

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Seventh Session  
February 25, 2013**

The joint meeting of the Senate Committee on Education and the Assembly Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Joyce Woodhouse at 3:37 p.m. on Monday, February 25, 2013, in Room 1214 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 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.

**SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Chair  
Senator Aaron D. Ford, Vice Chair  
Senator Ruben J. Kihuen  
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske  
Senator Donald G. Gustavson

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson, Chair  
Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Paul Aizley  
Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen  
Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz  
Assemblyman Wesley Duncan  
Assemblyman Andy Eisen  
Assemblywoman Michele Fiore  
Assemblyman Randy Kirner  
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford  
Assemblywoman Dina Neal  
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart  
Assemblywoman Heidi Swank  
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

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**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Senator Justin C. Jones, Senatorial District No. 9  
Senator Debbie Smith, Senatorial District No. 13

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Pepper Sturm, Policy Analyst  
Colleen Platt, Counsel  
Diana Jones, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

LeNora Bredsguard-Brown, Project Facilitator, K-12 Literacy, Clark County School District  
Pat Skorkowsky, Deputy Superintendent, Clark County School District  
Sharla Isle, Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District  
Kristen McNeill, Chief of Staff, Washoe County School District  
Andrea Nordhof, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Dotty Merrill, Ed.D., Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards  
Betsy Giles, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Paula Kerchenski, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Krista Heard, Teacher, Washoe County School District  
Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District; Nevada Association of School Superintendents  
Teralee Burbank  
Tami Berg, Vice President of Advocacy, Nevada PTA  
Ruth Parker  
Rorie Fitzpatrick, Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research and Evaluative Services, Department of Education  
Juanita Clark, Charleston Neighborhood Preservation  
Victor Joecks, Communication Director, Nevada Policy Research Institute  
Marlene Lockard, Nevada Women's Lobby  
Danny Thompson, Nevada State AFL-CIO  
Craig Stevens, Nevada State Education Association  
Maureen Ford  
Frank Schnorbus, Chair, Nevada Homeschool Network  
Jessica Lagor

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Ronald Dreher, Washoe School Principals' Association  
Adam Berger, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Angie Sullivan, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Carole Benner  
Elissa Wahl, RISE Education Resource Center  
Janine Hansen, President, Nevada Families Association  
Truby Uithoven  
Robin Vircsik, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Suzan D. Reed, Vice President, Clark County 4H Council  
Angela Kleven, Operations Director, RISE Education Resource Center  
Lynn Chapman, Families for Freedom  
Herrman Glockler  
Steven Augspurger, Executive Director, Clark County Association of School  
Administrators  
Andrea Hughes-Baird, Parent Leaders for Education  
Gordon Gilbert  
Dale Norton, Superintendent, Nye County School District  
Julie Kasper, Director, Early Childhood Department, Clark County School District  
Erin Riddle, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Alexandra Bossert, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Kiri Wiggins  
Naomi Podorsek, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Barry Duncan, United Way of Southern Nevada  
Deanna Wright, Clerk, Board of School Trustees, Clark County School District  
Kim Wooden, Chief Student Services Officer, Clark County School District

**Chair Woodhouse:**

We will open the meeting with Senate Bill (S.B.) 182 which proposes to expand kindergarten to full day.

**SENATE BILL 182:** Expands full-day kindergarten in public schools. (BDR 34-138)

**Senator Debbie Smith (Senatorial District No. 13):**

This bill proposes to do three things. First, it requires full-day kindergarten be provided in public schools. Second, it provides funding at the 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) rather than the 0.6 FTE that is currently provided in the funding formula. This is critical to ensure adequate funding for program implementation and smaller class size. Third, it makes kindergarten mandatory. Page 17, lines 16-26 of

S.B. 182, proposes to eliminate the requirement in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 392.040, subsection 7, that a student who enters school at the age of 7 without having attended kindergarten, be developmentally tested.

I have researched mandatory and full-day kindergarten programs in other states. It is difficult to provide an exact picture of what is being done in these states because many decisions are both locally based and covered in statute. I am willing to entertain additional ideas and alternative solutions to the mandatory provision of this bill. It is time to address this issue, particularly as we begin to discuss prekindergarten (pre-K) programs.

Full-day kindergarten was first approved by the Nevada Legislature in 2005, and the budget included funds for expanding kindergarten to a full-day program. Due to State financial challenges and budgetary decisions, funding for full-day kindergarten is today at the same level as it was after the 2005 Session. Today, there exists a highly inequitable system within both schools and districts. Some schools only provide half-day programs, some only provide full-day programs and some provide half-day programs with an option for parents to pay for a full-day program if there is room for their child.

The law is silent on the concept of tuition-based, full-day kindergarten programs. Some districts have begun tuition-based programs that allow parents to pay for full-day kindergarten if there is room available. This can create a situation in which a school operates multiple programs; some students may attend a tuition-based, full-day program, and students who are unable to pay, do not want to attend a full-day program, or are not able to be accommodated in the full-day program attend a half-day program. This is the significant problem with a tuition-based program, and it needs to be considered.

Expectations for all students remain the same regardless of the number of hours they spend in kindergarten. The experiences students receive in these programs, however, are quite different. For the last 8 years, the Legislature has acknowledged that full-day kindergarten is important. The last three Governors have maintained funding for this program in their budgets. Governor Brian Sandoval, in his January 16, 2013, State of the State speech stated, "My budget therefore includes an aggressive expansion of all-day kindergarten among the State's most at-risk schools." He additionally stated, "If we expect children to read by Three, we

cannot continue to ignore all of the data that tell us all-day kindergarten is a critical foundation for a child's success."

I appreciate the Governor's support, but we cannot wait 10 more years to complete the expansion of full-day kindergarten to all schools and students. Students from middle class families may be left out if we do. If they do not attend a school that is eligible for at-risk funding or that offers a full-day program, students who cannot pay for tuition-based, full-day kindergarten will remain in half-day classes. When these students enter first grade, they will face the same performance expectations as students who benefitted from full-day kindergarten attendance. This is inherently unfair. It is time to level the playing field and give all our students the same opportunities. We have created a number of problems for our students, families and teachers by having this trifurcated system. A first grade teacher may receive students who participated in a half-day program, a full-day program, or no program at all. That teacher is expected to hold all of these students accountable to the same standards.

The states with the highest educational rankings have the common denominator of offering full-day kindergarten. Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Arkansas, New Jersey, Georgia, Ohio and Florida all have full-day programs. Additionally, Georgia has a higher percentage of students in preschool programs than Nevada does in full-day kindergarten. We believe in this program; we know we need to do more. Starting school and attending full-day kindergarten should not be a challenge to be overcome by the children being born today. We have waited 8 years—it is too long to wait.

**Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop (Assembly District No. 5):**

I support S.B. 182. I am an educator with 30 years of experience in the Clark County School District (CCSD). I spent 10 years as a kindergarten teacher, and the others were concentrated in the early grades. I taught in different socioeconomic areas and saw students with many levels of preparation for their school experience. Some students came to school knowing colors, a few numbers and the letters in their names. Others came having few academic or social skills. Due to the diverse geography of Nevada and the distance required to get to some schools, a few miles can mean the difference between a quality education and one that is not attainable. Some students travel more than 2 hours by bus just to go to a half-day kindergarten program.

I saw a wide gap in the cognitive abilities and social skills of the children entering my classroom. It was my job to teach all of them during a half-day kindergarten program. With 30 or more students, there were many days when it was difficult to address all of the academic areas in that amount of time. I taught my students sounds, letters, colors, numbers and beginning reading skills. I also had to teach them basic social skills such as how to get along with their peers. The development of small motor skills, such as using scissors, was also addressed and was challenging for some students. I did not have enough time to do it all in a half-day program. I needed more time to get to know my students well, identify their challenges and assist parents with strategies to address the individual needs of their children at home. Most importantly, I needed more time for my students to be in a highly motivating setting where they could thrive and learn the skills they would need for success in the next 12 years of education.

Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students. This has been documented by the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, Indiana University. More time to learn benefits everyone. The extended kindergarten day provides additional time for students to benefit from a familiar learning environment. This helps them develop poise and be ready for success when they move into first grade.

Full-day kindergarten has its greatest impact on nonacademic factors such as behavior and self-confidence that affect school readiness. Parents who have had children in a full-day program state that their children have increased their vocabulary and math skills and are better prepared for a successful academic experience.

**Senator Justin C. Jones (Senatorial District No. 9):**

My daughter attended an optional, tuition-based kindergarten at Carolyn S. Reedom Elementary School in the CCSD. In first grade, she was placed with students who had attended half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. At the beginning of the year, the academic disparity between these students was stark. The students who attended the full-day program were up to a year ahead of the half-day students in reading and math skills. This required the teacher to modify instruction and teach to the lowest common denominator, providing remediation for those from the half-day program. My daughter became frustrated by this and began acting out. We made the decision to remove her from the public school program and homeschool her for the remainder of first grade.

My daughter's first grade teacher will tell you that full-day kindergarten works. Any first grade teacher will tell you that full-day kindergarten better prepares students to read at grade level. It is time to give all entering students the same opportunity to succeed that my daughter had. I urge the Committees to vote in favor of S.B. 182.

**Assemblyman Duncan:**

Does the infrastructure that now exists support having full-day kindergarten in all of our schools? Do you know of any studies that show the long-term benefits of full-day kindergarten?

**Senator Smith:**

We have been talking to the districts about infrastructure. We believe one-time funding, such as was allocated in 2005, would provide capital for implementation, in particular for the CCSD. It is my understanding that this would allow the CCSD to allow district-wide implementation of full-day kindergarten. We faced this same situation when the original legislation was passed.

The majority of the data I have reviewed about the benefits of full-day kindergarten clearly show that students develop better school attendance and behavior habits. Long-term completion rates and higher graduation rates are also seen. The cost-benefit analysis of early childhood education (ECE) is tremendous. Because three Governors have already established and funded full-day kindergarten, I believe Nevada has embraced the concept of full-day kindergarten. We now need to expand this concept to include all students. I will provide the Committee with research from the last several years about the benefits of these programs.

**Senator Cegavske:**

The biggest crisis in education is a lack of qualified teachers. Have you had conversations about trying to improve this? Is there a requirement that kindergarten and preschool teachers need to have ECE training? I am concerned that we may be putting a system in place that we cannot support with highly qualified staff.

**Senator Smith:**

These are questions that could best be answered by the representatives from our school districts. We do have a shortage of math and science teachers. In order for our students to achieve better in math and science, they need a quality early

childhood experience. I do not believe we currently have a shortage of teachers at this program level or that we have an issue with recruiting teachers for this level.

**Senator Cegavske:**

Is this program related to the tuition-based programs we provide? Would those programs continue under this legislation?

**Senator Smith:**

I want the State to pay for full-day kindergarten so parents do not have to pay tuition in a public school. The programs we now have create a "have and have-not" situation according to parent's ability to pay and limitations of a school's program size. We should not have a system in our public schools that depends on ability to pay. I hope we can fully fund these classes so parents do not have to pay and all children can attend.

**Senator Cegavske:**

Is the Senate Committee on Revenue and Economic Development reviewing how to fund this program?

**Senator Smith:**

That discussion will occur in the future.

**Senator Cegavske:**

I am also concerned about classroom space to implement this program. The CCSD has said it does not have enough classroom space to implement a full-day program for all kindergarten students.

**Senator Smith:**

The intention of this bill is to provide one-time funding for this, similar to what we did in 2005 when we first implemented full-day kindergarten. This has been discussed with CCSD.

**Senator Jones:**

The implementation plan for the CCSD, particularly for the southwest valley, is being developed. It will involve zoning changes and other measures. Many schools in the CCSD, such as those in the north and northwest, have the classroom capacity available to implement full-day kindergarten immediately. Additional funding will allow us to meet the needs of the areas that do not.

**Senator Cegavske:**

Are there options such as currently exist for a waiver or for parents who want to opt out of the full-day program?

**Senator Smith:**

I am open to the idea. We need to accommodate the needs of families. The goal is to provide as many students as possible the opportunity to attend full-day kindergarten tuition free.

**Senator Gustavson:**

I am also concerned about facilities and the need for qualified educators. I am concerned about the language in S.B. 182, on page 19, lines 29–31. It is frightening to me that a 5-year-old child could be taken into custody by law enforcement for nonattendance.

**Senator Smith:**

The language that is now in statute mandates school attendance for children who are age 7. This bill makes kindergarten mandatory, so the age for required attendance must also be adjusted lower to reflect that change. Nothing else is changed in this section.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

As a school employee, I can assure you that we work with parents to avoid situations where law enforcement becomes involved with families. We encourage parents to ensure their children are at school, in a learning environment every day so they do not fall behind. Sometimes children are able to come to school but do not. It is then our job to follow up and make sure parents send their children to school daily.

**Chair Woodhouse:**

I taught first grade and was an elementary school principal. There were times when I had to call the attendance officer who served my area to find a student. I can assure you, the officer was never intimidating. The child was always the primary consideration and was not dealt with like a criminal. We did not have a lot of truancy, but when a child was not at school, it was incumbent upon the educators to find the child, find out the reason the child was not in attendance and return the child to school.

**Senator Gustavson:**

I continue to be concerned about section 10 of the bill.

**Assemblywoman Neal:**

My question is about section 11, subsection 2, on page 20 of S.B. 182. This section adjusts existing law to reflect the change in the proposed mandatory attendance age. If a family is receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), what are the implications of lowering this age? Data I have reviewed indicate that families on TANF primarily have a female head-of-household who has not graduated from high school. The TANF numbers include situations where a 17-year-old girl might be responsible for getting not only herself, but also her 5-year-old child to school. Issues of transportation and the ability to successfully negotiate her difficult life situation due to personal challenges might impact her ability to meet this section of the bill.

**Senator Smith:**

I see the stability of having the child in a full-day kindergarten and the advantages this provides to a family participating in TANF as a counterbalance to the challenges of getting the child to school. This is a conversation we should continue.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

A concern frequently expressed to me is that some children are not ready for school at 5 years of age; they are not ready for the structure or the curriculum that may be presented. How does this bill address that issue? What can parents do if they feel their child is not ready for school?

**Senator Smith:**

This bill does not provide a waiver opportunity. We are open to discuss this further and explore what other states have done. Families can continue to apply to homeschool their children. Most people believe that kindergarten is required in Nevada based on the language in NRS 392.040 subsection 7, paragraph (b), regarding kindergarten attendance and required screening for students who have not attended kindergarten. This bill places that requirement into statute and lowers the age of mandatory attendance. I am open to discuss how we can address the needs of all parents.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

If a parent wants to homeschool a child for kindergarten, is that allowed under this bill?

**Senator Smith:**

Yes, this bill would cause kindergarten to be treated the same as other grade levels regarding homeschool.

**Assemblywoman Cohen:**

On page 15 of S.B. 182 in section 7, subsection 1, a mandate is given regarding the required number of minutes for a full-day kindergarten program. Does the kindergarten curriculum take into account the developmental needs of these students?

**Senator Smith:**

Yes, it does. I have experienced instruction in full-day kindergarten programs for a number of years, and I am impressed by what happens in those classrooms. Most full-day kindergarten teachers today were once half-day kindergarten teachers. They understand the developmental needs of their students. This section requires that full-day kindergartens have the same number of minutes as the other grade levels. This is how programs in operation are set up.

**Assemblyman Duncan:**

Do we have empirical or comparative data that show children who start school at age 5, as opposed to those who start at age 7, do better in the long term? Do we have National Assessment of Educational Progress scores from other states indicating a long-term benefit for students who started school early?

**Senator Smith:**

I will provide you with research on these topics. It is difficult to find a clear comparison between states because some decisions are made at the local level and others are in statute. The vast majority of the data support kindergarten attendance and full-day kindergarten programs and show a cost-benefit analysis that carries on to graduation. Universal full-day kindergarten is a common denominator among states that have high levels of student achievement. The *Quality Counts* report, published by *Education Week*, indicates that 9 out of the top 10 educationally ranked states provide a full-day kindergarten. Virginia, the one state that does not have a full-day program, has an extended kindergarten day that is longer than

Nevada's half-day kindergarten but shorter than our full-day program. Not all of these programs are mandatory, and the compulsory attendance age varies in these states; yet all of them are showing a high level of student achievement. The common factor of an expanded kindergarten day in all these programs must be important in creating this achievement.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

Does the extended day make a noticeable impact on the achievement of English language learners (ELLs) who might not have access to English language role models at home? Will an extended day help these students better address the higher Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that they are expected to meet?

**Senator Smith:**

We are looking to close the achievement gap for the over 50,000 ELL students in this State. Additional time for students to be exposed to an academic environment will help do this. It will send these students to first grade better prepared. If we fund this program at the requested 1.0 FTE, class size will be smaller. This smaller class size will also help our ELL students.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

I work in an inner city, at-risk school with a full-day kindergarten. Many of our students speak no English when they enter kindergarten. This is traumatic for them at first because they cannot socialize with their peers or communicate their needs. After a month or two in a full-day kindergarten program, these students are different.

We have adopted the CCSS. As a State we are moving forward with these standards and need to ensure that kindergarteners know how to do things such as read and write six sentences by the end of the year. These standards have changed the focus of kindergarten. We must find ways to prepare our students academically.

**Senator Smith:**

The Washoe County School District (WCSD) Kinder Amigos program, funded by Lifestyle Homes Foundation founder Bob Lissner, provided a summer program in 2011 for ELL students entering kindergarten. Before the beginning of the school year, this program gave students experiences with basic skills they needed to be successful when entering kindergarten. These skills included lining up, learning

about the school environment and negotiating the school day. These skills can greatly impact the success of students and teachers. All children are expected to meet the same standards under the CCSS, so we need to overcome academic differences however we can.

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

Is there a required class size stated in S.B. 182? I know there is a teacher ratio, but I would like to know if class size is discussed.

**Senator Smith:**

Class size/teacher ratio for kindergarten is set in NRS 388.700, subsection 1, paragraph (a), but we have never fully funded it. This bill does not change the current class size statute.

**LeNora Bredsguard-Brown (Project Facilitator, K-12 Literacy, Clark County School District):**

Mandatory kindergarten and first grade attendance, as well as full-day kindergarten, is vital to closing the achievement gap and allowing access to a rich curriculum for all students. As a former kindergarten teacher, I know firsthand how frustrating it is to try to fit all the academics we want into a half-day program. With the adoption of the CCSS, which give all students equal access to high standards and expectations, the need for a full instructional day in kindergarten has become a necessity.

The Committee's members have received the Full-Day Kindergarten information sheet ([Exhibit C](#)), prepared by the CCSD Curriculum & Professional Development Division. The chart on [Exhibit C](#), page 2, number II, compares previous Nevada standards with the CCSS. This comparison demonstrates the impact of the increased rigor of the CCSS. Students who are not required to attend kindergarten are at a disadvantage when compared to students from states where attendance is required. A CCSD study conducted between 2005 and 2010 found that students attending a full-day kindergarten achieved higher than their peers who did not. This success carried over from kindergarten through fourth grade. Similar studies in other states have had similar results.

First-grade teachers frequently express frustration over students who enter their classrooms lacking basic skills either because they were not required to attend

kindergarten or did not attend a full-day program. Kindergarten- and first-grade teachers in CCSD stated:

We struggle meeting the needs of our students that have not attended kindergarten or only attended a half-day program. The rigor of the Common Core State Standards is intense. Students must master the grade-level curriculum or they will not be prepared and ready to learn in the first grade and then in second grade. And so starts the vicious cycle of being behind and unprepared to master the next grade level standards. And this cycle continues throughout their careers. No wonder they drop out. They are behind the minute they walk into first grade.

Another teacher, who taught kindergarten and now teaches first grade stated:

When our students don't attend kindergarten and are only allowed to attend a half-day program, the first part of my year is spent teaching the kindergarten curriculum. They have to meet the kindergarten standards before they are prepared to meet the first grade standard. I hope someone sees that the first step to decreasing the drop-out rate and increasing student achievement, starts with requiring students to come to school and attend full-day kindergarten.

Connie Juel, a noted researcher from the Stanford Graduate School of Education, found that only one out of eight children who are not reading at grade level by the end of first grade will ever read on grade level. We do not have time to waste with our primary students. We, like these hard-working teachers, need to feel the urgency. One half-day kindergarten teacher stated that while she embraces the CCSS, she finds it difficult to fit a full year of instructional expectations into what amounts to half-a-year of instruction time with only 0.6 FTE of the funding. She states:

I have never seen point six (0.6) percent of a child enter my kindergarten classroom. Since kindergarten attendance isn't mandatory, I have students that miss a lot of school. And then, in first, and even second grade, we have students that are coming to school for the very first time. I guess the law says that they really don't need to show up until second grade, when school is actually

mandatory. Can you imagine how far behind they are by then? The first step to increasing student achievement is requiring students to attend first and second grade.

Please help the students in Nevada achieve at higher levels by requiring mandatory attendance at a younger age and full-day kindergarten.

**Pat Skorkowsky (Deputy Superintendent, Clark County School District):**

The CCSD has reviewed a full-day kindergarten study taken in our district. Both full-day and half-day programs were analyzed so we could have demographically alike student statistics. We will provide this study to the members of the Committee. This study showed that students who attended a full-day kindergarten program, scored approximately 20 percentage points higher in reading than students who attended a half-day program. In mathematics, these students scored 30 percentage points higher than their peers. When we looked at fourth grade statistics, students who attended a full-day program scored 30 percentage points higher in reading and 22 percentage points higher in mathematics. These data support why we feel the need for this program. We want to make sure our students have a level academic playing field regardless of their ability to pay. We currently have 1,674 students in the CCSD with no record of having attended kindergarten. We are mandated to assess these students prior to the beginning of the school year to ensure they can meet the standards required to be successful in the first grade.

We are working to solve the challenges related to infrastructure. To ensure every child has a highly qualified educator in his or her classroom we are actively recruiting teachers, specifically at the kindergarten and early childhood levels.

We have State-funded full-day kindergarten programs in our high-poverty areas, but we are most concerned about our children from families in the middle-income range. These families do not have the capability to pay for a full-day program, and their schools may not have the facilities capable of implementing this program for all children. We have over 15,000 kindergarten and first grade students who are at the lowest level of English language academic performance. During the early childhood years, when language skills are being developed, these students would benefit greatly from a full-day kindergarten program.

Students are expected to achieve at higher levels under the CCSS. Kindergarten today has greater rigor than in the past. In mathematics, kindergarten students begin to develop an understanding of the base 10 system. They learn what written numbers mean and how to relate concrete objects to abstract numbers. They are expected to use complete thoughts to give written opinions with correct sentence structure, grammar and spelling. In a half-day program, we cannot help all children gain this level of achievement. Some are falling behind, and they are falling behind at a rapid rate. A comparison of CCSD data from kindergarteners who took our district Discovery Assessment in September related to the national norm, showed that our students are statistically falling behind their counterparts across the Nation. We cannot afford to let that happen. We must change the face of education in Nevada.

We have to ensure that the funding for kindergarten is changed from 0.6 FTE to 1.0 FTE. Nevada must level the playing field for our students. We will be compared to other states. In national reports, the status of education in Nevada constantly shows at the bottom. We cannot afford to have that continue. Full-day kindergarten is essential, especially for those students who are not the most economically challenged or who do not have families where parents can provide enriched experiences at home. We must ensure the success of every student in every classroom without exceptions and without excuses.

**Sharla Isle (Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District):**

The Committee members have received a copy of my testimony ([Exhibit D](#)) and I will read it. I speak in support of S.B. 182. In a half-day kindergarten, we have to rush to teach all of the standards. This bill will provide more time for teachers and students to address the CCSS.

**Senator Cegavske:**

Mr. Skorkowsky, what do you look for when you are hiring an ECE teacher? What qualifications are needed for someone who wants to teach pre-K or kindergarten?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

There is a specific licensing requirement for the State. To teach kindergarten, a kindergarten through Grade 8 (K-8) certification is required. To be developmentally appropriate, ECE teachers break the school day into small segments, work on developing attention skills and make instruction very specific. We recruit teachers specifically for this level so we can be assured that they

understand the developmental needs and teaching approaches required for our early elementary students.

**Senator Cegavske:**

I am concerned we do not have enough licensed teachers and that we are not "growing our own." Does every kindergarten classroom in the CCSD have a licensed teacher?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

I do not have that data today. Kindergarten is one of the most essential experiences a student can have. Principals are working to ensure qualified teachers are in these classrooms. I will provide information regarding licensed teachers to the Committee. We have programs in the CCSD to "grow our own" ECE teachers. We are working in our career and technical academies and our high schools to help students explore this area via a licensed day-care position program.

**Senator Cegavske:**

An article in the February 19, 2013, *USA Today* stated that many teachers cannot find jobs because there is an oversupply of elementary teachers while there is a shortage of teachers in math, science and special education. We need to work with our institutions of higher education to make sure students are encouraged to go into fields where there is the highest need. Have you had conversations with other states or within Nevada on this issue?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

We are working on this in conjunction with the Department of Education (NDE). We realize that many of these teachers hold secondary certification. We can provide Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL) programs if a teacher is willing to take the required course work to receive the additional K-8 certification. We have been successful in our ARL programs in many fields, including bilingual education.

