

**MINUTES OF THE  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE**  
Wednesday, April 24, 2002 – 2:00 p.m. – Room 416 State Capitol

**Members Present:**

Rep. Carl R. Saunders, Chair  
Sen. D. Edgar Allen  
Rep. Patrice M. Arent  
Rep. Trisha S. Beck  
Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson  
Rep. Patricia W. Jones  
Rep. David Litvack  
Rep. Rebecca D. Lockhart  
Rep. Steven R. Mascaro  
Rep. Carol Spackman Moss  
Rep. Paul Ray  
Rep. Mike Thompson

**Members Absent:**

Sen. Terry R. Spencer, Chair  
Sen. Peter C. Knudson  
Rep. Wayne A. Harper  
Rep. Jack A. Seitz  
Rep. Glenn L. Way

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Mark D. Andrews, Research Analyst  
Mr. Paul W. Hess, Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Catherine J. Dupont, Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Alicia M. Laughlin, Legislative Secretary

**Note:** A list of others present and a copy of materials can be found at <http://www.image.le.state.ut.us/imaging/history.asp> or by contacting the Committee secretary at 538-1032.

**1. Committee Business**

Chair Saunders called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.

**2. Interim Study Topics**

The committee discussed potential study items for the 2002 Interim.

Chair Saunders indicated that Rep. Seitz would like to study H.B. 314, "Combining Divisions of Substance Abuse and Mental Health" and Item 79, "Optometry Law Study." He requested that the committee list the items they would like to study during the Interim in order of preference.

Chair Saunders requested that the committee consider studying calcium deficiency in women, obesity, the uninsured, medical errors, and the restoration of dental programs, and that it determine whether there are aging issues that still need to be addressed. He also indicated that he would like to look at the shortage of nursing staff and the lack of caregivers in the state.

**3. H.B. 314, "Combining Divisions of Substance Abuse and Mental Health," by Representative Jack A. Seitz**

Not discussed.

**4. Adequacy of Nursing Workforce**

Mr. Gar Elison, Executive Director, Medical Education Council, indicated that the Medical Education Council was created to study the healthcare workforce. He distributed a handout of the Council's presentation, "Utah

Workforce Issues in Health Care." He indicated that various groups worked together to develop information and recommendations for the committee. He introduced members of each group.

Mr. Paul Jackson, Chair, Medical Education Council, outlined information from the National Health Report. He gave an overview of national issues affecting health care, including the current shortages of caregivers in the United States. He indicated that the single largest shortage nationally and in the state is that of registered nurses. He also indicated that the current challenge for the state is recruiting and retaining nurses and stated that healthcare facilities in the state are operating with a shortage of 928 nurses. He concluded that the council will work to obtain additional information and return to the committee with recommendations from the academic community, healthcare industry, and professional associations.

Rep. Lockhart asked about licensed nurses not currently in the workforce. Mr. Elison said there are about 1,300 registered nurses who are not practicing, but many of them are at least 55 years of age and essentially retired.

Rep. Lockhart asked if any of the state institutions have caps on enrollment in nursing programs.

Ms. Maureen Keefe, Dean, University of Utah College of Nursing, stated that due to the budget cuts to the nursing program for 2002 and 2003, the university had to cap enrollment in the baccalaureate program and was only able to admit 50 applicants for the fall out of 173, all of whom had strong qualifications. She indicated that not only is there a nursing shortage in direct care, there is a national shortage of nursing faculty. She concluded that in order to increase nursing student enrollment, nursing faculty must be expanded.

Sen. Allen asked about utilization of less-qualified personnel in hospitals and clinics.

Mr. Rick Kinnersley, President, UHA: Utah Hospitals And Health Systems, indicated that in order to maintain care, hospitals are being forced to use personnel that they would prefer not to use. He pointed out that hospitals have 1,000 vacancies for registered nurses, which obligates them to draw on other personnel as a way to staff. He concluded that hospitals are struggling with the fact that they are unable to get the qualified and trained employees they need.

Rep. Jones asked what the Council recommended to help mitigate the problem.

Ms. Keefe indicated that those looking at the issue would like to come back to the committee with a very specific set of recommendations and actions that they would like to see enacted over the next year.

Rep. Mascaro asked whether the shortage is a problem that can be solved by the market by increasing nursing salaries. Mr. Jackson indicated that while pay is an issue, in the majority of cases it is not the reason why nurses leave clinical settings. Mr. Jackson said that he would share additional detail on the issue from a study.

In response to a question about the effect of the shortage on hospital certification, Mr. Kinnersley indicated that no provider in Utah has been cited for failure to maintain adequate staffing. He indicated that he would

like to see salary and faculty issues addressed. He commended the Legislature for efforts made to fund Medicaid during the last session.

Chair Saunders requested that the Council return with recommendations on how the Legislature can help, especially in ways that do not require additional funding.

## **5. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Rep. Mascaro moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with Sen. Knudson, Sen. Spencer, Rep. Arent, Rep. Harper, Rep. Seitz, and Rep. Way absent for the vote.

Chair Saunders adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.