

- Chair Woodhouse and Committee
- For the record, my name is Victor Wakefield, and I serve as the Executive Director of Teach For America, Las Vegas Valley.
- I am here today to speak to the need for appropriate level of **urgency, clarity, and a long-range view** in this decision making process.
- First, relating to **urgency**, I would like to reinforce my testimony from your May 21<sup>st</sup> 2014 meeting when I made reference to the 2014 School Fairness report card that found Nevada to have the most regressive funding allocation of any state.<sup>1</sup> 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. Our system of distribution was designed when we had a fundamentally different set of needs and the time has long past since our funding formula served its intended purpose. It's critical that we make change that is transformational, not incremental.
- Next, I want to speak towards **gaining clarity**. I applaud this committee's work to get as clear as possible on the appropriate recommendations. During a time of adaptive change, clarity of principle is critical. We need recommendations based on facts, research, and need, not politics. I applaud your orientation to studying trends from other states that have more progressive funding distributions. I support your work to study local interventions that are working in supporting our kids who are high poverty, English Language Learner, and children with disabilities. And in particular, I support your careful consideration of the body of research which points to the additional barriers our kids in poverty, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities face. The simple reality is that kids with additional barriers require additional resources and supports to have an equal playing field.

- You are the subject area experts and leaders in this work and your recommendations and rationale for those recommendations sets the bar for the rest of this process. Please root your recommendations in what is right and just, not where we have political appetite. Others can sort out that piece later – we need your expertise and clarity.
- And third, relating to the **long-range view**: we cannot talk about how we apply weights to funds (how we slice the pie) without the other conversation about adequacy and the appropriate size of the pie. I understand that is not your focus as a committee, but I think it's critical to create the framework of understanding so that as a community we move forward with clarity and understanding.
- According to the National Report Card on School Funding Fairness, the dimensions to consider when discussing funding fairness include: 1. Funding Level, 2. Funding Distribution, 3. Funding Effort, and 4. Funding Coverage. Your recommendation is the first step of many in this effort to better align our funding. Let's get this step right. Next we need to study the adequate funding level our kids need to be successful; and equally important we need to ensure our policies and systems, structures, and people are well aligned to the need.
- When we stop and reflect on why this all matters – especially when considering our current outcomes for kids in poverty and English Language learners – we have no choice but to get this right.
- To close, I want to highlight a quick observation on the current dialogue around Nevada education, and funding in particular.
- I've observed an unprecedented level of support and coalition on this issue. I stand proudly as an ally of the Latino Leadership Council, Clark County Black Caucus, as well as a partner with other leaders on the ground like Communities In Schools and Three Square Food Bank, and thought-leaders like the Lincy Institute. It's also encouraging to see the incredible level of coordination and communication with the Clark County School District.

- I applaud you all for your leadership on this front and ask that we all operate with clarity, urgency, and a long-term view. Our students and families deserve it.
- Thank you.