**Chair Anderson:**

Most states mandate school attendance at age of 5 or 6, while Nevada sets the age at 7. Because we are not achieving at the same level as the other states, do you think this higher age is potentially holding back our economic development? Do you think the national education community questions why our entry age is set so high?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

We are concerned about this issue. Prior to the last Session, Nevada's age span for mandatory attendance, 7 to 16 years of age, was one of the smallest. The upper age limit was raised to 18 years of age in NRS 392.040, subsection 1. Lowering the mandatory entry age to 5 is essential to the success of our students. It is important to remember the families that do not have opportunities for their children to participate in a full-day kindergarten program. These students must also start their education early. They must receive a strong foundation of basic academic skills or we will never ensure they are on track academically. They must be ready to read by the end of third grade when we switch from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. The CCSD Discovery Assessment data show CCSD students are below the national norm in reading and mathematics. Children must start school at an earlier age. We must ensure students have a full-day experience where the CCSS are met at each grade level so they are reading at the third grade level by the end of third grade.

**Assemblywoman Neal:**

I support the concept of full-day kindergarten. My child participated in the program, and I saw the benefits. How well are the CCSS being integrated into today's kindergarten program? Do you have data that show how the standards are being integrated or how well students are mastering them?

**Ms. Bredsguard-Brown:**

In CCSD, we are helping teachers integrate the rigor of the CCSS into their instruction. We are including ongoing professional development for teachers to help them unwrap the standards and better understand the foundational skills that need to be taught so scaffolding can occur.

**Ms. Isle:**

At Richard H. Bryan Elementary School in CCSD, teachers meet weekly to unwrap and discuss standards. We develop coherence across grade levels by having teachers review what is expected in the standards for the grade below theirs as well as those for the grade above.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

By lowering the mandatory attendance age, do we remove options for parents who do not feel that a public educational setting is the best for their child? If a parent feels a child is not ready for school at 5 years old, are there options?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

Parents have options within State law. Our homeschooling law is one of the most lenient in the Nation. Homeschooling is an option for all parents and would be an option for students under S.B. 182. There are options for students to attend charter school programs included in this bill. The CCSD will assist any parents having concerns about this program. We will help them make the best choice for their child.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

I support the concept of full-day kindergarten for all children, but I have some reservations. I have received many emails from parents expressing concern about losing control of their children. Some parents want their children to attend half-day kindergarten to allow time in the afternoons for family-based enrichment activities. I am concerned about the facilities needed for this program. If we are required to use portable classrooms, this will create more problems for schools.

I also have questions about the impact of this program over the long term. We are experiencing a high dropout rate at the end of eighth grade. I am concerned that as we increase funding on the lower levels, we will need to decrease spending at the middle and upper levels.

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

There are some families that can provide the extra assistance their children require at home, but a majority cannot. On an individual basis, we can work with parents who do not wish to participate in a full-day program. My concern is for the parents who do not have the flexibility and freedom to choose in these difficult economic times. I want to ensure that their children have a full-day option. These parents now put their children into programs that may not be standards-based or ones that do not provide the same level of skill mastery as a full-day kindergarten program provided by a full-day kindergarten teacher.

Facilities are a major issue in the CCSD. We are aggressively looking at ways to address this across the district. We may need to look at alternatives, such as phasing in the program, but we will do everything in our power to make sure there is a classroom ready for all students.

We are actively addressing the needs of students who are experiencing challenges between Grades 5 and 6 and Grades 8 and 9. The transition between having

one teacher in elementary school and many teachers in middle school is difficult for some students. This is where students start to fall behind. In our middle schools and high schools, we have initiated a beginning-of-the-year “bridge” program to jump-start students identified as at risk. These students start school 2 to 3 weeks early and receive extra time at school getting acclimated. The students who are most likely to drop out are often reading below grade level and cannot access the curriculum in our middle schools and high schools. If we can set them up for success at the very beginning, we know we can keep more of them in school and have them ready to exit successfully.

**Kristen McNeill (Chief of Staff, Washoe County School District):**

The WCSD supports S.B. 182. We know there are many challenges but believe this bill truly benefits all of our students. The Committee has received my statement regarding this bill ([Exhibit E](#)) and I will read it. We are more than willing to share our data regarding the success of full-day kindergarten with the Committee.

**Senator Cegavske:**

I would like the school districts to provide the Committee with information about the number of highly qualified and other teachers they have working in ECE programs in their districts.

**Andrea Nordhof (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I support S.B. 182. I have taught kindergarten for 7 years in the CCSD. Before that, I taught full-day kindergarten for 6 years. I currently teach two half-day kindergarten sessions. Kindergarten is different than it used to be. Students today need to write stories with at least three details using correct capitalization and punctuation. They must memorize 50 or more sight words. In mathematics, they are required to compose and decompose numbers from 11 to 19 into groups of tens and ones. As the requirements for our students change, I believe our approach must also change. It is no longer suitable to provide some students with only 2 1/2 hours of instruction a day.

There are several differences between full-day and half-day kindergarten programs. That results in a decrease in student achievement for students attending half-day programs. The CCSS in math, science, language arts and social studies cannot be adequately addressed in a half-day program. The lack of contact time makes it difficult to address nonacademic areas including physical, social and emotional development. In a half-day program, it is challenging to differentiate instruction to

meet the individual needs of students. There are increased student absences in a half-day program, and parent responsibility for providing learning experiences outside the school day also increases.

The CCSD promotes equity for all students. Students in Grades 1 through 5 receive a comparable amount of time to master these standards. Students in a half-day kindergarten program are at a disadvantage. I question whether all Nevada kindergartners are prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with their national peers. Kindergarten provides the foundation upon which a student's future educational experience will build. Expanding full-day kindergarten is an opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive in meeting student needs. By allowing students to start their educational career lacking the skills necessary to succeed, CCSD has one of the lowest graduation rates in the State. Having taught both full-day and half-day kindergarten, I have seen the difference in achievement levels between students in these programs. If we believe that 160 minutes per day is adequate for Nevada's kindergarten students to master the CCSS and to provide students with the skills necessary for college and careers, are we misusing resources by having students in Grades 1-12 attend class for 340 minutes per day? I urge you to support S.B. 182.

**Dotty Merrill, Ed.D. (Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards):**

The Committee has received a copy of my comments ([Exhibit F](#)). Nevada is one of 45 states that have adopted the CCSS, and it is important to provide all of our students with an equal opportunity to learn. Senate Bill 182 does this. According to the proposals in this bill, students in kindergarten would have the same number of attendance minutes as those in other elementary grades. This will benefit all of our children. On January 25, 2013, the Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB) voted unanimously to support the policy of expanding to full-day kindergarten. We support the three primary features of S.B. 182.

**Betsy Giles (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a teacher in the CCSD and have shared my statement ([Exhibit G](#)) with the Committee and I will read it. Young children need time to learn, and they need an accomplished teacher in their classroom. Half-day kindergarten means a teacher has time only to teach to the middle. We know what is successful in education. Full-day programs allow more time to focus on the CCSS and more time to create independent learners. I am certain the students in my classroom gain at a faster pace than in previous years because they attend a full-day program.

**Paula Kerchenski (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am speaking in support of S.B. 182. I teach a full-day kindergarten program in the CCSD. In this program, my students receive 120 minutes of reading a day. This program provides time for me to help students develop their literacy skills. The Committee has received my prepared statement ([Exhibit H](#)) and I will read it to you.

**Krista Heard (Teacher, Washoe County School District):**

I am a teacher at Lois Allen Elementary School in the WCSD, located in an extremely low socioeconomic community having a high percentage of ELL students. The CCSS are a key driver of instruction in my school and the WCSD. Kindergarten students are expected to address these standards, and this cannot be done in a half-day program. Children in a full-day program have greater exposure to literacy and math skills and spend more time developing them. Lengthened instructional time allows for increased learning activities and implementation of learning strategies such as group “read-alouds,” peer tutoring, mixed-ability grouping and child-initiated activities. Children exhibit more independent learning during classroom involvement with their peers and have more time to reflect on their problem-solving strategies and learning. In a half-day program, literacy and math instruction are sometimes alternated due to a lack of time. Teachers prefer the full-day program because it provides additional time to work with young students in small-group and one-to-one settings.

