



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

November 5, 2025
Capitol Room 137 & 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.

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rep. Melody Cunningham (D)

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

- 09:05:07 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. The committee secretary took roll.
- 09:05:48 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26: JUDICIAL PERSPECTIVES ON GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP IN MONTANA

- 09:07:35 Hon. Greg Pinski (Retired)

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 09:36:40 Sen. Mike Yakawich
- 09:37:15 Hon. Greg Pinski
- 09:40:54 Sen. John Esp
- 09:41:22 Hon. Greg Pinski

Public Comment

- 09:45:12 Kristen Page-Nei, American Association of Retired Persons Montana (AARP)
- [EXHIBIT 3](#)
- [EXHIBIT 4](#)
- 09:49:48 Aimee Grmoljez, Billings Clinic - Logan Health
- 09:51:30 Patrick Kelley, Alzheimer's Association
- 09:53:44 Rebecca Meyers, Montana Area Agencies on Aging Association
- 09:54:53 Laurie Glover, Great Falls
- 09:56:30 Jennifer Carlson, Former Montana Legislator
- 09:58:59 Theresa Baldry
- 10:00:32 Susan Gecho-Gobbs
- 10:05:24 Jan Smith, Billings
- 10:07:29 Travis Hoffman, Policy Director, Summit Independent Living
- 10:09:35 Nathan Stahley, Executive Director, Montana Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 10:10:55 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
- 10:12:32 Sen. Mike Yakawich
- 10:12:42 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
- 10:12:53 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

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

- 10:13:07 Charlie Brereton, Director, DPHHS
[EXHIBIT 5](#), Slides 2-3
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
- 10:15:05 Rebecca DeCamara, Executive Director, Medicaid and Health Services, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 5, Slides 5-12)
- 10:45:07 Matt Waller, Executive Director, Health Care Facilities, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 5, Slides 14-18)
- 10:50:48 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 5, Slides 20-21)
- 10:54:17 Natalie Smitham, Chief Financial Officer, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 5, Slides 23-26)
- 10:58:41 Jessie Counts, Executive Director, Human Services, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 5, Slides 27)

Committee Questions / Discussion

- 11:03:02 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
- 11:03:29 Sen. Cora Neumann
- 11:05:08 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:09:25 Sen. John Esp
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
- 11:10:33 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:11:53 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
- 11:12:41 Jessie Counts, DPHHS
- 11:17:13 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:17:26 Rep. George Nikolakakos
- 11:17:57 Sen. Mike Yakawich
- 11:19:25 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:19:41 Sen. John Esp
- 11:20:00 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:20:26 Sen. Cora Neumann
- 11:22:33 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
- 11:24:41 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
- 11:25:19 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
[EXHIBIT 8](#)
- 11:29:22 Dr. Douglas Harrington, State Medical Director
- 11:30:53 Sen. John Esp
- 11:32:24 Rep. George Nikolakakos
[EXHIBIT 9](#)

11:32:51 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
11:33:13 Gene Hermanson, Deputy Medicaid Director, DPHHS
11:34:44 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
(See Exhibit 5, Slide 10)
11:36:14 Rebecca DeCamara, DPHHS
11:38:51 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
11:44:55 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

[EXHIBIT 12](#)

[EXHIBIT 13](#)

Public Comment

11:45:53 Kiera Condon, Montana Food Bank Network
11:48:31 Heather O'Loughlin, Director, Montana Budget & Policy Center (MBPC)
11:50:36 Christa Gabriel, Disability Rights Montana
11:52:11 Amanda Cahill, Confluence Public Health Alliance
11:53:59 Cassie Wick, Ability Montana
11:55:32 Dillon Sarb, Catalyst Montana
11:57:47 Mary Collins, Policy Director, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, Montana
11:58:43 Ella Smith, Montana Community Action Network
12:02:25 Carrie Krepps, Executive Director, Florence Crittenton Family Services
12:07:58 Karrilyn Monroe, Founder & Director, Sukapi Lodge, Blackfeet Mental Health Center
12:09:32 Shyla Patera, Policy and Peer Coordinator, North Central Independent Living Services Inc.
12:12:35 Travis Hoffman, Policy Director, Summit Independent Living
12:13:53 Vina Little Owl
12:19:43 Sophie Albert, Executive Director, North Valley Food Band, Northwestern Montana
12:22:20 Nathan Stahley, Executive Director, Montana Chapter, National Association of Social Workers

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 37: BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS SERVING MONTANA

12:24:49 Jeff Folsom, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Center for Children, Families, and Workforce Development, University of Montana (UM)

[EXHIBIT 14](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

12:55:56 Sen. Cora Neumann
12:58:06 Jeff Folsom, UM

13:03:26 Sen. John Esp
13:05:36 Sen. Mike Yakawich
13:08:49 Jeff Folsom, UM
13:11:37 Sen. Mike Yakawich
13:11:47 Jeff Folsom, UM

Public Comment

13:12:18 Pat Noonan, Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana
(See Exhibit 14)
[EXHIBIT 15](#)
13:16:52 Sierra Riesberg, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana
13:21:44 Leanna Troesh, Mental Health Provider and Addiction Counselor
13:25:54 Kyla Hailstone, Director, Montana Family Court Awareness Project

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MATTER WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE CFHHS INTERIM COMMITTEE THAT IS NOT ON THE AGENDA

13:32:28 Dr. Megan Bailey, Licensed Clinical and Macrolevel Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist, Addiction Counselor

