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## **GOP Child Support Decision Leaves Idaho Taxpayers to Pay the Costs**

*By Representative Melissa Wintrow, D-Boise*

Child support is essential for thousands of Idaho's children. Unfortunately, some parents refuse to pay child support. And the Idaho legislature is entrusted to protect children by ensuring that child support is paid by the responsible party.

However, House GOP members shirked their responsibility to Idaho's children and parents, by voting down SB1067, which updates the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA), enacted by all states in the mid-1990's as a part of welfare reform. Holding "deadbeat" parents accountable for child support payments was a major reason for welfare reform as it is a major cause of child poverty rates. My GOP colleagues have chosen to dismantle almost 20 years of programs and services designed to help eliminate poverty and hold people accountable for their actions.

In the waning hours of the last day of session, House GOP members voted down SB1067 for reasons including irrational fears and their hatred of the federal government, but cloaked in "protecting" Idaho's sovereignty. GOP legislators exploited political paranoia to advance their partisan values while ignoring 400,000 parents and children who rely on child support to buy groceries and keep their lights on. Simply put, they claimed that Idaho's state sovereignty was under threat because of this child support legislation. They claimed that the federal government is holding Idaho's children hostage. Nothing could be further from the truth. Once again, my colleagues are putting their own ideology ahead of the needs of Idaho citizens, and they are holding all of us hostage to their narrow beliefs.

SB1067 is simple. It's about collecting child support checks or garnishing wages from parents who refuse to support their kids. It does not open a door to enforcing laws from other countries; it does not uphold Sharia law; it does not require us to support any law that goes against Idaho or U.S. law. It is merely a way to enforce child support orders in the most effective and efficient way.

As a former Women's Center director who worked with hundreds of single parents struggling to collect child support, this is one more example from this GOP dominated legislature that has used paranoia and fiction to damage Idaho's families. If we do not come into compliance within the next 60 days, our state will lose 46 million dollars in federal funding and potentially 160 jobs. We, also, lose access to federal databases and tools to collect on all child support orders. And let's be clear, those databases are essential in locating "deadbeat" parents and getting an accurate picture of a parent's wages to assess financial responsibility.

By voting down SB1067, my GOP friends are putting the financial burden on Idaho taxpayers instead of the responsible parents. Currently, Idaho is the only state in the country to refuse to update UIFSA. As our Lt. Governor noted in a recent interview, "This is a little bit of a problem." While I appreciate the the Lt. Governor's attempt to shield his GOP colleagues from this colossal error, his comment is the understatement of the session.

This outdated approach to state governance continues to isolate Idaho and inhibits our economic growth. A little more common sense, rational decision-making, inclusive policies, and trust would go a long way to make our state more livable.