

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-second Session
April 5, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Roberta Lange at 1:05 p.m. on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412E and Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair
Senator Edgar Flores, Vice Chair
Senator Dina Neal
Senator Fabian Doñate
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Carrie A. Buck
Senator Robin L. Titus

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Senatorial District No. 6
Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senatorial District No. 3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Counsel
Linda Hiller, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Vellardita, Executive Director, Clark County Education Association
Marie Neissess, President, Clark County Education Association
Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association
Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association
Nick Schneider, Vegas Chamber

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Kenny Belknap, Treasurer, Clark County Education Association
Kristofer DiPaolo, Clark County Education Association
Jacquelyn Spicer, Clark County Education Association
Francesca Petrucci
Fernando Romero
Josiah Davisson, Clark County Education Association
Jim Frazee, Vice President, Clark County Education Association
Tiersa Baughman, Librarian, William E. Orr Middle School
Brian Walker
Teresa Schultz, Clark County Education Association
Dan Price, Clark County Education Association
Elizabeth Adler, Clark County Education Association
Robert Hollowood, Clark County Education Association
Danny Thompson, Clark County Association of School Administrators
Jeff Horn, Executive Director, Clark County Association of School
Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees
Patricia Haddad, Clark County School District
A.J. Delap, Nevada Association of School Administrators
Gary Bugash, Principal, Brian and Teri Cram Middle School, Clark County
School District
Bruce K. Snyder, Commissioner, Government Employee-Management Relations
Board, Nevada Department of Business and Industry
Kenneth Varner, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives,
College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Danica Hays, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las
Vegas
Anthony Ruiz, Nevada State College
Constance Brooks, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Alejandro Rodriguez, Nevada System of Higher Education
Morgan Biaselli
Marco Rauda
Lindsay Diamond, Ph.D., Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Educator
Preparation, College of Education and Human Development, University of
Nevada, Reno
Joseph Morgan, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual, and
Special Education; Associate Professor, Special Education, University of
Nevada, Las Vegas
Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents

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Claire Tredwell, Ph.D., Director, UNLV/CSUN Preschool; Administrative Faculty,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Christina Romero

Miranda Garcia

Heather Dahl-Jacinto, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Counselor
Education, School Psychology and Human Services; College of Education,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Morgan Jackson

Kelsey Claus

Michelee Cruz-Crawford, Ed.D., Clark County School District

Susan Proffitt, Vice President, Nevada Republican Club

Andrea Cole

Kirsten Searer, President, Public Education Foundation

Keith Whitfield, Ph.D., President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

DeRionne Pollard, Ph.D., President, Nevada State College

Dale Erquiaga, Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education

Brian Sandoval, President, University of Nevada, Reno

Trevor Parrish, Vegas Chamber

Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson

Rudy Zamora, Director of Public Affairs, Teach for America

Maria Romero, Teacher, George E. Harris Elementary School, Clark County
School District

Giselle Lowe

Lushawn Threats, Special Education Teacher, Laura Dearing Elementary School,
Clark County School District

CHAIR LANGE:

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 282 and invite Senator Nguyen to
present her bill.

SENATE BILL 282: Revises provisions governing education. (BDR 34-532)

SENATOR ROCHELLE T. NGUYEN (Senatorial District No. 3):

Why Senate Bill 282? What is the problem I am seeking to solve with this bill?
My kids were fortunate enough to start their elementary school education in the
Clark County School District (CCSD). They attended a five-star elementary
school when they began their career in first grade. It had excellent
programming, financial literacy programs, and electives specifically for

elementary school kids. The students changed classes, had different teachers, had gardens in their schools, and everything was fantastic.

Our first child, who just turned 13 this weekend, attended this school from first grade to fifth grade. Like many parents, we wanted to do everything we could to be involved in our children's education. My husband decided to volunteer to be a School Organizational Team (SOT) member. Watching him serve our community, our school and our kids was our first entrance into service.

We had an amazing principal when our kids first started in that school. My husband attended every SOT meeting along with other parent participants, and there was communication, collaboration and decision-making on a local level. Things started to change when that principal decided to retire. When she did retire, the SOT members naturally assumed they would be able to participate in the selection process for the new principal. They had always been involved in budgetary decisions with everything from what apps to purchase, to what kind of programming to encourage at the school. They even participated in interviews with several principal candidates, and the SOT members were unified in their opinion about those candidates.

Unfortunately, my husband and the other SOT members soon began to realize they did not really have a voice in the selection of the new principal. In fact, when they made their recommendations, the person who was last on their list was an individual the SOT team warned against. "This person should not be doing this job because there are problems that we were able to discern from our interview process." The response from District officials was, "We are going to go in an opposite direction." That was it, there was no, "Thank you for your time and dedication to this school." It was heartbreaking to see what happened next.

After the District hired the last candidate on the SOT recommendation list, the one they warned against hiring, the school lost about 80 percent of their teachers the first year. With this new principal, the school's star rating plummeted from five to three in a year. It ultimately led us to make the heartbreaking choice of pulling our fifth grader out of that school in her very last year there and putting her into our neighborhood school.

We hoped that things would improve at the old school, but the literacy programs and the extras that made it so successful were eliminated. It was not uncommon to see teachers crying in the hallways because of the climate change that was taking place in that building.

In 2017, A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session was passed, creating autonomy for CCSD schools. Today, S.B. 282 will strengthen that autonomy by providing SOTs, which are called “organizational teams” in the bill, more control of the school’s budget, its plan of operation, the selection of a principal if there is a vacancy, the timely use of the school’s carryover dollars specifically to improve student education and a clearer understanding of the staff selection.

We often hear these words: “We want parents involved.” I personally think that parental involvement is a huge key to success in a school, and currently we are not empowering parents. In fact, we are disincentivizing parents who want to get involved. If people feel their time is wasted and their voice is not heard, what kind of motivation is that for those parents who volunteer to be involved in those decisions?

Senate Bill 282 addresses four areas, starting with the first area of empowering precinct of SOTs. Currently, the SOT plays an advisory role when it comes to the approval of school budgets, but it does not have voting authority over that budget. There are more than 340 schools with SOTs, which are comprised of three parents, two teachers, one support staff, and one community member if the SOT chooses to include that additional member. This bill requires approval of the budget by a 75 percent vote of the SOT, which gives a clear voice to those SOT members.

The second area S.B. 282 addresses is the carryover dollars. Currently, all the remaining funds in the school strategic budget are carried over into the next year, but there is no requirement for those dollars to be spent in a timely fashion, or on instruction. Quite a few of my fellow Legislators sit on money committees, and we often talk about the need to provide more money to our schools. Unfortunately, for many reasons, there is a lot of money just sitting in these accounts—currently, almost a quarter of a billion dollars.

The changes in S.B. 282 direct any funds over 1 percent of the school’s precinct year-ending balance to be spent on improving student outcomes. If the school’s precinct fails to spend the excess carryover year-end balance within

12 months, the unspent funds will be deposited into the Education Stabilization Account.

The third area this bill addresses is the selection of principals. When a position for a principal is vacant, the SOT creates a list of qualifications and provides it to the superintendent. The superintendent and at least one member of the SOT will then interview three to five candidates and submit them to the SOT, where those candidates are ranked in order of preference and submitted back to the superintendent. Under current law, the superintendent has the ultimate authority on hiring that principal. Senate Bill 282 seeks to change that so the SOT would be required to submit to the superintendent a ranking of candidates based on prescribed qualifications for the position of principal. The bill authorizes the SOT to reject the selection of the superintendent by utilizing the 75 percent required vote from the SOT.

The final major component of this bill has to do with the selection of staff. Currently, principals interpret their authority to mean they have unlimited authority over selection of staff, which means substitutes are hired in place of licensed educators. Principals often have the right to hire new educators as they apply for a job and are cleared by CCSD. They also have the right to hire educators who apply for a transfer to the school.

Currently, principals have the right to hire over 99 percent of all the staff, but they do not have the right to hire a substitute if a qualified educator is already available. The Nevada State Board of Education (SBE) passed regulations ensuring that a principal must hire an educator in good standing before hiring a substitute.

In S.B. 282, the meaning of “selection of staff” is clarified and must be done in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. The only time it would apply is when a teacher is surplus or laid off from a school and their tenure allows them to seek a vacant position in another school. The same regulations passed by the SBE would apply in that a principal has to hire an educator in good standing before hiring a substitute. This applies to less than 1 percent of all licensed professionals.

JOHN VELLARDITA (Executive Director, Clark County Education Association):
I want to provide some context to these proposed changes. In 2015, the Legislature passed A.B. No. 394 of the 78th Session, which was to essentially

reorganize the CCSD. I sat on the Technical Advisory Committee and helped draft some of the language that became a bill two years later—A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session.

The idea behind the reorganization was to decentralize the District. The hub of delivery in K-12 is the school, and what is critical to that school is the team that carries out the education. One of the ideas was to empower and also provide more autonomy to the SOT. We have had four years of this reorganization, and the last time I was before this Committee, which was a couple of weeks ago, we presented some important statistics about the proficiency levels of students in at-risk schools. After four years of autonomy, we think there are some needed changes.

I want to start with the idea of empowering parents and staff at a school building so they have more authority in developing the plan of operation in the budget and to transition the SOT from “assist and advise” to actually having a say and a vote. We think that is a significant way to empower parents, particularly after a couple of years of COVID-19 and the proficiency levels that we see today. This empowerment will give them more authority in approving the education plan and the resources that will fund that plan. This bill provides a solution to that issue.

The second thing, which is in the amendment ([Exhibit C](#)), is absolutely critical. When this bill was drafted, the intent was not for schools to have this much money sitting unused. This money is a result of salary attrition—we have high teacher vacancies, then we fill the vacancy with substitutes. In some cases, substitutes cost 40 percent less than a full-time equivalent (FTE) position, hence the savings. Other factors enter into the surplus funds, but it is primarily salary attrition savings. Those unused carryover dollars have now grown to almost a quarter of a billion dollars! The amendment to [S.B. 282](#) puts guardrails on those funds and essentially says that a school must use the money within a year, and it must be used for instruction and for student education.

So where should that money go? The current funding formula, the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP), has what is called weights. This formula provides additional revenue for English Language Learner (ELL) students, at-risk students and gifted-and-talented students.

The amendment, [Exhibit C](#), adds section 8 to the bill and, under subsection 3, paragraphs (a) through (f), list six recommended areas where those carryover funds can be used by the school, including tutoring, social-emotional learning, extracurricular programs and more. This puts guardrails on two things—one, you have to use the money; two, you have to use it on the students to improve their education.

The third change in the amendment to S.B. 282 is the selection of the leader, the principal of the school. It empowers the SOT to have some say, not just a recommendation, but more of a say on who the leader should be. That did not exist before. Over the past four years, the SOT may recommend somebody from a list of names submitted to them as applicants for a vacancy, but their recommendation holds no weight. This bill provides the SOT with a little more authority, but ultimately, the final decision comes from the superintendent.

On staff selection, there is a provision under A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session, that makes a correlation between selection of staff and carryover dollars. When this bill was drafted, it tried to put a guardrail around that correlation. The source of carryover dollars is salary attrition, and salary attrition is by and large a product of an FTE position being filled by a substitute instead of a licensed educator. That is the primary source of carryover dollars. Currently under statute it says:

To the greatest extent possible, the principal of a local school precinct shall select teachers who are licensed and in good standing before selecting substitutes to teach at the local school precinct. The principal, in consultation with the organizational team, shall make every effort to ensure that effective licensed teachers are employed at the local school precinct.

After four years of this bill in place, we found some abuse around that directive. The principals felt they had uncontrolled authority over the selection of teachers when, in fact, they did not. What I just read to you was essentially a guardrail. The SBE adopted some regulations that essentially spell out and clearly state that principals do not have this unfettered authority to select staff; that they must select somebody who is in good standing. Through regulations, they defined what that was and they described the process. All we are doing with this piece of Legislation is to bring some clarity to the issue. As Senator Nguyen

suggested, less than 1 percent of the staff is affected by this; it is the staff being surplussed out of a school.

We are saying that teacher tenure means they are given the opportunity to be accepted or rejected because Clark County Education Association (CCEA) supports the SBE's regulations that were passed. This piece of Legislation is a product of what we learned after four years of a decentralized model that had autonomy, with some empowerment and control of budgets. What we are proposing are changes to empower the SOTs, provide more autonomy, and also put guardrails around the carryover dollars.

CHAIR LANGE:

On the conceptual amendment, is there a difference between subsection 3, paragraphs (c) and (f)?

SENATOR NGUYEN:

I think that was just an error, we can cross off paragraph (f).

SENATOR TITUS:

In your presentation, you talk about empowering staff and parents. But in section 1, subsection 4 of the bill, it talks about the bargaining agreements and perhaps your union staff. Then it talks about the SOT at the school. That is not part of the bargaining agreement. Can you clarify? They must meet certain bargaining agreements, but that would be your union teachers versus the SOT, and that has nothing to do with your union teachers, does it? It seems like you are meshing them together.

MR. VELLARDITA:

The SOT is composed of parents, who are 50 percent of the SOT. The balance includes licensed educators, support staff and possibly a community member. Those members who are educators that we represent in the bargaining unit would be the only connection.

SENATOR TITUS:

Does that mean that to be a member of the SOT as a teacher, you must be a member of your union?

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MR. VELLARDITA:

No. There is a requirement that 50 percent of licensed educators elected by their peers onto the SOT have to be a member of the union, but it is not a requirement that every educator be a member.

SENATOR TITUS:

Are 50 percent of CCSD teachers members of the union?

MR. VELLARDITA:

For those who vote in that school. If there are two positions, one must be a member of the union and the other does not have to be a member if they are elected.

