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SENATE BILL 460
TESTIMONY TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Laura Dancer, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Washoe County School District
April 9, 2003

This bill provides important protections to students, by empowering districts to dismiss an employee who is found to have engaged in immoral acts relating to drugs or sexual conduct with minors, without having to go through an admonition. Currently, the admonition is essentially the first bite of the apple for these offenses - we must warn the employee that if they do it again, they could be dismissed, and we must provide assistance to help them improve. These are such serious offenses that it may be putting students at risk while we wait for a second offense before we terminate employment.

This bill also requires that districts terminate teachers whose licenses expire. This makes sense - you would not want to go to a doctor whose license had expired. We have 35 teachers so far this year who did not complete the requirements to maintain their teaching licenses. Again, we are required to issue an admonition, and offer assistance for them to improve, before we can dismiss. Then, upon dismissal, the employee is entitled to a hearing. Maintaining a teaching license is a basic professional responsibility, and if a teacher cannot do it, districts should terminate employment. Districts should not have to hold a position for such a teacher, while he "works" the administrative processes in an attempt to get reinstated. The current process flies in the face of the requirements of No Child Left Behind, which requires highly qualified, licensed teachers.

This is important legislation which addresses teacher quality and student safety. I urge the committee to pass this bill.

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