MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Seventy-Eighth Session
April 1, 2015

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Melissa Woodbury at 3:24 p.m. on Wednesday, April 1, 2015, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada, and to Room 114, McMullen Hall, Great Basin College, 1500 College Parkway, Elko, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda (Exhibit A), the Attendance Roster (Exhibit B), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/78th2015. In addition, copies of the audio or video of the meeting may be purchased, for personal use only, through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury, Chair
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson
Assemblyman Derek Armstrong
Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz
Assemblywoman Victoria A. Dooling
Assemblyman Chris Edwards
Assemblyman Edgar Flores
Assemblyman David M. Gardner
Assemblyman Pat Hickey
Assemblywoman Amber Joiner
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblywoman Shelly M. Shelton
Assemblywoman Heidi Swank

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Brent Jones, Assembly District No. 35
Senator Scott Hammond, Senate District No. 18
Assemblyman James Ohrenschall, Assembly District No. 12

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst
Kristin Rossiter, Committee Policy Analyst
Karly O'Krent, Committee Counsel
Joan Waldock, Committee Secretary
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen Gray, Education Researcher, Nevada Policy Research Institute
Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D., Professor Emerita, University of Arkansas
Ze'ev Wurman, Private Citizen, Palo Alto, California
Michael Brickman, National Policy Director, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Washington, D.C.
Evelyn Allred, Member, Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, Department of Education
Allison Serafin, Vice President, State Board of Education and State Board for Career and Technical Education
Mark Newburn, Member, State Board of Education and State Board for Career and Technical Education
Don Gallimore, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
John Eppolito, Private Citizen, Incline Village, Nevada
Virginia Starrett, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada
Kenneth M. Coll, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno
Teruni Lamberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Elementary Mathematics Education, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno
Amy Weber-Salgo, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Peggy Lear Bowen, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Yvonne Sweeten, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada
Christina Leventis, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Amy Bauck, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada
Carrie A. Buck, Principal, Pinecrest Academy, Henderson, Nevada
Danny Klingler, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Joe Armbruster, Private Citizen, Elko, Nevada
Andrew Krueger, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Punam Mather, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Karen Cavallaro, Consultant, Decoding Dyslexia-Nevada
Elizabeth Gray, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada
Cheryl Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ryan Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jessica L. Salts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Spencer Flanders, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada
Marla Flanders, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada
Penny Ramos Bennett, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Susan Lacey, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada
Connie Forstrom, M.S., Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada
Janet Whitemore, Director, Literacy Volunteers for Children; and Carson City Literacy Volunteers, Carson City, Nevada
Daniela R. Corral, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Jonathan Denwood, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Jonathan Dahl, Private Citizen, Elko County, Nevada
Bethel Jeanne Baglin, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Leticia Corral, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Jan Bennett, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Gwen Niccoli, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada
Craig M. Stevens, Director, Intergovernmental Relations, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District
Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Eagle Forum
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Joannah Schumacher, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Juanita Cox, representing Citizens in Action

Chair Woodbury:
[Roll was called. Committee protocol and rules were explained.] We will begin with our work session. We have three bills on work session today.

H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst:
Your binder has the work session documents with the three measures. The first of these is Assembly Bill 166 (Exhibit C).

Assembly Bill 166: Provides for the establishment of the State Seal of Biliteracy Program. (BDR 34-526)

This measure was first heard on February 25, 2015. It is sponsored by Assemblymen Benitez-Thompson, Diaz, and others. The bill establishes the State Seal of Biliteracy Program. It provides a special seal denoting biliteracy to be affixed to the high school diploma of a pupil who has achieved a high level of

proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English. School districts, charter schools, and university schools for profoundly gifted pupils may choose to participate in the program. The bill requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to design and distribute the special seal to the participating school districts and schools. The measure also specifies the academic performance criteria that must be met for the pupil to qualify for the program.

There is a mock-up following the summary page that incorporates amendments by Craig M. Stevens from the Clark County School District and Chair Woodbury. There is one additional amendment that I accidentally left off. [Read from work session document (Exhibit C).]

The amendment I missed was that the biliteracy program's seal could also be added to students' transcripts if they successfully complete the program.

Chair Woodbury:
Do I have a motion on the bill?

> ASSEMBLYMAN GARDNER MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 166 WITH ALL THE AMENDMENTS.
>
> ASSEMBLYMAN ARMSTRONG SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

> THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson will take the floor statement. I will have Mr. Sturm continue walking us through the work session.

Assembly Bill 178: Revises provisions governing the discipline of pupils. (BDR 34-248)

H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst:
The next measure is Assembly Bill 178, which revises provisions governing the discipline of pupils (Exhibit D). We first heard this bill on March 2, 2015. It was sponsored by Assemblyman Thompson and others. The measure revises the statutory requirement that a pupil classified as a habitual disciplinary problem be suspended from school for at least one school semester. As introduced, the bill deletes the option to expel the pupil and instead provides that a pupil may be suspended for up to one semester, depending upon the severity of the problem. In addition, the measure revises the requirement that a school principal classify a pupil as a habitual disciplinary problem after

applying certain criteria, making the designation permissive versus mandatory (Exhibit E). The measure also provides only pupils suspended for a full semester or more need to enroll in an alternative education program. There was one amendment proposed by Associate Justice Nancy Saitta to restore the option of expelling a pupil designated as a habitual disciplinary problem under extraordinary circumstances. A conceptual mock-up follows the summary page. You can find that change on pages 2, 3, and 5 of the mock-up.

Chair Woodbury:
Do I have a motion?

> ASSEMBLYMAN ARMSTRONG MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 178.
>
> ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHELTON SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion? [There was none.]

> THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Assemblyman Thompson will take the floor statement. We will move on to Assembly Bill 351.

Assembly Bill 351: Revises provisions relating to projects to benefit charter schools. (BDR 34-1012)

H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst:
The final measure before us for the work session is Assembly Bill 351 (Exhibit F). That measure was first heard on March 25, 2015. It revises provisions relating to projects to benefit charter schools. The bill requires a charter school using bonds to finance a project issued by the Department of Business and Industry to have received one of the three highest rankings from the public school's statewide system of accountability within the immediately preceding two consecutive school years. The current law is the two highest rankings in the preceding three consecutive years. Section 2 of the bill as introduced also removes the requirement that prevailing wages must be paid for these projects. The one amendment was suggested by Committee member Elliot T. Anderson, who suggested deleting section 2 of the bill, which would remove the prevailing wage language.

Chair Woodbury:
Do I have a motion on the bill?

> ASSEMBLYMAN ELLIOT T. ANDERSON MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 351.
>
> ASSEMBLYWOMAN DIAZ SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion?

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I want to thank you for considering that amendment. I had expressed some anxiety over changing section 1. It was an amendment I proposed last session when I supported the charter bond bill in this Committee. The more I thought about it—we were going to have a lot of things up in the air with our performance framework—I felt we should provide a little more flexibility as we are going through a transition period. As long as section 2 is out, I am very happy to support this measure.

Assemblywoman Swank:
Unlike my colleague, I am still a little hesitant about this. I will vote yes today, but will reserve my right to change my vote on the floor.

Assemblyman Armstrong:
It did not seem to me that we needed to do anything with section 2. It was moot due to Senate Bill 119. I am not sure we need to amend this bill.

Chair Woodbury:
I will have Ms. O'Krent answer that.

Karly O'Krent, Committee Counsel:
As we discussed previously, section 2 has been addressed in a bill that has already been signed by Governor Brian Sandoval. The amendment that has been made to section 2 will be taken care of during codification—by removing it from the text of this bill.

Chair Woodbury:
Is there any other discussion on the motion?

Assemblyman Flores:
I will vote yes, even though I am hesitant. I reserve the right to change my vote on the floor.

Chair Woodbury:
Is there further discussion?

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Assemblywoman Dickman will give the floor statement. I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 303.

Assembly Bill 303: Revises provisions governing academic standards in public schools. (BDR 34-886)

Assemblyman Brent Jones, Assembly District No. 35:
As elected officials, we bear the responsibility to do that which is good and that which is right for our children and future generations. We must put the needs of our young people ahead of political ideology and political careers. The decisions we collectively make about education as a country, as a state, as a community, not only shape who we are but determine our survival as the greatest country the world has ever known. We need to make sure we know what we are doing. [Read from PowerPoint presentation (Exhibit G).]

Currently, there are 11 states, represented in blue, that have completely rejected Common Core since it started being implemented in the late 2000s (Exhibit H). There are 35 other states, represented in red, which are either in the process of repealing all or part of it now. I want you to notice that Nevada, although we are bringing this bill, has been lagging. Unfortunately, that might be an indicator of where our education system is. We need to be in front of this issue instead of behind it. There is overwhelming support of people who are becoming aware of what Common Core actually is, and they are rejecting it. On the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS), I placed the same map and, with it, the statutes delineated showing what they are attempting to do to get rid of Common Core. It is overwhelming what is happening with Common Core and how people are rejecting it. The devil is in the details. Once people actually understand what it is, they become very frustrated and upset with it.

Why is Common Core opposition growing? It is growing, not as a Republican issue or as a Democratic issue, but as a parent issue—parents who care about their children. If you actually look, there is bipartisan support for this. The Republican National Party has put in its platform that they are opposed to Common Core (Exhibit I). The Clark County Democratic Party has included opposition to Common Core in their party platform (Exhibit J). This issue transcends party lines. It is about parents who care for their children.

As you are probably aware, since 1978 when the federal government formed the Department of Education, almost every president has had a new education program—No Child Left Behind is one example. Each has a different name, but the goal is to raise standards nationwide. Common Core first started as Race to the Top. Governor Jim Gibbons signed it into law not knowing the details of testing, curriculum, et cetera (Exhibit K). He knew that he could get federal funds in order to raise standards. It is a very good purpose. We signed on to this for the federal dollars; the problem came when we learned what the program was.

It has now been over six years since we started with Common Core. There are many organizations that are coming out against it, including Truth in American Education, Home School Legal Defense Association, Heritage Foundation, our own Nevada Policy Research Institute (NPRI), and many grassroots efforts. Parents are getting upset, mobilizing, and demanding that we get rid of Common Core. In Oklahoma alone, 1,100 people showed up to say that we cannot do this to their children.

Common Core started by saying it merely sets standards. It has evolved into more than that. There are three main issues that are troublesome, raising concerns: First, the confusing curriculum; second, data collection, or data mining as many refer to it; and third is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing, which is proprietary and unproven. We are all mandated to participate in these tests.

Common Core is confusing. I encourage all of you to go onto Google and search "Common Core math curriculum examples." You will see many. This is what brought Common Core to my attention [page 10, (Exhibit G)]. A constituent, a business owner who has to balance his books, knows math pretty well. He asked me if I had seen the new math the schools are trying to teach. I had not, so I asked him to tell me about it. He said that he cannot even help his elementary school son do his homework. He went to his son's teacher, asking for help. She told him that he could take a course that would teach him how to help his child. How realistic is it for parents to have to take courses to help their children do their simple math homework? It is not only unrealistic for affluent and stay-at-home parents, but what about our less-advantaged parents who are working two jobs? How are they going to have time to help their children? It is such an important thing to have parents able to work with their children, to help them do well in school. If the parents cannot understand the assignments, how can they help their children?

The next area of concern is data mining [page 11, (Exhibit G)]. The actual implementation of the data mining is pages and pages of information the school

system is now required to keep on our children. The claim is the information goes from the cradle to the grave. This information will determine if your children are eligible for college or other programs. It is quite extensive, covering everything from if your child is at-risk from a young age, to if parents own firearms, to whether or not there is fighting going on in the home, to what types of medications are being taken. Many are becoming worried about the "Big Brother" effect of the government knowing everything about our children and our family life.

The third area of concern is the proprietary and unproven testing—the SBAC that we are required to use. It has not been validated as being effective. It is almost a joke that, not only is it unproven, but we are forced to buy it [page 13, (Exhibit G)]. It is estimated that we pay $33 per student, which means we will pay over $15 million every two years for the testing.

With that introduction, I will now run through the bill. There is also a proposed amendment mock-up (Exhibit L). A similar bill was presented in the Senate by Senator Scott Hammond. That bill was not allowed to be heard. I discussed this bill with Senator Hammond, who made very good suggestions. Initially, we wrote in the bill to return to our previous standards. After looking into it, I found that the Massachusetts standards had proven to be very successful. They are free. They were called "the miracle in Massachusetts" when these standards were brought in because they are so effective.

If you look at the bill, it is quite simple. There are just a few lines referring to Common Core and removing it. In the back section of the amendment, we added the Massachusetts framework. While the bill is simple, it would have a profound effect. We are saying we will not follow the Common Core standards. The regulatory environment at the school and at the state level put the standards in place.

I have Karen Gray here to testify. She is a reporter/researcher with the Nevada Policy Research Institute (NPRI) and the *Nevada Journal*. She has been with NPRI since 2008. Prior to joining NPRI, Ms. Gray spent 17 years involved as a parent in the Clark County School District, serving on various district committees and parent groups. As an independent education advocate and paralegal, Ms. Gray has assisted parents and attorneys in advocating for students with school district administration and the Board of Trustees and special education legal proceedings.

In addition to Ms. Gray, we have telephone testimony from Dr. Sandra Stotsky. She is very well known in the Common Core arena because she was involved with it at the very beginning. I will give you a brief biography so that you can

see how special it is that we have her testifying on our behalf. Dr. Stotsky is a professor of education emerita at the University of Arkansas, where she held the Twenty-First Century Chair in Teacher Quality. She served as the senior associate commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from 1999 to 2003, where she was in charge of developing or revising all the state's K-12 standards, teacher licensure tests, and teacher and administrator licensure regulations. She served on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education from 2006 to 2010, on the National Mathematics Advisory Panel from 2006 to 2008, and on the Common Core State Standards Initiative Validation Committee from 2009 to 2010. She was one of the five members of the validation committee who would not sign off on the standards as being rigorous, internationally benchmarked (which means comparable or competitive), or research-based. From 1991 to 1997, Dr. Stotsky was editor of the premiere research journal *Research in the Teaching of English*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English. She has published extensively in professional journals and has written several books.

In addition to Ms. Stotsky, we have Ze'ev Wurman. Mr. Wurman is a former senior advisor at the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development in the U.S. Department of Education. Throughout development of the Common Core standards from 2009 to 2010, he analyzed the mathematics drafts for the Pioneer Institute and for the state of California. In the summer of 2010, he served on the California Academic Contents Standards Commission that reviewed the adoption of Common Core for California. He has been very involved with this and is very knowledgeable in what the results are.

Karen Gray, Education Researcher, Nevada Policy Research Institute:
Assemblyman Jones asked me here today to hopefully clarify the question, "What is Common Core?" We have all seen the headlines, debates, protests, and rallies for or against Common Core. What Common Core is by definition remains elusive. Perhaps one of the most important insights for understanding what Common Core is today is to recognize the distinction between "Common Core" and "Common Core State Standards."