13:42:06 **Recessed**
14:21:39 **Reconvened**

AGENCY OVERSIGHT: ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW

14:21:48 Emily McKay, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 16](#)
[EXHIBIT 17](#)
[EXHIBIT 18](#)
[EXHIBIT 19](#)
[EXHIBIT 20](#)
[EXHIBIT 21](#)

Public Comment

14:26:11 None

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:26:27 None

Overview of Interim Committee's Role in Agency Oversight

14:26:39 Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff, LSD
[EXHIBIT 22](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:33:02 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

Public Comment

14:33:27 None

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 48: OVERVIEW OF CANNABIS REGULATION BY THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE (DOR)

14:33:43 Kristan Barbour, Administrator, Cannabis and Alcohol Regulation Division, DOR

[EXHIBIT 23](#)

[EXHIBIT 24](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:38:07 Sen. Mike Yakawich

14:38:39 Kristan Barbour, DOR

14:40:41 Sen. John Esp

14:42:08 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

14:43:23 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

14:44:30 Kristan Barbour, DOR

[EXHIBIT 25](#)

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 48: OVERVIEW OF CANNABIS REGULATION BY THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE (DOR) - Continued

14:47:32 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, Cannabis Laboratory Program Manager, DOR

(See Exhibit 25)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:51:52 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

14:52:18 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, DOR

14:57:37 Sen. Mike Yakawich

14:58:20 Kristan Barbour, DOR

15:03:16 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

15:06:03 Sen. John Esp

15:06:17 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, DOR

15:07:25 Rep. George Nikolakakos

15:08:19 Kristan Barbour, DOR

15:09:03 Sen. John Esp

15:09:15 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, DOR

15:09:59 Sen. Mike Yakawich

15:11:48 Kristan Barbour, DOR

15:13:45 Sen. Cora Neumann

15:14:45 Kristan Barbour, DOR

15:16:27 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

15:16:52 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, DOR

15:18:00 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

15:18:18 Kathy Wiegand-Palmer, DOR

15:20:10 Sen. John Esp

15:20:34 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
15:20:45 Kristan Barbour, DOR
15:21:50 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

Public Comment

15:22:27 Jennifer Hensley, Fidelity Diagnostics Laboratory
[EXHIBIT 26](#)
15:33:23 Kate Cholewa, Montana Cannabis Industry Association
15:37:41 Jean Branscum, CEO, Montana Medical Association
15:44:05 Leanna Troesh, SAFE Montana

15:56:13 **Recessed**

16:13:27 **Reconvened**

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 13: EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) AND LIABILITY

16:15:04 Emily McKay, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 27](#)
[EXHIBIT 28](#)

Public Comment

16:29:27 Julie Masolo, Registered Nurse, Townsend
16:32:11 Joe Mery
16:33:21 Charity Stephens, Nationally Registered and MT Registered Paramedic
16:38:20 Brody Verworn, Vitalogy EMS, Kalispell
16:39:56 Ron Lake, Dillon
16:41:36 Barbara Mutter, Three Forks Area Ambulance Services
16:44:35 Rand Dickson, Paramedic
16:46:27 Trevor Walter, Candidate House District 69
16:48:06 Sen. John Esp
16:48:18 Kerry Walter
16:50:12 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
16:50:38 Michael Bedick
16:53:54 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
16:53:52 Derek Hitt, Teamsters Local 2
16:55:21 Elliott Cole, Retired Army Flight Paramedic and Former Rural EMS
16:57:05 Elissa Johnson, Emergency and Trauma Nurse
16:29:07 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

17:01:37 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

Committee Questions / Discussion

17:05:30 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:07:42 Milly Allen, LSD
17:08:24 Rep. George Nikolakakos
17:08:53 Sen. John Esp

17:10:05 **Recessed**

17:13:45 **Reconvened**

Committee Questions / Discussion - Continued

17:13:55 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:15:34 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
(See Exhibit 2)
17:16:55 Sen. Dennis Lenz
17:18:09 Sen. Cora Neumann
17:18:46 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:19:02 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:20:54 Sen. John Esp
17:21:32 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:22:02 Milly Allen, LSD
17:22:20 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:22:34 Rep. George Nikolakakos
17:23:07 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:23:21 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:23:33 Milly Allen, LSD
17:24:42 Rep. George Nikolakakos
17:24:56 Sen. John Esp
17:25:39 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:25:48 Sen. Mike Yakawich
17:26:29 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:26:57 Milly Allen, LSD
17:28:11 Sen. Cora Neumann
17:28:28 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:29:10 Milly Allen, LSD
17:30:22 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:31:50 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:33:41 Milly Allen, LSD
17:34:37 Sen. John Esp
17:36:26 Sen. Mike Yakawich
17:36:57 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

17:37:23 Sen. Cora Neumann
(See Exhibit 9)
17:38:08 Milly Allen, LSD
17:39:55 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:40:44 Sen. John Esp
17:41:06 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:41:15 Milly Allen, LSD
[EXHIBIT 29](#)
[EXHIBIT 30](#)
17:43:16 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:43:44 Sen. Dennis Lenz
17:45:03 Milly Allen, LSD

Motion

17:46:45 Sen. John Esp moved to not spend the committee's time on the SJ 36 Study
(Study Dependent Neglect Standards for Prosecutors).

vote

17:48:03 Carried unanimously by voice vote.

Committee Questions / Discussion

17:48:19 Sen. Cora Neumann
17:48:50 Milly Allen, LSD
(See Exhibit 12)
17:50:35 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:51:40 Sen. John Esp
17:52:09 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:53:08 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:53:21 Milly Allen, LSD
(See Exhibit 8)

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 17:55:13