School today is not only about academics. I am not just a teacher teaching basic skills; I am also an emotional and behavioral support system for my students. These needs can be best addressed in a full-day program. Many of my students enter kindergarten having little to no academic exposure at home. Many of our students are ELLs and begin kindergarten with no knowledge of English because they have not been fortunate enough attend our site’s pre-K program. I do not know if a half-day program can meet the needs of these students. They need extensive exposure to language to be successful. Students in a full-day program make significantly greater academic progress than those who do not attend full-day.

The adjustment from kindergarten to first grade is easier for students who have participated in a full-day kindergarten program. Socialization skills and knowledge of school routines and procedures are already in place for these students. All children should be granted access to publicly funded, full-day kindergarten in order to meet the learning and workforce challenges of the twenty-first century.

**Richard Stokes (Superintendent, Carson City School District; Nevada Association of School Superintendents):**

All-day kindergarten is important. The Carson City School District supports S.B. 182. I also speak in support of this bill as the president of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS). Additional discussion may be required regarding some areas of this bill. The NASS is willing to assist the Committee as needed.

**Teralee Burbank:**

Speaking as a parent, I think it is important to fund education in Nevada. If we do not, we will continue to see our children fail and our communities fall into disrepair, and we will not be able to attract the people and industries we desire into our State. Our children will take care of us in the future. It is important that children are well-educated and know how to make good decisions. The only way to do this is through education. In the past, parents have been encouraged to be vocal advocates for their children. We will continue to do this so we can be proud of the State.

**Tami Berg (Vice President of Advocacy, Nevada PTA):**

With the implementation of the CCSS, it is imperative to the success of our students that we provide full-day kindergarten. I have provided the Committee with a statement ([Exhibit I](#)) detailing the reasons the Nevada PTA supports S.B. 182. Increased instructional time for students will provide additional opportunities for teacher-child interactions. It will allow more frequent individualized instructional opportunities, and it will further students' in-depth exploration of topics through use of small and large group activities.

Teachers will gain additional time to work with ELL students in a full-day program. Our State has the third highest percentage of these students in the Nation. Additional instructional time will allow ELL students to reach English language proficiency sooner.

Many children are better prepared for full-day kindergarten today due to participation in child care or nursery school. They are more cognitively, physically and socially ready for this experience than previous students. This bill takes advantage of that readiness.

The half-day program places an undue burden on families having two working parents, or those with a single parent. Transporting children to and from school at odd hours and arranging child care during off hours is difficult for these families. A full-day, tuition-free program is appropriate for these families.

Students, teachers and districts are feeling pressure to meet the CCSS. Lowering the minimum, mandatory age of attendance to 5 years old will provide additional opportunities for instructional time to address these standards. Funding and supporting full-day kindergarten across Nevada will help ensure our students are given every opportunity to reach their full potential. The Nevada PTA urges the Legislature to support and fund S.B. 182. It is one more step toward improving student achievement across our State.

**Ruth Parker:**

I am opposed to S.B. 182 for several reasons. I taught in an elementary setting for 10 years, and I also homeschooled my children who now attend a private, liberal arts high school. I have participated in a variety of programs to meet the educational needs of my children. Losing the flexibility to choose program options is what concerns me about S.B. 182. This bill appears to take away the parental rights and options we now have. Making kindergarten mandatory violates the constitutional rights we have as parents. There is research to support both sides of the early education issue. I ask the Committee to review this research to get a full picture of the impact of this bill on future families and learners. What effect might this legislation have on the parents, families and children of Nevada in 10 or 20 years? We should pay attention to research about how children learn when we are planning programs. I ask you please to pay attention to the facts on both sides of the equation and consider not passing S.B. 182.

**Rorie Fitzpatrick (Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research and Evaluative Services, Department of Education):**

It is important to have this conversation about the role and value of early childhood education. I concur with the importance of shifting toward full-day kindergarten, but the NDE has concerns about S.B. 182. We support purposeful, phased-in, full-day kindergarten as described in Governor Sandoval's January 16, 2013, Executive Budget. Research on implementation science makes it clear that we must also pay attention to the implementation efforts themselves. We believe full-day kindergarten is a priority but feel better student outcomes will be achieved if this program is undertaken in stages. This approach will allow us to build the needed

infrastructure, recruit and select highly effective teachers, arrange appropriate facilities, address logistics such as transportation, acquire sufficient instructional materials and teaching tools, and monitor implementation to ensure the sustainability of high-quality programs. It will also allow us to resolve issues in programs where the necessary level of quality is not yet in place. A shift toward full-day kindergarten is essential, but it is important that we not begin so quickly that we omit the move toward purposeful, staged implementation.

**Chair Woodhouse:**

Are you speaking on behalf of the NDE?

**Ms. Fitzpatrick:**

Yes, I am.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

As a Legislature, we have been working on this issue since 2005. Are you saying that we need to delay further the implementation of full-day kindergarten? How many more children will continue to fail? How do you expect our educational system to improve if we do not take real, active measures to correct the problems? We know that early education is important in closing the achievement gap.

**Ms. Fitzpatrick:**

I understand your urgency. In order to implement well, we must implement these programs in a way that allows us to support the infrastructure. The Executive Budget provides adequate resources to make radical improvement and to begin to make an impact, but it does not include enough to grow so quickly that we should not pay attention to the infrastructure we are building.

**Senator Ford:**

Can we do many of these things simultaneously? We have been discussing this since 2005. It is now time to begin implementation. If the infrastructure is not set up, it needs to be a priority. We need to have serious discussions about how to fund this process. You mentioned studies about the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs. Studies can reflect views on both sides of an issue. I encourage the Committee to take action now.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

You stated that the NDE recognizes full-day kindergarten is important for our students. If we are not pushing for full implementation, how do we decide which students do not participate? Do we have a plan for that?

**Ms. Fitzpatrick:**

The Executive Budget prioritizes funding to schools that have a high percentage of poverty. We will be discussing the cut levels with the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. We need to ensure that the infrastructure is in place. Facilities must be built out to ensure developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms. Transportation is an issue. I appreciate your concern about this issue. The Executive Budget attempts to prioritize resources and create equity for the students who are most in need. It also allows for the simultaneous build out of infrastructure to establish full-day kindergarten over time for every student in Nevada.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

Have we not made significant progress implementing full-day kindergarten across the State since 2005?

**Ms. Fitzpatrick:**

Yes, we have. We will be sharing information about the number of full-day kindergarten programs with Finance and Ways and Means on March 1, 2013.

**Juanita Clark (Charleston Neighborhood Preservation):**

The Charleston Neighborhood Preservation, a neighborhood group, has provided the Committee with a written statement ([Exhibit J](#)). This statement discusses the findings of the HighScope Perry Preschool study that was conducted from 1962 to 1967. This study is often referenced in support of ECE programs, but its results have not been replicated. Our graduation levels in Nevada are poor. We are starting interventions at the wrong end of the educational spectrum. Teaching needs to result in student learning. We urge you to vote no on S.B. 182.

**Victor Joecks (Communication Director, Nevada Policy Research Institute):**

The Committee has received my written statement ([Exhibit K](#)). Follow-up studies to those originally supporting full-day kindergarten have not supported findings that showed gains from these programs. Children who attended public, full-day

kindergarten classes did not maintain their academic advantage by third grade. A study by CCSD, referenced in [Exhibit K](#), showed that by second grade, attendance in a full-day kindergarten had a negative impact on students who were not at risk when they entered school. The pattern of academic gains being both minimal and temporary is found in numerous other studies, as referenced in [Exhibit K](#). I urge the Committee to consider reforms that produce substantial and long-term gains, such as school choice, instead of programs that produce temporary improvements such as full-day kindergarten.

**Senator Ford:**

There is research to support both sides of this issue. In the study you cited about students being behind by third grade, were the students behind their cohort in third grade, or did the program put them above their cohort in kindergarten and now the other students have caught up to their achievement level, creating an equal level among the students? Teachers, advocates and superintendents support this bill and support a full-day program for all students.

**Mr. Joecks:**

The students did not necessarily fall behind, but there have been some behavioral problems noted in full-day kindergarten when compared to half-day programs. I will submit the studies to the Committee. Educational gains from full-day kindergarten are minimal and temporary; the research does not support its benefits. I urge you to review the evidence about this issue. The body of the evidence does not support full-day kindergarten.