Common Core State Standards are simply what their name implies; a set of common academic standards reaching across states. In some circles, the term "Common Core" refers strictly to those particular copyrighted common academic standards; however, Common Core today encompasses much more. In a nutshell, Common Core is a collection of components, some of which are associated with federal Race to the Top grants. Within these components, adoption of the Common Core State Standards is an element. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit M).]

I am skipping over some of my prepared testimony, as Assemblyman Jones has already addressed it. As the Assemblyman mentioned, Nevada committed to adopt the Common Core State Standards prior to their release. We also joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which received over $170 million in federal grants to develop the student assessments that are now at issue. Another aspect of today's Common Core is priority number four under the Race to the Top grant specifications. This is the expansion and adaptation of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program. While Nevada did not win the Race to the Top grant, it is expanding its Statewide Longitudinal database. In 2012, the Nevada Department of Education received a $4 million federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant award to link its K-12 data collection system, known as the System of Accountability Information in Nevada (SAIN), with the state's other longitudinal data systems, ultimately creating a pre-K through workforce tracking system—which will not only streamline information within Nevada, but across states and federal systems.

Currently, Nevada's SAIN system uploads over 800 student and teacher data points from each school district in the state. According to a 2012 state feasibility report, Nevada's stated goal in its longitudinal database system is "to develop a matching data hub for assigning a unique state personal identifier to individuals so that students and teachers can be followed throughout their enrollment in pre-K and post-secondary education and into the workplace." Student addresses and identification numbers are bio-demographic attribute elements used in the generation of these unique state identifiers. Currently, the state is working to electronically connect SAIN and data systems from the Nevada System of Higher Education and the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation to this hub. According to the study, in the future, Nevada envisions adding early childhood education, health and human services agencies, pre-K, juvenile justice, adult justice, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to the data collection system. In fact, we can already see a vertical alignment linking K-12 to the DMV via the student's driver license and school attendance mandates.

We can also now see an electronic vertical alignment between K-12 and higher education databases through the College and Career Readiness exams. In order to graduate, 11th graders must take the ACT as part of the college and career readiness requirement. It is not imperative that students pass these exams, only that they take them. For parents, this raises the obvious question. What is the purpose for the exam? It appears that one of its purposes is that it allows a transition from the K-12 system into the higher education system. From there, that information can be combined and compiled with employment information.

Supporters of this type of data collection and sharing feel access to this information will help policymakers and educators improve education; however, opponents fear this type of compilation and sharing of private personal information is an invasion of privacy and an encroachment by the state and federal government. They fear that this information is not safe and secure.

As noted previously, these new academic standards do not come without new assessments. You may recall the SBAC received over $170 million in the Race to the Top assessment funding. These assessments have parents concerned over the number of the tests and the manner in which children are tested. The new SBAC assessments are completely and entirely computer based. They are computer-adaptive testing. Gone are the paper and pencils we all knew; they have been replaced by a system of electronic testing. An assessment question is populated based on a student's response. For example, if a student answers a question incorrectly, the assessment generates a question that is easier next time. If a student answers a question correctly, it generates a harder question. Parents are concerned that too much emphasis is placed on these assessments and that eventually all the information that is compiled and shared will be used to design the educational path for their child. It ultimately erodes the parents' right to advocate and direct their child's education in the direction they and the family feel is in the best interests of their child.

Finally, Assemblyman Jones gave you an example of Common Core math. Opponents of Common Core feel that local control over the curriculum is being lost. Proponents say that is not the case. Even though Nevada requires the Department of Education to create a model curriculum, local school districts are free to use whatever curriculum and instruction methodology they prefer. Examples, such as the one the Assemblyman has presented to you, are seen across the country and here in our Nevada classrooms. That demonstrates, in practical applications, the local school districts are not free to choose which curriculum or which instruction they use. In fact, parents are being told that teachers cannot adapt their methods, lesson plans, or strategies to meet the individual needs of their students.

Hopefully, that helps you understand what Common Core is today. It is no longer just the Common Core State Standards. It has evolved into these issues and more, including teacher evaluations.

Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D., Professor Emerita, University of Arkansas:
I believe you all have a four-page paper (Exhibit N) available to you. I will bounce off it in sections because I could not possibly read all of it in 10 minutes. The point of my paper is to spell out the deficiencies in your

English language arts (ELA) standards, which are Common Core, as they were adopted by your State Board of Education in 2010. I will briefly touch upon my own qualifications, which have been presented to you already. I will note the fact that the standards writers and most of the members of Common Core's validation committee—on which I served—did not have qualifications for whatever they were charged with doing. Then I will talk about the flaws or problems in your standards and why Nevada needs to revise what it has if it wishes to improve public education in the state. It will not cost more to change your standards now. In fact, it is likely to cost even less if you adopt, as was suggested earlier, the pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards. I cannot speak for the California standards directly, but I know that they were considered first-class in the country. The pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards in English and mathematics were easily taken to by the teachers in the state. We did not have to spend any extra money to help them understand how to teach to those standards. The standards reflected their professional training, background, and experience and would probably cost much less than the Common Core standards, with their lower results, are going to cost Nevada in the future.

Let me first give you my qualifications, which are on the first page of my testimony. You can see that I was chiefly involved in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, revising or developing all the state's K-12 standards. These standards helped to propel Bay State students from somewhere in the middle of the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, called the Nation's Report Card, to where they hit the top in grade four and in grade eight in both reading and math from 2005 on. In addition, on the Trends in International Math and Science Study that we entered as a separate country, we tied with Singapore for first place in science in grade eight. We were also among the top six or so countries in math in grade four and in grade eight. Our standards have, at least by indirect empirical evidence, contributed to academic gain in all groups of students. Our average went up—all groups gained, which was one of the goals of our standards. It was not to just close gaps or to raise the bottom scores, we were concerned about making sure that all groups improved because this is what we need in public education. We had a 50-year decline in the quality of K-12 and needed to raise the standards and level of academic achievement for all students and try to accelerate the growth among the low-achieving groups of students. They accomplished that.

Let me move on to the lack of qualifications in Common Core's standards writers, which is when I first became concerned about the quality of Common Core's standards. I will focus chiefly on English language arts, my own area of expertise. I have a graduate degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education in reading research and beginning reading instruction. I know the research background and what is involved in developing the best kinds of standards in reading and English K-12. We did not have qualified people in the English language arts to do that with Common Core. We do not even know why they were chosen, we only know that private organizations funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation all contributed to the choice of the standards writers. No rationale has ever been given. They decided what they were to do. There are no public records available of the decisions they made, why they made them, and how they handled whatever feedback they received. We heard from many states that believed that their own teachers contributed to the development of Common Core standards. There are no records to show any of that. As far as we know, the standards writers chosen by private organizations in Washington, D.C., and the Gates Foundation developed the standards and finalized whatever they wanted by June 2010, which was when the final versions were released—even though many states had already adopted the standards in an unwritten or semi-written form. The fact that those writing them had poor qualifications was compounded by the low qualifications of most members of the validation committee.

What was that committee to do? The procedures the committee followed and the kinds of activities that were engaged in by the members of the validation committee did not result in a validation of these standards. Five of the fewer than thirty members of the committee refused to sign off because we did not see any evidence that the standards were internationally benchmarked competitive, they were not research-based, and they were not rigorous. The five included the two major content experts: Professor James Milgram from Stanford University, who was the only mathematician on the committee, and me, the only English language arts expert on the committee. Despite the fact that for six years the proponents of the standards have been regularly repeating that these standards are rigorous and demanding, they cannot in any way explain what makes them that way because they are not rigorous and demanding. Indeed, in mathematics, Professor Milgram has been able to point to the fact that they are about two grades behind what high-achieving countries in southeast Asia make sure their own students achieve. We know that Nevada could do a lot better, particularly in mathematics, if it drew on its own higher education teaching faculty in math and science.

Let me detail some of the major flaws in Common Core's English language arts standards that you are using. This is on page 2 of the testimony I submitted (Exhibit N). The major points I have listed are shown with some examples. Most of these English language arts standards are content-free skills. They are not content standards, no matter how you label them. They contain no literary or historical knowledge that would contribute to a knowledge base for your students so that they could then be able to engage in critical thinking, which is another piece of false propaganda by proponents of Common Core. In no way can Common Core's standards enhance critical thinking. Indeed, they are unlikely to develop analytical thinking, which must precede critical thinking because they, in effect, reduce literary study of complex literary work by about 50 percent in the English class. There has been some attempt to suggest that an effort to read informational texts should take place across the curriculum. Indeed it should, and always has. The standards in the English language arts standards document for Common Core are for the English class. Only the last six or seven pages are for literacy standards in other subjects. It is what happens in your English classes that is going to be severely affected by the deficiencies in Common Core's standards.

Page 3 of my testimony outlines other deficiencies—weak vocabulary standards, deficiencies in the kinds of standards it offers. There is no standard on the history of the English language, no standard on any British literature or authors, and no standard on authors from the ancient world. All of these were in the Massachusetts standards and in California's old standards because those standards were developed mainly by English teachers at the high school level who knew what students needed in order to be college-ready. That was not the real goal of Common Core's standards, despite the name of the standards as being college and career ready. You should be free to ask questions about it.

I would like to point out an interesting, puzzling contradiction at the bottom of page 3 of my testimony. There are two very important standards in Common Core's English language arts standards that I put there because I was asked for my contribution in about March of 2010. I suggested that there be something that dealt with our seminal political documents. There are no test items, as far as we know, on any of the tests that have been developed based on Common Core's standards that address those particular standards. If we wish students in this country to continue understanding some of our fundamental political documents they should, in part, be taught in an English class and certainly should be taught in a history or U.S. government class. These are failings that appear in all Common Core-based tests. Certainly, I cannot find them in the SBAC, which is the test to be used in Nevada. If you look at released items, you will find none of these seminal documents in any way addressed by

supposedly sample test items. There should be a complaint about that. Why are those standards not being addressed?

I have some recommendations. The first major recommendation is that your State Board of Education should develop rigorous, internationally comparable standards for the secondary level because that is what is going to make a difference in college readiness. That should be done as soon as possible, particularly if this bill is passed. It means that you will not have interference from inferior standards—Common Core or any Common Core-based test. I have provided free of charge non-copyrighted English language arts standards, but they can be obtained anywhere because state standards are not copyrighted, they are public information. Only Common Core has been copyrighted, and there is no mechanism for revising them. You are stuck with them, and you have to think about why you should be stuck with any set of standards. Who knows when they will ever be revised? If you face any revision, it is going to be in conjunction with all the states that are part of the SBAC.

You should also develop a bill to eliminate your own State Board of Education and state Department of Education because they have shown no interest in trying to reach out to the upset parents and teachers across the state who are trying to figure out ways to get out of this set of tentacles called Common Core standards and tests.

Each state should develop its own entrance exams or matriculation tests for its own institutions of higher education. There are fine institutions of higher education in every state in the country, including Nevada. Your teaching faculty should be drawn upon to develop its own admission test. You do not need to have Washington, D.C. bureaucrats tell you what the requirements for admission to your higher education institutions should be. That is exactly what the grade 11 college readiness test will do. The SBAC tests are designed to indicate which students declared passing should be able—if they want to go to college—to get credit-bearing courses in their freshman year. That is not a judgment that should be made by people outside of Nevada. It should be made within your state.

Finally, you must restructure and reform your own schools of education—your future teachers. This is where the ballgame really begins if we are to upgrade and have high standards taught. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Until we begin to address teacher qualification in our country, it will not matter what kind of standards you have. We will not be able to improve the education of the future generations in this country until we begin to strengthen the teacher corps. That is what I spent most of my time in the Massachusetts Department of Education doing—working on licensure tests that are available at

relatively no cost to the rest of the country. That is how I would end, by saying that is where we really need to begin—not with student tests, but with teacher training programs and teacher tests, to make sure we begin with the people who actually do most of the work in our classrooms.

Assemblywoman Swank:
I, too, am a researcher. For the past 15 years, I have done research in the field of anthropology, focusing on education. I was looking at your résumé. I wonder if you can direct me to some of your recent articles that have appeared in peer-reviewed journals. I am having trouble locating that. I would also be interested in knowing the publisher of your most recent book.

Sandra Stotsky:
That is on the last page of my testimony. It is not a vanity press. The title of the book is *An Empty Curriculum: The Need to Reform Teacher Licensing Regulations and Tests*, published by Roman and Littlefield. You can search Amazon.com and find it. It is available in hardcover, paperback, and as an electronic book for Kindle. As for peer-reviewed—my Pioneer Institute white papers are all peer-reviewed. They are research reports done with other academics. The first one done with Mark Bauerlein is a report that was done with a professor of English at Emory University. It went out for peer review, which is a normal process for Pioneer Institute research reports. The second one is by Anthony Esolen and Jamie Highfill, who is a former eighth-grade teacher in Arkansas. That report also went out for peer review. Mr. Esolen is a published poet and a professor of English literature at Providence College in Rhode Island. If you are looking for peer reviews, I can give you the peer-review status for almost anything on my curriculum vitae because almost all of my work has been peer reviewed.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I can appreciate Massachusetts because it is number one in the country in a lot of things—such as in funding.

Sandra Stotsky:
I do not know that it is on funding, frankly.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Funding for education is a lot higher in Massachusetts than it is in Nevada anyway. I wanted to get into Massachusetts and what Massachusetts is doing. Is it true that Massachusetts adopted Common Core, or at least blended parts of their standards into Common Core? If we were to adopt pre-Common Core standards as proposed by this bill, would we not be doing differently than Massachusetts?

Sandra Stotsky:
Massachusetts now has Common Core standards. I was on the state board at the time they were adopted. We accepted standards because we were promised $250 million of Race to the Top money. If you adopted the pre-Common Core standards, you would be getting the standards that actually contributed to the rise in academic achievement of all students in the state. We do not have any evidence like that for Common Core standards.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
To follow up, Massachusetts still has the Common Core standards. They have not gotten rid of them.

Sandra Stotsky:
They adopted them in 2010. They have not gotten rid of them because they got the money, $250 million, and Governor Deval Patrick was a friend of President Barack Obama. Massachusetts kept and used the money. The commissioner of education, Mitchell Chester, is chairman of the governing board of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers testing consortium, so he is certainly not going to make a recommendation against continuing with Common Core standards because that was all part of the deal for getting the $250 million of Race to the Top money.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I think the point is clear that we would be doing something Massachusetts is not doing if we were to adopt this bill. While we are talking about adopting Massachusetts standards, did any Nevada teachers have input into Massachusetts standards?

Sandra Stotsky:
I am not aware that any other state's teachers would have had input into Massachusetts' standards. In fact, we do not know of any teachers who had input into Common Core either, by the way. As far as we know—and I was on the committee, asking about this—there were no high school English or high school math teachers on either the validation committee, the standards writers, or the standards development committee for Common Core.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Ms. Stotsky, that is two different things, is it not? Giving feedback is different than being on the committee. Anyone here in the Legislature knows that if you put too many people on a committee, you will not get anything done. Feedback and being on the committee are two separate and distinct issues.

Sandra Stotsky:
They certainly are, but we have no record that these committees used feedback from anyone. That was the point I made earlier—there are no public records. These private organizations did what they did all on their own, making their own decisions. The one English professor, Mark Bauerlein, was on the vast review committee. He kept sending in feedback and has mentioned in the report we wrote together that he never got any acknowledgement of his feedback. He has no idea what was done with it. I have asked many teachers who think that they had input into these committees. None of them can tell you anything about where their input went or how it was used. You cannot get records. As far as we know, the standards writers made their own decisions. If you hear the tales from Professor Milgram about the difference between the public comment draft in math that came out in March 2010 and then the final draft, he cannot even find out what was happening behind the scenes because there were changes made from the public comment draft to the final draft. We were on the validation committee and could not find out. This was a very nontransparent, bizarre, and mysterious process.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Ms. Stotsky, I take issue with what you said about no teachers giving input. I know one teacher, Amy Salgo, who has spoken with me specifically. She is a Nevada teacher who told me that she had feedback into them and submitted a report to the committee. I have also seen stories about Florida teachers providing input.

Sandra Stotsky:
I heard that from many states. What these people cannot do is point to what standards they actually wrote. We have no record of it.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Have any teachers you know who received training in the colleges of education you referred to taken classes in how to write education standards?

Sandra Stotsky:
I am not aware of any.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I wanted to clarify that. Going back to the validation committee, there were 28 members, and 24 signed off on them. There was a difference of opinion on the validation committee. Is that correct?

Sandra Stotsky:
There was a difference of opinion between those who were experts. The one mathematician did not sign off. It does not matter if you had a committee of 25, 30, or 50. If they are not experts in mathematics, what difference does it make if they have signed off on high school math standards, when they could not tell the difference between a trigonometry, a pre-calculus, or an algebra II topic? The point was that we did not have the academic experts that you would expect on a validation committee. If you went to a surgeon, you would expect a member of the board of surgeons, you would not expect a podiatrist to be operating on your head. You must understand that there is an expertise issue here. There was one mathematician on the entire validation committee. He said there was no way to get to a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) major because they were missing standards in math.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Ms. Stotsky, I need to yield my time. The Chair has been patient with me. I want to point out that Mr. Milgram said that Common Core was better than 85 percent of the standards that exist. He also said that our old standards were among the worst in the nation. I wanted to make that point and clarify it.

Chair Woodbury:
We will now move to Mr. Wurman's testimony so that the sponsor can finish his presentation.

Ze'ev Wurman, Private Citizen, Palo Alto, California:
I want to address three points: the mediocrity of Common Core mathematics standards, the low level of Common Core's definition of college readiness, and the costs of Smarter Balanced assessments as compared to the previous Nevada criterion referenced test (CRT).

Let us start with the quality of Common Core. Nevada pre-Common Core standards have been rated a mediocre "C" by the Fordham Institute. Yet how much weight should one attribute to the ranking? [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit O).]

I am not saying that the Common Core standards are terrible. They are mediocre. Your old standards were also mediocre, but at least you were used to them and made progress with them. Now you have a completely new set of standards that are experimental and unproven, and your teachers struggle with them. [Continued reading from (Exhibit O).]

I think the idea of taking up your old standards temporarily until you develop your own is a good idea. Your students and your teachers will bless you

because they know how to handle it. Yes, you have to make improvements, but you do not have to go overboard on unproven and experimental mediocre standards.

Chair Woodbury:
Committee, are there any questions? [There were none.]

Michael Brickman, National Policy Director, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Washington, D.C.:
The Fordham Institute focuses on education reform, including parental choice and higher standards. We have done this for many years. We have done evaluations of all 50 states' standards. Our evaluation was mentioned earlier. We have looked at the idea of standards of quality. I have some written testimony prepared. I was going to just read it, but I want to just quickly summarize it, if I can, and then was hoping to address some of the things that I heard earlier. Unfortunately, so many of the things that we have heard today about Common Core, about Nevada's current standards, are not true. I have heard the same things across the country, in many different states. Unfortunately, I think it is leading to some misconceptions. I hope that you all, as policymakers, will ultimately have the full picture.

I will start with our evaluation of the old standards. These are the standards that Nevada had in place prior to Common Core. Those standards received a "C" in both English language arts and mathematics, whereas the new standards that Nevada has now received an "A-" in math and a "B+" in English language arts. I want to be clear—I am not here saying that the standards you have today are perfect, but they are a major upgrade over what you had in place before, and a major upgrade over what many states had in place before. It is not just the Fordham Institute saying this. In fact, that was our 2010 evaluation. We did an evaluation in 2005 as well. I am especially interested in quoting this because the author of that report was Dr. Stotsky, who you heard from just a moment ago. What she said of Nevada's old standards:

> Nevada's literature standards lack any cultural or historical specifics, and they contain a group of indicators on the use of historical/cultural contexts that are unintelligible or generally impossible to teach in K-12. Additionally, the standards do not clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language, nor do they index or illustrate growth through the grades—both essential elements of first-rate state standards.

She was very critical of the standards that you had in place before. The bill being offered, as it was written the last time I checked, would revert back to

the old state standards. There is the alternative of going to the Massachusetts standards which, as we heard from the Assemblyman's questioning before, even Massachusetts has done away with. We are told that they were guaranteed money, that they were "promised," in Dr. Sandra Stotsky's words, that they would get money from Race to the Top. The vast majority of states, including Nevada, applied for money under the Race to the Top program. Some got it. Massachusetts did not get it at first but eventually did. Nevada tried for this as well and did not get funding. It was a competition. The bottom line here, though, is that as much as some want to claim that this was federal coercion, that Nevada had no choice in the matter, is simply not true. The fact that you have a bill being considered that would make changes to the standards should prove that the state has every right to set its own standards. I want to be clear that, as a conservative, I think this is how it should be. The state of Nevada should set its own standards, and every other state should have that same decision-making power.

I agree with the opponents who spoke earlier that the federal government never should have gotten involved in the first place. I think the Obama Administration was wrong to incentivize states in any way to adopt this. This should fully be a state decision, but just because the government was out there incentivizing these standards does not mean that they are low-quality. In fact, they are quite good. In that same Race to the Top program, states were incentivized also to do things like evaluate teachers and allow for more charter schools. We do not hear people saying, "Well, if Race to the Top incentivized it, we should ban charter schools, or we should not evaluate our teachers." I think that is something to consider. While the federal intervention was wrong, it is 100 percent your choice as to what standards to adopt.

I want to go over some of the other things that were said earlier, because they get to the heart of what this is. What are standards in the first place? Standards are the academic goals that you set for students. They are a statement of what you want students to know by the time they graduate from high school. Nevada has always had standards, always had these goals. Unfortunately, those goals did not adequately prepare students lucky enough to graduate to do college-level work. That is why 29 percent of Nevada's four-year college freshmen, and 42 percent of its two-year college freshmen require remediation, resulting in lower completion rates and forcing Nevadans to pay to reteach college freshmen things they should have already learned in high school to the tune of $23 million per year—the cost of having standards that leave a gap between what high school students are expected to know and what college freshmen or those newly entering the workforce are expected to know. The state of Nevada, as did many other states, wisely moved to a set of standards that are called college- and career-ready standards. This set of

standards, if met, will prepare students to be ready for college or a career. That by itself is not going to get the job done. In any area of life, if you are setting goals for yourself, it is not enough to just say that you have set the goals and are now going to sit back and the mission is accomplished. You have to actually follow through. You have to do the other things that Dr. Stotsky and others mentioned.

In particular, I want to agree with her on something—the idea of teacher licensure. When I was in the state of Wisconsin, I worked with Dr. Stotsky on raising expectations for new teachers. It made a difference in Massachusetts. Hopefully, it will make a difference in other states. I believe in school choice. I believe in other things to make sure that we are delivering a high-quality education for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. These are the types of things we actually have to do to follow through. These standards do not prescribe how to teach and do not tell schools which textbooks to use. They do not assign homework to students. We saw the Assemblyman's math example before. I agree—that is a more confusing way to do a math problem, but it is not mandated in Common Core. Teachers are allowed to teach the way they feel is best.

We heard a comment that teachers are being told that they can no longer differentiate instruction for every child. That is completely not true. I would like to see a source for that, because I think that if you asked teachers in this and every other state, they would tell you it is not true. I agree with the opponents who say, "Look at these confusing math problems." There have been confusing and maybe inappropriate textbooks as long as there have been textbooks, but Common Core does not tell you which textbooks to use. That is up to your local school officials. That is why I am such a strong believer in local control of education. If you as a parent see something you dislike, you have the power to go to your local school officials and demand better. I am so glad to see so many parents engaged in this because they are demanding better, they are frustrated with the educational system. They believe that we need to do more. I completely agree with them, but I think that saying this is somehow the fault of a set of goals—that somehow the goals are to be blamed when really it is the implementation of those goals or the effort to meet those goals is what I think we need to consider.

There are a few other things I want to make sure we address, but I think the difference between standards on the one hand and curriculum, lessons, textbooks, and homework assignments on the other is really, really important. Common Core only sets the goals. If down the line you all feel those goals need to be strengthened to go even higher, I think that is great, but let us at least give the students of Nevada a chance to meet those goals. These

standards are so new, these goals are so new, they have not even had a chance yet. Let us give those students a chance. I know they can meet the standards. I know we need to do other things. This and every other state need to do other things to make sure that their students have the ability to meet those goals. Simply pulling the rug out from under the teachers and the students who are working hard at this right now is not going to fix the problem.

I want to point out something about the validation committee. I know that what is important ultimately is student learning—what the standards actually say. There has been so much brought up about process that I feel the need to mention that the validation committee had a wide variety of really great experts on it. I know Dr. Stotsky has said they had no qualifications. If you look at the list, there are professors of mathematics and board-certified teachers. Dr. Stotsky said she wanted board-certified, and that is who was on the committee. Look at these members. I really think that they would take issue with having their credentials questioned, as would the Nevada teachers who also looked at this. There is also a Nevada validation committee, which we will hear more about in a little bit. I think those teachers, those experts in this state, would take issue with having their credentials questioned as well.

A few other points—we were told that Common Core reduces literature. That is not true. Politifact checked Dr. Stotsky on that very statement and said it was false. These same claims have been made, debunked, and still repeated in the next state and the next state. This is the same thing we have been hearing over and over again. Unfortunately, a lot of it is just not true.

Ultimately, this is something that gives you the ability to determine your destiny. This is up to Nevada's elected leaders, including you on this Committee. I hope that you will listen to the teachers and to the leaders in this state who are doing the hard work. We did a national study looking at the implementation. One of the specific examples that we wrote a whole report on was the great work of teachers in Washoe County who are doing this work of implementation. I think it is important to understand that this work has been going on for a couple of years. Many of the teachers who will speak today want this to continue and want to be allowed the chance to succeed at these high goals. I think the students expect the same.

Assemblyman Hickey:
This question is for you, Mr. Brickman, but I would be happy to hear from members of our State Board of Education, too. You talked about raising expectations for teachers. Another way of saying that is certain teachers feel pressured by a whole new set of standards and expectations. In part, as you mentioned, these standards have been tied to teacher evaluations. When I look

at some of the opposition from teachers—New York State was referenced and one of our political party platforms opposed it in Nevada—have you looked at any other states? We have heard that a number of states have backed out of Common Core. Have any of them successfully moved to the previous Massachusetts standards? How do we address that we are six years into this program? There were three or four years of planning and implementation. If a state, this late in the game, were to pull the plug on this process, where is that going to leave us? What is the lag time, even if you accept the assumption that this was not the best way to go? Where does that leave us and how do we get to where we want to go?

Michael Brickman:
I think there are probably others who have a good perspective on that, but I will briefly give the national perspective. The map showed states that we were told have rejected or backed out of Common Core (Exhibit H). The reality is that not every state joined in the first place. Some of those states—Minnesota, for example—liked half of the standards and went with half the standards, and still have that today. Louisiana and Florida were highlighted—that is not true; they are still on Common Core. I think the map is inaccurate in a lot of ways. As to your question about who has gone with the old Massachusetts standards, the answer to the best of my knowledge is no one, including Massachusetts.

Assemblyman Edwards:
Going door to door during the campaign last year, I ran into literally hundreds of teachers. There were a lot of them in every precinct of my district that said that teaching to Common Core was straight-jacketed. They were told what to teach on what days; they were told how much time to spend on things, when the test would be given, and how to teach. They said they found it unbelievably restrictive, not allowing them to be teachers. If I had heard it once or twice, I could dismiss it. After hearing it dozens of times, it is very different than what you said—teachers can continue to teach in the old-fashioned ways they had. Where is the disconnect? Where is the message not getting through that teachers can continue to teach as they see fit? They are telling me that they are required to continue to make the students take the test, even if they do not grasp the subject matter. They also say they do not have the option of extending the class for another day or two in order to make sure their students understand the subject.

Evelyn Allred, Member, Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, Department of Education:
I might be able to address some of that. When I get to my presentation, it might also make it clear to you. There are districts that set up pacing guides, and even weekly guides that the teachers set up themselves, as to when things

are going to be taught in order to cover everything that they need to get through. It is not prescribed how to teach or when to teach. That is a school district decision. I am a principal in a district here in the state. We do have pacing guides. You have to be prepared for the testing because, ultimately, testing is what proves if teachers are doing their job, as far as how teachers feel. With anything that is new, it is very stressful and anxiety-ridden for teachers because they are trying to make sure that they are doing the best job they can do. Common Core has been difficult to get resources for right away. They are coming now, and districts and teachers are developing them. What many people are saying is, "We are all going to do this together so that we can go down in a ball of flames or up in a blaze of glory, so that we know what we are doing and that we are covering what we need to cover." For many teachers, it is a shift in the paradigm of the way they teach. I might be able to answer that more in my presentation.

I currently am a principal in an elementary school that is 100 percent free and reduced-lunch and has a very large population of English language learner (ELL) students, so I know the struggles that some schools go through. I also had been a teacher in the state for 17 years before I became an administrator. I was in the rural district of Elko. I am here at the request of the Nevada Department of Education because I also have served on the Council to Establish Academic Standards for the state of Nevada since the second year of its existence. I wrote standards for the state and had to recuse myself from the committee to go down and present my standards to the council for approval. I was appointed by four governors: Bob Miller, Jim Gibbons, Kenny Guinn, and Brian Sandoval. I worked with H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst, when he was working with Senator Ann O'Connell, and I worked with Elaine Wynn, chairman of the State Board of Education.

I am going to talk to you about standards. There is a difference between the adoption of the standards and the adoption of the test to test the standards. Those are not the same thing. Standards are, as my colleague said, what we want students to know and be able to do. The test is how we show that they can do that. My council did not approve the test. We approved the standards. We set up teacher committees. Our council comprises two parents, two businessmen, two legislators, and two educators. The goal of the council was to have a rural educator and an urban educator. That has happened through my entire tenure. We were charged with establishing standards that were challenging to students and then recommending them to the State Board of Education. When this first started, we had all teachers, business people, and parents on the committee. As time went by and the standards were put in place, those committees went from 60 to 70 people down to 15 to 20. The bigger the committee, the harder it is to get the work done. We always made

sure that all stakeholders were represented, reviewing and helping to write and develop standards. The standards were presented to us by the committee. We then reviewed them, asked questions, and sent them out for public comment. On more than one occasion I recall driving to Ruth and Ely, Nevada, in a giant snowstorm so that I could present to the school board and the constituents there what was happening with standards in our state.

