

June 16, 2020

**Testimony to the Legislative Committee on Education regarding Agenda Item V,
Discussion on School Closures and Distance Learning Plans in Response to the
COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear Chairwoman Miller and Members of the Legislative Committee on Education,

For the record, my name is Alexandra Dominguez, Director of State Government Relations for Nevada at The College Board. As a partner working with students, districts, and education leaders across Nevada to provide Advanced Placement (AP) coursework, the PSAT and SAT, and other initiatives that prepare students to be college and career ready, we would like to share some recommendations that we believe are critical to ensure students stay on track and don't lose progress on college readiness and completion.

First, we would like to express our support for investing in universal high-speed connectivity and devices for students to continue their learning. This is a top organizational priority for us and we commend Superintendent Ebert and the Department for making this a statewide priority in their Path Forward Plan. Providing access to reliable internet and devices allows students to keep up with their coursework and ensure learning continues throughout the fall. Research shows that students with broadband in their zip code perform better on the SAT, apply to more colleges, and apply to a more expansive set of colleges.

This year, the College Board made the decision to offer AP Exams online for the first time ever because students overwhelmingly told us they wanted the chance to test, and we wanted to do everything we could to give them the chance to still earn college credit for the courses they worked so hard on all year. In an effort to address the digital divide, we established a dedicated 100-person customer service team at the College Board who directly reached out to and supported more than 28,000 students, parents, and educators to help get them what they needed—whether it was through connecting them to local efforts already in place through their school district, distributing devices ourselves, or connecting them with other resources.

We would also like to encourage the state to invest in expanding access to high-quality advanced coursework that can be done anywhere. Before COVID-19, there were already significant gaps in access to AP across the state. For example, 47 public schools in Nevada do not offer any AP courses, and of the 48 rural and small-town high schools in the state, only 26 have AP courses available.

Students and teachers are facing unprecedented situations amid disruptions in traditional learning. Teachers need online course materials, video instructional resources, through-course online assessments to measure learning, and training so they can teach effectively in blended and virtual environments. To help support this, the AP Program provides these tools free of charge to students and educators-- motivating

students to do their best for a chance to get college credit. These tools can help both strengthen and support existing AP instruction and make AP courses available in underserved schools where students may be lacking access.

Finally, NDE has been a great partner in supporting low-income AP students by subsidizing their exam fees as one of the allowable uses of College and Career Readiness (CCR) Grants. But as this pandemic has created historic unemployment numbers and many families are struggling now more than ever, we fear that low-income students are being most adversely affected across the board and there will be an unprecedented need for this assistance in 2021. We encourage the state to continue its support by dedicating CARES Act funds to cover these exam fees to meet the increased demand of students on their path to earn college credit while in high school.

The College Board stands ready to be a partner and resource to the state as you navigate these difficult challenges, and we look forward to working together for Nevada students.

Thank you for your time.

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