

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND EDUCATION**

**Seventy-fourth Session
May 21, 2007**

The Senate Committee on Human Resources and Education was called to order by Chair Maurice E. Washington at 2:07 p.m. on Monday, May 21, 2007, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4412E, 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 Maurice E. Washington, Chair
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske, Vice Chair
Senator Joseph J. Heck
Senator Valerie Wiener
Senator Joyce Woodhouse

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Dennis Nolan (Excused)
Senator Steven A. Horsford (Excused)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Marsheilah D. Lyons, Committee Policy Analyst
Joe McCoy, Committee Policy Analyst
Sara Partida, Committee Counsel
Shauna Kirk, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Paula Berkley, Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Cherie Jamason, President and Chief Executive Officer, Food Bank of Northern Nevada

PAULA BERKLEY (Food Bank of Northern Nevada):

Last Session, this Committee unanimously voted on a measure that was a resolution, A.C.R. No. 5 of the 73rd Session. I have included it in your packet ([Exhibit C](#)). I will briefly summarize the points of that resolution. It describes the school breakfast program as a fully funded federal program that was available to all school districts since 1966 and which provides cash subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to schools that participate. There are approximately 132,000 children attending schools in Nevada who are eligible either for a free or reduced lunch. Fewer than 40,000 are actually eating breakfast in our schools which leave 92,000 that are eligible but are waiting for lunch for their first meal of the day. There have been generations of children since 1966 who have gone through our school system without learning about eating breakfast and having a healthy breakfast available to them. Research verifies that this is important in the school life of a child. The health benefits range from fewer days of student illness, fewer visits to the school nurse and increased ability to concentrate in the classroom. The educational benefits are higher test scores, less tardiness, fewer suspensions, increased alertness and a greater level of classroom participation by those students who have breakfast.

Examples of having a nutritious breakfast are beneficial to our challenges of childhood obesity. These students, in order to be qualified for a free breakfast, must have 130 percent of poverty at home. These are very much like food stamps with the same qualifications. The Food Bank of Northern Nevada created this resolution. The resolution concluded to challenge the school districts to increase the participation in school breakfast by 15 percent each year. We consulted with the Department of Education who supported our resolution as to whether that was a good number. We also asked at the end of that two-year period for the schools to report their results. There were no schools that were able to increase their breakfast participation by 15 percent. Some of the schools were up one year and not the next year. The school districts provided some information as to their successes and failures. They were written too generally and no assumptions could be made. For example, the school bus comes at the same time that class starts. That has been a problem for 41 years, and if it has not been addressed yet, then we are probably not really trying. In order to meet that challenge, some schools had their buses arrive 15 minutes early, or start school 15 minutes later, or put breakfast in the classroom or give them breakfast between classes in what they call a "grab-and-go" in which they grab their breakfast in a bag on their way to the next class. It was difficult to read this and know what to do, but the Food Bank is stubborn enough to make some

recommendations. We have six recommendations that we felt were easy to accomplish ([Exhibit D](#)). Only one of them might have an expense. Five of them could be implemented tomorrow if so desired, if they are appropriate, because it is not a cookie-cutter approach. We do feel that these recommendations would be useful.

CHERIE JAMASON (President and Chief Executive Officer, Food Bank of Northern Nevada):

The United States government has created more than a dozen federal nutrition programs in order to provide life-giving nutrition for those who need support. They may need support due to family income, it might be because of age, or infirmity or just because it makes good sense. Those programs range from the work program that helps moms give birth to healthy children; to those children in their first five years of life; to the commodity supplemental food program and senior meals programs at the end of life; and many in between. School lunch was started in 1947 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) because so many young men reported to defend their country and were not able to be accepted because of malnutrition problems, disease and physical infirmities caused by malnutrition. It was right after the Depression and FDR wanted to find a place where most children are on a regular basis that we could provide a meal every day, and that was school lunch. In the 1960s, the Physician's Task Force on Hunger discovered with their own eyes that in a number of places there were families who worked and were unable to put food on the table and the children were the ones who suffered. Today, there are 35 million Americans who work every day and are still unable to put food on the table for their children and 12 million children who suffer. Some of those live here in Nevada. Food stamps are the key child nutrition program for children before they get into school. In Nevada, only half of the eligible families are tapping into that program which causes people to stand in emergency food lines and rely on school breakfast or school lunch food in order to feed their children. We have the power to change that. About 38 percent of children rely on school breakfast for their first meal of the day, and there are probably a few thousand more whose mother had other things to do than make sure their children had eaten breakfast before they went to school. There are many thousands more children who are up early and have eaten breakfast at 6 a.m. One of the things that we observed was that as the school year progresses, many parents forget about the school breakfast program.

Ms. JAMASON:

We are recommending a standard statement that goes out of the school to the parents that contains a sentence or two reminder that school breakfast is available. This will also help if a family's circumstances should change through the school year, and the child needs a school breakfast.

The second thing we have observed is there are thousands of families who qualify for reduced price. Many years ago, Washoe County decided to abolish the reduced-price fee and treat all of those children as free students. What they discovered is the economy of scale and the federal reimbursement to offset the 40 cents, and it did not cost them any money to do that. The net result was that more children got fed who would not have otherwise. We are recommending that the urban school districts eliminate that cost to ensure that more children get fed. Washoe County is already doing it. Clark County and Carson City have the economy of scale that would make that workable.

The third observation is schools that are at least 50 percent needy have the opportunity to apply for something called "Provision II" which means that applications for free school lunch are only taken every four years. This reduces paperwork for the staff and ensures that all children eat for free. It is economically viable at about 75 to 80 percent, depending on the size of the school district. There is much less paperwork required, and it reduces the stigma of children being free-lunch students or paid-lunch students; everybody eats, regardless. We are recommending that all schools with 90 percent of students qualifying for Provision II status apply in 2008. Schools with 80 percent qualifying students become Provision II in 2009. This is an uncomplicated process and would ensure that a lot more children get fed. I think there is an issue with educators that think they will be jeopardizing their federal government title money in applying for Provision II. We have been assured that is not the case, and if at any time they have a dramatic increase in free students who qualify, they can reapply. This allows the federal government to recognize the number of students who are eligible for meals. There are unexplained comments in the report about breakfast programs being eliminated. The net result is that many children who took advantage of those programs would not have the opportunity to eat. The nutrition break was very important at the high school level for teenagers who do not really like to eat when they first get up. It has recently been eliminated in Washoe County School District. This appears to happen because principals can choose whether to have the breakfast program or not. We feel that should not be allowed. Once a breakfast program is

established, it should be maintained. The decision to discontinue a meal can be devastating for children who rely on those programs. We are recommending that once a breakfast nutrition break or grab-and-go meal is offered and is successful, it should never be discontinued.

Ms. JAMASON:

The fourth observation is a disconnect between nutrition and effective learning. There is ample evidence of the benefits of good nutrition in terms of academic performance. With the Task Force for the Fund for a Healthy Nevada, the Food Bank has created a small education program for teachers at the beginning of school that will remind them about the importance of good nutrition and help them make school breakfast a welcoming opportunity for students. This helps children understand that whether they eat breakfast at school or not, breakfast is a very important component to good health and their ability to learn. We are recommending all teachers be educated on the benefits of school nutrition programs and how they can be implemented in a way to make the offering custom to their needs.

The last recommendation is that rural schools often discontinue breakfast or lunch meals even though they have high numbers of children who qualify because they do not have the money to run the programs. Once the breakfast in the classroom dollars are no longer available, which were secured through vitamin settlement funding, the breakfast program will be discontinued. We are recommending that the State consider supplementing the school-breakfast program for a few cents a meal in rural communities. This is something that many states do for school breakfast and the summer food program. We have provided you with these six recommendations, along with a brief discussion on food stamps so you can see the connection in our research.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Do you have a fiscal note on any of the recommendations?

Ms. JAMASON:

There will be no cost with the exception of the last recommendation.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

If you want the teachers to be educated on this, someone will have to pay the teachers to do that.

Ms. JAMASON:

We are doing that right now, and it can be effectively done with nonprofit organizations and through the cooperative extension.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Last year, I was invited to the schools in my district. They had improved their meals and the food was better and more nutritious. To my sadness, the cart and the whole layout of food had a large amount of carbohydrates and high sugar content. I would have a hard time recommending that someone have their kids eat at a school. The reason we do not have all the schools that could be getting the free and reduced lunches is because of the vending machines and candy stores. The schools that are already participating with vendors cannot get federal funding. They can make more money with vending machines. It is money that is not reported, and they can spend it where they like.

Ms. JAMASON:

The vending machine issue is being handled under the model food policy. Clark County has done an outstanding job of leading the field in eliminating unhealthful choices in vending machines. That is part of the requirement that came from the federal government in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004. All meals must follow the U. S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for nutrition. The requirements for breakfast are two grains, a dairy product, a protein and a fruit or vegetable. Unfortunately, there is also a calorie requirement, and in many cases, you cannot serve a child enough applesauce to meet that calorie requirement. The only way you can meet the calorie content is by the addition of sugar. The third component is the health department and the restrictions placed on school food service that has caused schools to go to prepackaged meals that really constrain options for serving healthier food.

Ms. BERKLEY:

Since the school districts did not make any recommendations, all the recommendations we made were already implemented in a school district so we are not recommending something that does not work. We would love to work with each of you here with your school districts and bring that nutrition program to their schools or help come up with ideas to overcome some of the selections that are not the best selections.

SENATOR WIENER:

There are six members on this committee who have districts in Clark County and you are the Northern Nevada Food Bank. If we take you up on your invitation, in what ways would you help us help our schools in our districts?

Ms. JAMASON:

About five years ago, we were invited by the State to apply for funding to help implement the summer food program throughout the State. This is an issue that is very dear to our heart, and it is not restricted to northern Nevada. We work throughout the State and in the rural communities. We would be happy to help, and we have partners in the south as well.

SENATOR WIENER:

I am making a commitment on the record to see what I can do for my schools. Several years ago I helped several schools who had applied for \$500,000 in grants. One of the schools did take one of the grants for healthy snacks on test day to demonstrate that kids coming in who had not eaten since lunch the day before could have a better test performance. What they found was that when they offered breakfast and put notices out, the attendance went up on those days because there was a free breakfast.

Ms. JAMASON:

The attendance at the nurse's office usually goes down.

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CHAIR WASHINGTON:

We will now adjourn the Senate Committee on Human Resources and Education
at 2:35 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Shauna Kirk,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Maurice E. Washington, Chair

DATE: _____