After they were returned to us, we again had public comment in the rural zones, the urban zones, and at the state Department of Education. Then the standards went back to the committee. Anything that was changed was done at the direction of the chair, Debbie Smith. The state Department of Education changed what we requested to be changed. We had one more public comment and then decided whether to recommend or not recommend the standards being sent to the State Board of Education. We did not approve standards, we recommended them. Then the State Board of Education went through the same process—public hearings, changes if needed. If they did not agree with something, it was sent back to our council so that we could figure out why they did not like it or if there needed to be a tweak based on something.

There were a lot of checks and balances. Through the entire process, teachers were always involved, telling us what they did and did not need. In 2010, Governor Gibbons appointed the Blue Ribbon Education Reform Task Force. On this task force, he had the regional professional development program that the Legislature approved. He had businesspeople, parents, educators, school district people, and charter school people on the committee. The committee was charged with establishing challenging and rigorous standards for the state of Nevada. They vetted numerous options for standards and came forward with the recommendation for Common Core adoption. We again went through the process of public hearings. As a council, we vetted the standards and sent them to the State Board. They went through their process again, then they were adopted as our standards.

As a principal and an educator, I want you to know that there is not a prescribed way to teach the standards. There are some people who have recommendations, who have published books, and those kinds of things. My teachers are very creative, and they are professionals. They are the practitioners of the craft. I would never presume, as a principal, to tell them the best way to reach their students. I would venture to say 99 percent of principals feel the same way. We are not the experts on every academic subject the way the teachers are. Yes, I know the standards in pre-K through fifth grade, because that is what is at my school, but I do not know the ins and outs of every little detail and nuance that goes into teaching them to a child. I am sure that during your lifetime you have seen "the new math."

Your children brought it home and you went, "Oh, my goodness. What is going on at that school? I cannot help my child with that." That happens for most people every time there is a shift in instruction. Schools are providing parents support. We provide workshops so that we can show parents what we are doing. What I have seen with Common Core is that students are working together. Students are learning how to persevere, how to solve problems and create answers, and how to think outside the box—all of which are skills they are going to need for jobs that do not even exist at this time.

Teachers have been part of this through the entire process. We have a teacher here in Carson City who was a Nevada representative on the writing of the standards and review of them. I also want to talk to you about what one of the people said about there not being mastery on angle degrees until eighth grade. I have first-graders who can tell you the attributes of a square, a triangle, a rhombus. I have fifth-graders who can do geometry and measurement. In Common Core standards, there are introduction, continuation, and mastery. Everything is not mastered at the end of every single grade because learning is ongoing. Each year you build on that skill, which is one of the strengths of Common Core. It is not a matter of learning it in first grade and never having to do it again. You need to learn that this is how you decompose a number, and this is how you can get a different answer. These are the attributes of a square. Next year, a student will know what a square is. Is a square a rhombus? Is a rhombus a square? Then you will go on to your geometry and higher-level math skills. Those are great points.

The other point I want to make is that we have students who take advanced placement classes and get college credit now. It is happening. We do reach out to our parents. Parent involvement is huge. It is a part of what we do every day, but this is new to parents. Everyone has done calculation. You calculate, you subtract, you get the answer. If you ask a student now, they can explain to you why that makes sense. Why, when I subtract 12 from 32, does that give me 20? I can show you with a proof drawing and with manipulatives place value and all sorts of different things that go with that.

Allison Serafin, Vice President, State Board of Education and State Board for Career and Technical Education:

I am a former middle school English and history teacher. My heart, like the educators on your Committee and in this room, still remains in the classroom. I am here today in support of the Common Core State Standards and ask that you vote no on Assembly Bill 303. First, it is important to note that the Nevada State Board of Education voted unanimously last week to oppose this bill. I wish to provide a few additional pieces of context from the frontlines that I think are helpful when framing my support for these standards.

I will start with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. I had the privilege of serving on the Blue Ribbon Task Force that was previously mentioned, which supported the adoption of the standards. To clarify, we knew we were not promised any money through Race to the Top. We adopted these standards because we felt a great sense of urgency to provide students with dramatically better standards that would lead to dramatically better outcomes. While we may disagree with the process of how the standards were adopted, there is no question that the Common Core State Standards are good for our students. We must expect more from our young people. These standards are the right foundation.

Second, I have had the privilege of seeing the standards impact student achievement and teacher empowerment. Four years ago, I led a project at our superintendent's request at a Clark County elementary school to help roll out the Common Core standards and help teachers engage in unit planning with backwards design. It saddens me to hear that some teachers felt straitjacketed or that they did not have any control in their instruction because the scripted approach is not the spirit nor the intent of these standards. Prior to this project, the teachers that I worked with were following a scripted text. Every single day they had to be on a particular page and students had to answer a particular set of questions. Teachers were understandably frustrated. Student achievement was pretty low. What was exciting about working with these teachers was that they had a great amount of curiosity around the Common Core State Standards, and they wanted to improve their craft.

Here are a few things we witnessed in just a few months. We saw students—many of the English language learners that had previously struggled with reading—rereading texts to develop a deeper understanding instead of just giving up when they got frustrated. We saw kiddos using evidence from texts to support an inference. We also saw students develop grit as they struggled and worked through rigorous grade-level texts, even though they had been several years behind in their reading. As a side note, the expectation for students to support an inference with evidence is hugely important. If you have a chance to look at the Common Core State Standards (Exhibit P), for grade levels it will be, "(RL) 4.1," which is reading literature fourth grade, first standard. I bring this up because it is a skill that was not expected previously with our young people. I also have not seen any evidence that citing text to develop an inference is in the Massachusetts standards. I find that if we were to even consider removing a standard such as that, it would be very disempowering for our young people, especially for struggling readers and English language learners.

In addition, what we saw in our teachers was really exciting. We saw teachers integrate reading and writing standards across curriculum. For instance, there was a fifth-grade teacher who was reading *Island of the Blue Dolphins* with her students. She was using Common Core literature standards to assess their reading and to ensure that the students were reading on grade level and developing strong skills, but they were also studying Native American cultures in their social studies unit. She was using the informational text Common Core standards in order to ensure that their reading instruction was interwoven and, quite frankly, challenging. We also all know that if you are going to be a great reader, reading across content areas consistently is incredibly important. Teachers found their love of instruction again, and they felt unleashed to develop creative units in cross-curriculum projects. There are few things more exciting than watching a teacher reconnect with his or her purpose and seeing students achieve great outcomes as a result.

Finally, universities, vocational programs, and employers all want students and/or employees who can think critically, have a firm grasp of the English language, can make logical decisions, and can engage with the world around them in a deliberate and thoughtful way. The Common Core State Standards provide the blueprint that our teachers need to help mold our young people into leaders of tomorrow. Let us not forget—these are standards. While rigorous, the tremendous talent in front of the classroom every day has the power to make them come alive, to help our students achieve at the highest levels. In closing, I challenge anyone to point out a single item contained in these standards that our students do not need to learn in order to be competitive in life.

Mark Newburn, Member, State Board of Education and State Board for Career and Technical Education:

I am currently the chair of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Computer Science Advisory Board. I am also a member of the College of Engineering curriculum committee, a 36-year veteran computer scientist, small business owner, and member of the Computer Science Teachers Association. I am considered one of the lead science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) advocates in Nevada. I am going to give you a little bit of STEM spin on this.

The STEM community was very interested in the new Common Core standards because they are modern standards. As a STEM professional, I enjoy hearing professors talk about STEM careers. It becomes pretty clear that they are really out of their depth. I am troubled by most of what I have heard because it reflects almost a complete lack of the issues that the STEM community is trying to fix. I am a big supporter of the current standards because when I read the

math standards, I see the more rigorous math and the greater depth of knowledge that the STEM community is looking for (Exhibit Q). When the standards came out, we got a couple of things that we really wanted. One of the biggest is a greater emphasis on integrating math across subjects. This puts math in a real-world context that makes it relevant to students. Math out of context is the killer of STEM. This is where students drop out. They take math and have no idea what it means. This was a big win for us in the new standards.

Another element we got was more emphasis on technical reading and writing. So many times I get people complaining that our students cannot read technical materials. They can read a novel, but they cannot read their insurance policy, the manual that comes with their computer, the simple manual to assemble the bicycle for their children. This is systematic of the old literacy system. We wanted and we got more emphasis on technical reading and technical writing. We do not need someone who can only read a novel and talk about plot development. We are never going to ask somebody to hypothesize on the good versus evil symbolism of the new IBM supercomputer, but we are going to ask them to read and understand how it works. These are items that no one has mentioned and were a big win for us. These are some of the reasons that the STEM community almost universally endorses the new standards because they give us the things that we are looking for. One of the few achievements that was cited in the Brookings Institution's "Cracking the Code on STEM: A People Strategy for Nevada's Economy" was the adopting of the Common Core standards because they understand the important STEM elements of the new standards. These are modern standards. These are not old Massachusetts standards. These are standards that came out during the evolution of STEM.

I would also like to clear up a little bit about the new arithmetic. I understand that it is very confusing, but some of it is our fault. Americans almost universally do not understand place value—that is, the first place is ten to the zero power, the next place is ten to the first, the next place is ten to the second. The reason this is critical is because electronic devices do not operate base-10, they operate base-2. All computer scientists routinely deal with number systems that are base-2 (binary), base-8 (octal), base-16 (hexadecimal). I do not need any more students who have no understanding of place value. It makes it incredibly hard to turn them into computer scientists because they do not understand the fundamental math system of the computer. As a representative of many of the most at-risk schools, I like the idea of all students being held to high academic standards. Well-educated parents already know to push their child into the high-rigor classes that are on college track. Implying that it is okay to just meet low standards and low expectations is the lie we used to tell our at-risk students and their families. Our old standards did

nothing to prepare them for college and career and many times did not even prepare them to pass the exit exams and graduate. It was a road to nowhere for many of our at-risk children. The school-to-prison pipeline is paved with low expectations.

Chair Woodbury:
Are there any questions from the Committee?

Assemblywoman Shelton:
Are you teaching this new math in Elko?

Evelyn Allred:
I am no longer in Elko. That is where I was teaching in the past. As the principal, I go to the classrooms often and learn with the students. One of the things I did with them was a math problem. I solved it the traditional algorithm way. The students said, "No, you cannot do it like that. You have to show your work, you need to explain, and you need to show me how you came to your answer." I said, "Well, I came to the answer because I subtracted." They said, "Yes, but how did you decompose?" They are really ahead of me as far as being able to explain their thinking and explain why they are getting the answer they are getting.

Assemblywoman Shelton:
The problem that Assemblyman Jones showed us was 32 minus 12. I was thinking, 2 minus 2 is zero. They start out with 12 plus 3 is 15, and it goes on from there. Could you explain the process behind that?

Michael Brickman:
To give a little bit of context, there are certainly many different ways to solve a math problem. The traditional way that we learned in school is perfectly acceptable if you get the right answer. There are some people who are saying that you do not need to get the right answer. Of course you need to get the right answer. If you get it the traditional way where you line up the numbers, that is fine. What these standards are about is exposing students to additional ways of solving problems as well. If you talk about the normal way of lining up numbers, that is called the standard algorithm. That is explicit in the Common Core, but it also wants to expose students to other methods of learning. It is up to the teachers and principals to determine what those other methods are, to what extent they are emphasized, and ultimately how they are going to be grading these students in their course work. As the gentleman who was talking about STEM mentioned, it is important for a variety of fields to know a variety of different ways of doing math. Ultimately, we would agree, it is about getting the right answer.

Assemblywoman Shelton:
In this example, why do they do the 12 plus 3, then 15 plus 5, 12 plus 10, and 30 plus 2?

Michael Brickman:
It is a different way of learning material. It certainly is not going to be everybody's first choice. The idea is to give the students a lot of different tools, which is what different ways of solving problems are. Some are going to be useful in some settings, some are going to be useful in other settings. Let us give them the tools and see which way works best for them. Getting back to this idea of differentiating instruction, not every student learns the same way or processes things the same way. Let us at least expose them to these different ways of learning how to do problems and then let them choose the path that works best for them.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I will open this up to the panel, whoever wants to answer my question. I think it will be Mr. Newburn, because he is blowing my mind away with how much he knows about math. I have always thought this Common Core math problem that has made the rounds is a bit unfair because that is just one homework assignment in some state somewhere. It is not something that is actually in the standards. When I read the standards, what I see contemplated in addition to the standard algorithm, the way that I learned—writing it down, showing your work—is trying to think about numbers logically. Ten is not just 10, but it is 1 ten times and 2 five times, and 5 two times. If I am correct, I think that has a practical application. I used to be a dice dealer on the Strip. We did not have time to think about the odds and write them down. If we had a place bet on the six or on the eight, it pays seven for every six units. If I have a large bet in front of me, I cannot take out a pen and paper and say, "Okay, here is $150. I can break that down into six units of 25." Once I do that, I know it pays $175, which is seven units of 25. If I were to write that down on a piece of paper at an elementary school level and make it $1.50 with six units of 25, it would look a little silly. Is not part of it at such a small level in trying to get students to think about it logically that it will look a little silly to all of us who are used to the standard algorithm? Is it sort of a learning curve, getting the homework assignments ready with the new standards in an effort to make people think logically?

Mark Newburn:
I think I follow this. When I grew up, there were no calculators. It became important to learn the standard method. If I was working in fast food, we had to add up the orders by hand. That was our calculator—the standard method is the calculator. The problem is that now we have calculators with us all the time

on our phones and in our watches. I am never going to use the standard method. I am just going to use a calculator. The urgency to turn our children into $10 calculators has gone away. What we are trying to do with the alternate methods is to give them a little understanding of the underlying operations. The standard method is like a calculator. It does not teach you anything about the underlying concepts of addition, subtraction, or place value. It is just a mechanical operation, exactly like teaching a child to use a calculator. If we want the fastest way to teach children to add or subtract, we would show them a calculator. They would be done in one minute. I can show people how to do a natural logarithm or *e* to the power *x*, but that does not give them any insight into those operations. That does not even tell them that they are inverses of each other. What we are trying to do is move a little bit away from the purely mechanical. The goal of the alternate methods is to give students a depth of knowledge of what it means to play with the numbers and what addition means. Is it an operation on distance and length? That is what we are seeing. The problem is my generation was never taught these lower-level skills to this depth of knowledge. The teachers were never taught these low-level skills to a greater depth of knowledge. Now what you have to do is not only teach the students but teach the teachers and parents on alternate algorithm methods that are supposed to be greater depth of knowledge. They are supposed to be more challenging because they are supposed to teach the students more of the underlying operations, not just how to be a $10 calculator. As you said, it takes time for everybody to come up to speed on it, during which you can end up with some very bad results.

Assemblyman Edwards:
How long are we supposed to proceed down this road before we see real results that lift us from the bottom? How much is it going cost us? How long do we wait before we say it worked or it did not work?

Michael Brickman:
I think that is a great question. The answer is that states will hopefully be looking at a process of continuum.