SENATOR TITUS:

How was it determined that 50 percent of the teachers have to be a member of the union?

MR. VELLARDITA:

That is part of the current Legislation.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

To be clear, there are three parent members on a SOT board, two teachers, one of whom must be a union member, one support staff and, if they choose, one community member. I know there are several Legislators who currently sit on SOTs as community members.

SENATOR NEAL:

In section 3, subsection 3, there is language that allows the SOT to help determine the budget along with the principal. How did you arrive at that required 75 percent approval by the SOT?

MR. VELLARDITA:

It is a critical mass supermajority, aimed at getting more of the stakeholders involved in the decision-making.

SENATOR NEAL:

Having the SOT control the money was something you probably mentioned when we were both in the CCSD reorganization meetings for two years. I never supported it, mainly because the liability still falls on the principal, not the SOT

members who might make a decision about the money. If that decision fails, or does not align with the responsibilities of the principal, how would this be shared pain on the SOT when the buck stops with the principal, not the SOT?

MR. VELLARDITA:

The ultimate authority is still the superintendent. With this proposed change, the SOT would have authority to vote on the budget. If they approve the budget, it gets kicked to the associate superintendent, who then either approves or does not approve it, and ultimately it goes to the superintendent. Currently, the budget or the plan of operation developed by the principal goes to the associate superintendent for approval and ultimately to the superintendent of the school district for approval. Final responsibility and liability is still with the school district as it currently is in legislation.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

That was one of the things I was most concerned about. I looked at some of the legislative history, and I knew that was a concern. I think this has some balance in that it gives an extra voice to the SOT, with the ultimate authority still at the top.

SENATOR NEAL:

Thank you for that, because the way I read and interpreted it, the principal is still being overridden by the SOT, which is why I asked that question. Technically, you might think it is equality, but I do not necessarily feel that way because not all folks on the SOT will understand the financial intricacies of running a school, even though they may see budget presentations.

My next question pertains to the SOT team rejecting a principal candidate. What happens if they reject the principal that is selected by the superintendent, and then they get another opportunity to pick who they want?

MR. VELLARDITA:

The drafted legislation directs the SOTs to interview and then rank the principal candidates, and the superintendent has the right to reject the first ranking. The superintendent then has to make a selection from the balance of those five original candidates, which is now down to four candidates.

SENATOR NEAL:

I meant in the absence of a principal. There have been situations where a principal has gone to another school and there is an interim principal or someone else filling the vacant position until they find a permanent replacement. I think Clyde C. Cox Elementary School and Gwendolyn Woolley Elementary School in CCSD had a situation where there was a shared relationship between the principals. The one principal, who remained after the other one left, was running back and forth between the campuses. How long do we expect this process to take without a school leader while the SOT goes through their rounds?

SENATOR NGUYEN:

At the school where my husband was a SOT member, our principal that retired was also the principal of three other schools and was moving around between those schools. When they did the interviews, the SOT interviewed and ranked those five individuals. There could be a situation where the SOT interviews five candidates submitted by the superintendent and they do not like any of them. That could cause some issues. It happened quickly at our school; they interviewed the five candidates over a period of two weeks and then ranked their top five.

SENATOR NEAL:

In the amendment, section 8, subsection 3, it lists the six acceptable areas where carryover funds can go. The way I read it, we are already mandating that CCSD do some of this work. How were these items selected? I know there is already funding for tutoring, and other funds are probably moving this Session for the District to spend on students. And now you want the carryover dollars to be applied to the same areas. I ask because I want the CCSD to spend the money they get, especially the federal money they receive. There may be schools that are holding on to some of their dollars because they never had that much money. They are being more cautious because they are used to the District never having enough. How did you arrive at these areas that look like a duplication of services?

MR. VELLARDITA:

I do not know if it is actually a duplication of services. That does not mean the school district does not provide some resources or programs. This intent is very specific to the needs of the student population in that particular building. For example, in some Title 1 elementary schools, the proficiency levels in reading and math are super low.

What this bill and amendment suggest is that schools spend money targeting the specific needs of their unique student population on programs that will help accelerate their learning. That is what is unique about this proposal. It is not like we are relieving the District of some financial obligation to resource a program. Instead, it is giving the opportunity to the school to say, "This is the additional time or programs we need for these kids to improve their proficiency."

SENATOR NEAL:

I have mixed feelings about this bill in general. Tying the hands of the principal or the SOT to determine how to best use their attrition money is somewhat problematic for me. We have heard about carryover dollars for about three years. I also believe the wisdom of the principal may not fall into one of these categories. It is the same debate we had between a Victory and a Zoom school model—Zoom, where it prescribed a certain activity, and Victory, where it gave a menu of options. It could be "shall expand on any of the following," but what if it is something outside of this? It says "extracurricular programming for students." When we talk about academic enrichment versus academic literacy programs, although you could say tutoring crosses over into that, it is still not necessarily what happens during the day. This seems to extend to what happens on the extended day after the school day ends.

MR. VELLARDITA:

The money follows the student, and under the PCFP, there are two components. The first is the base and the second is the weights, where money is for a specific student population in that building. It is not to be used four years later when those students are out of that building. If there are suggestions around amending the use of those weighted funds, that is fine and we are open to that conversation, but it must be used for the education of those specific students. That is what this bill and amendment are attempting to capture.

I want to share a real-life story. I was contacted by a parent from a high school because the principal sat down with the SOT, with the SOT having no authority except to advise and assist. The principal said, "I want to give everybody here a \$1,000 bonus, including myself." This was for 135 staff members. The principal said it would be called "retention." That never happened because we intervened. There was no retention issue in the building, but they wanted to spend it that way. I am not saying that people do not need additional dollars,

but there must be some kind of guardrail on how that money should be spent, particularly because it is intended for student betterment.

If I am the parent of an ELL student and that money is supposed to be going to my kid's education and I learn that it is being used for non-ELL purposes, there may be some legal exposure for the school district.

SENATOR BUCK:

I know the leader makes the greatest difference in the school because that person attracts talent. I am open to section 5, subsection 5, where the SOT has input to the selection of a principal. However, I have seen that go awry. I think I know the school situation that Senator Nguyen referenced, and it is unfortunate, especially when it was a national award-winning school. I do not know for sure if the past principal and the SOT did not have a lot of weight with the superintendent, but I do believe they need input. That would be one area of this bill I could potentially agree with.

I feel like the rest of it is an attack on autonomy. I was fortunate enough in 2008 to become an empowerment principal. I do not know if C.T. Sewell Elementary School at the time would have grown to a National Title 1 school in the years that I was there without those autonomies. I know autonomy is crucial, certainly with input and engaging that community. In the initial stages of my time there, I do not know that I would have been able to achieve the 75 percent approval for every program I wanted to implement. As a leader coming into a site when you are trying to move change, a lot of times there are obstacles and challenges.

Staffing is another problem I see with this bill, mainly because I have seen the issues firsthand. At the time when I was a principal, we had substitute teachers, and there was one in particular who had the highest classroom test scores in the school. The rest of the subs were used as interventionists in different grade levels.

As far as the autonomy of staffing, why do you want to force staff when it could potentially be a consent of the principal, which could be a win-win situation for that staff member? Because they really have to buy into a model. I cannot imagine running a company and not being able to choose or pick employees that are the right fit for your workplace. Tell me how is it going to move the needle in student achievement if the principals cannot pick their staff?

MR. VELLARDITA:

It does not take that authority away. The bill that was passed in 2017, A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session, essentially did not give principals unfettered authority to select staff, especially when it came to substitutes.

SENATOR BUCK:

But I want a substitute in my classroom because he does an amazing job, and you are going to place a licensed staff member in there. I actually ended up getting that sub his degree and he became a full-fledged teacher, and now an assistant principal. I just do not see that would have been a pathway or decision for me at the time, so it does kind of take away that autonomy.

MR. VELLARDITA:

The SBE adopted a regulation that essentially said, if there is an educator in good standing who is available for that position, they should be selected before a substitute. That is what the SBE intended, and we agree with it. That was the intent behind the law when it was adopted in 2017. It was intended to direct the District to not go out of their way to hire substitutes in lieu of qualified educators who were ready to be placed in a teaching position.

SENATOR BUCK:

I just feel it takes away the staffing autonomy. Back in my day, before we ever had the ability to carry over money, we were literally incentivized to spend, spend, spend because, if not, the District would take it back into their pot. I agree that funds need to be spent on students, and potentially in the same year. With the labor shortage, I can see where there is a disconnect. It may be that principals need more training, so if that can be worked into effective models of delivery, it could help. I mentioned interventionists, the substitutes that fill temporary gaps. They are needed when staffing is at critical levels. If there is a labor or staff shortage and \$75 million in vacancies, how does that roll out?

MR. VELLARDITA:

I am not exactly sure what you are asking, Senator.

SENATOR BUCK:

If \$75 million is for vacant positions, then you can only buy so many programs. A lot of these schools are Title 1 schools, so they have a lot of federal dollars,

and they are using those funds on programs. But if you do not have the people to hire, how is that going to roll out?

MR. VELLARDITA:

You mean in terms of how to use the carryover dollars? Well, you can use your existing staff for programs, and, in some cases, those programs are preschool or after school, to provide more instructional time or more training and programs for students to learn.

SENATOR FLORES:

I agree that if you are qualified and deemed to be adequate and your resume, your file and everything else is fine, that you should be picked over a substitute teacher. I also want to engage in the conversation about giving more autonomy to the leadership, which is something we have discussed before, particularly when it involves money.

I am a businessman, and I often think about how we run our private businesses, preparing for years down the road when we know difficult times are coming. I am always just trying to find that balance between forcing the hand on utilizing money in a certain way, while also preparing for a difficult tomorrow with good leadership. We have all been through it; we just got out of it with the pandemic. Many of us were grossly underprepared, and I am not talking about just school districts or education. I think in general, we all realized immediately just how unprepared we were for difficult moments like the pandemic.

In focusing through that lens, I am of the mindset to allow folks in a leadership position to have a responsible approach for that difficult moment, which may come tomorrow.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

I echo what Mr. Vellardita mentioned before; that we are open to finding flexible ways for that money to be spent. I have concerns about that, stemming from a recent conversation in a joint meeting of Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance, when Superintendent Jara was asked why Title 1 schools had lost money and he said they have carryover dollars, so that is why he is cutting them off from some of those Title 1 funds. The fact that we have school districts looking at these carryover funds that these schools are sitting on, and cutting them off from resources because they have carryover funds, is

something we want to avoid. We want to make sure those schools are fully funded and not being penalized because they saved that money.

That is why there needs to be some balance between allowing some schools to carry over that money. We would be open to having more flexible ways for them to spend that money. I take into consideration what Senator Buck said, that sometimes it is hard to spend it, so if we can give more flexibility to ensure that money is following those students as it was intended to do, that is our intention.

As far as the selection of staff and the autonomy, I understand. My sister is a school principal and she would probably kill me if I took away some of the autonomy that she has. In the current law, principals have more than 99 percent autonomy in their selection of staff. There may be situations where you have a very qualified substitute, but I still think we should value the education, training and licensing that these individuals went through to become a qualified classroom teacher. Hopefully that substitute who did not get hired because the principal hired a licensed teacher, will have mentors like Senator Buck who will encourage them to get that licensing and training and become a full-time teacher and leader. That is the intention.

SENATOR FLORES:

I agree. If we set a minimum criterion that every educator should meet, and they are meeting that and more, then I agree 100 percent that that individual should always be selected over someone who has yet to go through the minimal State criteria.

But if the issue is a responsible school saying we will do XYZ to ensure we have some additional funds, and now we have different language in the presentation saying we are not going to give them XYZ funds because they have some carryover money, then that is being utilized to punish them. I am open to putting the parameters between that relationship, saying that even if you are responsible, that should not punish you. I am 100 percent open to that.

MR. VELLARDITA:

What I am hearing, and maybe this goes to a comment Senator Neal made, is that central administration should not force on a school that has carryover dollars to supplant an obligation that central has to resource some program. Is that what I am hearing? I see you nodding. We are in total support of that.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will now take testimony in favor of S.B. 282.

MARIE NEISESS (President, Clark County Education Association):

I am speaking in support of S.B. 282. I was elected to my School Organization Team (SOT) during the first two years of implementation, and I was fortunate to work with an administrator who valued the committee's input. We reviewed needed materials and staffing in ways to meet our students' needs. Unfortunately, this was not the case for many of my colleagues. Senate Bill 282 will help address this and other problematic issues with our current SOT model. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit D](#)).

CHRIS DALY (Nevada State Education Association):

We support S.B. 282 as introduced, due to language in section 1 of the bill clarifying selection of staff shall be done in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. While we believe language in S.B. 251 on the same topic is stronger, the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) is the bigger organization and we support this bill.

SENATE BILL 251: Revises provisions relating to employees of school districts.
(BDR 34-685)

CALEN EVANS (President, Washoe Education Association):

We represent all certified professionals in the Washoe County School District (WCSD). You might be asking why somebody who represents educators from Washoe County would be speaking in support of the bill on SOTs, when we do not have those school organizational teams. I am here to speak in favor of the larger message that this bill conveys. For us to address the many issues that we are facing in public education, we have to address the culture that exists within individual schools. In any profession, working conditions are everything. Administrators that engage their staff in the decisions at their school sites create a culture that empowers their employees. Collaboration is crucial for the ability to improve student outcomes.

The other portion of this bill that is important to focus on is the idea around carryover dollars. We do not have that same terminology in WCSD, but we have a significant amount of accrued savings due to the teacher vacancies. For the first time, we have accessed those dollars during the school years. We are using those dollars right now to provide additional compensation to teachers who are

working above certain caseloads. There are creative ways we need to use the accrued savings from unfilled positions to support the students and educators in our District. We have to be very clear that across the State, students in our schools are being serviced, even though we have a massive teaching shortage, and they are being serviced on the backs of unpaid labor by educators. We need to do everything we can to use those resources to support students and educators in the class. We support S.B. 282.

NICK SCHNEIDER (Vegas Chamber):

We support S.B. 282 because we believe this bill will provide additional parent empowerment in our schools, lending more of a voice and educational decisions to the SOTs. We also believe that this will bring more dollars into our classrooms.

KENNY BELKNAP (Treasurer, Clark County Education Association):

I am a high school social studies teacher at Liberty High School and I am speaking today in favor of S.B. 282 and the changes it makes. I can tell you from my lived experience that these changes are desperately needed. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit E](#)).

KRISTOFER DIPAOLO (Clark County Education Association):

I am a staff member with CCEA, reading on behalf of member Erica Jackson, who is an educator with the CCSD and supports S.B. 282. I have submitted her written testimony ([Exhibit F](#)).

JACQUELYN SPICER (Clark County Education Association):

I am a staff member at CCEA and today I am reading testimony on behalf of educator Sandy Kupfer who has worked for CCSD for 23 years and is in support of S.B. 282. I have submitted her written testimony ([Exhibit G](#)).

FRANCESCA PETRUCCI:

Many of our educators are still in school and could not testify in person today. I am reading testimony in favor of S.B. 282 from Christina Hollowood, who is a high school special education teacher and has served on middle school SOTs as a parent, licensed staff member and chair. I have submitted her written testimony ([Exhibit H](#)).

FERNANDO ROMERO:

I belong to three SOTs and ironically, I came here to accompany my wife on another issue and had no idea that this bill was even being brought up. In the SOTs I belong to, I am never informed as to what is going on. I am sitting here and totally surprised as to what is being said, some of which make no sense. You talk about community members being voting members. I am a community member for all three SOTs, and I do not have a vote. I had a vote when I was the chair of one SOT, and even then, the process when we hired a principal was not close to what has been said and what is supposed to be done according to A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session.

The administration for CCSD has been micromanaging the whole affair to the point where the deputy superintendent of our area would admonish the principal of one of the schools, Global Community High School, anytime she contacted any of us members of the SOT. They really are the ones who wanted to do the administering of everything that deals with the high schools. In fact, the principals, at least to the school that I belong to, have no vote either. I do not know why we were not advised or informed that this was taking place, but it is no surprise to me that this is happening.

From what I have been hearing, I am in support of S.B. 282 with the admonishment that we or the Legislature should be made aware of whether or not CCSD is adhering to the law. In every meeting I went to, they have not.

JOSIAH DAVISSON (Clark County Education Association):

I support S.B. 282. When SOT recommendations are ignored, a principal may be placed in a school where they do not fit, and they can destroy school culture and wreck achievements at the school. The SOTs must have more power for this and other reasons.

JIM FRAZEE (Vice President, Clark County Education Association):

I am a classroom teacher and in support of S.B. 282. The point of the original law, A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session, was to prevent the breakup of the CCSD by breaking it down to its most basic level—the school community, and the empowerment of a school, stakeholders, parents, staff and students. As with every new law, adjustments become necessary to ensure the original intent of the legislation is achieved. The vast majority of schools have embraced the spirit of the original law. This bill addresses some of the holdouts and other unforeseen consequences.

This bill would also stop the practice of our superintendent superseding the will of parents and staff by ignoring the recommendations from the SOT for the selection of a new principal in favor of his person. Like every other organization, you can always tell a school's priorities by where they put their money. This bill enables all stakeholders to have a meaningful voice in the budget process. Student achievement cannot be fully realized unless there is a basic belief that the school stakeholders' voices will be heard and valued.

TIERSA BAUGHMAN (Librarian, William E. Orr Middle School):

I am the librarian at William E. Orr Middle School and I am calling in support of S.B. 282. The bill covers equity within the building, and it also speaks directly to the school SOT and the makeup and decision-making that occurs within the building. We have a SOT here at our school and it is set up the way it was meant to be set up. However, it is padded with people who are friends of our administration. We took a group of people who were all friends, and they went from the instructional leadership team to the SOT. That is how they basically have become a clique, or a group of people who make the financial decisions for the school. The principal makes the decisions, and the group just signs off on them.

We have several open positions here at the school that have been vacant throughout the year. One of the positions that has been vacant all year long is Reading Six. We did have a long-term substitute in there who is a relative of one of our instructional coaches. That person left to take a job closer to home due to the extreme expectations here for some of us. Once the sub left, all but our sections of the classes were dissolved into other English Language Arts (ELA) and Reading Six sections, taking the classes from teachable levels in the high 20s to all of them being over 36 students per classroom. As a librarian, I have two reading sections of my own.

Beyond that, we lost our health teacher last semester. Again, a full-time sub was placed in this particular classroom. Although she is an amazing sub, she is unable to be with the students. I am here and not there because this is my Wednesday health class and, again, I am the librarian. Rather than put any of the instructional coaches back into classrooms or have them share sections of other areas they are licensed to teach, they were simply given to me. I understand that there is a fiscal reason for this because, as a librarian, I do not have to have a prep time, so you can put me into a room and have me teach and cover classes.

BRIAN WALKER:

I am a parent of students in the CCSD and I currently chair two SOTs, one in elementary school and one in middle school. I also serve as a community representative to a high school SOT. I am very much in favor of S.B. 282 as it will actually give some teeth and accountability into the reorganization. As an example, in one of my SOTs during the most recent budget cycle, we were presented with a budget that had no numbers. It was a very abstract budget, and, as a SOT, we are currently not in a position to decline it or to even suggest that the principal go back and give us a budget that has more substance to it.

Regarding the conceptual amendment, I entirely agree that there should be some guardrails. From my experience though, in the scarcity mindset of the CCSD, 1 percent as the trigger to move those funds to the State is very low. We are very cognizant that stability and consistency is important for our students. When we have such dramatic fluctuations from year to year, it has detrimental effects on the social-emotional learning, as well as the atmosphere of a safe and learning environment that we are attempting to provide at all our schools.

TERESA SCHULTZ (Clark County Education Association):

I am a school counselor at Lucile S. Bruner Elementary School, North Las Vegas, a Title 1, Tier 1 school, and I support S.B. 282 because SOTs were designed to give stakeholders a voice and a say in what happens at their school. I sit on two SOTs and I know that is not always happening. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit I](#)).

DAN PRICE (Clark County Education Association):

I am a Career and Technical Education teacher at Sunrise Mountain High School, and I am here today to speak in support of S.B. 282. I have always taught at a Title 1, Tier 1 school, and along with that comes significant funding to ensure our students have access to curriculum resources, technology, out-of-school opportunities, remediation, tutoring, summer programs and so on. With that comes the accountability. I have served on our school SOT since its inception, and I have been the Chair all those years. If I did not remind my principal of the meeting each month and set the agenda date, it might not happen. I take my role in the SOT very seriously, and have been selected on this team because my colleagues know I will speak my mind and do what is best for our school.

Two issues we deal with frequently on the SOT are carryover dollars and staff shortages. Like many schools in our demographic, we find that we have significant carryover dollars in attrition money each year. Carryover dollars allow us to do things at our school that many other schools cannot do. Our students with the greatest need deserve to have those funds spent on them the year they are allocated; the year those students are in our building for the purpose they are intended.

Regarding student achievement, if a student needs extra help, materials, supplies, tutoring, money to pay for fees, etc., the school buildings should be able to demonstrate that students are benefiting from these extra funds. This can be shown by growth and achievement, especially in ELA and math. Schools do not need to save up money for special projects or expensive murals done by professionals. They need to have oversight by the SOT and know these funds are going to be used by the end of that year. Finally, I would like to address the issue of staff selection and educators who are in surplus. We have faced a critical shortage of license qualified educators every year.

ELIZABETH ADLER (Clark County Education Association):

I am a 25-year veteran Spanish and ELL teacher at Sunrise Mountain High School here to speak in support of S.B. 282. The intent of the law that created the formation of SOTs at each school site was to assist principals in the decision-making process. I have served on my school's SOT for six years, and instead of evolving and offering more support to principals, I have seen that the SOT simply serves to vote in favor of the principal and not have a real role or voice in any decision-making capacity.

When my school had a principal vacancy, we were fully anticipating a process where the SOT would interview candidates and make a recommendation. This process never took place. We were given a principal who had been an assistant chief superintendent that needed a new position due to downsizing. There was no discussion and no explanation; just a new principal with no input. The SOT was not even given the courtesy of being informed that this would happen prior to the staff being told.

Another middle school was given the same level of disrespect when they went through the process of interviewing all the candidates who applied and chose one candidate, just to have the superintendent disregard the SOTs decision and selected one of the candidates that was the last choice of the SOT. As a result,

the culture and climate of that school was decimated and many teachers left the school. Why have SOTs if they have absolutely no impact on the school's decision-making process? This inevitably hurts children.

If SOTs are to have any impact, they must be provided with more oversight and power to ensure that budgets are used to hire more educators and support staff that have a direct impact on student achievement. My school has nine administrators. If we had outstanding achievement, high graduation rates, good attendance, a low incidence of suspensions and expulsions, minimal offenses and fights, students who arrive at school and attend class on time, I would be fine with this amount of leadership. However, this is not the case. If the SOTs have more authority, they could have relevant input on budget decisions, including staffing.

ROBERT HOLLOWOOD (Clark County Education Association):

I am testifying in support of S.B. 282. I have been elected to my school's SOT every year since the implementation of the CCSD reorganization law. During this time, my school had a principal retiring. It was extremely important to our school community to have the opportunity to select the incoming leader for our building. It took a tremendous amount of effort in our school community, much of it from our parent-teacher organization to allow the SOT to interview candidates put forward by the district and then recommend one from that pool. The revisions in S.B. 282 are essential for the reorganization law to continue making a difference for the CCSD schools. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit J](#)).

CHAIR LANGE:

Seeing no more people wanting to testify in person in support of S.B. 282, I am submitting seven letters of support that have been submitted to the Committee ([Exhibit K](#)). I will now take testimony opposed to the bill.

DANNY THOMPSON (Clark County Association of School Administrators):

When I first came to this building a long time ago, there were no rules—there was no 120-day limit, no rules on bills and no rules on fundraising. Over the years, the Legislature has fixed those things and stopped those practices. Back then, someone could be involved in a lawsuit at the Supreme Court, come to the Legislature, and say, "Give me a bill to settle that lawsuit in my favor." It happened. The Legislature, in its infinite wisdom, chose not to do that because they have unlimited power.

You can do things, not because you are right or wrong, but just because you can. You are the Legislature and you do write the laws, but the appearance of that impropriety was just too great. I cannot think of an occasion where the Legislature crossed that line.

In section 1 of S.B. 282, that is the exact circumstance—that issue is before the Supreme Court. My client has spent over \$200,000 in the past three years getting it there. When the law was changed, the Clark County Association of School Administrators adjusted their collective bargaining agreement to reflect the current law. If you pass this bill with section 1 in it, you are settling that lawsuit. Someone testified before this Committee last week that it would make it a moot issue. It will not make it a moot issue. You will be taking a side in that lawsuit. I would urge you to set section 1 aside until the lawsuit is settled. The other provisions of the bill can be dealt with between the parties. The court has heard the case, they just have not ruled.

JEFF HORN (Executive Director, Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees):

I represent the Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees (CCASAPE) which includes more than 1,450 CCSD administrators, and nearly 98 percent are CCASAPE members. We are opposed to S.B. 282 because it would change the law to allow bargaining units the right to place staff at a school without the consent of the principal. Sadly, this section of A.B. No. 469 of the 79th Session from 2017 has never been enforced. On the other hand, CCASAPE, to the detriment of our own members, changed our collective bargaining agreement to align ourselves with that 2017 CCSD reorganization bill to ensure that only the principal can select other administrators at their site. An administrator can never be force-placed out of school without the approval or consent of the principal. We believe only the most impactful educators should be in front of students and staff.

This bill will place unrealistic expectations on principals because it will require 75 percent of the SOT to approve the school's plan of operation. This creates unneeded red tape and layers of bureaucracy. There already exists an appeal process in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 388G that allows SOTs to challenge or request changes to the school's plan of operation. Senate Bill 282 will require the principal to become a voting member of the SOT, contradicting a relationship that is meant to take place between the principal and SOT members.

Further, CCASAPE believes the superintendent, after consultation and advisement from the site, should have the final say in selecting the position of principal. Lastly, the conceptual amendment, placing restrictions on the carryover balance will again hurt students and the principal's ability to hire effective staff. Vacancy dollars as well as approved purchases that have already been encumbered but not yet expensed, should not be included in the carryover balance. We believe that administrators should be held accountable for student outcomes. It is time to provide them with the responsibility to do so.

PATRICIA HADDAD (Clark County School District):

Principals working with educators and families on behalf of student outcomes is the foundation of meaningful dialogue and input at the school site. What exists in current law facilitates that goal through the balanced relationship between SOTs, building principals and their supervisors, and the central office. Counter to the proposal in this bill, we believe SOTs should maintain the current authority to provide advice and input on the selection of a principal. We oppose S.B. 282 for this and other reasons in my written testimony ([Exhibit L](#)).

A.J. DELAP (Nevada Association of School Administrators):

We echo many of the sentiments in opposition to S.B. 282. We have met with the bill sponsor and had a fruitful conversation, and we look forward to working with her in the future.

