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December 15, 2022

Dear Esteemed Interim Finance Committee:

My name is Annette Dawson Owens, and I serve as the School Readiness Policy Director for the Children's Advocacy Alliance. I am here today to testify in support of several items on the Interim Finance Committee agenda that can improve outcomes for Nevada children and families.

The Children's Advocacy Alliance is a nonpartisan, statewide, independent policy advocacy organization. Our work is guided by four pillars: health, safety, economic well-being, and school readiness. Over the last two decades, we have partnered with decision makers and legislators to move the needle on key issues. Our work has contributed to an improvement in conditions through advocacy, policy, and resources. In keeping with this commitment, we strongly ask you to **support** the following investments in children and families/work programs:

[List H](#)

- 5 – Local library support
- 11 – Trauma informed services in schools
- 12 – Stop Violence in Schools grant
- 13 – Support schools with high percentage of low-income students
- 16 – education for homeless children
- 17 – English language learner grants
- 18 – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program
- 19 – Academic enrichment after school hour

[List G](#)

- 6 and 9– School nutrition programs
- 11 – Access to care for children with rare diseases.
- 16 – Low-income affordable housing project

On item H.71 - CAA is concerned about the use of TANF dollars to fund a virtual pre-k option at a time of economic uncertainty. According to [an analysis](#) prepared by the [Kiskanen Center](#) in 2021 , Nevada has seen the sharpest drop in real TANF funding per child among states since 1996, falling by 63.5 % due to inflation. NV Families continue to struggle with affording basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, and hygiene items. Have the families receiving TANF support been asked if this is a program they would be interested in for their children? Do these families have the time to dedicate to this virtual learning option with their children? Many parents are working 2-3 jobs and even 15-20 minutes is a luxury they may not have to supervise the virtual education . TANF funds can be used for childcare, transportation, food, and meeting the basic needs of children. CAA suggests these would be a better use of TANF dollars.

If \$2 million is available for pre-kindergarten, then we recommend allocating that money to existing in person pre-kindergarten rather than looking for new programs through an RFA process. Virtual learning may be an option for some families, and that option should be available for those willing and able to dedicate time to sit with their child for those programs. However, using funds from the temporary assistance for needy families does not seem to be a best use of funds.

We are grateful for your work and your ongoing support. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can offer additional information or if you would like clarification.

Much appreciation,
Annette Dawson Owens

EIN #88-0394078