

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

The Honorable Joe Lombardo
Governor of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4786

Incoming Chair
Senate Committee on Finance

Incoming Chair
Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Governor Lombardo and Incoming Chairs:

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. Though the COE is a policy committee, policy and funding discussions in education often overlap, and several of the recommendations the COE considered related to funding topics. Resultingly, the COE voted on several measures that the members agreed should be priority items for budget consideration:

- Support efforts that might increase the production and retention of specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) in Nevada. Specifically, the COE voted to encourage funding to increase the number of school psychologist graduate education programs offered by Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions as well as to increase the size of the programs currently offered. Furthermore, encourage incentives for SISP who remain employed in Nevada, and encourage the allocation of additional funding for scholarships to increase the number of qualified SISP to ensure students have equitable access to qualified service providers.
 - Rationale: During the interim, one topic that particularly concerned the COE was the lack of SISP, such as school psychologists, in Nevada. Specifically, the 2022 ratios for school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors to students, respectively, were presented as 1:1,866, 1:8,730, and 1:544 (recommended ratios for these professionals are 1:500, 1:250, and 1:250, respectively). The COE also heard, at the time of the meeting, there was only one active school psychology program in the State at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. A second program at Nevada State University accepted its first cohort this fall. When discussing the barriers to

increasing the number of SISP, particularly school psychologists, one presenter highlighted the limited number of higher education programs in the State and its impact on the SISP career pipeline. Resultingly, the COE voted unanimously to encourage funding efforts and program implementation from the NSHE that might increase the number of SISP in Nevada;

- Encourage funding to support Nevada's educational personnel, specifically through providing continuing support for the teacher advancement scholarships and State General Fund appropriations to supplement the current funding structure to support the Home Is Possible for Teachers program.
 - Rationale: The Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force, a body charged with evaluating the challenges of attracting and retaining educational personnel in the State, offered multiple recommendations to the COE in this regard. First, the Task Force recommended increasing funding for teacher advancement scholarships so cost would not be a prohibitive factor in Nevada's educational personnel seeking to attain additional qualifications to fill hard-to-staff areas in the State. The Task Force expects such an investment will result in an increase in retention of a diverse body of education. Furthermore, concerning the Home Is Possible for Teachers program, the Task Force noted the current funding structure of the Program, combined with rising house costs, results in decreases to the amount of funding advocated to each teacher. The Task Force recommended providing State funds to help support the Program to mitigate housing cost as a barrier for teachers;
- Encourage increased funding for the Nevada Institute on Teaching and Educator Preparation (NITEP) in order to support NITEP's expansion efforts to community colleges in the State.
 - Rationale: A recurrent topic of interest for the COE is Nevada's teacher pipeline efforts. To this effect, the COE heard a presentation from NITEP, which provides an array of support to Nevada's teacher pipeline, including through professional development, wraparound supports and engagement, and microcredentialing. Discussion during this presentation included a recommendation that NITEP expand to two-year colleges, as they are an important aspect of the teacher pipeline that do not always get included. In considering the different pathways people may take to receive a degree, rather than focusing only on the major portion of a degree path, NITEP might be able to expand its pipeline efforts; and
- Encourage a consideration of funding to school districts and charter schools to access artificial intelligence (AI) platforms to support daily work responsibilities for both teachers and administrators.
 - Rationale: One of the COE's considerations this interim was educational personnel workload, including recommendations that might help to reduce it. One recommendation that emerged in this regard was to encourage administrators to consider how AI might be used to help support educational personnel, particularly in regard to workload and time-saving opportunities, such as creation and production of resources. An important caveat to this discussion, though, was the recognition that while large AI platforms that

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could support an entire district do exist, they would come with a financial cost.

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.

Sincerely,

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

SBA/cr:W242564

cc: Ryan Cherry, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Madeline S. Burak, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor
Amy Stephenson, Director, Office of Finance, Office of the Governor
Wayne Thorley, Senate Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB)
Sarah Coffman, Assembly Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, LCB
Asher Killian, Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, 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