GARY BUGASH (Principal, Brian and Teri Cram Middle School, Clark County School District):

I wanted to address three issues since I have not heard from a principal yet. The first is School Organizational Team (SOT) empowerment. I cannot really talk about hiring the principal because I have not been involved with that. As far as buy-in from the community, it is important we understand that schools are a reflection of the community, and the SOT includes community members. By presenting budgets to them and getting suggestions from them prior to the meeting is key. I do that every year before I send in my budgets. Also, I present the budget to the staff for any input from them. Changing anything the SOT does needs to be building-specific. We heard Senator Nguyen explain that she had a great experience with the principal and then a not-so-great experience with another one. Unfortunately, that occurs.

As far as the carryover money goes, understand that we have been living in an underfunded situation for a number of years. I have been a principal for 9 years,

14 years in the CCSD, and I currently believe the money should stay with the students that it is allocated for in that year. Unfortunately, when funding is cut or Title 1 funding is lost, which happened in my case for next school year, I have to use that carryover money so I do not lose staff and increase class sizes. So, I do not recommend touching anything with carryover money. The schools need that money and keep in mind that it does go for staffing and reducing class size.

BRUCE K. SNYDER (Commissioner, Government Employee-Management Relations Board, Nevada Department of Business and Industry):

I am the Commissioner of the Government Employee-Management Relations Board (EMRB), which regulates labor relations between Nevada's governments and the employee organizations that represent their employees. We are neutral on S.B. 282. The issue of what to do with the surplus teachers in the pool was the litigation that came before the EMRB. I just want to alert the members of this Committee that I submitted written testimony ([Exhibit M](#)) of the history of that litigation, both before our Board and in the Eighth Judicial District Court as well as what is pending now before the Nevada Supreme Court.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 282 and open a work session.

JEN STURM-GAHNER (Policy Analyst):

The first bill on work session today is S.B. 80 which was sponsored by this Committee on behalf of the Nevada Youth Legislature.

SENATE BILL 80: Revises provisions relating to the prevention and treatment of injuries to the head. (BDR 34-549)

I have submitted the work session document ([Exhibit N](#)).

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 80.

SENATOR NEAL SECONDED THE MOTION.

SENATOR TITUS:

As much as I appreciate the intent of this bill, unfortunately I am going to be a no. The blanket requirements and misdemeanor fines are things I just feel are not appropriate at this time.

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SENATOR HAMMOND:

I had one question during the hearing and I see that it has not been addressed at all, so I am going to be a no with a chance that I might change my mind by the time it gets to the Floor.

THE MOTION CARRIED. (SENATORS HAMMOND AND TITUS VOTED NO.)

* * * * *

CHAIR LANGE:

I see our next bill presenter is here, so we will close work session and open the hearing on S.B. 291.

SENATE BILL 291: Makes various changes relating to education. (BDR 34-503)

SENATOR NICOLE J. CANNIZZARO (Senatorial District No. 6):

I am excited to be here today to present S.B. 291, which seeks to make it possible for student teachers to receive substitute pay while completing their coursework in higher education.

It also provides funding to allow the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) student cohorts at the Nevada Institute on Teaching and Educator Preparation (NITEP) to continue their educator preparation program.

I would like to share just a little background with you regarding NITEP. This program was instituted during the 2017 Legislative Session and funded each session thereafter via an appropriation. This group recruits the best and brightest students to be part of this intensive and hands-on teacher-preparation program. These students also make a commitment to begin their teaching careers in Nevada, which is incredible because we know that we want to continue to recruit and retain the best teachers right here in my home State where I received my entire formal education.

I will do a quick run-through of the bill. Section 1 removes the requirement that a student teacher must have completed at least four weeks of student teaching to qualify for employment as a substitute teacher. Additionally, the bill makes an appropriation from the General Fund of \$1,575,000 to the

Nevada Department of Education (NDE) for NITEP and requires reporting to the Legislature on each expenditure made from these funds.

I have two co-presenters from the UNLV College of Education, Dr. Danica Hayes and Dr. Kenneth Warner, both of whom have been working with the NITEP program for the past few years. They will share with you the growth and success that has occurred with that program and those teachers.

KENNETH VARNER, PH.D. (Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

In our presentation ([Exhibit O](#)), we are talking about the multi-institutional approach we have been using through NITEP and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds in the Nevada Institute on Educator Preparation, Retention and Research (NIEPRR). We have worked with about 117 fellows, 60 percent from underrepresented groups, [Exhibit O](#), page 3.

This year, with the addition of the NIEPRR funds, we were able to expand the reach of NITEP to be multi-institutional. One of the concerns we had is that because it was running through UNLV, we did not want it to be only a UNLV program. Therefore, we have worked with our partners at both the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and Nevada State College (NSC) to meaningfully include our new cohort of fellows this year, which are 15 from each institution, in the first-of-a-kind collaboration.

We have had over 6,000 hours of faculty involvement through mentoring and support from 25 faculty members and staff, [Exhibit O](#), page 4. We have also been able to fund 16 research mini-grants. One of the benefits of NITEP is that it is not just student support, it is also an opportunity for students to participate as co-researchers with faculty on issues like recruitment preparation, retention of teachers and more. We have 18 partnerships with 10 different organizations, including Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY), the Boys and Girls Club, the Public Education Foundation, Nevada Partners and more.

Beyond their regular academic programming, NITEP fellows have also had more than 14,000 hours of educational engagement beyond what their programs can typically provide for them, [Exhibit O](#), page 5. Those include tutoring programs with MGM through a public-private partnership, supporting mental health and wellness development, working on English language acquisition and development through a digital partnership with schools in Chile, as well as advocacy and

education in which students have gained an understanding of complex educational issues.

We also include community engagement because we want to prepare students for the realities of the classroom and the communities they serve. We have a partnership with NPHY to get candidates working with community partners. We run a homework hotline to support students after school when teachers are not available.

Another component of our program is professional development which brings national and local experts together to deliver interactive professional development that we deploy Statewide. This is not just for NITEP fellows, but also educators Statewide through online mechanisms.

We incorporated meaningful research projects for students and faculty to look at issues, [Exhibit O](#), page 6. These programs include teacher identity, teacher retention, building teacher leadership capacity in Nevada and supporting the development of school leaders of color. Seeing our students being able to deploy complex research skills as undergraduate students who are going to be teachers puts them in a great position to become informed leaders in their own schools. We have heard a lot this Session about the lack of accountability in data reporting, so we are preparing NITEP students to take on the challenge of making sure they hold themselves accountable for student learning.

Finally, we have been able to embed micro-credentials as a way of supporting not just NITEP fellows, but all educators Statewide. We provide online asynchronous learning, focusing on Title 1 and expanding the parental involvement and family engagement requirements that NDE requires for teacher licensure. We have courses on homelessness and housing vulnerability, literacy, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, often called STEM, ELL and data-informed instruction. Not only do the NITEP fellows benefit from this, but we have been able to get these courses to teachers Statewide and help expand NITEPs reach.

We have been able to recruit a diverse set of students and provide them with experiences beyond what traditional higher education programs can provide, [Exhibit O](#), page 7. We focus on retention and helping support the fellows with wraparound services in the first three years of their career. We have been responsible stewards of the money. In the past, there were questions around

NITEP's effectiveness. We have really been serious about accountability for the financial investment into this program. We make sure we are expending the funds well in the preparation of teachers.

We look forward to all Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions being able to work in partnership with us to have their students benefit from NITEP and have stable funding, [Exhibit O](#), page 8. In the last Session, this program was funded through an emergency bill. We are thankful that S.B. 291 creates stability for the students in the program. Waiting every two years to see if the funding will be there is a challenge in a four-year program.

DANICA HAYS, PH.D. (Dean, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

I will reiterate what Dr. Varner mentioned about the impact and evolution of the program. We have evolved from scholarships to a more community-embedded program that involves multiple institutions, and we expect to grow in that area. This program has had a ripple effect in the number of educators who benefit from the various components of NITEP. It has also had a ripple effect in direct educational services. We are reaching far into our community and working with our kids as they are learning to be educators.

SENATOR TITUS:

Conceptually, I think this is not a bad idea; however, I need some clarification. In the bill, it states that a licensed teacher must be available to assist and observe the student teacher on a periodic basis. How often is that?

DR. VARNER:

This language is addressing a gap. While students are in NITEP, one portion of their program is while they are student teaching. That is where they have the restrictions. So they follow all the rules of student teachers—they are observed twice, at least, by the university as well as each semester Statewide by their cooperating teachers and building-based principals during student teaching.

SENATOR TITUS:

How often are they observed when they are student teaching? Is another teacher always in the classroom?

DR. VARNER:

Yes, they are always with a licensed professional for the student teaching.

SENATOR TITUS:

If they are always with a licensed professional, then are we actually paying two people to be in that classroom, doubling the cost?

DR. VARNER:

After four weeks, they are eligible to be long-term subs and principals have been able to have students go to other classrooms and serve as substitutes on a limited basis.

SENATOR TITUS:

But this bill is changing that. They do not have to have four weeks now, so right from the start, they are in the classroom by themselves.

DR. VARNER:

This accompanies the work of the Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching (IPT) program, which is allowing school support professionals and other folks to pursue student teaching through their normal course of employment. Typically, education students have not been able to earn income while they were student teaching, so this is trying to address that gap and not make them wait four weeks before they could do it. There were a lot of restrictions around being able to afford to student teach if they were working and had to lose their income. The IPT program already funds them, so this allows them to earn in the first four weeks.

SENATOR TITUS:

So, if they are treated as a student teacher, they are not paying into the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), and they do not get benefits, right?

DR. VARNER:

I do not believe I am qualified to answer that question.

ASHER KILLIAN (Counsel):

I would have to look at the specific provisions. I believe there is a provision in NRS 286 that explicitly excludes substitute teachers from qualifying for PERS, but I can find that reference.

SENATOR TITUS:

As an intern, I received a stipend. I understand that graduate medical students as well as many graduate students at the university system need to be able to do that to survive. Have student teachers graduated yet? Or do they have to do their student teaching in order to get their teaching certificate?

DR. VARNER:

Graduate students with an Alternate Route to Licensure (ARL) do not need to complete student teaching if they have met the requirements for an ARL license. Those pursuing a standard license do need to complete student teaching before they get their degree.

SENATOR NEAL:

I get the idea of students working so they can get paid. Where do they make up the four weeks of teaching? The way the law was written, they need to have completed at least four weeks of student teaching and then go into the school. Now, we want to make sure they are getting paid, which is great, but where along the pathway do they get those four weeks so that when they are standing in front of the students, they actually have some kind of content information to teach from?

DR. VARNER:

At UNLV, our intention is not that they become long-term subs; it is the ability to earn money one or two days a week. It is not a substitute for their student teaching. They are still doing their student teaching. There are different tracks and programs. Our paraprofessionals, for example, are already employed in school districts and working as paraprofessionals. Their student teaching can be done through the course of their regular employment.

A traditional student teacher who is not employed with the school district is assigned with a mentor teacher in his or her classroom. I think the reason this addition was put into the bill is to address how the IPT program has worked and where those funds were meant to go, and whether students could earn money while they were in the first four weeks of their student teaching. I believe it is just to clarify that part of it.

CHAIR LANGE:

Senator Titus, NRS 286.297 says PERS is not included for a student teacher.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I think you guys are trying to clarify and make this program better than it was and to make sure we create that pathway. Senator Buck mentioned earlier that there are a lot of people who probably are going to be good teachers, but they happen to be in the classroom now, maybe as an aid. So in order to incentivize them to leave a position where they are making money, you have to give them some way to earn money while they are doing the student teaching. If they are substitute teaching, that is one way of doing it, making sure they are earning money. I have no problem with that. I think it is a great idea.

I was left on my own when I was studying to be a teacher. I had two different master teachers, and one of them just kind of left me out there and said, "Hey, have fun with the kids." I did not learn anything. I had another one who was really good at mentoring me for the first couple of weeks and then started to let me teach a little bit here and there. I thought it was great. What you guys are doing is trying to create a more perfect pathway. You want to make sure that these folks are brought in and taught the right way and feel like they have some support as they get into the profession. It is a great idea and I like the fact that you are contemplating payment for them as well.

SENATOR BUCK:

I appreciate this bill. A lot of times it is a hardship when people are going through university and then having to take time off from their regular job to be able to student teach. Would the person have to have a long-term substitute license or substitute license before they student-taught, or would that be at the same time? Would they need it before they would actually be student teaching?

DR. VARNER:

There are a lot of scenarios by which somebody can come to student teaching. You can be a long-term substitute and not be in a teacher education program at all, and you can earn money as a long-term substitute. Whereas, our students who have had four years of preparation, have an embargo on their first four weeks of student teaching, even though they come to that experience better prepared. That is one of the challenges. To earn substitute teacher pay, you would have to have a substitute license, so they would have to go through all the background checks and apply with NDE. This bill is to address some of the gaps that NDE experiences, where some of the overlap and licensure does not work well as it pertains to the student teachers.

SENATOR BUCK:

When it comes to background checks, does that complicate it? I know that is a necessary step.

DR. VARNER:

Background checks are a complicated matter all the way around. They are very important, but we know there is a significant time delay in completing those background checks. It has become one of the obstacles and one of the boulders on the highway. We would like to leave Boulder Highway to southern Nevada, and not have it as an obstacle to teachers getting into the classroom. We are trying to encourage students to get this earlier with their license because we know it can take several months to go through the background check process. We also do not want folks who have not been background-checked in our classrooms.

SENATOR BUCK:

What I found is that sometimes you are required to get a background check for the university and also for the school district. Is there a way to streamline that so it is just one background check?

DR. VARNER:

In the next bill we are going to hear, we are trying to streamline everything. One of the challenges in this State is that there are a lot of great thoughts around teacher preparation, and that ends up creating lots of lanes that intersect with each other and make things complicated. I cannot speak for other institutions, but at UNLV, we are committed to working across the State with school districts and the Legislature to understand the best ways to streamline this teacher pipeline. The goal is to have effective educators in front of children and not lose them along the way.

