



CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE

69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

John Esp
Dennis Lenz
Cora Neumann
Mike Yakawich

HOUSE MEMBERS

Melody Cunningham
Jodee Etchart
SJ Howell
George Nikolakakos
Melissa Nikolakakos

COMMITTEE STAFF

Milly Allen – Lead Staff
Maddelyn Black – Secretary
Maddie Krezowski – Legal Staff

MINUTES LOG

July 08, 2025
Room 137
Helena, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Jodee Etchart, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. Melody Cunningham (D)
Sen. John Esp (R)
Sen. Dennis Lenz (R)
Rep. George Nikolakakos (R)
Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos (R)
Sen. Mike Yakawich (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rep. SJ Howell, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Sen. Cora Neumann (D)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
Maddelyn Black, Legislative Secretary, LSD
Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, LSD

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

VISITORS' LIST ([Attachment 2](#))

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

09:31:42 Sen. John Esp, acting chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

INTRODUCTIONS OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

09:33:00 Rep. George Nikolakakos
09:33:15 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
09:33:35 Leah Hibbs, Executive Assistant, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
09:33:42 Maddelyn Black, Legislative Secretary, LSD
09:33:53 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, LSD
09:34:10 Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, LSD
09:34:18 Rep. Jodee Etchart
09:34:33 Sen. Dennis Lenz
09:34:48 Rep. Melody Cunningham
09:34:58 Sen. Mike Yakawich
09:35:22 Sen. John Esp

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

09:36:47 Nikki Davison, Budget Analyst, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 1](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:39:35 Sen. John Esp
09:39:56 Sen. Dennis Lenz
09:40:14 Nikki Davison, LSD
09:40:29 Sen. Mike Yakawich
09:40:43 Nikki Davison
09:41:20 Sen. John Esp
09:41:33 Nikki Davison

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS - Continued

09:41:48 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, LSD
09:42:29 Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, LSD
09:43:11 Sen. John Esp
09:44:13 Milly Allen, LSD
[EXHIBIT 2](#)
09:48:55 Sen. John Esp
09:49:46 Sen. Dennis Lenz
09:50:21 Milly Allen

09:51:21 Sen. John Esp

DRAFT INTERIM WORK PLAN AND STUDY ASSIGNMENTS

09:52:06 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

[EXHIBIT 4](#)

10:02:14 Sen. John Esp

Public Comment

10:03:09 Ingrid Lovitt, Shodair Children's Hospital

10:03:46 JJ Carmody, Logan Health Billings Clinic

10:04:21 Matt Kuntz, Executive Director, NAMI Montana

10:04:44 Jean Branscum, CEO, Montana Medical Association

10:05:16 Sen. John Esp

10:05:31 Duane Preshinger, Montana Hospital Association

10:05:48 Trent Bolger, Big Sky 55+

10:06:31 Coleen Rahn, Education Director, NAMI Montana

10:07:06 Christina Noel, Executive Director, Keystone Wellness

10:07:44 Jackie Semmens, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

10:08:15 Jennifer Hensley, Ability Montana, Montana Academy of Physician Assistance (MAPA), County of Missoula

10:09:07 Grace Decker, Montana Advocates for Children (MAC)

10:09:55 Dr. Jennifer Preble, Assistant Professor, Walla Walla University, Clinical Director
Keystone Wellness

10:10:22 Ella Smith, Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness

10:11:02 Heather O'Loughlin, Montana Budget and Policy Center (MBPC)

10:11:35 Stacy Anderson, Montana Primary Care Association (MPCA), Rocky Boy Health
Center, Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MTAAP),
Montana Academy of Family Physicians (MAFP)

10:12:26 Bill Warden, Lobbyist, Bozeman Health, Shodair Hospital, St. Peter's Health

10:12:58 Sen. John Esp

DRAFT INTERIM WORK PLAN AND STUDY ASSIGNMENTS - Continued

10:13:45 Milly Allen, LSD

[EXHIBIT 5](#)

10:16:13 Sen. John Esp

10:16:24 Milly Allen

[EXHIBIT 6](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:21:59 Sen. John Esp

[EXHIBIT 7](#)

10:22:56 Sen. Dennis Lenz
10:23:23 Rep. Melody Cunningham
10:23:50 Sen. John Esp
10:24:05 Sen. Mike Yakawich
10:25:53 Milly Allen

DRAFT INTERIM WORK PLAN AND STUDY ASSIGNMENTS - Continued

10:28:07 Milly Allen

[EXHIBIT 8](#)

[EXHIBIT 9](#)

10:35:19 Sen. John Esp

10:36:06 Milly Allen

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:38:14 Sen. John Esp

10:38:21 Sen. Mike Yakawich

DRAFT INTERIM WORK PLAN AND STUDY ASSIGNMENTS - Continued

10:40:27 Milly Allen

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:45:41 Sen. Mike Yakawich

10:46:55 Sen. John Esp

Public Comment

10:47:23 Ella Smith, Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness

10:51:28 Sen. John Esp

10:51:50 Jennifer Hensley, Ability Montana, Montana Academy of Physician Assistants (MAPA), County of Missoula

10:54:00 Kate Chowela, Montana Cannabis Industry Association

10:54:50 Jackie Semmens, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

10:55:47 Trent Bolger, Big Sky 55+

10:58:17 Matt Kuntz, Executive Director, NAMI Montana

11:00:05 Jean Branscum, CEO, Montana Medical Association

11:02:41 Sen. John Esp

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DPHHS)

11:03:35 Charlie Brereton, Director, DPHHS

11:04:45 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

11:05:15 Sen. John Esp

11:05:33 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
[EXHIBIT 12](#)
 11:07:58 Sen. John Esp left the meeting.
 11:08:04 Rep. Jodee Etchart designated as acting chair.
 11:09:43 Milly Allen, LSD
 11:09:52 Director Charlie Brereton
[EXHIBIT 13](#)
 11:11:46 Kim Aiken, Deputy Director, DPHHS
 11:12:30 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:13:04 Sen. John Esp joined the meeting.
 11:13:47 Dr. Douglas Harrington, State Medical Officer, DPHHS
 11:14:14 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:14:32 Chad Parker, Deputy Chief Legal Counsel, DPHHS
 11:15:01 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:15:40 Dave Gerard, Public Health & Community Affairs, Executive Director, DPHHS
 11:17:37 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:18:06 Jessie Counts, Human Services Director, DPHHS
 11:19:05 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:19:26 Rebecca de Camara, Executive Director, Medicaid and Health Services Practice, DPHHS
 11:20:36 Director Charlie Brereton

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:22:16 Sen. John Esp
 11:22:22 Sen. Dennis Lenz
 11:22:47 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:22:52 Sen. Mike Yakawich
 11:23:22 Rep. Melody Cunningham
 11:23:52 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:24:10 Sen. John Esp

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES - Continued

11:25:10 Director Charlie Brereton
 11:38:23 Sen. John Esp
 11:38:33 Rebecca De Camera, DPHHS

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:48:57 Sen. John Esp
 11:50:24 Sen. Mike Yakawich
 11:51:01 Rebecca De Camara

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES - Continued

11:52:05 Sen. John Esp
11:52:19 Director Charlie Brereton

Public Comment

11:53:03 Sen. John Esp
11:53:32 Heather O'Loughlin, Montana Budget and Policy Center (MBPC)

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:55:46 Rep. Melody Cunningham
11:55:56 Director Charlie Brereton

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY TOPIC WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE

11:59:07 Grace Decker, Montana Advocates for Children (MAC)
12:02:27 Christina Noel, Executive Director, Keystone Wellness

[EXHIBIT 14](#)

12:04:49 Sen. John Esp
12:05:30 Ashley Torres
12:08:48 Sen. John Esp
12:09:28 Milly Allen

12:10:02 **Recessed**
13:32:05 **Reconvened**

ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW PRIMER AND FIRST RULE REVIEW

13:32:20 Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 15](#)

[EXHIBIT 16](#)

[EXHIBIT 17](#)

[EXHIBIT 18](#)

13:32:33 Rep. SJ Howell joined the meeting.

Committee Questions / Discussion

13:46:44 Sen. Mike Yakawich
13:47:14 Maddie Krezowski, LSD
13:48:04 Sen. John Esp
13:48:57 Sen. Dennis Lenz
13:50:23 Sen. John Esp
13:50:48 Maddie Krezowski

ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW PRIMER AND FIRST RULE REVIEW - Continued

13:52:13 Maddie Krezowski

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:07:38 Sen. Mike Yakawich
14:08:08 Maddie Krezowski
14:09:03 Sen. John Esp
14:09:21 Maddie Krezowski
14:10:31 Rep. Melody Cunningham
14:11:04 Maddie Krezowski
14:13:37 Sen. John Esp
14:13:39 Rep. Jodee Etchart
14:14:00 Maddie Krezowski

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

14:14:44 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
14:15:31 Sen. John Esp

Public Comment

14:16:04 None

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued**Proxy Voting**

14:16:16 Sen. John Esp

Motion

14:16:53 Rep. SJ Howell moved to allow the use of proxies in the Children, Family, Health and Human Services Interim Committee.

