

2026 Legislative Session – Week 11 Report

The Idaho Legislature appears to be heading into its final week as it continues its customary late-session push on health and welfare issues. The most consequential development was the movement of H913, which would add community engagement / work requirements to Medicaid expansion eligibility and continued coverage, as discussed last week. The bill passed the House on March 23rd, was moved to the Senate on March 24th, and cleared the Senate Health and Welfare Committee on March 27th, leaving it positioned for Senate floor action.

H648, known as the “oral parity bill”, and pertaining to coverage of anticancer medications under health benefit plans, passed the Senate and was delivered to the Governor on March 27th. It’s worth noting that this legislation has been rejected by previous legislatures, making this a big win for cancer advocates and health care providers.

Child care has been a controversial subject this session, and S1419, which would have codified the existing Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP), moved quickly from introduction to a vote by the Senate, then failed on the Senate floor 11–23–1. S1428, the FY27 appropriation for Early Learning and Development, which includes the ICCP, reached the Senate calendar, but was returned to JFAC after the policy bill died. In lieu of another policy bill this session, it is expected that JFAC will add intent language to the appropriations bill to create more rules around child care subsidy grants.

S1435, the Medicaid Maintenance budget, passed the Senate 22-13 and it is headed to the House for its first opportunity to consider the bill. An earlier version of the budget died in the Senate, and a number of Medicaid budget bill have been killed by the House in recent years. S1435 included the \$66 million cut to Residential Habilitation provider rates, which generated the needed additional votes from conservative legislators to pass the budget this time.

On March 23rd, JFAC approved funding to restore Medicaid mental health programs, including ACT and Peer Supports, in the wake of four deaths of former program participants since the programs were cut on December 1st. The funds are one-time, so they are a temporary fix to an ongoing problem, but they are a step in the right direction. A bill number has not yet been assigned to the appropriation.

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee killed H916, the House version of the Rural Health Transformation Program legislative oversight committee. In response, the Senate amended its version of the bill, S1264, and it is now sitting on the Senate calendar. Whichever version of the bill finally passes, it will be one of the last bills to pass this session.

Looking ahead, the House has cleared most of the bills from its calendar, but several bills are working their way over from the Senate, which will require committee hearings in the coming days. The Senate has a lengthy Reading Calendar, including yet-to-be-introduced budget bills, but several legislators are projecting that the session could end by Wednesday or Thursday of this coming week.