



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
Maddie Krezowski – Legal Staff
Emily McKay – Legal Staff
Jolanda Songer - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

March 09, 2026
Day 1 - Capitol Room 152 & Zoom
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.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <https://leg.mt.gov>. From the home page, select the "Committees" drop down menu at the top, then select Administrative or Interim, and the appropriate committee. The written minutes log can be located by expanding the accordion menu for the date of the meeting. Links to the audio/video files can be located by selecting the Video/Audio button on the same page, then the "past/current recordings" button. From there, use the calendar to select the date of the meeting you wish to view/listen to. The written Minutes Log, along with links to the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the Exhibits is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed. Please contact the Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for more information.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Jodee Etchart, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. SJ Howell, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Sen. John Esp (R)
Sen. Dennis Lenz (R)
Sen. Cora Neumann (D) – Via Zoom
Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos (R)
Sen. Mike Yakawich (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rep. Melody Cunningham (D)
Rep. George Nikolakakos (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Milly Allen, Lead Staff
Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff
Emily McKay, Legal Staff
Jolanda Songer, Secretary

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

09:00:09 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

AGENCY OVERSIGHT - DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DPHHS)

Organizational Update

09:01:05 Charlie Brereton, Director, DPHHS

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

Overview

09:02:17 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

H.R. 1 Implementation

09:03:42 Jessie Counts, Human Services Executive Director, DPHHS

(See Exhibit 2)

09:10:05 Rep. Melody Cunningham joined the meeting via Zoom.

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:15:46 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

09:16:30 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

09:21:54 Rep. Melody Cunningham

09:22:26 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

Rural Health Transformation Program

09:27:02 Rebecca de Camara, Medicaid and Health Services Executive Director, DPHHS

(See Exhibit 2)

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:56:50 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

09:57:15 Sen. Dennis Lenz

09:57:50 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

09:58:32 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

10:02:40 Sen. John Esp

10:04:06 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

(See Exhibit 2)

10:06:41 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

10:12:33 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
10:13:06 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS
10:14:08 Sen. Cora Neumann
10:14:57 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS
10:16:11 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
10:16:28 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

Technology Modernization Update

10:17:56 Jessie Counts, Humans Services Executive Director, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 2)
10:20:00 Carrie Albro, Chief Information Officer, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 2)

Montana State Hospital: Continuous Improvement and Recertification Update

10:29:45 Matt Waller, Health Care Facilities Executive Director, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 2)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:33:42 Sen. Mike Yakawich
10:34:06 Director Charlie Brereton
10:34:24 Meghan Peel, DPHHS
10:38:04 Sen. Cora Neuman
10:38:46 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

Forensic Mental Health Facility Update

10:39:49 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
10:50:25 Dan Villa, Executive Director, Montana Board of Investments
(See Exhibit 2)
[EXHIBIT 3](#)
[EXHIBIT 4](#)
[EXHIBIT 5](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:59:14 Sen. John Esp
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
11:05:08 Rep. Melody Cunningham
11:05:49 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
11:06:29 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

Olmstead Plan Update

11:07:07 Lindsey Carter, Senior and Long-Term Care Division Administrator, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 2)

Public Comment

11:12:26 Heather O'Loughlin, Executive Director, Montana Budget and Policy Center

11:14:46 Sean Thomas Conroe, Executive Director, Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors

11:15:23 Karen Harvey, Victor
[EXHIBIT 8](#)

11:20:03 Atty Moriarty, President, The Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics & Pediatrician in Missoula

11:21:32 Amanda Cahill, Confluence Public Health Alliance

11:22:42 Brine Quimby, Missoula, Access to Care Task Force for Missoula Public Health & Behavioral Health Advisory Council for Missoula County & the Community Living Task Force for Community Health Improvement Plan

11:25:42 Dandilion Cloverdale, Missoula

11:28:46 Matt Kuntz, Executive Director, NAMI Montana

11:31:21 Cassie Wick, Public Policy and Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator, Ability Montana
[EXHIBIT 9](#)

11:34:32 Jackie Semmens, State Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

11:36:36 Dillon Sarb, Catalyst Montana

11:37:23 Ben King, Rural Paramedic & Best Practice Medicine

11:40:09 Stacie Anderson, Montana Primary Care Association & Rocky Boy Health Center & Montana Academy of Family Physicians & Montana Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists & Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

11:46:24 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

11:46:40 Pam Boyd, Nurse Practitioner, Missoula

11:49:16 Julie Parker

11:53:50 Kristin Page-Nei, American Association of Retired Persons Montana (AARP)

11:56:55 Michele Hirsch, Valley County

11:58:13 Chet Phillips

12:00:48 Travis Hoffman, Policy Director, Summit Independent Living in Missoula

12:03:23 Leigh Bradshaw, Yellowstone County

12:05:45 **Recessed**

12:21:14 **Reconvened**

HJ 26 - GUARDIANSHIP ISSUES IN THE PATIENT DISCHARGE PROCESS

12:21:35 Amy Ready, Registered Nurse & Director of Care Management, Billings Clinic
[EXHIBIT 10](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 12:32:17 Rep. Melody Cunningham
12:32:53 Amy Ready, Billings Clinic

