

Hello Sublette County and LaBarge, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from Cheyenne on February 20, the seventh day of the 2024 Budget Session.

Last night we worked until 11:30 pm, hearing eighty 2nd Reading Amendments to House Bill 1, the budget bill. This was the first time the full House had the opportunity to provide amendments to the draft budget that the Joint Appropriations Committee has been working diligently on.

I voted for two amendments that would support mental health services. [HB0001H2033](#) passed. This amendment would add money to the 988 Suicide Hotline trust fund to support suicide crisis intervention. I also voted for [HB0001H2045](#), but it failed to be adopted. This amendment would have put money toward a grant program to support mental health services in K-12 schools. Locally, our school districts have been pressed to support the amount of crisis intervention needed in our schools.

I voted for [HB0001H2003](#) and [HB0001H2049](#), both of which were developed to support law enforcement agencies helping border states deal with illegal immigration.

I did not support efforts to restrict how the University of Wyoming and its partnering universities teach health care professionals. Even though the state of Wyoming funds a large portion of UW's budget, I do not believe the Legislature should serve as the school board for UW. By law, the University of Wyoming is managed by a Board of Trustees chosen by the Governor. Wyoming primarily funds UW through a block grant, and then funds some specific entities at the University like the School of Energy Resources. In my opinion, the Legislature should not micromanage the operations of the University or the Community Colleges.

I supported [HB0001H2046](#), which would support a slight increase in Hathaway Scholarships. There has not been a bump in the size of the Hathaway Scholarships for several years, but the trust fund for the Hathaway has grown enough to support extra dollars going to students. This is an exceptional program that has helped thousands of students headed to post-secondary education.

Tomorrow, we will hear and debate 3rd Reading Amendments to the budget bill, and I expect another long day. I can be reached with questions or comments at albert@albertsommers.com.