Assemblyman Edwards:
I am just looking for a simple answer. I do not want a long explanation. How many years is this designed to take in order to get us out of fiftieth place into the thirties, or twenties, or teens? How much time, money, and effort do we have to expend? When will we know if it is working?

Michael Brickman:
Like any goals you set, it is not about setting the goals, it is about the follow-through. There are many, many other things that the state of Nevada

and many other states need to do to meet and exceed these goals. You cannot just set these goals and walk away. My understanding is that the state, in 2017, is going to be taking another look at these standards and hopefully they will eventually get to a system that is better and better.

Don Gallimore, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a family man. Common Core Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing is actually horrible. We need to take a look at that or eliminate it completely, which is why we are here today. Two-thirds of our students will purposely be failed by Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium tests, by the State Department of Education's admission. Minority children who are already two grades behind their comparable white peers fall another expected 1.8th of a grade after third grade SBAC testing. [Continued to read from written testimony (Exhibit R)].

I really feel sorry for the teachers and the administrators.

Chair Woodbury:
Your written testimony will be entered in the record, as well as the testimony of anyone who testifies today. If you already have submitted it or if you brought it with you today, please give it to our secretary. We will submit it into the record.

Dan Gallimore:
I just wanted to mention RO 19-11 should be eliminated, as it violates the *Constitution of the United States*.

John Eppolito, Private Citizen, Incline Village, Nevada:
I am the father of four children in the system and am a former teacher. I would like to clarify some things that have been said, especially by Mr. Brickman, about the Massachusetts standards. After three years of using Common Core, fourth-grade reading proficiency scores in Massachusetts fell more than any other state in the country. That is what is starting to happen with Common Core. In California, Common Core math was very problematic from the mid-'90s. Dr. Milgram has research to show that after four years of Common Core math, most students do not recover. Last year, my daughter's third-grade teacher showed me that my daughter knew how to subtract using the regular method. She was so excited that she got to teach my daughter three more ways to subtract. What she left off is that while my daughter was learning three other ways to subtract, she could have been doing something much more in depth.

Fordham University took at least $8 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support Common Core. I believe Mr. Brickman left that out, too. Brookings Institution took nothing, and they said Common Core will do little, if anything, to improve education in the United States. We are going to spend billions, but it is not going to do anything. The Gates Foundation is also evaluating the curriculum. There is a formal method of evaluation, not to say if it is good, only if it follows Common Core.

Regarding informational texts, according to Dr. Stotsky, "There are 10 reading standards at every grade level for informational texts and 9 reading standards at every grade level for literature, 50 percent informational texts."

I believe the Fordham Institute said something about parents being frustrated. I was not frustrated with my children's schooling until Common Core came along. Yesterday, the American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest teachers' union in the country, said they supported parents who opt out of Common Core testing. The president of the largest teachers' union in New York suggested that parents opt their children out of Common Core testing. We do not have that option in Nevada.

Virginia Starrett, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada:
I am a retired English instructor from California State University, Fullerton. I also taught here at Western Nevada College. I would like to point out some flaws in the testimony that was given by those who are against this bill, regarding curriculum and pedagogy not being prescribed by Common Core. They, in fact, very much are. In the area of English language arts, much to the detriment of students, all of the reading texts and assignments that are given under Common Core fall under what is called "new criticism." It is a style of literary criticism that was introduced across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. It is one tool for assessing a text, but just one tool. Common Core students are limited to that one tool only. For instance, if you were going to study the Gettysburg Address in a class, Common Core students are directed, through the Common Core instructions to teachers, that they cannot offer erroneous guiding information or respond to erroneous guiding questions. They cannot talk about Abraham Lincoln or tell you what the situation was in regard to slavery, the Civil War, or anything surrounding the Gettysburg Address. They cannot tell you the time frame in history that had anything to do with that text. All you have are the words on the page for that text. The teacher who spoke about teaching *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and said it was being used in a way to integrate different classes actually goes against what Common Core teaches because you cannot teach beyond the text itself. If they were doing that, they were not doing it according to Common Core. Teachers will get

around what Common Core says, but they should not have to. We should get Common Core out of their way.

Kenneth M. Coll, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno:

We have a letter strongly opposing A.B. 303 (Exhibit S). I will highlight a few areas from the letter. There is much evidence of input with the Common Core standards. I will give you a few examples. These standards are supported by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the Association of Supervision of Curriculum Development, Council of Exceptional Children, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Parent Teacher Association, and others. All these groups have vetted these standards very specifically and thoroughly.

The purpose of the Common Core standards is to increase sustained quality nationally and to reduce variability of education nationally. That is very important in our mobile society today. In the college of education, we have many faculty members, including Dr. Lamberg, researching the effectiveness of Common Core. We found that Common Core standards show a progression of skills and help educators understand how to best support the development of these skills in students. We have also discovered, through our own research with Nevada students in northern Nevada, outcome evidence that these standards are helping students develop conceptual understanding of material well beyond memorization, and that the standards have shown that teachers who are trained in the standards showed significant achievement gains in their students.

Teruni Lamberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Elementary Mathematics Education, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno:

I have been a classroom teacher. When I was doing my post-doctorate in math education at Vanderbilt University, I spent three years traveling across the country and spent time in middle school classrooms. This is my fourteenth year working with teachers, my eleventh year in Nevada. I would like to share some of the work we have been doing around the standards.

What has really been great this last year is we got a statewide grant funded through the Department of Education to train teachers on the Common Core. Mathematicians, math educators from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Regional Professional Development Program, and district leaders all came together, sat around the table, and asked, "What is Common Core? Let us understand it." Do you know what we did? We went and researched behind the standards. You can look up

the math education research on how children learn. When we looked at that, we understood the progressions. We worked with 126 teachers from across the state. We were in Elko, Las Vegas, Silver Springs, and Reno. Teachers came to us from every single county. We all studied the standards together. I am happy to report that, after the teachers had spent an intensive summer studying, they came up in the following sessions trying some of the ideas out in the classrooms, and some remarked that they had been teaching for 20 years and the students are finally getting it. What we have been doing is figuring out how to work smarter, not harder. Going back to that question about how to do that math problem. Common Core does not prescribe that is the step-by-step way to do the problem. Part of it is to train students to come up with more efficient answers. You do not want to take 10 pages to solve a problem when there are more efficient ways to think about that. I wrote a whole book on that. The fact is, teachers are beginning to see results. These are the teachers who are actually trained. [Submitted support document (Exhibit T).]

Amy Weber-Salgo, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I have been a Nevada teacher since 1992. Four months ago, I left the Washoe County School District to go to work to ensure that our teachers across the nation have access to high quality materials. One of the things I have discovered in my new position is that not everything that is labeled Common Core is Common Core. [Read from written testimony (Exhibit U).]

Also, our teachers have been able to work on a national level to share materials and to make sense of the standards together. [Continued to read from written testimony (Exhibit U).]

If you look at the math problem that was presented earlier, I would hope that the next step in this classroom would be to talk about the efficiency of this strategy. What this student is doing is counting up all the way from 12 to 32. That is not the most efficient strategy, so we could talk about how to make strategies more efficient. I urge you to stay the course of the Common Core standards. I think it is making a difference for our students.

Chair Woodbury:
Is there anyone in Carson City who would like to testify as neutral?

Peggy Lear Bowen, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a former member of the Nevada State Board of Education. I was elected three terms, twelve years. I think there are some points that need to be brought to this discussion that no one has mentioned at this point. By law in the state of Nevada, you cannot test what you have not taught. If your graduation requirements do not include calculus, algebra, et cetera, then you

need them in your graduation requirements. Our students have been undereducated for a long time. It is by the cheap design. To quote a friend of mine, "Stack them deep and teach them cheap." If you have a bond issue to build and repair schools, make sure those schools include laboratories, language labs, choir rooms, and physical education rooms. Do not have a different description for classes, either college-bound or other-bound, and give one a higher quality mark. All classes taught by teachers in this state for our children should be world-class. They should not be, "Well, that is a home economics class," or, "That is an art class." We have careers that are based on the classes we are teaching, or we would not have taught them in the first place.

I taught at the boys school in Elko. We had students leave that school who could be master meat cutters or master landscapers. Teach to the quality. What you need here now is hands-on application. The standards all miss the boat because they do not include that. We do not have hands-on application because those are expensive classrooms. I do not care if you are teaching a kindergartner how to do the math. If you want to set it up and show the direction and the breakdown like that last problem did, that was easy to understand if you really want to discover what it was doing. Our students in our age did not know when their batteries were running low on their calculators because they did not know what the mathematic problem really consumed.

Chair Woodbury:
We will now take testimony in Las Vegas in support of A.B. 303.

Yvonne Sweeten, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:
There have been many good points in support of this bill. The biggest reason I see to vote for this bill is to improve the education in the state. We are number 50 some years, 49 other years. Since using Common Core, we have not risen at all. The purpose of Common Core, I believe, is for the Gates Foundation and President Obama to make money and to dumb down the education system, taking advantage of the parents and children.

Christina Leventis, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
Helen Keller said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight, but no vision." The Common Core State Standards Initiative has no vision. This initiative is so blinded by its complete and utter insistence that K-12 education's sole purpose is to pipeline children into a workforce for the twenty-first century that the fact that it is crippling the education of these same children is completely lost. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit V).]

Michael Brickman said that he takes issue with some of the things that were said here earlier. I take issue with Michael Brickman. He does not even live in this state. For him to speak about what goes on in our classrooms—shame on him. I have written an article (Exhibit W) that I have yet to publish called "Round Lessons for Square Learners." I was a square learner and was falling behind in seventh grade in math. My teacher could look in my eyes, unlike Michael Brickman, who cannot look in anyone's eyes in our state or in our classrooms. My teacher was able to work with me during my homeroom period and brought me up to speed. Common Core does not allow for that. No Child Left Behind did not allow for that either.

My daughter's sixth-grade teacher is in this room right now with me. She knew how much my daughter loved math. My daughter hates math now because it is Common Core. She had a geometry teacher in high school who did not know what to do with it. He was not allowed, contrary to what you have heard, to teach the way he wanted to teach because Common Core had a different dictate.

I urge you, please support this bill. Help us to restore some semblance of education to the state of Nevada.

Amy Bauck, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:
I am a parent of Nevada children. I will hit a few things from the earlier testimony. Some talked about responses received by the writers of the standards. I understand that they did solicit opinions. The first was done on the Internet in September 2009. They received 1,000 responses. If you look at the census from that year, that would mean that 0.0028 percent of parents—if only parents were asked—responded. It is about 0.14 percent of teachers, if you only ask teachers. They reached out again in March 2010 and received feedback from 10,000 people. That is 0.028 percent of parents here in the United States that would have responded and given their feedback on the standards.

From that point, I also want to point out that it is constantly said that these are just standards, but we are testing to those specific methods. It has been said time and time again that they have to teach those methods. The students have to understand those methods. Time, and time, and time again professionals have come out to say that students cannot critically think like that. You and I and every professional in this room learned the algorithms. I guarantee that if you sat down and talked to us, we would be able to critically think and draw boxes as to what 10 plus 10 is and why it is 10 plus 10. We do not just understand the algorithm.

I will say that I have chosen to homeschool my children because Common Core is the only thing the system allows. As a parent, I want my children to succeed. I did the research on standards and what I am teaching my students I can guarantee that the standards I have chosen, which are not Common Core, provide grit, tenacity, and rigor. Common Core does not.

Chair Woodbury:
We will hear three people in opposition in Las Vegas.

Carrie A. Buck, Principal, Pinecrest Academy, Henderson, Nevada
I am an educator and parent here to testify in opposition to A.B. 303. First, I will pass it over to Danny Klinger, a seventh-grader from Pinecrest Academy.

Danny Klingler, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I will be speaking in opposition to A.B. 303. From a child, my mother researched many schools in Las Vegas before determining to enroll me and my sisters into a local charter school. This school promotes college and career preparation. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit X).]

Chair Woodbury:
I am going to move to Elko for testimony.

Joe Armbruster, Private Citizen, Elko, Nevada:
I am a parent of two. I am a nurse in an operating room and am here to support A.B. 303. What a lot of people have talked about are the different standards for Common Core—whether they are good, or whether they are bad. Standards aside, one thing we need to talk about is the data mining of our children. I do not want our federal government to determine whether or not my daughter or my son can do what job and when. I do not want the government to decide their future. We should decide that. We should have our own standards within our own community. That has been the backbone of America—standards within our own community, within our own state. We do not need the federal government teaching us how to teach our own children, what to teach our children. My standards are not the standards of someone in Los Angeles or of someone in Chicago. We need to look at that.

Furthermore, when we talk about equal access and equal education for all students, we need to look at the spending. Why is one school district able to spend *x* number of dollars per student, whereas another school district could either spend twice that or half that? We need to equalize spending per student throughout the country. That is what will equalize our children and help raise our standards. We need to stop looking at trying to reinvent the wheel. We have built a great society on our old standards, our old ways of education.

We need to continue that. We need to promote those ways of education and make education relevant for our children. That is why my wife homeschools our two children, and why so many thousands of parents are homeschooling their children. Currently, the standards, whether old or Common Core standards, are not meeting those needs.

Chair Woodbury:
We will now go back to Las Vegas.

Andrew Krueger, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am in opposition to A.B. 303. Here at Pinecrest Academy of Nevada, I learn very well. The students are well educated every day. We are taught with quality of subject material. We learn math, reading, writing, science, social studies, Spanish, physical education, art, music, and technology with intent. We learn to show our work and explain how we get our answers. If we need help with a subject or with a specific problem, our teachers will help us understand it better. We review our subjects every week to progress our learning. We do work pages to record things and study subjects or to see our skill in the subject. Our school congratulates our accomplishments and learning. Our learning here at Pinecrest Academy of Nevada is so good for our future education.

Carrie Buck:
Let us take a stroll down memory lane. Now, some of you may have to go back further than others, but close your eyes for a moment and think back to math class. You were learning long division. Do you remember memorizing the procedure, or the algorithm for long division? [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit Y).]

Chair Woodbury:
In Las Vegas, I am going to take one more in opposition and one more in support.

Punam Mather, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I, like everyone in the room, am always grateful to participate in democracy, to sit here today to oppose A.B. 303. I have been a businessperson for 30 years, so I have some pretty significant perspective related to employers' needs and the workforce of the future. I have been a member of several committees to advance increasing and elevating standards and expectations for our children, so I have a perspective from working at the policy level in education in Nevada. I think the perspective I am going to choose to take is that of a parent. I am going to talk about one very specific experience I have had. Two years ago, I moved a 15-and-a-half-year old foster son, Devon, into my home. After his

freshman year, he had earned one credit and a grade point average of 0.9. The good news for us is that we had clarity about where we were starting. I think that is equivalent to where Nevada starts, in terms of our educational outcome—at the bottom. I did not know what do, so I thought we would put him into a Clark County School District online offering, rather than a campus. Boy, did we learn a lot. We went into a fully converted Common Core setting and it kicked both of our butts. I do not know how to say it more delicately. I was not equipped to manage and help him.

We had to get a tutor, as we required additional support. It was difficult to find resources that were ready to help him navigate. What I witnessed is that after a year of putting the requisite supports in place, he discovered what he was capable of. It was a deeper level of understanding, a deeper discovery for him in terms of the concepts, the capability, the application. I am very proud to tell you that Devon is on track to graduate on time at a high school in Clark County. He will be walking in June. That would not have happened.

The lessons for me going forward—we spend a lot of time on this topic, looking back 5 years, 10 years, with a whole bunch of opinions and perspectives. Here is what I know: we are where we are, at the bottom of every educational outcome. We need to aim high. It is the right thing to do. There is big work to do to prepare students, to prepare teachers, and to prepare and manage the expectations of families. As we implement testing to rise to the measure of performance at new standards, all of our children are going to look shorter. There is a lot of real work to do. My preference would be to see all of this positive attention focused to solve those things. To manage through the data security issues is a real issue.

Senator Scott Hammond, Senate District No. 18:
I sponsored Senate Bill 290. I respect a lot of those here in Carson City and in Las Vegas who are in opposition to the bill. There are a lot of smart people who are trying to make a difference in our community and in the state of Nevada. I have been looking at Common Core for the last two years, since we ended the last session in 2013. As a policymaker, I am a little bit ashamed that we did not look into Common Core when we were presented with it years ago. One of the criticisms I have of Common Core is that it limits local control of the educational system. Some people would say that it increases. One of the things that we keep seeing here as policymakers is people coming to us and saying that they would like to do this, or why do we not have more cursive writing or ethnic studies in school? I have to tell you that we cannot fit that in, even if you think there is a need at the local level because Common Core has a testing regimen that goes along with it. Teachers are tied to the test. They

want to make sure their students do well on the tests. As a policymaker, I am concerned about how this rolled out.

One of the things we heard earlier from the Fordham Institute is that they rated a lot of these standards. In the Interim Legislative Committee on Education, we had a meeting with Mr. Brickman. He came in and talked about the standards. The question I asked him was, "In looking at your matrix, you actually had the Massachusetts standards rated as higher, especially in the English language arts standards." He agreed. I said, "If you are promoting higher standards, then why did you not promote that? Why are we here? Why are you talking about just the Common Core State Standards?" I do not think he gave me a sufficient answer. I hope he talks to you individually and tells you why.

One of the other questions I had as a policymaker is we were told that the reason we entered into contract with Common Core, and later with Smarter Balanced for testing, is because the National Governors Association worked on this for a very long time. They took a vote to support the Common Core State Standards. I asked which governors voted, and how did they vote? That has never come to light. I understand where we are now. Going forward, we will likely keep the standards. We reevaluate the standards in two years and see what we need to change. If we change too much of the standards, then we might have the problem of being out of compliance with the rest of the consortium, meaning we may not be able to take the test that a majority of them will have unless we can convince them to change the test as well. We have a vote in the consortium. That is one of the major downsides of a system where everybody is together. The framers of the *U.S. Constitution* realized, even when we had only thirteen colonies, that it was going to be hard to have uniformity throughout the United States. It is almost impossible because we have so much diversity. I do not know if local control is something that I want to give up in order to have commonality throughout the nation on this one issue.

Assemblyman Munford:
Assemblyman Stewart and I are teachers from the old school. You are presently a certified teacher or a contracted teacher in Clark County. Many of you in this room are in the classroom still. Today, I listened to all the different ideas and different positions people took. I do not know if I am in the position to make a clear determination right now. I am looking at you and the teachers on this Committee—you can make that calculation because you are in the classrooms. You can tell us what is happening in the classroom now with the students. Are they performing? Are they achieving? Are they accomplishing anything? Are they successful at the stage we are with Common Core? We are not completely in it, are we?

Senator Hammond:
We are. We are teaching the Common Core State Standards as we speak. We will be testing on them. I think the testing started the day before yesterday or yesterday. We are in the middle of doing it. There are mixed results. You are going to hear teachers who say they love it, that they cannot believe they have never taught like this before, and that they should have had this a long time ago. I cannot change that reality. They say what they believe. Maybe Common Core has motivated them to be better. I have other colleagues who look at me and say that they cannot believe that other teachers are saying that because they have been teaching that way for years—asking deeper-level questions, trying to get the most out of their students. It depends on perspective.

I have a sister who is ten years from me in age. We grew up separately but are similar in temperament and nature. She is a kindergarten teacher. We have had several conversations about Common Core. I asked her what she thinks about it. She said she teaches through the standards, and her students excel. Some of my colleagues working in minority areas struggle with it. She said there are some things that need to change. That is one of the bigger criticisms that you hear—perhaps we all dove headfirst into a shallow pool at the same time. Another analogy I have heard from a lot of administrators and teachers is that we started building a plane after jumping out of one and being told to build another one. It is a serious criticism that a lot of people will say is true. The implementation has been botched since the beginning. Hopefully, it will get better. We had to find out about the standards and figure out how to teach to the standards. We had to take training on the standards. From what I remember, the standards are fairly simple. They say, "This is what you need to achieve," and then you go do that. I did not think that one day we would have to be trained on what standards mean, but that is what we are getting. Perhaps that is better because we just needed to kick it up a notch. My sister said that sometimes children do struggle. She was required to have them do story problems at the beginning of the school year when they could not even read.

Assemblyman Munford:
Do you think this is a silver bullet?

Senator Hammond:
No. The silver bullet is good teaching, good teachers in the classrooms.

Assemblyman Munford:
This is not the panacea for our problems, is it?

Senator Hammond:
We still do not know much about standards. There is a lot of research about what impact standards have on student achievement. Do they increase student achievement or not? It is a mixed bag. What we know does increase student achievement is good teaching. You put good teachers in classrooms, give them some standards, and you will get really good results. Teaching, training of the teachers, peer review—those will create the biggest impact, the silver bullet.

Assemblyman Munford:
I know that. I just wanted to ask you because you are still in the classroom. I started teaching probably before you were born. I first taught in 1966 in Clark County and left in 2005. I saw achievement without all these new programs and new ideas. The teacher was totally in charge. I did not ever have to look over my shoulder. I had to do my job. I was professionally trained, and I loved teaching. I was creative and innovative. I did it my way.

Senator Hammond:
You did. Several former students of yours are members of this Legislature.

Assemblyman Munford:
Many of my former students are here in this building right now.

Senator Hammond:
You have many teachers who do not like Common Core, and many who do. Assemblyman Edwards mentioned that he ran into them on the campaign trail. Recently, Nancy Atwell, a teacher who won a $1 million prize, went on a CNN morning program. She was asked what she recommended to young people who think about going into teaching. She said that some of the things that are happening, specifically naming the Common Core State Standards, cause her to see teachers more as technicians than practitioners. I hope that people see this. The criticisms may not be leveled just against Common Core. They might be about the teaching profession. There is definitely some criticism that needs to be addressed.

Assemblyman Jones:
Common Core really goes to the root of what our country is. It is a simple thing for me. Our country was founded on the premise that we were 50 republics, and that those republics, those individual states, can create ideas and ways of business that either work or do not work. Whenever the federal government gets involved, saying that one size fits all, that is where we run into problems. Right now, we do not get to keep our own doctors, and the price of medical care did not go down because of one-size-fits-all government policy. Common Core is not proven to work. We have the Massachusetts standard,

which was proven to work. Now that Massachusetts has adopted Common Core, their performance is falling. We have heard from educators that say that Common Core is great, yet we continue, as Assemblyman Edwards said, to bump along the bottom year after year after year. We need to go with philosophies, ideas, and standards that are proven to work, not an experiment on our children. Right now, Common Core is an experiment. It is not proven to work, and it is coming from the federal government down. I think that is completely wrong. It does not represent what we as Americans are, having created the greatest country in the world. It surely is not helping our children right now.

[All items submitted on NELIS but not discussed will become part of the record: (Exhibit Z), (Exhibit AA), (Exhibit BB), (Exhibit CC), and (Exhibit DD).]

Chair Woodbury:
I will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 303. [Meeting recessed at 6:18 p.m. and reconvened at 6:35 p.m.] We will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 341.

Assembly Bill 341: Mandates enhanced screening and intervention for children with certain disabilities. (BDR 34-832)

Assemblyman James Ohrenschall, Assembly District No. 12:
This issue is very important. As you see, the hearing room is full. We even have families in the overflow room and at the Grant Sawyer State Office Building. Assembly Bill 341 establishes an early literacy assessment process through which dyslexia is identified, and therapy, accommodations, and modifications are provided to dyslexic students in Nevada. Assembly Bill 341 also creates a process for school districts, charter schools, and the State Board of Education to report on the results of such an assessment.

Why is Assembly Bill 341 important? As one of the most common language-based learning disabilities, dyslexia affects as high as 20 percent of the population; however, only a small portion of people with dyslexia are ever diagnosed and given appropriate assistance. Too often, children in Nevada are left undiagnosed, facing early challenges that affect their entire educational career, often leading to frustration with school, possibly dropping out of school, and giving up on a lot of their potential. Dyslexia is not a reading disability but a language disability, meaning that it affects not only a person's ability to learn, write, and spell, but also increases difficulty in processing and concentrating. I believe we owe it to young Nevadans and the future of our state to use available resources to identify and accommodate this disorder as early in the educational process as possible.

I would like to go over the key provisions of Assembly Bill 341. I will begin with section 9 of the bill, which really gets to the heart of the legislation. Section 9 requires the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a charter school to administer an early literacy screening assessment to determine whether a student has indicators of dyslexia and needs intervention. The required assessment must be administered at the beginning of the year for students in kindergarten through second grade, or whenever a student transfers from out of state, or for students in third grade or higher when a teacher determines that the student has difficulty with skills such as alphabet knowledge, decoding, encoding, phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid naming, and sound-symbol recognition. If an early literacy screening assessment finds a student has indicators for dyslexia under A.B. 341, the board of trustees of that school district or the governing body of that charter school must provide notice to the parent or guardian and address the student's needs through the response-to-intervention system of instruction. If it is determined additional screening is necessary, the student must receive additional testing by a trained professional. A comprehensive dyslexia evaluation must be performed, and the parent or guardian may have an independent evaluation performed as well if they choose to. If the evaluation determines the student has dyslexia, the school district or charter school must provide dyslexia therapy and necessary accommodations and modifications as required by federal law.

Section 10 of Assembly Bill 341 requires notification of a parent or guardian of a student who undergoes a dyslexia evaluation, including results of the evaluation and educational information about the learning disorder. Section 11 outlines the instructional approaches that must be used in dyslexia therapy provided by school district or charter school. Section 12 requires the Department of Education to designate a full-time employee as a dyslexia specialist. The board of trustees of each of our state school districts must employ at least one dyslexia interventionist. Section 13 requires school districts and charter schools to provide professional development regarding dyslexia for teachers and other educational personnel. Section 14 requires the Department of Education to develop a dyslexia resource guide to help schools identify and provide dyslexia therapy. Section 16 requires minimum standards prescribed by the State Board of Education for students with dyslexia to include certain instruction. Finally, returning to the beginning of the bill, the first few sections require the board of trustees of each school district and the governing body of each charter school to include the results of the newly required early literacy screening assessment in their annual report of accountability. That concludes my comments.

I have with me today Karen Cavallaro, who is a parent, advocate, and a dyslexia tutor and instructor. I also have Elizabeth Gray, who is an educator and works with students with dyslexia here in Nevada. Before I turn it over for their testimony, we have a brief video we wanted to play for the Committee. I would be happy to answer any questions. [Played video (Exhibit EE).]

Karen Cavallaro, Consultant, Decoding Dyslexia-Nevada:
Most people are aware that autism affects approximately 1 in 80 children in this country. Most people are completely unaware that dyslexia affects one in five people. I stand before you today as a dyslexia consultant, advocate, tutor, and most importantly, mom. Two of my children and my husband are among the one in five people. You probably also do not know that reading ability is not tied to intelligence. Dyslexia is not a vision problem. Dyslexia affects all aspects of a student's core subjects. Eighty percent of special education students are dyslexic. Dyslexia is a federally recognized and funded disability, yet the majority of students continue to go undiagnosed and never receive services. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit FF).]

This is a pay now or pay later situation. For the last 31 years, Nevada has chosen the pay later scenario, which is directly responsible for some of the poor outcomes we are seeing in this state.

Elizabeth Gray, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada:
I have my master's degree in education from the University of Nevada, Reno. This is my twenty-eighth year of teaching in Nevada. The last seven years I have served as the reading specialist at a K-6 elementary school. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit GG).]

From your *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 391.008, paraprofessionals as defined in our statutes, and teacher's aides are fully capable of tutoring students. [Returned to reading from (Exhibit GG).]

Assemblyman Stewart:
I am uneducated about dyslexia. I notice in the bill that testing would be at kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Elizabeth Gray:
I do not believe that testing in second grade is necessary. That could actually be amended. In other states, kindergarten is the place where they start observing some of the characteristics of dyslexia. Kindergarten teachers are expert at checking for phonemic learners. It is actually part of our required testing already in our district. First grade is when I would say that screening for all students needs to be done, with additional testing for those we are

concerned about. By the second grade, we really have identified probably 95 percent of our dyslexic students.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Do they just need to be identified in one test—not kindergarten, first, and second grades? In my opinion, the bill is not clear on that.

Elizabeth Gray:
It is just one test.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Once dyslexia is diagnosed, are new teaching methods begun? Does the student immediately begin to make progress?

Elizabeth Gray:
I would say no. It is not immediate. These children have language processing issues. Dyslexia stems from the language section of the brain. It takes such students longer to process. On average, three to four years of tutoring two hours a week would be required.

Assemblyman Stewart:
After that, are the students able to progress with their peers?

Elizabeth Gray:
Most of them eventually do get to grade level. There is a spectrum—from mild to moderate to severe to profound dyslexia, like any spectrum. Sometimes I miss the mild students when I am identifying them right away. Sometimes they do not pop up until third or fourth grade. Often it is through spelling assessments that we see that. Even dyslexics who learn to read fairly well might hide from me because their reading is at grade level. They even pass tests, but their spelling is almost always an issue, even into adulthood. The majority of dyslexic students can be brought up to grade level.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Is it easy to identify these students? Can we train people readily?

Elizabeth Gray:
We absolutely can.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Can the aides be trained to do that?

Elizabeth Gray:
Yes. We have reading specialists in most of our Nevada elementary schools. Reading specialists would be able to supervise the paraprofessionals that are hired. Of course this is going to have a fiscal impact. I do not believe it will be a severe one on the districts if we simply reallocate money. On our staff we have four recess aides who copy papers for teachers and things like that. What if we just reallocated those positions, utilizing them in different ways? There are a lot of creative ways we could meet the needs of the students, which is what I want. I want manpower right at the school level without causing a huge fiscal impact on our districts.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I appreciate section 9, talking about the response-to-intervention (RTI) provisions. My hope would be that should we identify students who are having problems, we could get them the support they need before they have to get qualified for special education services. Where are dyslexic children falling now? The RTI process already exists at different levels. Might it be an issue of semantics?

Elizabeth Gray:
No, not at all.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I know that the learning disability category can sometimes be a very broad term. Maybe it is not focusing as directly on what the specific issues are and which services are needed. Would you help me understand how you would parse out the difference between just the general learning disability and dyslexia? That is what I am trying to understand.

Elizabeth Gray:
Dyslexia is listed under specific learning disability in our NRS and in other bills. Only 10 percent of dyslexics ever get referred for testing in special education. Only about 10 percent of those students ever qualify. Eighty percent of the children in special education under specific learning disability are there because of dyslexia, but most of our children never get tested and never get service. You ask where they are—they are falling between the cracks. We are not allowed to even address the idea of dyslexia. It is a hidden disability. Even though I am trained to screen for dyslexia, I bet I have a 90 percent or higher success rate with just my observations and experience, I am not allowed to use that knowledge because of the school district.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
We took testimony during the interim about how busy our school counselors and psychologists are. They spend an inordinate amount of time doing evaluations and reevaluations because there is such a great need. Part of the problem we face is a resource issue—getting the correct personnel—making sure that we get enough psychologists, counselors, and social workers to help us solve some of these problems, hopefully even in the RTI phase. The Legislature bears some of that burden. We need to provide some of those resources so that we are able to identify more children's specific issues.

Elizabeth Gray:
By identifying students as dyslexic, I do not necessarily want them in special education. We could eliminate a lot of students going in that direction. Right now, we still operate on the "wait to fail" model, where there has to be a two-year discrepancy between their ability and their performance. I know we have tried to do away with that, but it is still in practice within the schools. I want to get to dyslexic students early so that they learn in the appropriate manner that applies to their disability. I do not want them under the special education umbrella if I can help it. I would like them to have accommodations on the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. I prefer that to their going under the special education umbrella. Fiscally, this is a very responsible bill, eventually leading to a lot of savings as dyslexic students are not put under special education.

Assemblyman Ohrenschall:
I have had parents of small children in Washoe County and Clark County contact me about this bill, telling me they are worried that their child is dyslexic, have contacted the school, and the school has told them there is nothing they can do and they are not going to provide the testing. The parents who have contacted me have the resources to go out and find a child psychologist or a neuropsychologist and have tests performed on their own. But many of our constituents do not have the means to do that. That is why I think it is important that A.B. 341 is seriously considered.

Karen Cavallaro:
In the RTI process, none of the reading programs are targeted to dyslexics. That is why dyslexic students stay in RTIs way too long, never getting identified there, either. I know that RTI is part of the process, but it could be totally done away with by doing the screening. Those students would not need to be in RTI because we know what the issue is. Dyslexia has been around for a very long time. We know exactly what their brain structure is. The brain structure is different—they are using a different part of their brain to process language.

That is why they have trouble with phonemic awareness and manipulating the sounds in language. Dyslexia is not tied to intelligence. These students are very intelligent. I believe that a lot of the failure of schools to recognize what is going on is lack of training and lack of wanting to address the issue, because most districts do not want more children in special education. We are here to tell you that these students do not need to be in special education. We do not want them there. They do not get the services or help they need there, either.

Assemblyman Gardner:
What kind of control do parents have? I am dyslexic, my brother is more profoundly dyslexic. My mom also was dyslexic, so she made the diagnosis very early for us, meaning we could do things. How much input will the parents have if their child is diagnosed? I was able to go to my regular classes, while my brother had to have more tutoring.

Elizabeth Gray:
The parents that I counsel are usually extremely supportive that finally their child is getting what is needed to learn appropriately. I have never had parents say they did not want the services I offered them. I cannot offer enough to all the students that need services. I am sure you are not the only one in the room with dyslexia. If the percentage is one in five and we have about 20 people sitting on the Committee, there may be two or three others who are dyslexic. I try to encourage parents at every level. Often, though, a dyslexic parent is not the one best-suited to tutoring the child. Sometimes it is best to have tutoring come through someone who is not dyslexic.

Assemblyman Edwards:
If you have 450,000 students in the Nevada school system, that would equal about 90,000 students with different levels of dyslexia. How long does the test take to do the diagnosis? How much funding do we need in order to solve the problem?

Elizabeth Gray:
At my school, I start looking at an early age—I am watching my kindergartners right now. I have my eye on 12 to 16 of them. Right now, it is just observation—looking at their phonemic awareness through testing that already exists in our districts and, I am assuming, in most districts. We already have those students we are watching. In first grade, we can do some easy tests. There are even tests that are free online. If we want to test their fluency, we can use a free Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The only test I use that is a norm-referenced test is one called the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP). That one takes several hours.

Karen Cavallaro:
I think the CTOPP takes about 40 minutes.

Elizabeth Gray:
That could be done on the ones that we have put through the process of screening, maybe 10 or 20 percent of the students will need that type of testing. I would say that 95 percent of the time a child struggling with reading is dyslexic. There are very few other reasons for such a struggle. A student could be autistic, which would result in a reading problem. Students under the special education umbrella are already going to have their issues. Once in a great while, I have children who can read anything but do not have a clue what they are reading. Almost every child who is referred to me for a reading disability is dyslexic.

Karen Cavallaro:
One thing I would like to say is this explicit Simultaneous Multisensory Teaching program that we are talking about is a method that has been around forever. It benefits all students. In 2000, the National Reading Panel went through and figured out the best way to teach reading to all students, and this is it. What we are providing is not just specific to dyslexics; it can help anyone.

Chair Woodbury:
How many students would you expect to be identified in any given screening? How many out of 10 or 100?

Elizabeth Gray:
I would say between 10 and 20 out of 100, but probably not all of those will fall on that severe to profound level on the spectrum. Ten to fifteen would need intervention.

Assemblywoman Diaz:
Being a public school educator, I have felt the frustration of not being given the tools to recognize what disabilities my students might have. We just saw lack of progress, and tried as much as we could. I concur with you that schools say that students are not dyslexic; we do not train our teachers to identify dyslexia or how to intervene. Will it require a lot more manpower to implement this? We already do RTI for struggling students at many schools. I know there needs to be training in order for teachers to recognize dyslexia and then to take the next step to help their students. We do not want our students to fall further behind. What does an intervention model look like? Once you identify that a particular child has dyslexia, is there 90 minutes of intervention every day or week? Would you give me a frame of reference regarding where there is additional manpower and expertise that is needed? Could you give me

statistics? Does this affect all children, regardless of cultural background? In the video, I did not see many ethnicities represented.

Elizabeth Gray:
Dyslexia is across the world. It is international. It does not matter if your culture has an alphabetic system or a pictorial system like Japan or China. Culturally, it does not matter. Approximately 15 percent of the population in every country around the world is dyslexic. At my school, we use the instructional consultation (IC) model RTI that has been adopted by Nevada. Often, they look at microskills. They think if they provide 15 minutes of tutoring every day to a child, he will get up to grade level. I see reading as a much more global picture. As a result, I am little uncomfortable with the RTI model. With dyslexia, the child needs to use many senses. We use colored tiles when we are working with phonemic awareness long before we even get to letters. Students manipulate, segment sounds, and practice breaking apart words through auditory. They practice replacing sounds and deleting sounds. We work a lot with that type of auditory work. Often a dyslexic will have a problem with rapid naming. They know a lot about tornadoes, for example, but cannot come up with the word. They have retrieval issues. Some of my students have a visual memory, some do not. Everyone is different. After we have gone through very systematic work with phonemic awareness, we go into teaching the letter sounds.

One problem in our schools is we often teach phonics, which does not help children with dyslexia, because that is not how they read. They read by sight. They take a picture of every word and file all the pictures in their mind. By third or fourth grade, when 70 percent of the text is multisyllable words, they have no strategy so they really start to fall down. When we can identify dyslexia early, we can work through the phonemic awareness and phonics issues. Students can learn simple three-letter words and consonant-vowel-consonant patterns. We continue, and it is very systemic, building skill upon skill. We use all of our modalities as we are learning.

Assemblywoman Diaz:
How much expertise is needed to implement the plan?

Elizabeth Gray:
We do not need any more psychologists to do this. It is very easy to screen. It is something that the reading specialist is able to do. I do not believe that we need any additional licensed personnel to manage this. I believe that with paraprofessionals—one teacher's aide per 200 students—I would be able to service all the students that I need to.

Assemblywoman Shelton:
According to the bill, is it just two people that we are adding to school personnel—the specialist and the interventionist?

Elizabeth Gray:
Currently, there is a specialist at every school, so that position does not need to be added. I would need a paraprofessional at my school. I would probably use two six-hour paraprofessionals for the school year. I do not know what that would amount to fiscally, but I am estimating $12,000 apiece. I think I could manage with that.

Assemblywoman Shelton:
I looked at the fiscal note. One says there is a large fiscal impact, the other says there would not be one. That sounds like a lot of people who would need to be hired.

Elizabeth Gray:
I think we have the personnel onsite; we are just using them in different ways.

Assemblywoman Shelton:
You would want to change their titles?

Elizabeth Gray:
Exactly. I think so.

Cheryl Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
We are happy to be here today in support of A.B. 341. Present with me are my son, Ryan, and Ryan's dad, Mark. Mark and I have prepared testimony together because it would be similar. Ryan has prepared his own. I will let him go first.

Ryan Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am here today to talk to you about dyslexia. I was independently diagnosed with dyslexia in 2010, and up until this year, I have struggled with reading and writing. I have spent countless hours being tutored in the Barton reading and spelling system. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit HH).]

Cheryl Misuraca:
We appear before this Committee today in support of A.B. 341 as parent advocates for children in Nevada's education system who have dyslexia.

Our son, Ryan, was born in October 1999. At his birth, we discussed the importance of education and wanted him to have every opportunity to be successful. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit II).]

Jessica L. Salts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
In 1984, the *Study of Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Disabilities* was conducted by a state-sponsored committee (Exhibit JJ). The committee essentially recommended everything this bill entails. The committee requested reading remediation for dyslexics by people who have been appropriately trained. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit KK).]

Spencer Flanders, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada:
I am 16 years old and a junior at Douglas High School. I look at myself as a typical Nevada teenager because I am, until I go to school. The reason I say this is because I have a learning disability. [Read from prepared testimony (Exhibit LL).]

Marla Flanders, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada:
It is very hard to speak after hearing that story, so please excuse me. What I would like to add is the piece that goes back to what children with dyslexia have to add to our society as a whole. Spencer is the 2014 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids western region youth advocate of the year, also serving on the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) youth advisory board for the state of Nevada. He was named one of the top 30 citizens of the year by the *Reno Gazette-Journal* and has received a proclamation from Douglas County commissioners for his work in tobacco control. He is the 2014 Sertoma Service to Mankind recipient. He is a featured volunteer for the American Heart Association, and spent the day lobbying here yesterday. His favorite title is "big brother" to dyslexic third-grader, Logan. He is also the president of Students Taking on Prevention (STOP) through the Partnership of Community Resources. Over the summer, he formed his own Nevada statewide coalition to take on "big tobacco."

This has been an 11-year battle, as he said. I was told by the principal when Spencer was in second grade that he would never graduate from high school. As angry as that made me, and as uphill the battle I have fought, we still are not on track for him to graduate. Spencer cannot pass his proficiency in writing. He has taken it two times. We are waiting for the results. We were not fortunate enough to get dyslexic training from the beginning. He was put in special education and ignored. He just smiled. Even though I worked in classroom after classroom, even though I was an active team member, even though I was in the middle of the individualized education program (IEP) meetings, I did not know what to look for. I am not an educator. I did not know what questions I was supposed to ask. No one is allowed to use the word dyslexia, I have learned. I have an eight-year old. We are on the same course. He is extremely articulate, bright, and involved in everything. We are again struggling with reading, comprehension, and spelling. It does not make

sense. There has to be someone or something that can help. I beg for help on behalf of all the children. I am tired of seeing the children sitting in the back of the class, just being promoted from grade to grade, when there is obviously something that can make a difference for them. Spencer is a very intelligent person. There is no reason why he cannot graduate. He just needed the training.

Penny Ramos Bennett, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I applaud Nevada for being ahead of the curve in 1984 when it convened the *Study of Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Disabilities.* At that time, I had just entered college to study psychology. Now, I am a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), a business owner, a mother of three, and a person with dyscalculia, which is also known as math dyslexia. While I applaud the 1984 study, I am saddened that generations of students and teachers have gone through the Nevada education system having been affected by the shelved study, yet today I remain hopeful as we discuss this. The Assembly Committee on Education has the opportunity to recognize that something must be done, something for all those faces that you have seen and all the unknown faces that you have not. I encourage you, please pass this out of committee. I am here as an advocate for equal and balanced learning for students with learning disabilities or, as we refer to them in my home, learning challenges. My son, Aaron, is dyslexic.

Nevada students face an environment that is less than accommodating at times due only to the lack of educational training, testing, and recognized learning strategies for this disorder. Aaron was lucky. He was diagnosed with dyslexia at a very young age. A private school teacher named Ms. Rosie Bushbaum discovered that Aaron learned differently and alerted us. I will be forever grateful to her. She changed his path forever. If we had waited to test him to receive a diagnosis, he would not have learned to read at an earlier age, nor would he be achieving academically today. He was given an IQ test by a local school district and did well, but he could not read well at the time since IQ testing does not indicate dyslexia. No help was offered to us. Prior to Aaron receiving intervention, he memorized his small readers in school so that others would not catch on that he could not read. It got to a point where he could not memorize any more. His peers were reading more advanced texts, and he was being left behind. At substantial cost, my husband and I paid for private testing, hoping to find a solution. Aaron was then diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia. We began to work privately to obtain help, and our early intervention aided Aaron. He is an example that early intervention does make a difference. He has a 504 and did not receive special education because of early intervention.

While there is no cure for dyslexia, dyslexics can learn differently. While Aaron is successful in school according to general population descriptions of success, A's and B's, he currently takes longer to complete his work and still uses tools along the way to help him with his writing. While most teachers are good and want to help, we have discovered throughout his years in public school that there are educators who do not and will not recognize the learning difficulties that he has. They do not have the means because they were not educated in this area.

I do advocate for this because it levels the playing field and helps our students. The Nevada system of education denies our teachers education in how to support the dyslexic student, not to mention identifying dyslexia to request testing. This in turn creates teachers who recognize spelling problems, grammar issues, and difficulty in reading and writing as laziness or worse. Nevada's dyslexic English language learners will also have significant difficulty in learning language acquisition. We must test.

Nevada's children want to graduate, to achieve their dreams, to support themselves and our great state. Dyslexics are legislators, as you know. They are chief executive officers, surgeons, and writers, yet they have the story of anguish and difficulty in school. Some of those stories have led to dropping out of school. Within many success stories, you find a family, a friend, or a teacher who went to extraordinary means to aid a dyslexic child. Not everyone can afford those extraordinary means or knows how to help their child. Every year we wait, another child drops out of school, loses faith in his or her abilities and in education. We, as a state, can do something about this. We must do something about this. Do not let another 31 years go by in Nevada without recognizing a better outcome for dyslexic students. We will see a boost in our graduation rate, which will be the outcome of the appropriate identification of dyslexia. School district training and student interventions will make a difference. I call on you to make this difference for our children and children like my son, Aaron. He is driven to prove dyslexics are smart and can do anything. He is a dyslexic champion, and I could not be prouder of him.