**Marlene Lockard (Nevada Women's Lobby):**

The Nevada Women's Lobby strongly supports [S.B. 182](#). My granddaughter attends a half-day kindergarten program because the full-day, tuition-based program was full. In order to attend her school of choice, she had to be placed in a half-day program. She will not get back this learning opportunity; she has lost this time. Even though we could have paid for the program, it was closed because there were too many children wanting to attend.

**Danny Thompson (Nevada State AFL-CIO):**

Every study that has been done about diversifying our economy in the past 30 years has included a statement about improving education; you have to fix your educational system. Nevada has the worst educational system in the Nation, and we have to fix it. It starts at the beginning. Research shows that focusing on the

early years helps students. Students who fall behind by middle school never recover. We support full-day kindergarten for this reason. We know that to diversify the economy, create more jobs in the high-tech field and create full employment, we must start with a good education. We believe this is a step in the right direction.

**Craig Stevens (Nevada State Education Association):**

I talk to the experts in the classroom daily—the teachers. They want this program because it will improve our graduation rate and keep students in school. Today, some students are able to take advantage of the full-day program and some are not. This creates an inequity in our system. We are in favor of S.B. 182.

**Maureen Ford:**

I am a former kindergarten teacher, and I taught in a full-day kindergarten. I approve of full-day kindergarten, but I question the need for a mandate. Why do we need to change the law regarding entry age? Is it required for full funding? I think we should offer full-day kindergarten for families who want that option, but why do we have to change the law that mandates minimum attendance age? As a parent, I feel this takes away my ability to choose what is best for my child. Will the homeschooling laws continue to provide an option for parents? I would like to have full-day kindergarten provided for students without changing the mandated age for attendance.

**Chair Woodhouse:**

Please speak to Senator Smith further about your concerns.

**Frank Schnorbus (Chair, Nevada Homeschool Network):**

I have had children in public, private and homeschool in Nevada. Homeschooling families care deeply about the education of their children. I will highlight three points against S.B. 182. I have outlined these in a letter I have provided to the Committee from the Nevada Homeschool Network ([Exhibit L](#)). First, research shows that gains from attending an early education program appear to disappear after a few years.

Second, current law allows children to enroll in school at 5 years of age with the majority of children actually enrolling at that age. If needed, parents should have the right to delay school entry for their children; they know their children best. The State should not mandate attendance at this age.

Third, under this legislation, homeschoolers would need to file a Notice of Intent to Homeschool form at an earlier age, but attendance appears to be a legal gray area between the ages of 5 and 7. We ask that an exemption be provided for parents who are homeschooling and do not feel their child is ready to begin academics at the age of 5. Confusion could arise from the mandatory attendance enforcement component of this bill if parents decide to homeschool their children, but do not feel they are ready for school at age 5 and so do not provide instruction. I have provided the Committee with a proposed amendment to S.B. 182 to address this topic ([Exhibit M](#)).

**Jessica Lagor:**

As a member of a homeschooling family, I feel this bill does not recognize parental rights and it gives more control to the government. Sending a 5-year-old to school is an option. We should make full-day programs free. Parents should be educated on the benefits of the program, but we should not make it mandatory. Every child is different and each learns differently, and parents should determine what their child is ready to do. We cannot expect every child to reach a specific milestone by a specific grade; that is not fair. The problem is not early education, it is our expectations. It is that we expect all children to achieve at the same level at the same time. By the end of kindergarten, some children can read, and some children are not ready to read. That should be acceptable. Full-day kindergarten can be beneficial for children who are ready for it. If parents want their children to attend a full-day program and cannot afford it, it should be free. It should be an option for everyone, but not a law.

**Ronald Dreher (Washoe School Principals' Association):**

The Washoe School Principals' Association asks that the Committee support S.B. 182.

**Adam Berger (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a special education teacher at David Cox Elementary School in the CCSD. I fully support full-day kindergarten for all students in Nevada. It is necessary. It contributes to increased school readiness, leads to higher academic achievement, improves student attendance, supports literacy and language development, benefits children socially and lowers costs by reducing the retention and remediation rate. It is the most cost-effective way to ensure the healthy development of all children and the greatest returns to society. We need to do this now. All children should be mandated to attend full-day kindergarten.

**Angie Sullivan (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a kindergarten teacher in the CCSD. The research I have done shows that children benefit from early intervention including kindergarten and other ECE programs. Children living in poverty and ELL students need early literacy development to create a foundation for success in life. Research shows a narrowing of the academic improvements seen between children attending early intervention programs and those who did not, but newer research indicates that gains from these programs may have an impact on other areas into adulthood. Students with early intervention and kindergarten developmental experiences are better prepared, have higher paying jobs and demonstrate greater social skills than those who did not participate in these programs. These cannot be measured using standardized testing. I am concerned about funding in the CCSD. We are underfunded and academic rigor is increasing. We are setting up children up to fail. I ask that you support this bill because it is fair.

**Carole Benner:**

I work in the classroom. I want to protest the comment about having our children read by age 3. There is no credibility in providing a full-day kindergarten when we are promoting children who cannot read. I work with students in middle school who are unable to read. If we are not going to hold students back until they can read, there is no point to all-day kindergarten. A child's education is not the responsibility of the Legislature, it is the responsibility of his or her parents. Parents have asked that a process be put in place to provide education, but this does not give the Legislature the right to strip us of our liberties. School attendance by a 5-year-old should not be mandated; a parent should decide when his or her child is ready to attend. Where will the money come from to fund this bill? The decision of when to send a child to school should remain with the parent. I am against this bill.

**Elissa Wahl (RISE Education Resource Center):**

I have provided a statement ([Exhibit N](#)) to the Committee giving the reasons I am against this bill. Parents need the option to start their children in school when they are ready, not at the mandated age of 5 years. Both of my parents were teachers. My birthday was a month after the cutoff date to start school. My parents chose to start me in kindergarten at the age of 6 instead of 5. Because of this, I was able to succeed and go through school easily. Parents need the option to choose and make this decision for their children.

Some families opt to place their children in private schools. Under this legislation, they would be mandated to pay for an additional year or more of schooling. That could be an unreasonable financial burden on many families.

Another reason I am against this bill is the cost impact. The State will need more teachers and facilities and require more administration for this program.

The primary reason I am against this bill is that it lessens the family unit. Parents are not perceived as the experts in raising their own children. We need to strengthen the family unit. Homeschooling or charter schools are not viable options for families who do not want to start schooling their child at 5 years old. These families want the opportunity for their child to have additional time to become developmentally ready before beginning school of any type. I support allowing an exemption in these programs for children between age 5 and 7.

**Janine Hansen (President, Nevada Families Association):**

I am particularly concerned about lowering the mandatory attendance age from 7 to 5 years old. I have taught children from ages 3 to 18 and know there are many differences among them. In their book, *School Can Wait*, Raymond and Dorothy Moore share over 6,000 studies showing that starting school later is more beneficial than starting earlier, particularly for boys. This bill discriminates against boys because, at this age, they are developmentally at least a year behind girls. Because of this, boys exhibit more discipline and learning problems than girls and are more often placed in special education programs or on drugs to control their behavior.

My son attended first grade when he was 6 years old and was very unhappy. I kept him home for the rest of the year, and when he was 7, I sent him back to first grade. By the time he was 15 he was attending Truckee Meadows Community College. My son did not need to be in kindergarten; he needed more time to grow developmentally at home. My son is not alone in this situation. Children who enter school at a later age demonstrate better skills in socialization, academics, leadership and self-esteem and achievement, and they do not experience school burnout. Many children, especially 5-year-old boys, are not prepared to be in a regimented classroom. Parents need options and the ability to make choices. I oppose this bill, especially when it takes away that parental choice.

**Truby Uithoven:**

I have provided a statement to the Committee in support of S.B. 182 ([Exhibit O](#)). As a half-day kindergarten teacher, I witnessed students writing at various proficiency levels. In their journals they wrote about caterpillars, which we later released when they became butterflies. These students enjoyed school. They did not want to leave my class at the end of the day. However, because I taught in a half-day program, I was not able to differentiate at an appropriate level for all of my students. My students needed more small-group attention. Students need a full-day kindergarten program so they can develop routines and learn to use their brains more efficiently. I have provided the Committee with a research brief ([Exhibit P](#)) on these and other benefits of full-day kindergarten.

**Robin Vircsik (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I work for the CCSD and have been a teacher for 22 years. I would like to correct statements made by previous speakers. The CCSD does not expect children to be reading by the age of 3. We expect them to be reading by Grade 3.