Public Comment

- 12:33:35 Sean Thomas Conroe, Executive Director, Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors (MDBoV)
12:34:38 Patrick Kelley, Alzheimer's Association
12:37:12 Rep. Brian Close, House District 65

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 12:38:55 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
12:39:25 Sean Conroe, MDBoV
12:40:12 Amy Ready, Billings Clinic
12:40:42 Rep. Melody Cunningham
12:41:03 Amy Ready, Billings Clinic
12:41:30 Rep. Mike Yakawich
12:42:00 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MATTER WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE THAT IS NOT ON THIS AGENDA

- 12:42:51 Joshua Sink

12:50:19 **Recessed**
14:08:36 **Reconvened**

AGENCY OVERSIGHT - ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW

- 14:08:48 Emily McKay, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 11](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 14:13:17 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
14:15:44 Emily McKay, LSD
14:16:19 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
14:16:32 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
14:16:50 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
[EXHIBIT 12](#)
[EXHIBIT 13](#)
14:17:01 Emily McKay, LSD
(See Exhibit 12 & 13)
14:17:48 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
14:18:13 Emily McKay, LSD

14:19:58 Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, LSD
14:21:25 Sen. John Esp
14:21:49 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
14:22:39 Emily McKay, LSD
14:23:35 Rep. Melody Cunningham

Public Comment

14:24:16 None

HJ 26 - REVIEW OF PROVISIONAL DRAFT LEGISLATION

14:24:47 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 14](#)

[EXHIBIT 15](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:45:12 None

Public Comment

14:45:37 Christa Gabriel, Policy Director, Disability Rights Montana

[EXHIBIT 16](#)

14:49:43 Rep. Brian Close

14:54:50 Susan Gobbs

15:03:22 Kristin Page-Nei, American Association of Retired Persons Montana (AARP)

15:05:52 Milly Allen, LSD

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:07:19 Sen. Dennis Lenz

15:09:39 Sen. John Esp

15:10:23 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

15:14:13 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

15:15:11 Sen. Dennis Lenz

15:15:57 Christa Gabriel, Disability Rights Montana

15:16:17 Rep. Melody Cunningham

15:16:50 Rep. Brian Close

SJ 48 - MARIJUANA PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY DATA: SNAPSHOT OF KEY SOURCES

15:17:46 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 17](#)

Public Comment

15:36:28 Ben Forsyth

[EXHIBIT 18](#)

15:41:48 Leanna Troesh, Safe Montana
15:46:05 Kate Cholewa, Montana Cannabis Industry Association
15:47:51 Jean Branscum, Chief Executive Officer, Montana Medical Association
[EXHIBIT 19](#)
15:51:14 Rep. Bob Carter, Missoula

Bill Draft Request Title: Marijuana Data Dashboard and Reporting Act

15:59:32 Rep. Mike Yakawich
[EXHIBIT 20](#)
[EXHIBIT 21](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

16:04:19 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
16:04:38 Rep. Bob Carter
16:07:06 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
16:09:27 Sen. Mike Yakawich
16:10:23 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

16:11:26 **Recessed**

16:34:32 **Reconvened**

WORK SESSION (1 of 2)

Additional Changes to HJ 26 1.2

16:34:37 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
16:35:18 Sen. Dennis Lenz
16:37:19 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
16:39:17 Rep. Melody Cunningham
16:40:30 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
16:40:50 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
(See Exhibit 15)
16:41:57 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
(See Exhibit 14)
16:43:31 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
16:43:59 Sen. Dennis Lenz
16:45:31 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
16:46:31 Milly Allen, LSD
16:49:37 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
16:51:34 Milly Allen, LSD
16:55:48 Sen. Dennis Lenz
16:57:03 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
16:57:58 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

16:58:19 Milly Allen, LSD
17:00:01 Rep. Melody Cunningham
17:00:22 Milly Allen, LSD
17:01:14 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:01:23 Milly Allen, LSD
17:02:15 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
17:02:31 Milly Allen
17:03:36 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:04:41 Milly Allen, LSD
17:06:31 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:07:19 Milly Allen, LSD
17:07:50 Sen. Dennis Lenz
17:08:38 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:09:49 Rep. Melody Cunningham
17:10:33 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:11:39 Milly Allen, LSD

Discussion of Today's Agenda Items

17:13:10 Sen. Mike Yakawich

Discussion on the Motion

17:13:39 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

Motion

17:13:32 Sen. Mike Yakawich moved for Staff to draft the Marijuana Dashboard and Reporting Act Bill.

Vote

17:14:11 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

Committee Questions / Discussion

17:14:39 Sen. Mike Yakawich

17:15:04 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

RECESS UNTIL MARCH 10, 2026, AT 9:00 A.M.

17:16:01 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart