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# Senate Bill 236—STEM Advisory Council

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**REMARKS BY SENATOR JOYCE WOODHOUSE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
APRIL 14, 2015**

Good afternoon, Mister Chair and Members of the Committee. For the record, I am Joyce Woodhouse, representing Senate District 5 in Clark County. I am here today to introduce Senate Bill 236, which, for the next biennium only, expands the activity of Nevada's STEM Advisory Council.

As you know, STEM is an abbreviation for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. You have heard often that STEM education is essential to Nevada's economic development and diversification, because a significant proportion of the new jobs being created in our state require postsecondary technical education.

In recognition of the need to advance the STEM agenda in Nevada, the 2013 Nevada Legislature created the STEM Advisory Council and charged it with developing a strategic plan; making programmatic recommendations; applying for grants; and developing a plan to identify and recognize students and schools demonstrating exemplary achievement in STEM. The Council must complete all its work before its statutory sunset in June of 2017.

The STEM Council has engaged an outstanding group of stakeholders that have been very active over the past year. They have:

- Developed and distributed a STEM education survey, and compiled responses from nearly 2,000 STEM educators;
- Created a scoring rubric for the recognition of high performing STEM students and schools; and
- Issued a request for applications and identified a nonprofit agency to act as the fiscal agent for the Council's grant writing activities.

In the course of completing its work this past year, the Council has come to realize that additional effort and resources will be necessary to fulfill its mission by June of 2017. As I attended several Council and sub-committee meetings, it was apparent to me that some face-to-face meetings were necessary. Senate Bill 236 meets these needs, in two ways:

First, it requires the Council meet at least six times each year. This is an increase from the current limit of four meetings per year, but only two of the required six meetings must be in person; the remaining meetings can be conducted by videoconference. I anticipate a fiscal note for this portion of the bill.

Second, as I mentioned earlier, the legislation creating the Council required it to develop a plan for the recognition of outstanding STEM students and schools. Senate Bill 236 recommends two student recognition events to be held

at NSHE institutions, one in the north and one in the south, and a single, statewide school recognition event to be held in Carson City.

Senate Bill 236 requires that these events occur, and includes a nominal \$5,000 annual appropriation from the State General Fund to support the statewide school recognition event for the next two years. The first reprint of S.B. 236 includes language providing for gifts and donations being accepted for these events.

The Council will still be required to complete its work by June 2017, and will still sunset at the end of the next Biennium. The requirements and resources provided in S.B. 236 simply empower the Council to successfully fulfill its mission.

This Legislature had the foresight to create the STEM Advisory Council before Tesla decided to come to our State, before Switch decided to open two massive data centers in Nevada, and before numerous other technology-based businesses decided to move or expand here. All this makes the Council's mission even more vital.

Mister Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for your commitment to STEM education and, I hope, for supporting S.B. 236. That concludes my remarks, and I am happy to answer any questions. Also, in Las Vegas Sharon Pearson, a STEM elementary school teacher and member of the Council is prepared to share her testimony with you.