

February 28, 1979

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS:

A Human Services Committee meeting was held February 28, 1979, in the Capitol Annex room #20. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Holmes at 12:30, and all members were present except Representatives Stobie and Wyrick.

SENATE BILL #109 -- SPONSOR: Senator Ryan, District #19, introduced his bill and stated that it was from a request of the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences and local health boards. This bill clarifies the responsibilities of the person who does the health inspections as also the person who authorizes licensing. The role of the Department has changed from supervisory to consultation to local health boards. PROPONENTS: Mr. Don Bizzenie, Health Officer for Cascade County, pointed out what he thought were the two important concepts of the bill; one being, that since local health boards actually work in the field with businesses, etc., they are the ones who should be controlling licensing, since they better know the subjects, and secondly it would put local boards in a position of autonomy rather than so strictly supervised by the Department. Mr. Vern Sloan, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, stated that he was in favor of this bill with the proposed amendments he handed out. Mr. Bob Johnson, Health Officer of Lewis and Clark County, stated that he agreed with the amendments and that the bill will not change anything that is not already being done currently. He felt that the bill would merely bring the statute's language into a more current form. Mr. Ed Marsh, Executive Director of the Montana Nurses' Association, stated that they supported the bill and its amendments. Senator Ryan in closing, requested that the committee give this bill a do pass recommendation. Questions were given and answered.

SENATE BILL #175 -- SPONSOR: Senator VanValkenburg, District #50, stated that he was the initial sponsor to this bill requested by the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences and that he felt very fortunate to do so. This bill which he introduced would make it a mandatory requirement to immunize school age children rather than permissive as the laws currently stand. This bill is important he explained to see that in the future there aren't large outbreaks of diseases, like there have been in the past. Children are exempt from immunization only for either personal, medical, or religious reasons. Currently there are only about 60% of our school aged children who are immunized, which is a very low percentage. Passage and implementation of this bill hopes to bring that level up to over 90%. This bill provides for enforcement authority by use of injunctions and provides for civil penalties. PROPONENTS: Dr. Martin Skinner, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, stated that he supports this bill because of the reasons that the sponsor named and because it provides for a record keeping system as well as procedures. Problems have arisen in controlling diseases because of a lack of sufficient records explaining where problems begin. The following proponents stood in favor of the bill: Dr. J. Strickler, Mr. Jerry Leondorf of the Montana Medical Association,

Alice Armstrong, Mr. T. Carl Johnson of the Montana Association of School Administrators, Mr. David Sexton of the Montana Education Association, Mr. David Lackman of the Montana Health Association, Mr. Ed Mars of the Montana Nurses' Association, and Mr. Chad Smith of the Montana School Board Association. Questions were asked and answered.

SENATE BILL #331 -- SPONSOR: Senator Dover, District #24, introduced his bill stating that it was aimed at the 16 and 17 year olds who get married because of various reasons. This bill provides for two different sessions of counseling before they are granted a marriage license. This bill meets with a great deal of approval from various organizations. He felt that they are going to be stepping into something very big and should be informed of the responsibilities and problems they may encounter. It will give them much needed insight into the realities of marriage as something serious and not fun and games. Ms. Jan Brown, Montana Association of Churches, stated that such a proposal had been in their position papers for this legislative session. She stated that ministers from this group are willing to do counseling and will submit a list of names of all interested parties to individual judges upon passage. This additional counseling will not cost anything, but could save money later for welfare expenses, legal services, etc. Judge Bennett informed Ms. Brown that most couples that are pregnant, feel pressured into marriage. This type of counseling will show them there are many alternatives. He went on further to state that couples who would receive this guidance might in the future go for help before involving themselves in divorce.

The following action was taken:

Rep. Fabrega moved that Senate Bill #109 do pass as amended. This motion carried with a unanimous vote. The consensus of the committee was that Rep. Tropila would carry this bill on the floor.

Rep. O'Connell moved that Senate Bill #175 do pass. This motion carried with a 16 to one vote.

Rep. Feda moved that Senate Bill #331 do pass. This motion carried with a unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 by Chairman Holmes.

Polly Holmes

CHAIRMAN

A. Ratliff
SECRETARY