The loss of income is certainly a great barrier for many of our students. They cannot afford to student teach, so they have tended to drop out at the very end of a program. At that point, they will have made a pretty significant investment in their education, yet they are not able to complete it. That is not only heartbreaking; it is counterproductive to filling our teacher shortage.

SENATOR BUCK:

I know that being a long-term sub definitely prepares one for student teaching and for actually doing the job. What I found in my experience running a small

district was that many times our ARL folks are not necessarily as prepared. Is there a way to provide extra training for that lane?

DR. VARNER:

I do not know if I am allowed to say this, but I think when we get to our next bill, you are going to hear about a lot more of those efforts that we are trying to put in motion. That is certainly a part of this. In a lot of ways, NITEP is an extra-curricular program. In the next bill, we are going to hear about the curricular part of the program. We are all working as hard as we can across the State to streamline processes while enhancing the quality of the preparation for folks serving children to ensure that our students are not without qualified teachers.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will take testimony in favor of S.B. 291.

MR. DALY:

The NSEA supports S.B. 291. In the last days of the 2017 Session, we supported S.B. No. 548 of the 79th Session that created NITEP. In particular, we associate ourselves with the comments of Senators Hammond and Buck on the issue of that four-week obstacle for student teachers. They are going to be better prepared than many long-term subs out there, and it is the right thing to do. I would note that on the Assembly side, we supported A.B. 323, which contemplates payment for student teachers. Perhaps that can be harmonized.

[ASSEMBLY BILL 323](#): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-114)

MR. SCHNEIDER:

We are in support of S.B. 291. Education is one of the top priorities of the Vegas Chamber, and we appreciate that this bill aims to address the shortage of teachers and substitute teachers by eliminating that four-week requirement and supporting our rising educators.

ANTHONY RUIZ (Nevada State College):

We support this bill and appreciate the partnership with our friends from UNLV. We look forward to incorporating the multi-school approach into this program to make it even better.

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CONSTANCE BROOKS (University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

We support S.B. 291 and we thank Senator Cannizzaro and former Senator Joyce Woodhouse, who is a champion for education and, in particular, for teacher preparation. We thank them for their support and for the collaborative efforts with the College of Education at UNLV. We also would like to thank the nonprofit community that has stepped up to join the work. In particular, we thank the Public Education Foundation for their support.

ALEJANDRO RODRIGUEZ (Nevada System of Higher Education):

The Nevada System of Higher Education is in strong support of S.B. 291. I echo the remarks from our institutions.

MORGAN BIASELLI:

I am here on behalf of a small coalition of Washoe charter schools. We are in support of S.B. 291 and bringing additional teachers into the classrooms.

MARCO RAUDA:

I am just going to say ditto.

LINDSAY DIAMOND, PH.D. (Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Educator Preparation, College of Education and Human Development, University of Nevada, Reno):

I would like to express our continued support of S.B. 291. We have seen the positive impacts of this program from our cohort of students. In reference to a question earlier, our student teachers are observed six times and there is ongoing collaboration and observations by the lead teacher.

JOSEPH MORGAN, PH.D. (Chair, Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual, and Special Education; Associate Professor, Special Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

I am here in strong support of S.B. 291, which would continue funding for NITEP. As a faculty member in the UNLV College of Education, I have witnessed firsthand the power of providing opportunities to meaningfully engage in the community. Our undergraduate students develop their skills to answer important questions about the problems facing students within their community. They also partner with researchers on developing problem-solving and solutions-oriented approaches to those variables. It also helps us as faculty to understand the perspectives of these critical stakeholders as they enter the classrooms, so we

can embed their ideas into our coursework and our research. All in all, it helps us work together as a State to better support the needs of our K-12 students.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

The Nevada Association of School Superintendents is comprised of all 17 superintendents in our State and we are in strong support of S.B. 291 which will help us with the teacher pipeline.

CLAIRE TREDWELL, PH.D. (Director, UNLV/CSUN Preschool, Administrative Faculty, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

Prior to my employment with UNLV, I was a teacher in CCSD for 18 years. The NITEP program provides our students with embedded experiences to work with young children and their families. Students use best practice strategies to engage with these young children. That, in turn, provides our families with resources to help foster their child's development. It also provides students with experience interfacing with families and developing age-appropriate and culturally responsive practices to implement when working with children.

We are grateful to bring a very important partnership like the NITEP Family Learning Night into our five-star, fully-inclusive preschool for more than 200 children and families. Funding provided to efforts like NITEP is critical to being able to continue multifaceted partnerships like these that impact our future educators, families, and our very youngest children. The University is committed to fostering these partnerships through faculty, staff and involvement from our community and students.

CHRISTINA ROMERO:

I am a UNLV student and a participant in NITEP, here to voice my support for S.B. 291. Being a participant in NITEP gives me the opportunity to participate in professional development workshops where we learn about current educational topics from equitable education to artificial intelligence technologies. We also participate in research projects, collaborate with students at UNLV, UNR and NSC, creating relationships across the State's higher education institutions and communities. Keeping the appropriation is an investment in our educators and will keep the doors open for opportunity, empowerment and community partnerships.

MIRANDA GARCIA:

I am a third-year student at UNLV and a third-year fellow in the NITEP program. In NITEP, we evaluate, develop, and conduct approaches to teaching that address a variety of educational settings. We get connections in our community through our research projects and opportunities to work for nonprofits like Spread the Word Nevada. We also get professional development days that give us perspectives and resources where we learn from other teachers and educators. This program helps prepare us to be not only great teachers and make an impact in the future, but it also helps us make an impact in our community now. I urge you to pass S.B. 291.

HEATHER DAHL-JACINTO, PH.D. (Assistant Professor, Department of Counselor Education, School Psychology and Human Services; College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

I am here today in support of S.B. 291. In my involvement with the NITEP program, I facilitate the mental health and wellness educational engagement pathway along with my colleague, Dr. Wendy Hoskins. This mental health pathway helps support NITEP fellows to develop increased knowledge, and has an impact on themselves, their students and their students' families. The NITEP fellows learn and reflect on their personal mental health, wellness strategies and potential barriers to becoming an effective licensed educator.

We know that supporting the mental health and wellness of our students and their families is vital. In Nevada, suicide is the leading cause of death for ages 12 to 19. From 2009 to 2019, persistent sadness or hopelessness increased by 40 percent to affect one in three high school students. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five young people report that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their mental health. Nevada continues to be ranked one of the lowest in the Nation for access to mental health treatment. Many children and their families may not have access, or know how to access, mental health outside the school. Our teachers may be the bridge for that child to receive additional mental health support.

Being on the front line as an educator, teachers are often the first person to recognize that a student is struggling. Teachers need to be able to identify potential risk factors and learn the support systems, such as school counselors, who are available to help. Our mental health and wellness educational engagement pathway seeks to bridge the gap between a NITEP fellow's personal and professional mental health journey, increasing their overall

awareness in the school setting. As they transition from student to educator, their new roles and responsibilities include awareness of potential risk factors, barriers and stressors affecting themselves in the school community they serve.

MS. PETRUCCI:

I am going to echo what others have said, and the CCEA is in strong support of S.B. 291 and any programs that remove barriers.

DR. DAHL-JACINTO:

I am going to read Dr. Wendy Hoskins statement. She is an associate professor at the UNLV College of Education in the Department of Counselor Education, School, Psychology and Human Services. She facilitates the mental health and wellness educational engagement pathway along with me. She writes:

This pathway supports NITEP students to develop increased knowledge of the impact mental health has on themselves, their students and their students' families. The NITEP fellows learn and reflect on their personal mental health, wellness strategies, and potential barriers to a successful transition to become an effective licensed educator.

During this pathway, fellows engage in modules that focus on various mental health topics and how they relate to their professional development, including personal wellness and burnout prevention for educators, student mental health crisis, student mental health balancing home and school, and connecting with school counselors, school psychologists, social workers and other helping professionals.

Fellows engage in knowledge-building and reflection regarding how their own mental health can affect their personal and professional wellness, along with how they handle career stress. By learning various strategies and building a toolbox of research resources, fellows can better handle their own journey of mental health and wellness and be there for their students.

Here are a few takeaways from fellows who have participated in NITEP. Teachers provide mental health support, include being comfortable with yourself before helping others. School mental

health services need more attention and funding. Finally, teachers providing mental support is essential not only to the student, but to themselves, too. As a former K-12 teacher, Dr. Hoskins can attest to how much she wishes she had this training. Your support of NITEP and our future, licensed educators is meaningful. I urge you to vote yes on S.B. 291.

MORGAN JACKSON:

I am here in support of S.B. 291. A critical aspect of this program is the professional development offered to our NITEP fellows four times a year. Our professional development is a combination of book studies, keynote speakers, and breakout sessions with local educators. It is an opportunity for these pre-service teachers to hear from renowned speakers and leaders in education at a time when they are developing their pedagogical beliefs before they enter the classroom. It is helping to develop the type of teacher they will become and being proactive in teacher training, developing and engaging them prior to becoming a licensed teacher.

As a licensed teacher myself, access to this type of professional development prior to entering the classrooms would have better prepared me for situations and scenarios I encountered. It would have allowed me to come into the classroom with a clearer pedagogical belief and as a more effective teacher for my students.

So much of what I learned as a classroom teacher, these NITEP fellows are being taught before even stepping into the classroom. This not only helps them as teachers, but it benefits their future students as well. As a graduate from a CCSD high school and two NSHE institutions and a licensed teacher, I strongly urge you to support S.B. 291.

KELSEY CLAUS:

I am going to read some remarks on behalf of a NITEP fellow, Samuel Self, who could not be here today because he is completing some classwork. He writes:

My participation in the Nevada Institute on Teaching and Educator Preparation (NITEP) has connected me to professionals and scholars from across the Nation, provided opportunities to practice delivering lessons while applying various instruction strategies and engaged me with the diverse needs of our community through

volunteer experiences. Not only has the NITEP program shaped my professional life, it has also helped me achieve my personal and financial goals which have allowed me to focus on my studies.

The professional development has allowed me to attend a variety of workshops focused on topics such as tribal sovereignty, building transformative multicultural classrooms, integrating social skill learning in the classroom, and examining the impact of critical perspectives in K-12 education. These workshops have provided me with invaluable insights and strategies to help enhance my teaching and leadership practices as well as deepen my understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences. I have had diverse educational experiences, such as providing English language support to multicultural students at Colegio Concepción in San Pedro, Chile, and offering small group tutoring to middle schoolers through the MGM partnership in Las Vegas.

These experiences allowed me to implement the pedagogical knowledge acquired in professional development, while gaining experience organizing a class and teaching content area literacy. I have also engaged in meaningful community service opportunities, including designing and presenting family workshops and volunteering with the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. These activities have allowed me to develop my leadership skills and foster relationships with families and students in the Las Vegas community. I support S.B. 291.

MICHELEE CRUZ-CRAWFORD, ED.D. (Clark County School District):

I am in strong support of this bill. In the last Legislative Session, I helped with S.B. No. 352 of the 81st Session, which allows paraprofessionals to student teach. This is a result of my research in 2021, where I surveyed future teachers and asked about barriers. There were 1,128 future teachers that said they would become teachers if they were able to pay for student teaching. That meant we had 1,128 future teachers. I am in full support of any way we can remove barriers to licensure. I have been able to see the NITEP program and it is a high quality, effective program. I am in full support of S.B. 291.

SUSAN PROFFITT (Vice President, Nevada Republican Club):

I support S.B. 291 with one caveat—that we put some restraints on it to ensure the money gets used for the right purposes. I think it would be great if you could add that if the money is not used for the purpose for which it was intended, then it must be returned. That way, no organization or department within the government can misappropriate or move it to another area it was not intended for. This bill is very much needed.

ANDREA COLE:

I am a parent and teacher, calling in support of S.B. 291. We all know we are in desperate need of teachers. This bill removes the barrier for students who are going through the teaching program at the universities and have to stop at the end because they cannot afford to student teach. Losing those potential teachers is a great loss for Nevada. It is my understanding that they would not be a substitute teacher, but they would be paid the same wage as a substitute teacher.

We do not want only those kids who can afford to take a year off work to teach. We know we have a lot of kids in tight economic situations, and if we are only getting teachers who are able to take a year off work, I do not think that is everybody.

Just like a lot of you had paid internships for your jobs, being a student teacher needs to be a paid internship to remove that barrier. While they are student teaching, their focus should be on learning to be an excellent teacher, not worrying about how they will pay their bills.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

I think this bill is an important step to develop great educators here in the State. I am a product of the educational system here in Nevada—Vegas Verdes Elementary School, J.M. Ullom Elementary School, C.W. Woodbury Middle School, Chaparral High School, UNR undergraduate, and UNLV law school graduate, so I believe very much in the education we can afford students in this State and the opportunities it can provide. We need to be doing everything we can to support educators who can help all of our students excel and have the opportunities they deserve.

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 291 and open the hearing on S.B. 438. I will turn the gavel over to Senator Neal while I present the bill.

SENATE BILL 438: Revises provisions relating to the recruitment, preparation and retention of teachers. (BDR 34-1061)

SENATOR ROBERTA LANGE (Senatorial District No. 7):

Senate Bill 438 is a bill that ultimately seeks to address the teacher shortage crisis in Nevada. It better coordinates a Statewide effort aimed at addressing the recruitment of those who plan to become teachers and the retention of those who currently serve the State in that capacity. Teachers and other educational personnel are critical components of Nevada's educational system. For several years, we have seen many Nevada entities, including this Legislature, look at various ways to assist schools in the recruitment and retention of teachers.

The State has funded and implemented numerous programs to support initiatives, such as strengthening teacher preparation programs, streamlining the licensure process, removing barriers to recruitment, and improving job satisfaction and working environments. However, Nevada continues to face a chronic teacher shortage, both in its urban and rural school districts. It is time we shift our approach. This bill will better coordinate, consolidate and improve the efficiency of a Statewide effort in recruiting and retaining teachers.

This may be the first time we have had three presidents of three universities here to speak on a bill all at the same time. It just points to the importance of this issue and why we need to do something. We have the people who are leading our universities saying, "This is what we need to do."

KIRSTEN SEARER (President, Public Education Foundation):

We are here today to present an entirely new approach to teacher recruitment and retention in Nevada.

DR. VARNER:

I will walk quickly through the bill. First, S.B. 438 creates the Teach Nevada Collaborative in the NDE as further outlined in section 9 of the bill. The purpose of the Collaborative is to consolidate, coordinate and improve the efficiency of all Statewide efforts to recruit and prepare those who want to become teachers in Nevada's public schools, and to retain teachers who are currently working in

Nevada's public schools. Additionally, the Collaborative must work with NSHE and other stakeholders to support dual-credit programs for pupils who wish to become teachers, provide scholarships to certain students and programs that lead to a teaching license. It will provide support to certain students, student teachers and support programs to recruit people into the teaching profession.

Additionally, S.B. 438 creates the Teach Nevada Collaborative Account in the General Fund. The allowable use of money is outlined in section 8 and includes the use for the recruitment and preparation of future teachers and the retention of existing teachers; awarding scholarships to those obtaining the necessary education to become licensed or endorsed as a teacher; awarding grants to various entities that recruit and prepare future teachers, while retaining existing public school teachers.

Section 16 repeals the Teach Nevada Scholarship program, but we will talk about that a little bit more. It is not actually repealing it; that would be terrible. Former Governor Brian Sandoval is here, and he created it.

We are often asked why we do this work, and I have a presentation ([Exhibit P](#)). I want to start with a personal anecdote. My mother, who is shown on page 2, passed away unexpectedly in early February 2023. Like many of the students we serve at UNLV and even some in this room, I am a first-generation college attendee. We tend to put a lot of focus and emphasis on first-generation college students as if they are something magic, but it is our parents who did not have the same opportunity to go through college and university and realize their dream that makes a difference for us “first-gen” students and graduates.

The programs we are talking about consolidating in S.B. 438 actually helped many folks who are not traditional pathway teachers, but those who want to come back to school later in life to become teachers. Many of them will break the first-generation cycle. As an immigrant, my mother did not have some of the opportunities that she made sure I had. Part of our commitment with these pathway programs is not about robotically preparing teachers; it is trying to recognize that every child deserves to have the best education by ensuring that teachers keep the personal stories of the students they teach. That is part of why we as teachers do this work.

Ms. SEARER:

You might be wondering why the Public Education Foundation (PEF) is sitting here with representatives of NSHE to talk about what is essentially a higher education bill. The reason is because PEF's Board of Directors is very concerned about the ongoing and, frankly, worsening teacher shortage crisis that disproportionately affects students in underserved communities. We have been partnering with UNLV on this issue and are very impressed that higher education and nonprofit organizations in Nevada and around the Country are recognizing that this is an equity issue. It is a workforce development issue too, so they are stepping up in a meaningful and innovative way.

Today, a historic coalition of NSHE institutions and nonprofit groups such as PEF are proposing this new Teach Nevada Collaborative, which will provide NSHE institutions with the funding and flexibility to create, implement and track pipelines of students from the high school level through a teacher's first three years in the classroom. It will also provide K-12 entities with a much larger pool of local, more diverse, homegrown teachers. This slide tells you why we need to address the lack of local pipelines in Nevada, [Exhibit P](#), page 3.

Throughout the State, our school districts average hiring 2,755 teachers a year while our four NSHE institutions that produce teachers—UNLV, UNR, NSC and Great Basin College—produce an average of 785 teachers per year. You can see why our school districts are put in a position where they are constantly working to recruit teachers from outside of Nevada. These out-of-state recruited teachers may or may not be committed to living in Nevada and staying and working with our students.

With this collective, we are addressing three critical issues. One is inflexibilities in our current teacher preparation programs; two is an over focus on scholarship programs without providing wraparound supports that we know will significantly increase graduation rates; and three is reducing barriers and increasing accountability so that we know how many teachers are in the pipeline at any one time.

Nevada's teacher shortage is growing worse, and it impacts our most underserved students the most, [Exhibit P](#), page 4. Why is this such a pressing issue that we believe now is the time to bring a solution? Data consistently tells us that learning loss due to not having a licensed teacher can financially impact students for the rest of their lives. Data also tells us that Nevada schools need

an additional 1,200 teachers right now, impacting more than 30,000 students. The learning loss from just one missed year of instruction can have a \$61,000 impact on a student's lifelong earning potential.

On a side note, at PEF we have a high school intern. She does not go to a CCSD school, but she is an extremely hard worker who wants to study psychology. Around the holidays, I asked her how her school year was going, and she told me that she did not have a permanent math teacher in her school. I asked her what this meant for her, and she said, "I guess I just will not learn geometry this year." That really broke my heart, because this is a student who is doing everything she can to advance herself, and she has absolutely no control over that situation. She has since received a full-time substitute teacher position, but for someone who has dreams of going to college, the consequences of that lost semester of learning could impact her for years.

National research tells us that it costs school districts about \$20,000 to hire and onboard each new teacher. We are here today because Nevada's 400,000 plus students are relying on us to fix this issue. These are devastating numbers, but even worse when heat maps show us that students who most need a caring, consistent licensed teacher are the ones who do not have access to them, [Exhibit P](#), page 5. These are heat maps provided by CCSD showing areas with the highest concentration of teacher vacancies, and areas with the highest concentration of Black and Latino students. These are startling maps.

Recent figures from CCSD show that in January 2023, 109 schools have at least a 10 percent teacher vacancy; 30 schools have at least a 20 percent teacher vacancy; and 6 schools have at least a 30 percent teacher vacancy rate. The one piece of good news about this heat map is that we are working closely with UNLV to recruit future teachers. We are mentoring school paraprofessionals who want to become teachers and go into the UNLV Paraprofessional Pathway Program (PPP). The red dots on that page are the areas where our current mentees work. We have found that these mentees often live near the areas where they work. When we focus on this innovative program to help paraprofessionals become teachers, we are not only lifting people out of poverty, we are also creating teachers who are dedicated to working in the areas where students need them most.

So, what is working, what is not, and why we do think this is the solution? While we have found that there are shining lights of organizations that are

working to innovatively nurture teachers, we have found that many of our institutions are operating in silos and that there is little data Statewide about the effectiveness of current grant programs to help new teachers, [Exhibit P](#), page 6.

That is why we seek to create one Statewide collective to combine current Statewide funds and efforts. Instead of having multiple streams of funding with different requirements and different deadlines, we suggest that all NSHE institutions and nonprofit organizations recruiting teachers can apply for block grants to address this issue. We welcome accountability and have built-in mechanisms throughout this plan, not only to create new pathways of teaching candidates, but also to evaluate the effectiveness of public and private funds utilized in producing these teachers.

We desperately need a public/private partnership and an all-hands-on-deck strategy Statewide. States around the Nation are doing this. In Illinois, their governor just announced \$70 million annually for three years for innovative teacher preparation programs and scholarships. In Michigan, the governor there just announced a \$100 million investment. States like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are also announcing tens of millions of dollars for teacher preparation programs and scholarship funds. There is a narrative that people do not want to become teachers these days, but nationally, these innovative programs have found that there are people interested in becoming teachers. They just need extra support.

DR. VARNER:

Our research has shown that there are three major areas of leaks in the teacher pipeline from those who might want to become teachers to those who stay more than three years in the profession, [Exhibit P](#), page 7. The first leak is a lack of wraparound supports before, during and after the program. The second leak is the cost of attendance and logistical barriers, and the third leak is program inflexibility, such as a student who is working full-time having issues when the courses they need to graduate are only offered during their work hours.

Through the leadership of President Whitfield and Dean Hays at UNLV, we have been able to implement the PPP, [Exhibit P](#), page 8. The data from the PPP has helped us understand how this Teach Nevada Collaborative can really materialize into something quite special in Nevada.

In our traditional programs, we have a 44 percent graduation rate and 65 percent students of color. What is alarming about that data is that six out of every ten students are not finishing within a reasonable graduation time, and it is negatively impacting folks of color. In contrast, in the PPP, 70 percent of the students are students of color with a 92 percent graduation rate. What is the difference? We have found that by addressing the wraparound services before, during and after the program, as well as the elimination of any barriers, more of our students succeed and complete the program, [Exhibit P](#), page 9.

We also actively recruit the untapped market of paraprofessionals who have not been encouraged to become teachers because of logistical restrictions, including time and money, and we facilitate their onboarding during their summer availability. This way, those who have spent years in the profession and are now coming back to a university setting have the proper supports to be successful.

Another clamp on the leaky teacher pipeline that we facilitate is to provide full financial support in the PPP program, so these students have no out-of-pocket costs. We are not asking them to take on loan debt with the hope that they might become teachers. We also provide flexible and predominantly asynchronous online coursework, with Saturday and weekend flexibility in terms of in-person interaction. We have meaningful embedded professional development, as well as a three-year post-program support.

With all those clamps to the leaky pipeline, we envision the Teach Nevada Collaborative as an opportunity to reduce the bureaucracy of current grant programs and produce more teachers, [Exhibit P](#), page 10. There are a number of teacher pathway programs, all operating separately within the State. In the current system, given the number of pathways and the inability to collect strong data, we are not able to be as accountable as we want to be. Part of our commitment is across-institution accountability, along with accountability for NDE in terms of impact on student performance, as well as building on best practices that increase graduation rates.

The Teach Nevada Collaborative combines four pathways—Teach Nevada, IPT, Nevada Educator Preparation Institute & Collaborative (NV-EPIC), and the dual-concurrent and dual-enrollment high school pipeline, [Exhibit P](#), page 11. Instead of having four stand-alone programs, we are proposing to comprehensively address all four in a single bill. [Senate Bill 438](#) would allow

institutions of higher education, as well as other ARL providers who are not higher education institutions, to be able to apply for block grants.

These grants would be used for the high school pipeline, and would include wraparound support and, most importantly, two-year institutions. None of the current funding models in the State involve two-year institutions, which is a real challenge, given the number of students who go through those community colleges on their pathway to becoming a teacher. The grants would also enhance fast-track opportunities for paraprofessionals and other ARL students, and creating more residency models that allow student-teaching to incorporate paid internship models.

In the third column on [Exhibit P](#), page 11, under State Programming, we identify where State programming and funds currently exist, although most of those funds are direct scholarship supports only. They do not build in the important programming and wraparound supports necessary for student success. The next column under Students Served, indicates our projection of how many students could be served.

We are actively thinking about recruitment, pre-program support, cost of attendance, program structures, in-program support and post-program support across all four of those areas, [Exhibit P](#), page 12. This is a first-of-its-kind comprehensive program that all NSHE institutions will collaborate on comprehensively.

DR. HAYS:

We want to thank all our NSHE presidents for spending the day with us, proving that all the institutions can get along and we can be at the same table. This bill represents something that has been working because we have had this partnership, and for the past couple of years, it has shown success. We have shown graduation rates that are 50 points higher, teacher candidate graduates up 70 percent and higher with teachers of color, and these teachers are working in the areas of the most need. With this continuation of funding, we are able to provide all the supports that are needed and increase the net growth of teachers by 500 individuals per year to help close the teacher shortage gap by the end of the biennium.

I think it is very natural for people to freak out when they see a price tag of \$51 million on a proposed bill, [Exhibit P](#), page 14, and I want to highlight a

couple things. One is something that the PEF has been instrumental in, after doing some surveying in the CCSD, showing that more than 2,200 paraprofessional support staff want to be teachers. These individuals are interested and they are also essentially impoverished. We know what these folks are paid, and we have to break the cycle of poverty, not just for them, but for kids in their classroom and for their families.

That is the first piece of this proposal; it is an investment in workforce development. Every time we lose a teacher in the State, it costs around \$20,000. If you multiply \$20,000 times the number of vacancies per year, that number is far higher than \$51 million. When we look at what we have currently spent in terms of funding from the last Legislature on Teach Nevada and IPT, in addition to some of the emergency funding, we can do more with that money and provide all the wraparound supports that support people who want to become teachers from high school through their third year as an educator. We are committed to that in the Teach Nevada Collaborative.

We will be able to develop this pipeline through dual-concurrent enrollment, increasing interest and graduating high schoolers with up to 30 credits in NSHE institutions. We will utilize funding to target some of the leaks Dr. Varner mentioned, and to increase graduation rates. It allows us to be innovative and establish one-year programs such as paraprofessional programs and ARL programs and it provides the necessary wraparound services.

No one wants to have more accountability on funding than we do as NSHE institutions and private partnerships, [Exhibit P](#), page 15. We want to be held accountable for the funding that is provided by the State and be able to show how programs like this impact, not only the proportion of high-quality and diverse teachers, but how it impacts students in the classroom.

Part of this infrastructure is to set up that accountability model to include certain metrics which would be reported twice a year and provided on a public website. That way, anyone in Nevada could see how we are performing and how we are using that money.

KEITH WHITFIELD, PH.D. (President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

There is incredible power in the collaboration across NSHE institutions, particularly in this case between UNR, NSC and UNLV. This is a program that actually works. We invested in it back in 2021 at UNLV, and it is just amazing

to see a 92 percent success rate in graduations. Those are numbers you can bank on and makes \$51 million worth spending. I am representing my university, UNLV, and we are in very strong support of S.B. 438.

DERIONNE POLLARD, PH.D. (President, Nevada State College):

I am delighted to offer full support for S.B. 438 from Nevada State College (NSC), soon to be Nevada State University. At our School of Education, we have been very fortunate in our commitment to the recruitment and retention of teachers. The last school of education graduated 144 students along with 40 ARL educators. Every action that is being proposed in this Legislation is designed to meet the teacher shortage by utilizing creative and innovative programming and fortifying school districts, NSHE, community partnerships and other key stakeholders to be part of a continuum to solve the collective problem.

Senate Bill 438 is particularly important because it addresses four key areas to bolster graduation rates while also speaking to the needs of nontraditional, predominantly first-generation student populations. At Nevada State, we specialize in this population, and what we know for sure is that their needs are very distinct and different.

First, our teacher education students reflect perseverance and endurance. If you were to sit through one of our awards ceremonies, you would recognize very clearly that they are passionate about their commitment to teaching and have gone through a very serious journey to be there. Quite often, I am moved to tears listening to these stories that are often about funding, particularly because of family obligations that have impacted their ability to complete college and graduate within four years. Therefore, they have tried to work diligently to meet that need. As first-generation students, they are often overwhelmed with navigating the adult education system and they look to us to guide them.

Those adults who are returning to the workforce through education often need a special hand. Our goal is to holistically address all ends of the teacher pipeline, from high school student recruitment and retention, to unique partnerships with two-year institutions, and to focus on nontraditional baccalaureate programs. For example, in Nevada State, our Teacher Academy Pipeline Program brings about 600 sophomores and freshman to our campus annually and it continues to grow.

Finally, I have one observation—we know that COVID-19 impacted higher education dramatically and the teacher-career pipeline was impacted more than any of us ever reckoned. While the debate in the public space leaves much to be desired, I believe this Legislation is an opportunity to bring all NSHE partners to the table and to design a more cohesive structure so we can move Nevada and our system of education forward. Besides voting rights, this may be one of the most consequential equity issues of our time.

DALE ERQUIAGA (Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education):

I am going to echo something that Ms. Searer from PEF said in her remarks—this is an all-hands-on-deck moment when it comes to the teacher shortage in Nevada. There are a number of pieces of Legislation moving in this body that are trying to deal with this all-hands-on-deck moment of our teacher shortage. There are bills in the other house that were heard yesterday that also deal with the student-teacher pipeline. Governor Joe Lombardo has a bill that includes some language around Teach Nevada, and the stepping up of that program. There is another bill coming in the Assembly that deals with the early grades ladder up.

I come to you as the poster child for “if you stick around long enough, all roads in your life lead back to where they began.” Some of the problems you have heard about are ones I probably helped cause over my career. So it is ironic and also satisfying to be here today to support this measure. You have heard from two of NSHE’s presidents and, as Dr. Varner mentioned, this bill also includes other presidents in two-year institutions. For the first time, we have an opportunity to draw them into this critical conversation about teacher preparation.

When Dr. Hays and Dr. Varner came to me from UNLV, along with Ms. Searer from the PEF, to talk about this program, they had me at hello, because they had data. I appreciate evidence-based policy. They have data about the PPP and how that works. Then, they put the icing on that particular cake and talked to me about wraparound services. If you know my background, I care a great deal about wraparound supports.

In this measure, I see an opportunity to bring coherence to this scattered world of scholarshiping, teacher shortage and teacher preparation. All the bills can be reconciled, and it could be a coherent package that leaves this Body. I also see opportunity for modeling in other spaces. This kind of a model with wraparound

data and scaffolding from the lower grades into higher education, could be used in other fields. Nursing comes to mind, and there are probably some others.

I think the folks have done a really nice job, not just laying out for you a case for why this is necessary to address the teacher shortage. They are giving us a model for coherence that could be replicated in other sectors. I would also add to what Dr. Hays said—it is not every day that NSHE institutions get along, so it is really nice when we are all here together working on a program. I thank the sponsor for bringing S.B. 438.

BRIAN SANDOVAL (President, University of Nevada, Reno):

On behalf of UNR, we are in full support of this bill. It is a great pleasure, privilege and honor to join my friends, President Pollard from Nevada State and President Whitfield from UNLV. This does not happen very often, and I think there are going to be a lot more moments like this where we come together particularly for a piece of Legislation that has so much potential to do so much good for the State. Dr. Varner alluded to the fact that this is something that started back in 2017 with the Teach Nevada scholarship. This bill expands that and does incredible things. It really is a proud moment and proud opportunity for the State to expand that teacher pipeline and assist all the school districts across Nevada.

SENATOR TITUS:

Who are the members of the Collaborative and how are they picked?

DR. VARNER:

Minimally, the Collaborative is going to be composed of NDE, NSHE institutions, and alternative providers. One of the components we were asked to think about is how the regulatory process could identify what would constitute membership. Initially, this was formed as a partnership with the NSHE institutions reaching out through NDE.

We also know that there are ARL providers that want to be a part of it. One thing that goes along with this accountability system is an initial conversation about who is in it. But there is also a need to develop some requirements around what it means to continue receiving these funds. That is something that needs to be developed through the regulatory process.

We know it started with NSHE and NDE wanting to create mutual collaborative accountability. The NDE certainly distributes a lot of funds and it is unclear as to how the accountability works with the NSHE partners that receive it.

There is a partially open question around other members beyond those two entities, but certainly teacher preparation providers come to mind. Where there is some hesitation is in predatory providers or folks from outside of Nevada. We are looking for a Nevada solution to Nevada problems. We are not looking to open up a scenario where people start coming in with outside solutions. We really want Nevada providers in this Collaborative who are producing folks who meet the qualifications for licensure and spending the money appropriately. Dean Hays discussed the data metrics, which is part of the mechanism of regulating the accountability, who gets to be in it and how that would work.

SENATOR TITUS:

I do have concerns that you are asking for \$51 million, but you are not telling me who is actually going to manage the money. It just says you are going to report to the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), and then LCB is going to report to the Interim Standing Committee on Education on or before June 30 of each year. But you are not telling me who those folks are that will be managing this money and how the decision process is going to be made.

My other concern is that in section 10, it says the Collaborative shall develop and carry into effect a program of block grants for colleges, universities and other providers. Is this just going to be that \$51 million or, once you have established the collaborative system, are they going to be able to apply and match any federal dollars?

You are asking for \$51 million from the General Fund, so I am worried that there is no ability to use that money to gain other matching funds or anything of that nature. Can you explain that?

MR. KILLIAN:

I will try to give a brief answer to both this question and the previous question. The bill as written creates the Collaborative account in the General Fund and makes the Collaborative the agent responsible for administering the account. The Collaborative is created in section 9 of the bill as an agency within the NDE. So, just like any other component of the NDE, that is under the control of the

NDE, and ultimately under the leadership of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Additionally, in subsection 3 of section 9, the spending of money from the Account is subject to the supervision of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This would be one component agency within the NDE that has the ability to enter into agreements with the colleges, universities, NSHE and other entities. But ultimately, since the Collaborative is a component of the NDE, the NDE would be responsible for the administration of the money in the Account.

SENATOR TITUS:

Would the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jhone Ebert, then be the one who decides who will be the members of this Collaborative?

MR. KILLIAN:

Ultimately, the Superintendent exercises control over the Department of Education, so since this is a component entity of the Department, it would be the Superintendent's decision how to staff it and what the components of the entity would be. So, indirectly, at least, the Superintendent would have control over which entities the agency enters into agreements with.

SENATOR NEAL:

Senator Flores had a question on section 6 for the definition of "partner." He wanted to know how partners would know about the program and if there would be access for bilingual partners so they could participate in the program?

DR. VARNER:

The Nevada Department of Education would have the ultimate responsibility for that, but the idea is to be inclusive of any partner who can demonstrate effectiveness in improving instruction for students and thoughtfully preparing those who enter the profession.

SENATOR NEAL:

How will the nonprofits learn about the partnership options so they can participate directly from communities of color?

DR. HAYS:

Your questions remind me of the origins of this bill. We do not seem to have a central way to communicate opportunities, nor do we have a central way of

holding folks accountable and being transparent. Part of our goal for this Collaborative is to put forward a biannual report and a call for partnership.

SENATOR NEAL:

You stated that part of the issue is access and relationship within communities of color

DR. HAYS:

No, part of the issue is around communicating as a State about these opportunities to come together to support education. We have had many successful efforts, including piecemeal initiatives that have supported educator shortages, but they have not been open to all to participate. Our hope with this external-facing website and data reporting is that more people will be made aware of what we are trying to do as a State.

SENATOR NEAL:

But if the current issue is lack of access, then how would they get access just because it is on the website? Who is going to be doing the marketing of the program and who are your feeder relationships into those communities that will be able to build that access? Because, no offense, it is not the PEF.

DR. VARNER:

Regarding student access, Teach Nevada, despite its best effort, is not made available to as many students as it could be. There has often been money left. It is up to each institution to decide how they announce it, and how they get people qualified for it. By working NSHE-wide, we can make sure that we are not passively hoping students find out about the scholarships. We realize that just by making the information available on a website, it does not mean students will take the opportunity.

Our goal is for the institutions to identify students by the criteria and to reach out and say, "You qualify for this, and we want you to be in these programs." Part of having the wraparound services and the professional development is not just to give scholarship money and say, "You qualify, here is the money." We want to identify students who have the need and provide those wraparound supports. A lot of our students are first-generation higher education students who have not had access to some of the benefits of higher education. Besides the community partner aspect, one part of it is to make these funds more

available to students in a new way that is not currently available; Teach Nevada is not currently accessible everywhere.

In the Paraprofessional Pathways Program, one of many partners we work with is the PEF. They have helped us facilitate pathways for students. We also work with CCEA, the teacher's union, with post-program support because the universities do not necessarily stay with the students once they leave us.

One of the implications is that we have to stay tuned-in with these students for at least three years after they graduate. We have to figure out partnerships with districts and teacher unions. Wherever these teachers are going to go, we work on their professional development. All the professional development we have done over the last two years has involved us reaching out with national and local experts of color. Every presenter has been from communities of color, both locally and not just in Clark County. We also partner with folks in Washoe and at a National level to do that.

The idea behind the Collaborative is that we all get together to talk about these challenges and opportunities, and how we can build relationships. Institutions have not necessarily been encouraged to work collaboratively. We have each been told to address our little piece of the pie and do it in isolation. Part of how we leverage out the resources and supports in the community agencies is in conversation, and that has not happened.

SENATOR NEAL:

The next question Senator Flores had was from section 9, subsection 2, paragraph (d). He wanted to know how nontraditional programs that are currently in place in communities of color would be integrated into this process?

DR. VARNER:

My understanding is that NDE is going to have to create systems of making known what is available and how to access those programs. I think that is a second part of this process; being able to get that out there.

SENATOR NEAL:

The second question is about the integration. Let us say there is a current nontraditional program that is training teachers; maybe it is a community grassroots organization. How would they become eligible? How would they

start to fit into the definition? How would they become a collaborator to make sure they fit into the definition of the program?

We know that when we do things at a high level, the people who are down at the grassroots level do not have a seat at the table. I am trying to convey what Senator Flores really wanted to try to get at and what he is worried about. He is saying that there are potentially grassroots community organizations doing this work. How do they become integrated into this process by knowing that a definition will fit them? What is the pathway for those organizations?

DR. VARNER:

One of the things that is an important component was the inclusion of the two-year institutions. The two-year institutions have a lot more grassroots connections than sometimes the four-year institutions do. A lot of the students who are entering the two-year system come from communities where access has not always been the norm. Part of this is also being able to collaborate across these institutions, not just the four-year institutions, but through the two-year institutions to get closer to the heart of community. That is an important part of this bill that has never been seen in the State, as far as we can tell.

Those students often cannot get to us because of roadblocks; and yet those students from those community organizations are finding that the pathway to licensure as an undergrad is only through a four-year degree. There is not a pathway without a bachelor's degree. They need an alternative that leads to licensure and this is one of the complexities. When we look at the distribution of the funds, 95 percent is direct support and 86 percent of it is through student scholarships. Most of the money, very similar to how IPT and Teach Nevada work, is intended to go to the students.

This other piece is around the programming. Nine percent of the funds are meant to start loosening up some of the things that have not been a part of this effort. We know that giving students scholarship money has not changed the graduation rates or teacher retention. Despite its best efforts, Teach Nevada has not been able to do that. I think one of the key errors has been that the two-year institutions were not a part of it and that we have not forced ourselves to look more towards community.

Ms. SEARER:

We recognize there is a diversity problem in our teaching core right now, because 78 percent of our CCSD students identify as diverse, and less than 30 percent of our CCSD teachers identify as diverse. Just by looking at two pools of potential teachers that have been basically ignored in the past—our students and our paraprofessionals working in our schools who are 65 percent diverse—we are already going to make huge strides in lifting people out of poverty and breaking cycles of poverty. We are very committed to that. Throughout all the data dashboard that we have been talking about, we would insist on setting up metrics to ensure that we are reaching all parts of our community. We would make that commitment to you.

SENATOR NEAL:

I generally support the bill but I have a question in section 10, subsection 4, paragraph (c) regarding wraparound services. You explained some of it around subsidies for testing, and programs for different cohorts within the program to support each other. Knowing that we are still missing teachers, who do we envision doing the professional mentoring? I know in the Collaborative we have different departments of education, but then there is the academic and the theoretical.

Say I am in the classroom and I know how to teach a student how to do classroom management, how to manage an at-risk population, how to deal with all the different things that you need to engage in to be a classroom teacher; who is going to be doing that professional mentoring?

