

SHANNON BILBRAY-AXELROD

ASSEMBLYWOMAN

District No. 34



DISTRICT OFFICE:

7500 West Lake Mead Boulevard

Suite 9-486

Las Vegas, Nevada 89128-0298

COMMITTEES:

Chair

Education

Member

Judiciary

Natural Resources

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING:

401 South Carson Street

Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747

Office: (775) 684-8847

Fax No.: (775) 684-8533

Email: Shannon.BilbrayAxelrod@asm.state.nv.us

www.leg.state.nv.us

State of Nevada Assembly

Eighty-Second Session

October 23, 2024

Mr. Andrew Feuling
Superintendent
Carson City School District
1402 West King Street
Carson City, Nevada 89703-4554

Ms. Pam Teel
Superintendent
Lincoln County School District
Post Office Box 118
Panaca, Nevada 89042-0118

Mr. W. Derild Parsons
Superintendent
Churchill County School District
690 South Main Street
Fallon, Nevada 89406-3807

Mr. Tim Logan
Superintendent
Lyon County School District
25 East Goldfield Avenue
Yerington, Nevada 89447-2315

Dr. Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
Interim Superintendent
Clark County School District
5100 West Sahara Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada 89146-3406

Ms. Stephanie Keuhey
Superintendent
Mineral County School District
Post Office Box 1540
Hawthorne, Nevada 89415-1540

Mr. Frankie Alvarado
Superintendent
Douglas County School District
1638 Mono Avenue
Minden, Nevada 89423-4212

Dr. Joe Gent
Superintendent
Nye County School District
484 South West Street
Pahrump, Nevada 89048-2104

Mr. Clayton (CJ) Anderson
Superintendent
Elko County School District
850 Elm Street
Elko, Nevada 89801-3349

Mr. Dennis Holmes
Superintendent
Pershing County School District
1150 Elmhurst Ave, Box 389
Lovelock, Nevada 89419-0389

Mr. James D. Fossett
Superintendent
Esmeralda County School District
Post Office Box 129
Dyer, Nevada 89010-0129

Mr. Joe Girdner
Superintendent
Storey County School District
Post Office Box C
Virginia City, Nevada 89440-0138

Mr. Tate Else
Superintendent
Eureka County School District
Post Office Box 249
Eureka, Nevada 89316-0249

Mr. Joseph M. Ernst
Superintendent
Washoe County School District
425 East 9th Street
Reno, Nevada 89512-2800

Dr. David Jensen
Superintendent
Humboldt County School District
310 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nevada, 89445-2831

Mr. Adam Young
Superintendent
White Pine County School District
1135 Avenue C
Ely, Nevada 89301-2331

Mr. Russel Klein
Superintendent
Lander County School District
Post Office Box 1300
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820-1300

Dear Superintendents Alvarado, Anderson, Else, Ernst, Feuling, Fossett, Gent, Girdner, Holmes, Jensen, Keuhey, Klein, Larsen-Mitchell, Logan, Parsons, Teel, and Young:

The [Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education](#) (COE) spent a significant amount of time during the 2023–2024 Interim considering recommendations made by a variety of stakeholders to positively impact education in this State. Several of these recommendations were specifically focused on school district operations, such as visa programs, staffing, and recruitment and retention mechanisms. Resultingly, the COE voted on several measures the members agreed should be recommended to Nevada’s school superintendents:

- Encourage each school district that employs J-1 visa holders to apply to become a designated sponsor to help minimize holders’ agency fees. Further, encourage such districts to investigate whether an H-1B visa program might better fit their needs and better support visa holders who enter the State to teach.
 - Rationale: During a COE hearing that covered visa teaching programs, the members heard information about the ways Nevada’s teaching workforce is supported by visa recipients, particularly those in a J-1 visa program. Recipients of such visas face challenges though, such as bearing the burden of significant fees. As a result, some school district J-1 programs in Nevada are looking into becoming their own sponsor of an H-1B program in order to expand and diversify their program and reduce recipient fees. We encourage all school districts that utilize J-1 visa recipients to consider whether becoming an H-1B sponsor might be best for you and them;
- Request that superintendents work with the school district boards of trustees to provide the following supports for educational personnel: (1) providing salary incentives for those who stay in special education positions and other high-need areas; (2) covering the costs associated with gaining an endorsement in a district- or State-designated critical shortage area; (3) prioritizing the use of funds for targeted training of administrators in building systemic support for teacher efficacy and increasing job satisfaction; and (4) providing for longevity pay.
 - Rationale: The Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force (Task Force), an entity charged with identifying and reviewing issues related to building and maintaining an educational workforce in this State, provided recommendations for the COE’s consideration. Several of these recommendations focused on possible areas of support for educational personnel. These include providing: (1) funding incentives for personnel

who stay in special education positions beyond five years, as this is a critical shortage area in which personnel retention might be particularly beneficial;
(2) funding to cover the cost of gaining an endorsement in a critical shortage area to help ensure multiple subject area courses are able to be offered at each school;
(3) funding for targeted administrator training to help them reduce workload and improve work/life balance for themselves and the personnel they oversee; and
(4) funding to support longevity pay in order to maintain and motivate teachers who have remained with their school for a certain period of time, thus potentially increasing retention of veteran personnel;

- Raise awareness regarding programs that may assist in removing barriers for educational personnel. These include ongoing modernization efforts with the Nevada Criminal Justice Information System, which will streamline and shorten current licensure processes, like fingerprinting. Furthermore, raise awareness regarding federal grants that may help to support rural schools and rural educational personnel.
 - Rationale: Another recommendation brought by the Task Force related to licensure barriers, specifically the substantial amount of time it can take the Department of Public Safety to process background checks. To respond to this concern, the COE's recommendation is that information be distributed about the Nevada Civil and Criminal Information Systems [Modernization Program](#). The Program [received](#) initial funding in 2019 to modernize various services and systems, including fingerprinting-based background checks. The timeline for such background checks is expected to significantly decrease once the Program is completed, which should help to reduce this licensure barrier for prospective teachers. Furthermore, part of the goal of this recommendation was to briefly provide information about possible resources for rural schools and educational personnel, such as the United States Department of Education's [Rural Education Achievement Program](#), which provides grant information for rural schools. Another potential resource is the University of Nevada, Reno's [Rural Education Initiative](#), which offers stipends to student teachers who seek placement in rural areas of the State; and
- Encourage the districts to calculate the number of specialized instructional support personnel (SISP)—including school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers—needed to fulfill the ratios established by Nevada's State Board of Education and to advertise for all open positions based on this calculation.
 - Rationale: Finally, in discussions during a COE meeting on how to improve SISP ratios, one option mentioned was to increase the number of full-time positions available in school districts in order to align with SISP ratios. This area of discussion explained that in some school districts, it can appear as though the district is fully staffed in SISP because all available positions are filled, but the actual number of SISP employed do not reach the needed amount to attain proper ratios.

Thank you for considering the COE's recommendations and your continued passion and efforts to support Nevada's education system. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact the COE's policy analysts, Alex Drozdoff and Jen Sturm-Gahner, via phone at (775) 684-6825 or via email at Alex.Drozdoff@lcb.state.nv.us or Jen.Sturm@lcb.state.nv.us.

School District Superintendents

Page 4

October 23, 2024

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair
Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education

SBA/cr:W242565

cc: Mary Pierzynski, Representative, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Asher Killian, Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB)
Cameron Newton, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, LCB
James Malone, Principal Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, LCB
Alex Drozdoff, Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB
Jennifer A. Sturm-Gahner, Senior Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB