

MINUTES
MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
69th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION
COMMITTEE ON (H) EDUCATION

Call to Order: Chair Linda Reksten-R, on February 28, 2025 at 3:31 PM, in Room 137

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Rep. Linda Reksten, Chair (R)
Rep. Melissa Romano, Vice Chair (D)
Rep. Marta Bertoglio (R)
Rep. Lee Deming (R)
Rep. Pete Elverum (D)
Rep. Sherry Essmann (R)
Rep. Jamie Isaly (D)
Rep. Jennifer Lynch (D)
Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos (R)
Rep. Greg Overstreet (R)
Rep. Peter Strand (D)
Rep. Mark Thane (D)
Rep. Eric Tilleman (R)

Members Excused: Rep. Randyn Gregg (R)
Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe (R)

Staff Present: Laura Sankey Keip, Attorney
Caitlyn Sena, Clerk

Audio Committees: These minutes are in outline form only. They provide a list of participants and a record of official action taken by the committee. The link to the audio recording of the meeting is available on the Legislative Branch website.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing & Date Posted:

HB 631 02/24/2025
HB 663 02/24/2025
HB 734 02/26/2025
HB 745 02/26/2025
HB 771 02/26/2025
HB 778 02/26/2025
HB 814 02/27/2025
HB 823 02/27/2025

Executive Action:

HB 553 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 567 DO PASS
HB 573 DO PASS
HB 591 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 599 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 600 DO PASS
HB 602 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 606 DO PASS
HB 628 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 631 DO PASS
HB 663 DO PASS AS AMENDED
HB 669 DO PASS
HB 734 TO TABLE
HB 771 TO TABLE
HB 778 DO PASS
HB 814 TO TABLE
HB 823 DO PASS
HB 745 DO PASS
HB 343 DO PASS AS AMENDED

HEARING ON HB 663 - Revise education laws related to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Opening Statement:

- 15:35:45 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe (R), HD 39, opening statement on HB 663, Revise education laws related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 15:36:00 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe-R: EXHIBIT - <https://docs.legmt.gov/download-ticket?ticketId=7784ffb8-aefd-4ec1-ae8e-7d3c841d5968>

Proponent Testimony:

None

Opponent Testimony:

- 15:40:49 Hope Morrison, Lobbyist, Associated Students of the University of Montana

Informational Witness Testimony:

- 15:42:22 Joe Thiel, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE)

Questions from Committee:

- 15:42:58 Rep. Pete Elverum
- 15:43:21 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe
- 15:44:10 Rep. Pete Elverum
- 15:44:20 Joe Thiel, OCHE
- 15:46:02 Rep. Sherry Essmann
- 15:46:35 Joe Thiel, OCHE
- 15:47:00 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos
- 15:48:00 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

Closing Statement:

15:48:43 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe (R), HD 39, closing statement on HB 663.

HEARING ON HB 631 - Revise student online protection laws related to postsecondary opportunities

Opening Statement:

15:49:40 Rep. Curtis Schomer (R), HD 48, opening statement on HB 631, Revise student online protection laws related to postsecondary opportunities.

Proponent Testimony:

15:51:01 Brad Griffin, Executive Director, Montana Equipment Dealership Association

Opponent Testimony:

None

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

15:52:30 Rep. Pete Elverum

15:52:40 Rep. Curtis Schomer

Closing Statement:

15:53:17 Rep. Curtis Schomer (R), HD 48, closing statement on HB 631.

HEARING ON HB 734 - Prohibit dispensing of menstrual products in school male-designated restrooms

Opening Statement:

15:53:53 Rep. Lukas Schubert (R), HD 8, opening statement on HB 734, Prohibit dispensing of menstrual products in school male-designated restrooms.

Proponent Testimony:

None

Opponent Testimony:

15:55:01 Doug Reisig, Former School Superintendent, Self

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

15:56:24 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg
15:56:45 Rep. Lukas Schubert
15:57:50 Vice Chair Melissa Romano
15:58:05 Rep. Lukas Schubert
15:58:51 Rep. Eric Tilleman
15:59:21 Rep. Mark Thane
15:59:35 Rep. Lukas Schubert
16:00:59 Rep. Eric Tilleman
16:01:17 Rep. Lukas Schubert

Closing Statement:

16:01:31 Rep. Lukas Schubert (R), HD 8, closing statement on HB 734.

HEARING ON HB 745 - Require background checks for certain school employees and volunteers

Opening Statement:

16:02:14 Rep. Eric Tilleman (R), HD 23, opening statement on HB 745, Require background checks for certain school employees and volunteers.

Proponent Testimony:

16:03:24 Susie Hedalen, Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
16:05:49 Rob Watson, Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana (SAM) and Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools (CAMPS)
16:06:48 Debra Silk, Associate Executive Director/General Counsel, Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA)

Opponent Testimony:

None

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

16:09:19 Rep. Mark Thane
16:09:44 Debra Silk, MTSBA
16:11:27 Rep. Lee Deming
16:11:53 Debra Silk, MTSBA
16:13:00 Rep. Lee Deming
16:13:20 Chair Linda Reksten
16:13:56 Debra Silk, MTSBA
16:14:24 Rep. Marta Bertoglio
16:14:54 Debra Silk, MTSBA
16:15:48 Rep. Peter Strand
16:16:24 Debra Silk, MTSBA
16:17:27 Rep. Jamie Isaly
16:18:01 Susie Hedalen, OPI
16:20:28 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg
16:20:42 Rep. Eric Tilleman

Closing Statement:

16:21:09 Rep. Eric Tilleman (R), HD 23, closing statement on HB 745.

Opening Statement:

16:22:31 Rep. Jodee Etchart (R), HD 51, opening statement on HB 771, Revise university system laws to remove barriers to freshmen living off campus.

Proponent Testimony:

None

Opponent Testimony:

None

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

None

Closing Statement:

16:23:51 Rep. Jodee Etchart (R), HD 51, closing statement on HB 771.

HEARING ON HB 823 - Revise laws relating to the state plan committee

Opening Statement:

16:24:30 Rep. Brad Barker (R), HD 55, opening statement on HB 823, Revise laws relating to the state plan committee.

Proponent Testimony:

16:25:39 Sarah Swanson, Commissioner, Montana Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)

16:30:41 Jackie McBroom, Montana State Conference of Electrical Workers

16:32:08 Jim Wonnacott, Montana Building and Construction Trades Council

16:33:49 Amanda Frickle, Montana AFL-CIO, Montana Realtors Association, and Montana Chamber of Commerce

16:35:17 Jennifer Owen, Director, State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB)

Opponent Testimony:

16:37:58 Joe Thiel, OCHE
16:39:07 Laura Sankey Keip, Attorney, Legislative Services Division (LSD):
Announcement
16:40:00 Susie Hedalen, OPI

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

16:42:43 Rep. Jennifer Lynch
16:43:10 Joe Thiel, OCHE
16:44:21 Rep. Jennifer Lynch
16:44:33 Commissioner Sarah Swanson, DLI
16:45:36 Rep. Eric Tilleman
16:45:58 Jennifer Owen, SWIB
16:46:10 Rep. Jamie Isaly
16:46:46 Commissioner Sarah Swanson, DLI

Closing Statement:

16:49:27 Rep. Brad Barker (R), HD 55, closing statement on HB 823.

HEARING ON HB 778 - Generally revise laws related to homeschooling

Opening Statement:

16:50:51 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg (R), HD 78, opening statement on HB 778,
Generally revise laws related to homeschooling.

Proponent Testimony:

16:52:56 Steve White, Legislative Liaison, Montana Coalition of Home Educators
(MCHE)

16:55:31 Lance Melton, Chief Executive Officer, Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) and Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools (CAMPS)

16:57:30 Jessie Browning, Homeschooling Mom, Self

16:58:56 Trish Schreiber, Senior Education Fellow, Frontier Institute

17:00:32 Chelsea Culpon, Homeschooling Mom, Self

17:01:32 Kevin Boden, Staff Attorney, Home School Legal Defense Association

Opponent Testimony:

None

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

17:03:48 Rep. Pete Elverum

17:04:17 Lance Melton, MTSBA and CAMPS

17:05:01 Steve White, MCHE

17:07:37 Rep. Jamie Isaly

17:08:11 Lance Melton, MTSBA and CAMPS

Closing Statement:

17:09:05 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg (R), HD 78, closing statement on HB 778.