DR. VARNER:

We have been doing that through the PPP. One of the things that S.B. 438 will help with is expanding the pool of part-time instructors teaching these courses. Part of our job has been working deliberately with school districts and finding effective strong teachers, mostly teachers of color, who want the opportunity to work with students and deliver classes in professional development.

We also have a teacher leadership certificate to use as an incentive for folks who want to mentor undergraduate students. They can then earn a four-course teacher leadership certificate, which is a gateway to a master's degree. This has incentivized teachers, particularly teachers of color, who have not necessarily had access to teaching and working with students in the higher education setting. We have found that to be very effective and we are also working with

some of the research grants for improving administrators of color and their ability to work in school buildings. We are working in the buildings to make sure we are delivering professional development in a way that responds to those communities.

SENATOR NEAL:

Will there be an opportunity for retired teachers of color to come back and participate in the professional mentorship? I do not think that resource is accessed enough in terms of being able to mentor and teach. It is not full-time, so those retirees might be interested in giving some hours to a cohort.

DR. VARNER:

My doctoral area of study is actually in multiculturalism and diversity. A lot of the things we talk about are fictive kinships, which are relationships that a child has with an individual who is not related by birth, adoption or marriage, but who has an emotionally significant relationship with the child. I think having intergenerational mentoring is really important and this makes retired teachers an underutilized asset, particularly administrators and teachers of color and non-educator members of the community.

One of the things we have to be able to let go of is the idea that only educators can prepare educators. Part of the effort here is to have other sectors of the community be able to contribute to what a student needs. Some of the focus is on the classroom and what happens there, but while we are doing wraparound services, we need to look at the full constellation of things that impact kids.

There are other employment sectors where people are longing for an opportunity to have more meaningful interaction in educative spaces. So retired teachers, sure, but I am also looking and thinking about anyone retired who is doing really impactful work that can help mentor a student. We also have a strong pipeline of doctoral students of color who were teachers that left teaching because they wanted to pursue higher education. These students have been serving in the last three years—with funding from both NITEP and NV-EPIC—as senior fellows and they serve as mentors, too. They are closer to practice, and they have skills and experience. Mentoring sharpens their tools while they are mentoring others.

Paraprofessionals come with a wealth of experience and knowledge, which makes them a great resource. They are not traditional 18-year-old students pursuing teaching. They have been in classrooms for five or ten years; they just

do not have a license or a degree. What is valuable about that is that there is intergenerational mentoring that goes both ways because the students are not a vessel that is empty.

We rely on the students who are a part of this Collaborative and receiving this support. Part of the giveback for them is sharing their wealth and knowledge with other people. That is another unique part of this. The current scholarship programs do not ask the students to do anything to give back. What we are doing is saying, "You have an obligation for this money and part of it is developing your skill set, and part of it is sharing the wealth of experience that you have that is being underutilized in the State."

MS. SEARER:

I mentioned that the PEF has been mentoring paraprofessionals who want to enter the UNLV program. We believe strongly that we need to provide stipends to teachers who are mentoring future teachers. This coming year, we are going to be mentoring 120 paraprofessional mentees, and each mentor will get a \$5,000 stipend. We focus on recruiting diverse mentors and 34 percent of our mentors this year were diverse. We are working to improve that number every year.

SENATOR NEAL:

Senator Lange has to go present a bill, so we will close the presentation and and open up for support testimony.

MR. DALY:

We have talked a great deal for the last year or two about the crisis of educator vacancies. In terms of our response to S.B. 438, while we tend to focus on educator retention, the pipeline and teacher recruitment is also critical. In this bill, which we support, the language that creates the Teach Nevada Collaborative Account, authorizes the use of money to recruit and prepare persons to become teachers and retain teachers who currently work in public schools. We are excited about the bill.

DR. DIAMOND:

On behalf of UNR and the College of Education and Human Development, we support S.B. 438. We believe this bill will provide the opportunity to engage and partner with other institutions to ensure we are implementing best practices in teacher preparation across the State. Additionally, this bill will provide equitable

access for students to attend a teacher preparation of their choice at a two- or four-year institution. This also provides support to our students in Nevada high schools through dual- and concurrent-enrollment initiatives.

Having a background as a teacher educator in southern Nevada and as a director of assessment in my previous career at UNLV and now as an educator and researcher at UNR, I understand the scope and needs of teacher preparation on a national level and how it impacts teacher preparation in our State. I also understand the steps we need to take to create higher quality teacher preparation programs through this Collaborative. This will create higher quality experiences for our students who are interested, and we will support them beyond the typical college experience through the implementation of wraparound and mentoring support services.

These services will look unique to every institution and how we choose to mentor the students who go through our programs. Ultimately, funding provided through this bill will allow us, as teacher-preparation programs, the flexibility to meet the specific needs of our students and ultimately have an impact on the child and student outcomes across Nevada.

TREVOR PARRISH (Vegas Chamber):

The Vegas Chamber supports S.B. 438 because K-12 education and workforce development have been top priorities for us at both the local and State levels of government. We believe that establishing the Teach Nevada Collaborative is an important step toward retaining and recruiting teachers to ensure quality education for upcoming generations. This bill will provide the necessary infrastructure to strengthen our teacher pipeline in Nevada, which is important to ensure that we have enough teachers in the classroom.

NICOLE ROURKE (City of Henderson):

We want to applaud this Collaboration. This has been a long time coming to address the crisis we have with so many vacancies in our schools. We hear about it from our families and from the teachers themselves. We see this as a giant innovative step forward in building the teacher pipeline and filling those vacancies in our schools.

We support S.B. 438 and we are grateful to the sponsor and to all the members of this Collaborative for bringing this forward.

MS. PIERCZYNSKI:

The Nevada Association of School Superintendents is supportive of anything that is going to help our teacher pipeline. This Collaborative is a great idea and I think it will be productive. We support S.B. 438.

MR. DELAP:

On behalf of Opportunity 180 and the Nevada Association of School Administrators, we echo the support that has been expressed for S.B. 438.

RUDY ZAMORA (Director of Public Affairs, Teach for America):

Teach for America supports S.B. 438 and would like to thank Senator Lange for her leadership. As we all know, the quality of education depends heavily on the quality of teachers. Unfortunately, the shortage of qualified and competent teachers has become a significant issue in Nevada as in many other states. Senate Bill 438 offers an innovative and comprehensive solution to address that critical problem. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit Q](#)).

MARIA ROMERO (Teacher, George E. Harris Elementary School, Clark County School District):

I am a first grade teacher at George E. Harris Elementary School and I am here in support of S.B. 438 because, had it not been for the UNLV PPP, I can honestly say that I would not be a licensed teacher today. I obtained my associate degree from the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) in the fall of 2020, but due to my work, home and economic status, I really did not see myself becoming a teacher for another four to five years. I was fortunate that a friend of mine made me aware of the PPP that UNLV was starting, which would pay my full tuition to obtain my elementary education degree if I was accepted into the program. All that was required of me was to demonstrate my absolute desire to become a teacher by devoting every spare minute of my life for a whole year to attend in-person and online classes.

A great factor in the PPP was that they help you every step of the way from the application process, counseling on which classes to take, tutoring, mentoring, graduation and beyond. They were always there for us to help us to become the teachers we are now.

In August 2022, I proudly graduated from UNLV with my degree in elementary education and I am now teaching first grade. I am very proud to say that I am a product of the PPP, and I am here on behalf of all teachers and

paraprofessionals who want to be teachers and who need the financial and moral support and the education that I received from this amazing program. Please help me to help paraprofessionals become teachers and make their dreams come true. Please support S.B. 438.

GISELLE LOWE:

I have been working in the school district as an instructional assistant and I would like to speak in support of S.B. 438. The PEF Teacher Pathway Project has been hugely instrumental in helping me achieve the next goal on my road map to licensure, which is placement in the NV-EPIC program at UNLV where I earned a bachelor's degree in education. I feel the Pathway program is unique and specifically targets the homegrown talent of paraprofessionals within CCSD, many of whom like myself want to become licensed educators, but have been hindered by challenges, including economic factors and academic requirements.

Without the financial assistance afforded by this program, I would have had enormous difficulty seriously considering pursuing a bachelor's degree based on the economic costs. Obviously, that is a requirement in achieving my teacher's license. Through the Pathway, paraprofessional staff are able to seek licensure with the aid of the academic resources, the support of the mentor program and the collaboration with the NV-EPIC program creates the crucial bridge we need to overcome all these challenges.

I have benefited from a productive and informative relationship with an educator as my mentor. My mentor's help and encouragement has been invaluable. Like many support personnel, I come from an educational background that is quite different from the traditional U.S. teacher pathway. I feel the wealth of professional experience, range of backgrounds and high proportion of diversity among our district support staff can only enhance the educational journey offered to our students.

LUSHAWN THREATS (Special Education Teacher, Laura Dearing Elementary School, Clark County School District):

I am a first-year special education teacher at Laura Dearing Elementary School, a Title 1 school also identified as a transformation network school. I am speaking in strong support of S.B. 438. My grandmother was a paraprofessional at a CCSD middle school in the 1970s, and my mother worked at a preschool on the historic west side of Las Vegas for 28 years.

I have worked since the age of 15 because, although the two women who raised me had stable employment, the income was not enough to make ends meet. For me, that was when I learned that the paycheck takes priority over academics, forcing me to continue that cycle.

I inherited their love of working with children, especially children with special needs, because of my brother and sister who are identified as special needs education students. Getting a job with the CCSD was a dream come true for me. I have worked to help provide an impactful education experience for these students for almost ten years.

I began taking steps towards my dream of becoming a teacher 23 years ago, when I started taking courses at CSN. Many paraprofessionals understand that educators are lifelong learners, taking courses over a number of years when we are able to afford them. It took me 21 years to get through CSN. I was able to complete my undergraduate degree in special education because of the UNLV Paraprofessional Pathway Project (PPP).

In just one year, the PPP project gave me the opportunity to take the legacy of three generations of minority women to a level that was almost unimaginable. I was able to recapture the high GPA that I had prior to joining the workforce and made the Dean's list both semesters I was in the program. The best part was I did not have to sacrifice my income; I was able to complete my studies while doing the job that I loved.

My success came from a high level of support offered by the program that was well beyond paying for courses. There were options for financial assistance to cover the cost of living so I could focus on my studies. I had multiple opportunities to attend amazing professional development workshops and opportunities for mentorships outside of my school. They even offered services to help with practice exams and teacher licenses.

When programs like these are supported, the benefits are mutual for our State and students. Our State can address the staff shortage from within, and our students get teachers who already have years of classroom experience and who will stay employed within the school district, especially at high-risk schools, because we are already members with roots in our community.

I am in strong support of [S.B. 438](#) because of the positive impact on our community and education system, especially learners of all ages and backgrounds.

SENATOR NEAL:

I will now take testimony in opposition to [S.B. 438](#). Seeing none, I will take neutral testimony.

SENATOR BUCK:

I was wondering how Superintendent Jhone Ebert is going to market this if it affects the school and school staff. In the first bill we heard today, [S.B. 282](#), it looks like there are excess funds because of staffing shortages, so I am wondering if some of that money, especially in the schools with a 30 percent vacancy rate, should be used for staff and leveraging some of the resources. Not that you definitely need the \$50 million, but as far as excess money sitting there, maybe this could be another answer for that.

Also, I saw the dots in the maps, [Exhibit P](#), page 5, and it made me wonder, do you have any cohorts, especially ones with 20- and 30-percent vacancies?

DR. VARNER:

We work actively with all the districts we can, not just CCSD. We work with WCSD, and we will work with anyone to make this available to them, either asynchronously or through the web. We have also reached out through charter organizations because they are also in the public sector. We have tried to do grassroots outreach ourselves. Interestingly, the students from our very first cohort are super tied to the communities where they work and live. They have been the word-of-mouth. With their help, we went from 35 students to 80 students. This next year, between our graduate and undergraduate version, we will have more than 300 applicants. We know there is space to grow, and it has happened through the networks of those schools.

MS. SEARER:

We have identified more than 2,000 paraprofessionals interested in becoming teachers. As we have combed through applicants for our pre-mentorship program, we have given priority to applicants who are from the schools with the most teacher openings. With our limited data, we have found that they tend to return to those schools; their principals will not let them go.

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SENATOR NEAL:

We received two letters of support for this bill ([Exhibit R](#)). I will close the hearing on S.B. 438 and open public comment. Seeing none, I will adjourn the Senate Committee on Education at 5:56 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Linda Hiller,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 282	C	7	John Vellardita / Clark County Education Association	Conceptual Amendment
S.B. 282	D	18	Marie Neisess / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony
S.B. 282	E	19	Kenny Belknap / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony
S.B. 282	F	19	Kristofer DiPaolo / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony on behalf of Erica Jackson
S.B. 282	G	19	Jacquelyn Spicer / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony on behalf of Sandy Kupfer
S.B. 282	H	19	Francesca Petrucci / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony on behalf of Christina Hollowood
S.B. 282	I	22	Teresa Schultz / Clark County Education Association	Written Testimony
S.B. 282	J	24	Robert Hollowood / Clark County	Written Testimony

			Education Association	
S.B. 282	K	24	Chair Roberta Lange	Letters of Support
S.B. 282	L	26	Patricia Haddad / Clark County School District	Written Testimony
S.B. 282	M	27	Bruce Snyder / Government Employee- Management Relations Board	Written Testimony
S.B. 80	N	27	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
S.B. 291	O	29	Kenny Varner / University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Presentation
S.B. 438	P	45	Kenny Varner / University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Teach Nevada Collaborative Presentation
S.B. 438	Q	64	Rudy Zamora / Teach for America	Written Testimony
S.B. 438	R	68	Senator Dina Neal	Written Testimonies