

- My name is Victor Wakefield, and I serve as the Executive Director of Teach For America, Las Vegas Valley. I also serve on a number of local education committees (including the Lincy Institute Education Collaborative Advisory Board, and co-chair the education advisory group for the Downtown Achieves Initiative).
- In my capacity at Teach For America, I support nearly 300 first and second year pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who teach across 60 title 1 qualifying school sites. 68% of our teachers provide instruction in district-identified high-need subject areas (special education, secondary stem, and secondary English), and 45% of our teachers identify as people of color. In addition, I support nearly 200 alumni in the Las Vegas Valley in the broader community effort to improve education
- I enter this conversation looking at educational issues through the lens of our families, kids, and communities with the greatest needs and who are most chronically underserved by our school system.
- We believe that the conversation around funding for P-12 education in the state of Nevada is incredibly important. It directly reflects the priority that we place on education as a state. We are excited to be engaged at this moment in time when Nevada is considering investing more in education overall.
- One of the most important functions of a state funding system is that it distributes funds in a way that is aligned to the needs of our kids. Accounting for the factors that this task force is exploring: concentrated student poverty, English Language Learners, and special education matter a great deal in the effort to ensure equal educational opportunity.
- **Currently, Nevada ranks #50 in the nation when it comes to state funding distribution which accounts for student poverty, and that is not OK.**
- To risk using technical language – but considering this committee’s level of expertise – the 2014 School Fairness report card found that Nevada has the **most** regressive funding allocation of any state. Meaning, we send more state dollars, on average, to kids farther above the poverty line than we do for kids at or below the poverty

line. This has to change. ([http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National\\_Report\\_Card\\_2014.pdf](http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National_Report_Card_2014.pdf))

- We are not experts in the highly technical aspects of school finance or funding, and are not well-positioned to advocate for specific “weightings” in school funding formulas per sub-groups of students or to engage on some of the very technical aspects of this topic. In fact, I recognize how hard and nuanced these decisions are.
- That said, one does not have to be an expert in school funding to know that we must come up with a better approach to funding distribution than what exists today. Our current outcomes for students in poverty and our English Language learners in the state underscore how important it is to focus on this issue and get it right.
- I do want to underscore what it means for me to be in front of this technical committee today. Teach For America operates in 46 unique communities across the country, and we are incredibly careful around making policy related statements since what I say publically in Nevada impacts my colleagues in other states.
- But it is logical, non-controversial, and morally right to suggest that our resource allocation should match the needs of our kids and it is time for our state systems to evolve.
- This is **step 1** of many in this effort to better fund our system. Let’s get this step right.
- I applaud you all for your leadership on this front and simply ask that we all operate with clarity and courage. We must ensure that the recommended changes in how we distribute funding match the enormity of the challenges facing our kids in poverty, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities.
- Thank you.