HEARING ON HB 814 - Require plans for school district reorganization

Opening Statement:

17:10:05 Rep. Fiona Nave (R), HD 56, opening statement on HB 814, Require plans for school district reorganization.

17:10:23 Rep. Fiona Nave-R: EXHIBIT - <https://docs.legmt.gov/download-ticket?ticketId=df02572e-50af-4f25-8fd0-bd605aeddb80>

Proponent Testimony:

None

Opponent Testimony:

- 17:18:16 Larry Crowder, Executive Director, Montana Rural Education Association (MREA) and Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools (CAMPS)
- 17:21:21 Lance Melton, Montana School Board Association (MTSBA)
- 17:26:53 Doug Reisig, Self
- 17:28:23 Dr. Molly Blakely, Superintendent, Hellgate Elementary School District

Informational Witness Testimony:

None

Questions from Committee:

- 17:31:01 Rep. Lee Deming
- 17:31:32 Rep. Fiona Nave
- 17:33:56 Rep. Lee Deming
- 17:34:33 Larry Crowder, MREA and CAMPS
- 17:35:40 Rep. Lee Deming
- 17:36:08 Lance Melton, MTSBA
- 17:37:30 Rep. Sherry Essmann
- 17:38:28 Rep. Fiona Nave
- 17:42:15 Rep. Jamie Isaly
- 17:42:46 Lance Melton, MTSBA

Closing Statement:

- 17:44:02 Rep. Fiona Nave (R), HD 56, closing statement on HB 814.
- 17:47:11 **Recessed**
- 18:34:49 **Reconvened**

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 553 - Generally revise military higher education act

Motion:

18:36:03 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 553 DO PASS.**

18:36:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

18:36:25 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 553 BE AMENDED
HB0553.001.001.**

18:36:28 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

18:37:35 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion:

18:38:09 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 553 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

18:38:15 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 567 - Revise education laws related to multidistrict agreements

Motion:

18:39:20 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 567 DO PASS.**

18:39:32 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 573 - Revise transformational learning laws to create a phase II grant program

Motion:

18:40:27 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 573 DO PASS.**

18:40:45 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 591 - Institute the celebrate freedom week in Montana's public schools

Motion:

18:41:37 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 591 DO PASS.**

18:41:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

18:41:52 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 591 BE AMENDED HB0591.001.001.**

18:43:05 Rep. Mark Thane

18:43:45 Rep. Peter Strand

18:45:12 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Motion:

18:45:58 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 591 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

18:46:17 **Vote:** Motion carried 10 - 5 in the House with Rep. Isaly, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Strand, Rep. Thane, voting no.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 599 - Revise student data collection laws

Motion:

18:47:38 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 599 DO PASS.**

18:47:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

18:47:48 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos moved that **HB 599 BE AMENDED HB0599.001.001.**

18:47:59 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

18:48:22 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion:

18:48:50 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 599 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

18:49:09 **Vote:** Motion carried 12 - 3 in the House with Rep. Deming, Rep. Essmann, Rep. Seekins-Crowe, voting no.
Rep. Deming, By Proxy

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 600 - Authorize emergency use of albuterol in a school setting

Motion:

18:50:28 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 600 DO PASS.**

18:50:40 Rep. Pete Elverum

18:51:11 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 602 - Require school district personnel to inform board of trustees of reductions in force

Motion:

18:52:20 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 602 DO PASS.**

18:52:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

18:52:24 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 602 BE AMENDED HB0602.001.001.**

18:52:49 Rep. Greg Overstreet

18:53:06 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion:

18:53:38 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 602 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

18:53:54 Rep. Pete Elverum

18:55:34 Rep. Jennifer Lynch

18:56:11 Rep. Greg Overstreet

18:58:05 Chair Linda Reksten

18:58:51 Rep. Marta Bertoglio

18:59:04 **Vote:** Motion carried 11 - 4 in the House with Rep. Elverum, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Thane, voting no.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 606 - Revise school district reorganization laws

Motion:

19:00:32 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 606 DO PASS.**

19:00:45 Rep. Mark Thane

19:01:10 **Vote:** Motion carried 14 - 1 in the House with Rep. Strand, voting no.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 628 - Revise early literacy targeted intervention laws

Motion:

19:02:26 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 628 DO PASS.**

19:02:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:02:33 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos moved that **HB 628 BE AMENDED
HB0628.001.001.**

19:02:48 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

19:03:21 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion:

19:03:57 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 628 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

19:04:16 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

**EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 631 - Revise student online protection laws related to
postsecondary opportunities**

Motion:

19:05:43 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 631 DO PASS.**

19:05:52 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

**EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 663 - Revise education laws related to diversity, equity, and
inclusion**

Motion:

19:06:48 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 663 DO PASS.**

19:06:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:07:03 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe moved that **HB 663 BE AMENDED
HB0663.001.001.**

19:07:14 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

19:07:40 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion:

19:07:55 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 663 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

19:08:05 Rep. Mark Thane

19:08:31 Rep. Pete Elverum

19:08:56 **Vote:** Motion carried 8 - 7 in the House with Rep. Elverum, Rep. Essmann, Rep. Isaly, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Strand, Rep. Thane, voting no.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 669 - Revise laws related to educating children receiving in-state inpatient treatment of serious emotional disturbances

Motion:

19:10:17 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 669 DO PASS.**

19:10:22 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 734 - Prohibit dispensing of menstrual products in school male-designated restrooms

Motion:

19:11:47 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 734 DO PASS.**

19:11:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:12:12 Rep. Eric Tilleman moved that **HB 734 TO TABLE.**

19:12:21 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 771 - Revise university system laws to remove barriers to freshmen living off campus

Motion:

19:13:17 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 771 DO PASS.**

19:13:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:13:30 Rep. Eric Tilleman moved that **HB 771 TO TABLE.**

19:13:36 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 778 - Generally revise laws related to homeschooling

Motion:

19:14:23 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 778 DO PASS.**

19:14:37 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 814 - Require plans for school district reorganization

Motion:

19:15:40 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 814 DO PASS.**

19:15:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:15:48 Rep. Marta Bertoglio moved that **HB 814 TO TABLE.**

19:15:59 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 823 - Revise laws relating to the state plan committee

Motion:

19:18:12 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 823 DO PASS.**

19:18:26 Rep. Marta Bertoglio

19:18:45 Rep. Eric Tilleman

19:19:21 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 745 - Require background checks for certain school employees and volunteers

Motion:

19:21:07 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 745 DO PASS.**

19:21:20 Rep. Jamie Isaly

19:21:46 Rep. Greg Overstreet

19:22:19 **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 343 - Require schools to provide religious instruction released time program

Motion:

19:22:40 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 343 TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE.**

19:23:44 **Vote:** Motion carried 9 - 6 in the House with Rep. Elverum, Rep. Isaly, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Strand, Rep. Thane, voting no.

Motion:

19:25:27 Vice Chair Melissa Romano moved that **HB 343 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

19:25:45 Rep. Peter Strand

19:25:15 **Vote:** There was no vote taken on this motion.

Motion:

19:26:38 Rep. Pete Elverum moved that **HB 343 BE AMENDED HB0343.001.004.**

19:27:29 Rep. Pete Elverum

19:29:34 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg

19:30:09 Rep. Pete Elverum

19:31:57 Chair Linda Reksten

19:32:20 Lance Melton, MTSBA

19:34:40 Rep. Peter Strand

19:35:11 Lance Melton, MTSBA

19:37:37 Rep. Pete Elverum

19:38:53 Rep. Jamie Isaly

19:40:15 Rep. Mark Thane

19:40:23 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

19:40:35 **Vote:** Motion failed 10 - 5 in the House with Rep. Elverum, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Strand, Rep. Thane, voting yes.

Motion:

19:41:35 Vice Chair Randyn Gregg moved that **HB 343 DO PASS AS AMENDED.**

19:41:52 Rep. Sherry Essmann

19:42:27 Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

19:42:43 **Vote:** Motion carried 8 - 7 in the House with Rep. Elverum, Rep. Essmann, Rep. Isaly, Rep. Lynch, Rep. Romano, Rep. Strand, Rep. Thane, voting no.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 19:44:35

Clerk: Caitlyn Sena

Additional Documents: