

May 17, 2023

Dear Members of the Nevada Assembly Committee on Ways and Means:

I am a pediatrician who practices general pediatrics and obesity medicine at Northern Nevada HOPES in Reno. I am writing this letter as a testimony of strong support for AB319.

Nutrition and food security is one of, if not the most, important Social Determinant of Health. In 2021, 15% of all Nevadans (8th nationally) and 23% of children (5th nationally) had food insecurity. Once again, we are near the top of a list that does not shine favorably on Nevada. Low food security is not only inadequate quantity but also inadequate quality of food, and is associated with many conditions like obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, depression, and kidney disease. Obesity rates in Nevada for adults continue to increase and have more than doubled since 1995 and currently 2/3s are overweight or have obesity. Roughly 1/5 of Nevada's youth have obesity, and nationally, the rate of obesity increased twice as fast as normal during the pandemic. Here at HOPES, 1/4 of our pediatric patients have obesity. We are what we eat – literally! This is no different than manufacturing a car. If you do not use high-quality parts, your car will not run well.

Children who have participated in school meal programs since the 2010 Hunger-Free Kids Act passed have reaped numerous benefits - beyond lower obesity rates. These benefits include improved Healthy Eating Index scores, better mental health, better school attendance, and better academic achievement. Meals for all students can help lower food insecurity and poverty rates for families, decrease socioeconomic disparities and stigma, support lower income school districts, improve overall health, lower healthcare costs, and provide a more productive workforce. This is an investment in our future that will have a positive ripple effect throughout our entire Nevada community for years to come. I emphatically support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Shane, MD, MS, FAAP, DABOM (He/Him/His) | **Pediatrician
Obesity Prevention Chair, Nevada AAP**

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References

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