Discussion on the Motion

14:17:40 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:17:58 Sen. John Esp
14:18:16 Rep. SJ Howell
14:18:21 Sen. John Esp
14:18:40 Rep. Jodee Etchart
14:18:58 Sen. John Esp
14:19:43 Rep. George Nikolakakos
14:20:18 Milly Allen, LSD
14:20:52 Sen. John Esp
14:21:11 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:22:03 Rep. Melody Cunningham
14:22:23 Milly Allen
14:23:09 Sen. John Esp

Vote

14:23:26 Carried 7 – 1 by voice vote with Rep. Jodee Etchart voting 'no'.

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION - Continued

Meeting Schedule

14:23:43 Sen. John Esp
14:24:05 Milly Allen
14:25:19 Rep. SJ Howell
14:26:01 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:26:32 Sen. John Esp informally stated committee consensus on committee meeting schedule B.

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

Work Plan

14:27:28 Sen. John Esp
14:27:41 Milly Allen
14:31:43 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:32:09 Sen. John Esp
14:32:39 Milly Allen
14:34:30 Rep. Jodee Etchart
14:35:54 Milly Allen
14:37:17 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:38:20 Sen. John Esp
14:39:21 Rep. Melody Cunningham
14:39:34 Rep. SJ Howell
14:41:50 Milly Allen
14:44:07 Sen. Mike Yakawich
14:44:27 Sen. John Esp
14:47:01 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
14:47:18 Milly Allen
14:47:53 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:49:04 Rep. George Nikolakakos
14:50:01 Rep. SJ Howell
14:51:00 Sen. John Esp
14:51:45 Sen. Dennis Lenz
14:53:59 Sen. John Esp
14:54:09 Jean Branscum, CEO, Montana Medical Association
14:56:24 Rep. George Nikolakakos
14:57:25 Sen. Mike Yakawich
14:57:30 Sen. John Esp
14:57:35 Rep. SJ Howell
14:59:38 Sen. Mike Yakawich
15:01:35 Jean Branscum, Montana Medical Association

15:02:22	Sen. John Esp
15:02:42	Jean Branscum
15:03:06	Rep. George Nikolakakos
15:04:03	Jean Branscum
15:05:20	Rep. Melody Cunningham
15:06:50	Sen. John Esp
15:07:18	Sen. Mike Yakawich
15:07:48	Milly Allen
15:08:22	Rep. Jodee Etchart
15:10:39	Sen. John Esp
15:10:51	Rep. Melody Cunningham
15:12:30	Sen. Dennis Lenz
15:14:27	Sen. John Esp
15:17:46	Milly Allen
15:17:51	Sen. John Esp
15:19:17	Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
15:20:15	Rep. Jodee Etchart
15:21:20	Sen. John Esp
15:21:36	Rep. Melody Cunningham
15:22:38	Milly Allen
15:23:34	Sen. John Esp
15:24:39	Rep. Jodee Etchart
	<u>EXHIBIT 19</u>
15:29:25	Maddie Krezowski
15:31:06	Rep. Melody Cunningham
15:31:42	Sen. John Esp
15:32:15	Milly Allen
	<u>EXHIBIT 20</u>
15:35:54	Rep Jodee Etchart
15:36:07	Rep. Melody Cunningham
15:36:34	Sen. John Esp
15:37:04	Milly Allen

Public Comment

15:37:40	Ingrid Lovett, Shodair Children's Hospital
15:38:23	Sen. John Esp
15:39:06	Sen. Dennis Lenz

ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS

Motion

15:39:04 Sen. Dennis Lenz moved to nominate Rep. Jodee Etchart as chair of Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee.

Discussion on the Motion

15:39:23 None

Vote

15:39:30 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS - Continued

Motion

15:39:57 Rep. Melody Cunningham moved to nominate Rep. SJ Howell as vice chair of Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee.

Discussion on the Motion

15:40:29 None

Vote

15:40:35 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:40:49 Sen. Mike Yakawich

15:41:10 Sen. John Esp

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 15:41:35