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## TESTIMONY

**BILL: SB383 – Expands the list of people who are mandated to report child abuse/neglect to include any person who is employed by or serves as a volunteer for an entity that provides organized activities for children. Increases the penalty for non-reporting from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor.**

### NEVADA DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Good morning Chairman Rawson and members of the Human Resources Committee.

I'm Edward Cotton, Administrator for the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services.

I am here to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 383, which would mandate volunteers and employees of agencies that provide organized activities for children to report any suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect. This Bill also increases the penalty for non-reporting from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor.

Each day, across Nevada, thousands of children take part in organized programs that provide recreation, enrichment, or other activities. Staff members and volunteers working at these agencies have the opportunity to interact with these children in an informal setting and often establish rapport with them. These people may be provided information by the child that s/he is not comfortable sharing with other adults that involves child abuse, or they may notice unexplained marks or burns. Making this group

of people mandated reporters means that we have additional "sets of eyes" observing children and helping us keep them safe from child abuse/neglect. These individuals can be provided a "mandated reporters' manual" and can receive training regarding their obligations to report.

The second part of the Bill changes the penalty for not reporting from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor. I also support this section of the Bill. The federal Department of Health and Human Services estimates that more than 50% of the child abuse in the nation goes unreported. People who work with children and suspect child abuse must be accountable for aiding in our efforts to keep children safe from further abuse. This change will reinforce Nevada's commitment to the safety of children.

I urge you to pass this Bill and take a step forward for abused and neglected children.