



University of Nevada, Reno

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March 29, 2021

TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Amy Pason, Chair
2020-21 Faculty Senate

SUBJECT: SB 287 Opposition Testimony (Hearing March 31, 2021)

Chair Denis,

I'm writing on behalf of the faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno in my capacity as Faculty Senate Chair. The Faculty Senate is the elected body representing all administrative and academic faculty at the University. This includes faculty serving Nevadans as part of the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension, and the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources—all units that would be directly impacted by the changes proposed in SB 287. It is on behalf of these faculty that I **oppose SB 287**.

As the land grant institution of Nevada, the University of Nevada, Reno has worked to fulfil that mission by providing the required agricultural, mechanical, and natural science related research and education that defines land grant institutions. Federal funding given to land grant institutions is specific to this mission and works in concert: funding from the Hatch Act specific to the establishment and research of Agricultural Experiment Stations is augmented by the Smith-Lever Act funding for Extension educators to bring that knowledge to all counties in the state. This bill aims to sever the relationship between research and education that is central to land grant institutions.

In our nearly 150 years as an institution, specific programs devoted to our land grant mission have developed successful, well-established methods for understanding and meeting the needs of Nevada with locally-driven programs. Extension educators, in particular, who live and work in the counties they serve, have deep connections with community partners, youth programs, and County Commissioners whom they work in collaboration to meet the ever-changing needs of local areas. Instead of looking to improve, expand, and build on these successes, **SB 287 aims to divide and reorganize**, forcing some counties to start from scratch to deliver programming to communities or assess community needs.

When a similar bill was proposed in 2017, Extension educators recognized that creating separate regions, instead of one, unified entity, could inhibit the programming they could provide. Different programs and initiatives extend across north/south county lines, thus, educators working together from the same institution (even if working in different counties) can better collaborate to obtain grants and

funding, and stretch that money farther to directly serve communities. One unified Extension program can be more effective and efficient—or offer a better return on investment—in providing statewide programming such as 4-H, Living with Fire, Master Gardener programs, or Radon Education (to name a few). The reorganization proposed in **SB 287 could disrupt or eliminate some of these programs** in some counties while new infrastructure is being developed.

Faculty at UNR are at a loss on what SB 287 would do to improve research, education, or Cooperative Extension work. **Research and education flourishes through collaboration.** Faculty at UNR and UNLV have been collaborating on research and obtaining grants on projects related to youth development, nutrition, urban horticulture, and food production (again, to name a few). Some faculty at DRI are already affiliated with UNR specific to their research and expertise. Faculty are already working together, building on strengths and expertise. Certainly, we can do more collaboration; faculty with research or community engagement interests related to the UNR's land grant mission can work collaboratively with UNR, and work through our already established infrastructure to successfully obtain and manage grants or to work with already established programs in each county. Rather than encouraging or fostering such collaboration that benefits Nevadans, SB 287 would discourage such collaboration by putting up barriers created by having separate regional entities.

We believe that our programs specifically developed to our land grant mission have continued to improve, grow, and adjust to serve the needs of specific local communities. Building from the infrastructure already in place at the main UNR campus in Reno as well as in each county, we can better support programming and meet the needs of our state while expanding through collaborations with faculty at our other NSHE institutions. This work is part of our mission and commitment to the state, and does not need legislation. SB 287 does not work to improve what is already working, and I respectfully ask committee members to oppose this bill.