



HB424: Study of State Budget Process & Personal Services Expenditures

68th Montana Legislature

Room 110 Capitol Building * P.O. Box 201711 * Helena, MT 59620-1711 * (406) 444-2986 * FAX (406) 444-3036

SENATE MEMBERS

SEN. JOHN ESP
SEN. CARL GLIMM
SEN. JANET ELLIS

HOUSE MEMBERS

REP. DAVID BEDEY
REP. LLEW JONES
REP. BILL MERCER
REP. ERIC MATTHEWS

COMMITTEE STAFF

QUINN HOLZER, Assistant Director
JULIE JOHNSON, Attorney
GRACE GIBNEY, Secretary

March 15, 2024
Room 102
Helena, Montana

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Llew Jones (R)
Sen. John Esp, Vice Chair (R)
Sen. Carl Glimm (R)
Rep. David Bedey (R)
Rep. Eric Matthews (D)
Rep. Bill Mercer (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. Janet Ellis (D)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Katie Guenther, Fiscal Analyst
Julia Hamilton, Fiscal Analyst,
Molly DelCurto, Fiscal Analyst
Nick VanBrown, Lead Data Analyst
Jennifer Whitt, Secretary

AGENDA (Attachment 1)

VISITORS' LIST (Attachment 2)

COMMITTEE ACTION

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

08:32:25 Sen. John Esp called the meeting to order. Secretary took roll.

COMMUNICATIONS

08:33:52 Katie Guenther, Lead Fiscal Analyst, (LFD) presented proposed changes to the Budget Analysis. Asked for feedback on HB 2 Narrative and changes.

08:40:04 Nick VanBrown, Lead Data Scientist, (LFD) conducted overview of HB 2 online dashboard. Answered questions on difficulty of obtaining multiple years' worth of data within dashboard for better manipulation

08:45:25 Rep Bill Mercer asked how burdensome it would be to have data available for multiple years for both printed material and the dashboard for better data analysis

08:55:12 Sen John Esp provided overview of subcommittee hours spreadsheet

08:56:40 Katie Guenther, Fiscal Analyst, (LFD) presented data on government funds. Discussion ensued on best formatting for presenting data

09:14:25 Nick VanBrown, Lead Data Scientist, (LFD) presented update on HB 2 integration. Answered questions on language and formatting within integration

09:22:09 Susie Lindsay, Lead Fiscal Analyst (LFD), clarified contingency language within the fiscal notes database

09:23:43 Sen Carl Glimm asked how the new software will deal with amendments

09:25:47 Rep David Bedey asked about timeline of operational ability and fall back plans

PERSONAL SERVICES BUDGETING

09:28:03 Quinn Holzer, Assistant Director, (LFD) presented Understanding the Snapshot. Answered questions on vacancies and their impacts on budget

09:49:08 Jason Harlow, Lead Budget Analyst, Office of the Governor Budget and Program Planning, weighed in on vacancy and funding discussion

09:50:18 Rep Llew Jones added comments on FTE discussion.

09:57:45 Committee discussion held on the language of FTE explanations

PUBLIC COMMENT

10:10:08 Chris Dorrington, Director of Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), provided illustration/demonstration of FTE and budgeting discussion. Received positive feedback from committee about the effectiveness of demonstration.

10:38:43 Jason Harlow, Lead Budget Analyst, Office of the Governor Budget and Program Planning, added comments on the need of flexible budgeting for things like retirement payouts

PERSONAL SERVICES BUDGETING

10:44:11 Molly DeCurto, Fiscal Analyst, (LFD) presented dashboards overview. Engaged in discussion on language used and the ability to manipulate data within dashboard.

10:49:59 Sen John Esp asked how detailed the Personal Services dashboard could be

10:51:27 Rep Llew Jones stated that the description of flexibility within the utilization rate needs to be very clear

10:54:12 Rep David Bedey stated the tool is invaluable and provides the legislators with the tools to have productive conversations about mission requirements

10:57:31 Sen Carl Glimm suggested different language to avoid confusion on hours utilized and how that could affect budget

BREAK:

11:01:26 Reconvened at 11:10:37.

PERSONAL SERVICES BUDGETING

11:11:00 Quinn Holzer, Assistant Director, (LFD) reported on personal services FTE and budget flexibility alternative options.

11:17:14 Rep Llew Jones commented on need to change language for better transparency

TOTAL BUDGET REVIEW

11:21:20 Quinn Holzer, Assistant Director, (LFD) presented IBC Deep Dive Plan.

11:26:30 Committee discussion ensued on effectiveness of plan, extending committee meetings to another day, staffing challenges that could occur.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

12:12:52 None

COMMITTEE BUSINESS:

12:13:17 Rep Llew Jones recommended Chris Dorrington, Director DEQ, give explanation and demonstration to other committees on FTE

12:17:06 Sen. John Esp provided reminder that next meeting is in June

12:18:57 Rep. David Bedey suggested that agencies incorporate an explanation in budget analysis that explains vacancies in more depth.

12:20:06 Discussion on which numbers and differentials in budget analysis should be included

- 12:27:55 Rep Bill Mercer suggested circulating language from previous meeting with OBPP
- 12:28:56 Rep David Bedey and Rep Bill Mercer suggested making language and intent clear on why agencies will have more questions to answer. Legislators request more information for better clarification and decision-making abilities, not to interrogate or accuse.

ADJOURNMENT:

12:32:22 Sen. John Esp adjourned the meeting.