In CCSD, we test all incoming kindergarten students. The ones who score lowest are the ones eligible to attend full-day kindergarten. Some of these students enter school functioning at the age of 2. Considering that these students exit kindergarten on grade-level, they make significant progress during the year. By the end of third grade, they are still at or near grade level. This shows the impact of attending full-day kindergarten considering the deficit they had on entry. We know that 80 percent of a child's brain growth occurs between birth and age 5. In kindergarten we are wiring a child's brain for success. The Committee has received the results of a survey ([Exhibit Q](#)) from the United Kindergarten Teachers of Las Vegas, a loosely organized group, sharing information about issues impacting kindergarten and kindergarten instruction.

**Suzan D. Reed (Vice President, Clark County 4H Council):**

I am against S.B. 182, specifically the lowering of the mandatory attendance age from 7 to 5 years old. Attendance during these 2 years should be a choice not a mandate. Children are ready for new experiences at different ages. Children learn to read at different ages, and we need flexibility in attendance options. This Committee should consider two separate bills: one to lower the age of attendance and one to require full-day kindergarten.

**Angela Kleven (Operations Director, RISE Education Resource Center):**

I am an advocate for educational options. I recently taught a class for a group of teens. We discussed the idea of having a law against swearing to protect children in a local park. The teens felt there should be one. After walking through the process of what it would take to enact such a law, these students realized it would be extremely difficult to fund and enact such a law. They understood that a compassionate, well-meaning idea does not necessarily make the best law. That is the point I make today. We want to meet the needs of our students, but I ask you to follow the logic in this bill. Is the end result what we want and what will best benefit families?

**Lynn Chapman (Families for Freedom):**

Parents are children's first teachers. I homeschooled my daughter and was a homeschool consultant for other families. School buildings are not the only place where children can learn. Many parents who chose to homeschool had young boys who experienced difficulties in structured situations. Children who are labeled as having behavior problems at a young age are unable to escape this label later in their school careers. Starting school at age 5 is not appropriate for all children. According to the Supreme Court of the United States, parents have the right to direct the education of their children. Please do not pass S.B. 182.

**Herrman Glockler:**

Schools have 12 years in which to educate children. I have read statistics that say two-thirds of the students who graduate do not read at a proficient level. I do not understand why we need to add 2 additional years of education when we are already failing to educate our children or worse, socially promoting them. The teacher unions are the only entities that will benefit from this action. We should ensure all students can read and write and achieve appropriately at each grade level. If they cannot, they are condemned to a substandard level of living.

**Steven Augspurger (Executive Director, Clark County Association of School Administrators):**

The Clark County Association of School Administrators (CCASA), representing over 1,200 principals, and central office administrators in Clark County, supports this bill.

**Andrea Hughes-Baird (Parent Leaders for Education):**

I will read my written statement to the Committee ([Exhibit R](#)). Schools in the WCSD are forced to provide half-day kindergarten because there are not enough spaces available for all interested students to attend the full-day kindergarten program. In a full-day program, the teacher is able provide 3 hours of focused literacy and reading instruction daily. This literacy instruction time is more than the total instructional time for all subjects provided in a half-day program. In WCSD, all but three elementary schools have the facilities needed to implement full-day kindergarten for all of their students next year. I have provided a document for the Committee, "2013 WCSD Public Schools Week: Kindergarten Wednesday" ([Exhibit S](#)) that reviews the benefits of full-day kindergarten.

**Gordon Gilbert:**

I am a parent of two children in the CCSD. Both of my boys are on the autism spectrum, and the second one attended a full-day kindergarten program. In first grade, the students who attended the full-day kindergarten demonstrated higher reading skills and better math performance than those who did not. For children such as mine, other components are addressed in a full-day program such as self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management and relationship building. These are important for children as they progress not only in academics but also in a social environment. The top international educational performers in science, technology, math and education as a whole, all provide robust kindergarten and even preschool programs. Early development is fundamental to developing lifelong learners.

**Dale Norton (Superintendent, Nye County School District):**

The Nye County School District (NCSD) covers 18,000 square miles, has 5,300 students and our buses travel over 1 million miles a year. I support the position of NASS, CCSD, WCSD, NASB, Nevada PTA and the other groups that have testified in favor of S.B. 182. The NCSD is prepared to provide space for all eligible students to attend full-day kindergarten next year.

**Senator Smith:**

In response to Assemblyman Stewart's question, full-day kindergarten has not been expanded by the State since its initial funding. Funding was reallocated in the 2007 Session, but it was cut when the budget was finalized. Expansion that has occurred has been through tuition-based programs. We have set the policy for full-day kindergarten, and we have funded this program at a partial level for the last

8 years. This bill extends the opportunity to participate in a full-day program to all Nevada children and families. Mr. Joecks questioned my previous comment about reviewing studies on both sides of this issue. I will provide these studies to the Committee on request.

**Chair Woodhouse:**

I would like to submit written testimony supporting S.B. 182 from Sherie Early, Debbie Voorhees and Debbie Zunnini ([Exhibit T](#)) and Lisa Daines and Kris Kreutzian ([Exhibit U](#)).

**Chair Anderson:**

We will now discuss Assembly Bill (A.B.) 163 which relates to early childhood education.

**ASSEMBLY BILL 163:** Provides for early childhood prekindergarten education programs. (BDR S-723)

**Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop (Assembly District No. 5):**

I taught kindergarten for many years and saw the benefit pre-K had on my students. Among the states that offer pre-K programs, Nevada ranks 51st in the Nation in preschool participation for all programs, and 34th out of 39 on total spending for state-funded preschool programs. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, from 2010 to 2011 only 1.7 percent of Nevada children who were 3 and 4 years old were enrolled in a pre-K program. I have provided additional information to the Committee about the status of preschool programs in Nevada ([Exhibit V](#)). High-quality pre-K programs can improve school readiness, with the greatest gains being seen in those children most at risk of school failure. Studies indicate there is a return to society of more than \$17 for every dollar invested in an ECE program, primarily due to the large, continuing effect early success has on the child.

Preschool-aged children should be exposed to cognitive learning opportunities in high-quality, language and print-rich environments. Using appropriate and effective programs to help preschool-aged children receive high-quality instruction and improve their early literacy skills will help those who are at risk for reading failure. Evaluating and implementing activities to support age-appropriate development will help our children become successful.

Assembly Bill 163 does four things. First, it expands pre-K education programs statewide for at-risk children. Second, it appropriates \$20 million for pre-K programs for fiscal year 2014-2015. This money must be used to expand the number of children served. It cannot be used to replace existing funding; the goal is to reach more children. Third, it requires school districts and the NDE to report to the 2015 Legislature on the implementation of the program, including the developmental progress of children and to make recommendations on future legislation relating to pre-K education. Last, it outlines a beginning discussion regarding instituting a pre-K program in Nevada. Working with the NDE and the 17 school districts, this preliminary framework will set general policies and procedures for the program. This process will be ongoing and will develop programs to promote appropriate and meaningful challenges for our pre-K students. This bill will enable our youngest citizens to participate in the rich learning experiences needed to develop their emergent skills in a strong educational environment.

**Julie Kasper (Director, Early Childhood Department, Clark County School District):**

The Committee has received a copy of my complete testimony ([Exhibit W](#)). When identifying a quality ECE program in Nevada, we look at many things. One is licensure. The most common ECE license is for general education preschool teachers working with students from birth through age 7. Licensure now exists for general education and special education. We are working with the DOE to develop option programs for endorsements for both of these.

In ECE programs, we also look at effective learning environments. We determine if the furniture is appropriate, if the environment is print-rich and if the students are provided a variety of high-quality experiences in which to participate. In the CCSD, we have 66 regular pre-K programs. Thirty-five of these programs are nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We plan to model future programs after these.

**Ms. McNeill:**

In the WCSD, we use a blended formula to fund pre-K programs. We fund 18 of the sites using a combination grant money from the NDE's Nevada State Pre-K program and funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Part A, Title I funds. I have provided my written statement of support to the Committee ([Exhibit X](#)).

**Erin Riddle (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a pre-K teacher with the CCSD. I am concerned about the importance of pre-K. The sooner at-risk children are in a classroom setting, the better it is for them academically. There is a parent involvement component to our program. We have parent meetings at least twice a month and have added additional instructional time for students who are experiencing difficulties. We also teach social skills. It is important to continue this program.

**Alexandra Bossert (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a preschool teacher in the CCSD and have taught in Head Start. I have provided my written testimony to the Committee ([Exhibit Y](#)). One reason it appears that the skills acquired in early entry programs fade by the third grade is our failure as educators to adjust our curriculum to meet the needs of our students. If we do not change our curriculum based on whether students have attended a preschool program or not, they will not continue to excel. Studies that show a lessening of the benefit of pre-K over time also show that some factors remain constant, such as lower rates of student dropouts, teen pregnancy, criminal activity and substance abuse. That is because preschool teachers focus on developing independence, social skills, self-regulation, resilience and other life skills daily.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

Are you able to help preschool parents identify speech or developmental delays and help them find resources in these areas?

**Ms. Bossert:**

Yes. It is an important component of our ECE program. It is built into the structure of our week in the CCSD Title I programs. On Fridays, when we work with parents, I am able to assist them in developing strategies for working at home with their children.

**Kiri Wiggins:**

I have over 10 years of experience in ECE and have worked with the WCSD teaching kindergarten and pre-K for 5 years. I have provided my full statement to the Committee ([Exhibit Z](#)). Pre-K is vital to our children. Over 98 percent of my students are ELLs, and it is difficult for them when the teacher does not speak their language. One of my students cried the first 2 weeks of school because he had never been away from home, but now he loves school. When he goes to kindergarten, he will be ready to learn on the first day of school.

In pre-K we teach problem solving skills. It is important that students learn how to negotiate with other students without using aggression. We are teaching our children how to be self-directed, independent learners who can make appropriate choices. They do not always receive this training in elementary school. We are teaching them risk-taking skills and are developing their confidence as well as their self-help skills. Introduction of these skills before kindergarten allows the kindergarten teacher to spend more time on academic skills and less time on basic teaching about how to be a student. We provide activities that help students develop large and small motor skills. We teach the whole child.

**Dr. Merrill:**

I have provided the Committee with a copy of my testimony ([Exhibit AA](#)) which highlights information from "Starting out right: pre-k and kindergarten: full report," a study published in 2012 by the Center for Public Education. The NASS supports the policy that would provide preschool programs for students in Nevada's most at-risk communities described in A.B. 163. Although there may be some complications associated with this bill, we look forward to working with Assemblywoman Dondero Loop on the adoption of a policy that will have a positive impact on these children. We know that income and geography sometimes penalize students in our State, and we hope to find a way for all students to get the services they need.

**Naomi Podorsek (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I am a pre-K teacher with the CCSD. I have provided the Committee with a written copy of my statement ([Exhibit BB](#)) which I will read. With the implementation of the CCSS we see a greater need for early intervention.

**Barry Duncan (United Way of Southern Nevada):**

The United Way of Southern Nevada is in full support of A.B. 163.

**Mr. Stokes:**

I endorse A.B. 163.

**Ms. Berg:**

I have provided a written statement of support to the Committee for this bill ([Exhibit CC](#)).

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**Mr. Stevens:**

The Nevada State Education Association supports this bill.

**Mr. Augspurger:**

The CCASA supports this bill.

**Mr. Norton:**

Nye County School District supports passing this bill.

**Deanna Wright (Clerk, Board of School Trustees, Clark County School District):**

The CCSD Board of Trustees supports this bill.

**Ms. Chapman:**

Families for Freedom is opposed to A.B. 163. Let children be children. A study published at the end of 2012 found that students participating in Head Start did worse in math and had more problems with social interactions by third grade than those who did not participate in the program. Parents of children in this study reported a significantly lower promotion rate than parents of children who did not participate. The study concluded there were some positive results from participation, but those effects disappeared once students entered early elementary school.

**Ms. Hansen:**

The Committee has been given "Head Start: A Tragic Waste of Money" ([Exhibit DD](#)). This article outlines the failure of the Head Start program to show long-term success for participating students. None of the tests given to first graders in this study showed a reliable, statistically-significant effect due to participation in Head Start. This has been a 45-year experiment by the federal government which has been a failure. Do we want to repeat the same thing in Nevada? One of the best places for a young child to be is with his or her mother. As shown by this paper, institutionalizing young children will not give them an advantage in learning. We could spend our funding more wisely on helping mothers become better mothers. I have provided the Committee "When Education Becomes Abuse" ([Exhibit EE](#)) with additional information about this topic.

**Assemblywoman Swank:**

Are you aware of the 40-year longitudinal study on early childhood education done in Ypsilanti, Michigan?

**Ms. Hansen:**

No, I am not, but I will review it.

**Ms. Reed:**

I oppose A.B. 163 because I am concerned that what begins as an option may become a mandate. Money would be better spent on programs that promote parent-child interactions, such as those provided by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. The statistics that are often quoted about the need for ECE programs are designed to frighten parents. The State is not and should not be the parent.

**Chair Anderson:**

This bill does not require mandatory attendance.

**Ms. Reed:**

My fear is that this is a step toward making preschool mandatory. I oppose A.B. 163 for this reason.

**Ms. Lagor:**

There are studies that show babies and young children need to be with their mothers. Offering a state-funded pre-K program will encourage families to send their children to school because it is easier than keeping them at home. I am opposed to this bill. Parents should be encouraged to be parents. We should spend our money on parental counseling and teaching parents how to be better parents, not on institutionalizing children.

**Mr. Joecks:**

I have submitted my written testimony to the Committee ([Exhibit FF](#)). It describes design problems in three commonly cited studies that support pre-K programs. These cause the significance of the gains found in these programs to be questioned. The High/Scope Perry Preschool program had several flaws in its research design, including the requirement that parents of participating children be home during the day. The Carolina Abecedarian Project included infants in its population and the Chicago Child-Parent Center program lacked random assignment of participants, had extensive parent interventions and included tutoring of school-age students.

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**Assemblyman Munford:**

What is the distinction between pre-K, Head Start, ECE and "Tots"?

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

Head Start is not considered preschool.

**Kim Wooden (Chief Student Services Officer, Clark County School District):**

Special education programs are typically referred to as ECE programs. Preschool refers to general education programs for young children. Head Start programs are federally funded. The "Tots" program is specifically for 3-year-olds in some of our Title I schools.

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**Chair Anderson:**

Seeing there is no other business, the meeting is adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Diana Jones,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

<b><u>EXHIBITS</u></b>				
<b>Bill</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>		<b>Witness / Agency</b>	<b>Description</b>
	A	1		Agenda
	B	20		Attendance Roster
S.B. 182	C	2	LeNora Bredsguard-Brown	CCSD Kindergarten Statement
S.B. 182	D	1	Sharla Isle	Testimony
S.B. 182	E	1	Kristen McNeill	Testimony
S.B. 182	F	1	Dotty Merrill	Testimony
S.B. 182	G	4	Betsy Giles	Testimony
S.B. 182	H	2	Paula Kerchenski	Testimony
S.B. 182	I	1	Tami Berg	Nevada PTA Testimony
S.B. 182	J	1	Juanita Clark	Preservation Neighborhood Testimony
S.B. 182	K	5	Victor Joecks	Testimony
S.B. 182	L	1	Frank Schnorbus	Nevada Homeschool Network Testimony
S.B. 182	M	1	Frank Schnorbus	Nevada Homeschool Network Proposed Amendment
S.B. 182	N	1	Elissa Wahl	Testimony
S.B. 182	O	2	Truby Uithoven	Letter of Support
S.B. 182	P	3	Truby Uithoven	All-Day Kindergarten Research
S.B. 182	Q	5	Robin Vircsik	Testimony

S.B. 182	R	2	Andrea Hughes-Baird	Testimony
S.B. 182	S	3	Andrea Hughes-Baird	Kindergarten Wednesday
S.B. 182	T	1	Early, Voorhees, Zunnini	Gomm Teacher's Letter of Support
S.B. 182	U	2	Daines, Kreutzian	Advantages of Full-day Kindergarten
A.B. 163	V	5	Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop	A.B. 163 Information
A.B. 163	W	3	Julie Kasper	Public Testimony
A.B. 163	X	1	Kristen McNeill	Ed-Testimony
A.B. 163	Y	2	Alexandra Bossert	ECE Testimony
A.B. 163	Z	2	Kiri Wiggins	Testimony
A.B. 163	AA	1	Dotty Merrill	Testimony
A.B. 163	BB	1	Naomi Podorsek	Testimony
A.B. 163	CC	1	Tami Berg	NVPTA Testimony
A.B. 163	DD	2	Janine Hansen	CATO Institute Head Start
A.B. 163	EE	6	Janine Hansen	When Education Becomes Abuse
A.B. 163	FF	2	Victor Joecks	Testimony