years for school facilities, continued investments in transportation and water, and an anti-human trafficking initiative. The Governor touted his budget proposal, with its 2.2% general fund growth over FY24, as one of the most fiscally conservative budgets in many years.

Although healthcare wasn't mentioned much in the text of the speech, the Governor's budget highlights included the following:

- *Reins in Medicaid spending by holding the state General Fund at prior-year (FY 2024) levels, while addressing needed provider rate increases and pursuing a work requirement for the Medicaid expansion population.*
  - Note: The General Fund will only be held at FY24 levels if the Legislature agrees with the Governor's plan to increase the hospital Upper Payment Limit tax assessment in the amount of \$58,331,600, placing additional taxes on both hospitals and nursing homes. This is significant because an agreement on the Upper Payment Limit was negotiated only two years ago, and the financial strength of most Idaho hospitals, especially critical access hospitals, has not improved since then.
- *Adds \$447k for 8 new **medical residency** positions to address the shortage of physicians in the state and continue implementation of the 10-year Graduate Medical Education plan. Approximately 100 new medical residency positions have been supported over the past three years.*
  - Note: This does not fully fund year 7 of the Idaho State Board of Education's Ten-Year Graduate Medical Education Expansion Plan, which called for \$859,500 to fund 14 new residency slots. Unfortunately, Idaho continues to rank near the bottom for physicians per capita, and these residency slots are desperately needed.
- *Provides \$806k in additional support for the **home delivered meals program** and to increase the reimbursement rate for congregate and home delivered meals by 25 cents per meal. This will assist Area Agencies on Aging that are experiencing shortfalls and waiting lists for this critical program for seniors.*
- *Leverages more than \$2 million from the **opioid settlement** fund to advance recommendations from the Idaho Behavioral Health Council. This includes investments to support behavioral health workers and increase their capacity, as well as increasing opportunities for treatment for targeted populations.*

The Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) began their work this week. This year, JFAC will implement a new process, which will include a short presentation of the proposed budget from the DFM analyst and then Q&A with the agency head/program administrator. They will spend the balance of the time in smaller workgroups, behind closed doors, doing the work of crafting the budget. In addition, JFAC will set budgets earlier in the session in an attempt to get budget bills through the legislative process earlier, with the hopes of spreading out the workload that accompanies budget considerations.

This week, committees got right to work with bill introductions and presentations. The first week saw a number of bills introductions on controversial topics, including abortion, school vouchers, harmful material in libraries (one leadership bill and one bill from the Main Street Caucus), and AI and pornography, with plenty of bills on these subjects and more to come. With a target adjournment date of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, legislators will work quickly this session to ensure that they can return home with plenty of time to campaign ahead of their primary elections on May 21<sup>st</sup>.

## 2024 Legislative Session Bill Tracking

Bill Number	Bill Introduction	Description
<a href="#">H381</a>	Introduced 1/9; Referred to House State Affairs	<b>Preborn children (Young, Skaug)</b> Amends existing law to redesignate the terms “fetus” and “stillborn fetus” to “preborn child” and “stillborn child.”
<a href="#">H383</a>	Introduced 1/10; Referred to House Business	<b>Medical liens (Skaug, Gannon)</b> Extending the time for filing a medical lien until after a citizen's health insurance has had the chance to process the medical costs ensuring that medical providers get paid a fair value for their services. This also modernizes the 1941 medical lien statute to make it consistent with recent Idaho medical billing statutes. This helps patients by making sure that those who have purchased medical insurance receive the benefits they have purchased while still protecting medical providers.

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