Jessica Salts:
Could I address one of Assemblywoman Diaz's concerns about the lack of minorities in the video? I put the video together. We have about 350 followers on Facebook so far. This was the result of my soliciting on Facebook. To further answer your question, we have a bilingual flyer that we are trying to get out. We know that the people who would read it are probably going to be migrants who are not bilingual. There are also trust issues—getting the trust of that community. Basically, what it boils down to is this is strictly from

followers on Facebook. Those who felt like sending in submissions did. We are coming up with a game plan to reach out to other minorities.

Assemblywoman Diaz:
Unfortunately, some of our migrant communities' educational attainment is not very high. I think that when the teachers are telling them that their children are struggling, they do not understand that concept. They do not think about learning disabilities, a need for testing, a private tutor. They do not have the means to do those things. That is why it is even more important that our public education system steps up to make sure that all of our students are properly identified.

Jessica Salts:
I agree. I moved here from the Rio Grande Valley. I continued my advocacy work here. What I found down there with the migrant community is the response that this is who my child is and who he or she will be, and there really is not a lot I can do about that. In addition, there was a lack of willingness to challenge people who are educated, saying, "No, you need to take care of my child." They are coming from backgrounds where that is not acceptable. We are trying to get into the Hispanic community. Our flyer is essentially done, but I sent it to a friend of mine in Monterey, Mexico. There were language issues that we are getting straightened out.

Chair Woodbury:
I am going to call up anyone who is in support of Assembly Bill 341.

Susan Lacey, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada:
I am a special education teacher in Douglas County. I teach little guys with big disabilities. I am also a member of the Nevada State Education Association. I am in support of A.B. 341, but I am also going to ask you to support a friendly amendment, which will raise the developmental age for children to be identified to continue services in special education from six, which is what it is now, to nine, which is federally allowed (Exhibit MM).

Currently, children who struggle with one or more areas can qualify for special education services at age three; however, once they turn six, they have to qualify under a specific category to continue those services. Right now, they are considered developmentally-delayed. What happens in the real setting is these children get services, turn six in kindergarten or early first grade, and must exit the program because there is not enough discrepancy between their IQ and what their ability levels are because they are so young. By the time they are eight or nine years old, red flags are up, and they return to special education. By that point, they are so far behind that they do not catch up,

becoming what we call "lifers." In Massachusetts, for example, they have a developmentally-delayed age of nine. What I have heard from people who have worked in Massachusetts is that once their children get the support that they need at age nine, having to requalify for special education, they no longer qualify and never do again.

If you are going to try to have students reading by third grade according to Common Core standards, you need to give extra support services to those little guys while they are still in that developmental setting. I cannot see a cost to this because, as a special education teacher, my caseload is going to be a little bit bigger when the students are in the primary grades. Right now, our fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade caseloads are gigantic. If we can keep giving them that support, those would decrease. I urge you to support A.B. 341 and to support the friendly amendment to raise the developmental delay designation to age nine. Twenty-five states have it as eight or nine. It is the right thing to do for Nevada children.

Chair Woodbury:
If the age were raised, that would not preclude them from being exited if they showed great progress, or they could continue with an IEP but have full inclusion until it was for sure.

Susan Lacey:
Most of the students are fully included now. If they do not need special education services earlier than age nine, you say, "Good job" and they can exit special education.

Connie Forstrom, M.S., Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada:
I am a speech-language pathologist. I have 19 years of experience. I have worked with children from birth to age twenty-one. I have worked in settings for Nevada Early Intervention Services, early childhood, elementary school, middle school, and high school. I am definitely in support of A.B. 341, but also the friendly amendment for raising the developmentally-delayed category age. There are 25 states that have this category raised through age nine. That is what the federal law allows and has since 1975, and again in 2004, when it was amended and added on for clarification. Some of the states did consider the question, "Would it cost a lot more money to do this?" A lot of our children are developmentally delayed. In Nevada, they are served through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). We have them from birth to age three. They often transition to the public schools at the age of three, fit the category of developmentally delayed under Part B, and go through age five. Sixty-six percent of those children who have the developmental delays are identified as being speech- and language-impaired. The language

impairment does not go away. For every single year under the age of five that they are identified and receive intervention, there is exponential benefit to them. Once they pass the age of six, the developmental rate becomes much slower and their intervention takes years. For every year of delay, it takes years of intervention. It is possible that they will never close the gap.

There are two testing specialists in the school system: the school psychologist and the speech language pathologist. Both of us have to work under the auspices of using the standardized norm test. Standardized norm tests are wonderful, a great assessment tool, but they are based on developmental norms for children. When you look at what a five-year-old or a five-and-a-half-year-old needs to do, the expectation in speech and language and reading and writing is so minimal that it is difficult for them to ever qualify. Basically, if they have a heartbeat, smile, are socially appropriate, and can hold a pencil they will meet those norms. They are released. Within the next two years, because they are not developmentally appropriate, they will fall. Brain research shows that the critical age for development is birth to age eight. This is why we are supporting that the category would be there for them.

Janet Whitemore, Director, Literacy Volunteers for Children; and Carson City Literacy Volunteers, Carson City, Nevada:

We are talking about dyslexia as if it were a bad thing. It is a wonderful thing to be dyslexic, as I am. Dyslexics are more creative and intuitive, they think outside the box. They can see the big picture. They make great engineers and architects. The National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) looks for dyslexics to be astronauts because they can be so much more creative. Their minds work faster than other people's minds. The sooner we catch it, the sooner it can be helped. It is just like a muscle in your body being developed.

People with dyslexia know they are different from a very young age. Little kindergartners know that they are not up to snuff with the rest of the class, so their self-esteem starts going down. They start becoming either the really quiet ones who are invisible, or they start becoming the class clowns who misbehave. They would much rather be bad than dumb. They know they cannot read. They do not understand why everyone else can read and they cannot. My earliest memory is sitting on mother's lap as she tried to teach me phonics. I was crying because I did not understand why this letter "e" sounded so different in all these different words. I did not get it. The sooner we catch these children, the more they will be developed and the less time it will take them to catch up because they are not so far behind. They do not have all these difficulties ingrained in their heads—what is the difference between "b" and "d"? They learn it at an early age and will not have the problems later on.

Our prisons are filled with people who cannot read. They are there because their self-esteem is so low. Their only out was to misbehave. If we catch them early, their self-esteem is going to be higher, and they will be more productive. Students drop out of high school because they know they cannot pass the proficiency tests because they cannot read. Help them in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, and they will succeed. I think it will be much more cost-effective to help them when they are young than to incarcerate them.

Daniela R. Corral, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I go to Archie Clayton Middle School. I think it is really important for us to catch dyslexia early. I have experienced this. When I was in first grade, the teacher would say, "It is just a simple word. Why can you not read it? It is just two vowels—just put them together." My brain could not match the sounds. My mom starting working hard. She put me through all these programs that said they would help me read. We tried everything. When I got to third grade, my mom said, "There is something wrong. It was not that you are not trying hard enough, because clearly you are." We found that I had dyslexia. Once I got help, I started excelling in my reading. My scores, instead of dropping, started going up. Even though it probably was not all that, it was me just being able to understand. The help I was getting and understanding that it was not just me not being able to learn or not trying hard enough—it was that extra push. I am in the Susan Barton program, and it has really been helping me. Now, in the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test scores I am a year above my reading level.

Chair Woodbury:
Daniela, what grade did you say you are in?

Daniela R. Corral:
I am in seventh grade.

Chair Woodbury:
You are a very articulate young lady. You are very good at speaking in front of others.

Daniela R. Corral:
We have representatives at our school. I represent our team.

Jonathan Denwood, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:
I am a business owner. I suffer from dyslexia. I do not like to use the word "suffer." It is not appropriate. I know this has been a very long day for all of you. You have listened to a lot of speeches, so I am going to put this in a really business-like direct way. I would imagine that most of you have been in

business or are business owners. Putting a dyslexic child into special education is a total waste of money. If you do not do anything, what will happen is, because dyslexia is becoming more well-known, you are going to have an increasing number of children placed in special education, which is going to cost you an enormous amount of money. It is going to be a total waste of money because they are not going to be taught anything. Not only is it going to be a terrible emotional disaster for the child, it will be a financial disaster for the state. I would highly recommend that you consider this bill and help to get it passed. It will save the state an enormous amount of money. Hopefully, I have explained the situation pretty clearly to the Committee.

Jonathan Dahl, Private Citizen, Elko County, Nevada:
I am a cattle rancher. I was diagnosed with dyslexia when I was in third grade. I would like to say I was born with it because I think it is a blessing. I struggled from kindergarten. I never colored in the lines because I could not tell where the lines were. The amazing thing is that when I found out I had dyslexia, my parents and my schoolteachers throughout my entire life discussed how I learned and they were able to teach me in a different way. I was not slower than any of the other students, and I was able to learn with them as well. That is what is so amazing about dyslexia. We were talking about the astronauts and other professionals with dyslexia. The person who diagnosed me was Dr. Manilla, who has a thing called Penny Power. It is two pennies. You raise it up until you see three pennies, and you count them ten times, in sets of ten. He helped me tremendously. What is amazing about it is everybody suffers from it. I am pretty sure there are a lot more people who have it in this room than most. I very much encourage you to support this bill. I think it is a great encouragement for the youth and for the future generation and leaders of this country and the state of Nevada.

Bethel Jeanne Baglin, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:
I am in support of this bill for a huge reason—my youngest daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia. It was a journey for the last four years. Another thing is that I am becoming an educator, I am getting my degree in education. I am passionate about it. I notice a very strong underlying theme for parents and educators. There is a stalling process. My daughter got what is called a response to intervention, but because there is not something specifically for this disability, she got the same reading program, just more of it. She was already doing a problem that she could not do, and it was just getting shoved in her face more. Her self-esteem plummeted. In second grade, my child was plagued with migraine headaches and vomiting in the morning to get out of going to school. We had her tested with a neuropsychologist to get an independent evaluation. She had an individualized education program (IEP) at the time.

Our district has a district-wide blanket reading program. I was concerned about it because she was doing the same thing over and over, and it was making it worse, not better. They told us to stick with it and trust them. We did that for a year before getting a neuropsychologist involved. She was diagnosed with phonological dyslexia. On paper, because Nevada does not really recognize dyslexia, it had to be listed as a specific learning disorder in reading and written language. It still is not classifying her with dyslexia so that she can still qualify for services at school. Because of the reading program and the time slots available, she could not be placed in a lower-ability time slot without missing her regular fourth-grade-level work. She could not be in the reading group of fourth and fifth because she is at a first-grade reading level. We were fortunate enough that the district and our school purchased the Barton Reading System and is doing one-on-one tutoring every day during that reading block. Her growth has improved immensely. She is now around a third-grade reading level. [Submitted written testimony (Exhibit NN).]

Leticia Corral, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am the mother of that child who was up here. I am sorry, but I get very emotional when I hear her speak. Until she was in second or third grade, all she wrote about was bacon because bacon was one of the only words she knew how to spell. She always talked about how much she loved the bacon pig or the bacon pig flew. We had been struggling with her since she was in kindergarten. When you listen to her, you know that is not who she is, that she is so much more intelligent than that. When I hear all these other stories, it is like I am hearing my own. Now I have my five-year-old daughter, who is dyslexic as well. She is almost at the end of the school year and still does not recognize the letters of the alphabet. Not only do I support this bill, I encourage you to do the same.

One of the things I thought was important for me to come up here to say is that I heard Assemblywoman Diaz ask about other ethnicities. Since I started struggling with Daniela, the first thing they told me was it was because she was an English as a second language (ESL) student. If you listen to her, she barely speaks Spanish, yet the focus was that she was an ESL student and that is why she was behind. It was not until the end of third grade when they finally decided to look at other options, but even those options did not get her the help she needed. There are a lot of students out there, whether they speak Spanish or any other language, that instead of looking at dyslexia as a possibility, they say it is a language barrier because the parents do not speak English. There are so many misconceptions out there. I think these students are even further behind than others because they have no voice because no one is listening. To this day, Daniela still has to get tested for ESL. Every year I fight it. Every year she has to go and get tested. Every year I get a letter that she

should be put on ESL. That needs to change as well if you want to make sure that we catch all the children at an early age.

Jan Bennett, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a dyslexia tutor. I wrote a prepared speech, but everything in my speech has been said. Right now, I have seven children. I tutor before and after school because I do not have homeschooled students. If I try really hard, I could squeeze one or two more children into my schedule, but that is all because I refuse to tutor past 7:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m. If I had nine children and have them each for three years, that is nine children out of the hundreds or thousands who have dyslexia. That is why we really need this bill.

Gwen Niccoli, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada:
I am the mother of two dyslexic children. I said I was not going to speak tonight, but this has all been extremely emotional. I could sit here and tell you many stories of heartaches and frustrations over the last 10 years, but I will not go there. When a child enters school, the main focus is learning to read. By third grade, students are reading to learn. Change is needed. It is too much to make up. By the time students hit third grade, they are hitting a wall. It is so difficult. Now they are reading to learn and learning to read. It is too much. It is not fair. This bill is very important to the future education of our children. I beg you, as a parent of two children who are dyslexic. I have watched my children for the last 10 years through many tears. Please vote on this bill. The key is early intervention and early detection.

Chair Woodbury:
Is there anyone in Las Vegas who would like to testify in support? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in either location who would like to testify in opposition?

Craig M. Stevens, Director, Intergovernmental Relations, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:
I would like to thank this Committee and Assemblyman Ohrenschall for bringing forward this bill. The testimony has been very enlightening. I also want to thank the parents and the students here tonight. You are amazing advocates. As a parent of two young children, I want to thank you for fighting for your children and all of the students of Nevada, but we do oppose this bill.

The Committee needs to know that dyslexia is a huge concern of ours. Diagnosing and treating all disorders is a priority. We have an achievement plan motto: Every child, every classroom, every community member. No matter what barriers exist, that is our motto. We oppose this well-meaning bill because of the unfunded mandate within it. As a general rule, we oppose any bill which

puts additional costs on our school district that does not also provide the funding that needs to come with it. As you heard in this hearing, these costs are going to include additional screening of every child who enters school, and additional staff and licensed professionals to help students once screened.

While we appreciate the testimony that occurred, we also have to follow federal guidelines. Those federal guidelines mandate who is included in a student's IEP, and they have to be professionally licensed. There are areas in which we have a shortage. We have acknowledged that shortage here in testimony in this Committee and in Governor Brian Sandoval's State of the State Address. As far as the professional development, we provide professional development to our educators; however, that professional development needs to be greater, and we need to help our educators more. That costs additional money. For those reasons, we oppose the bill. We have one question as well, regarding the language about the dyslexia interventionists. We are unsure of the qualifications of this position as written in the bill. We cannot find a specific license or certification for this, so we would need your guidance on how, if this bill were to pass, we would go about finding someone who fits that description and can help those students.

Assemblyman Edwards:
You probably know by now that I love the numbers because I have to work on the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means and the budgets. Sitting here today, we are discussing the cost. We are looking at going to a weighted system of 0.5 percent for students who are going to be getting any kind of special education. I believe that works out to about $3,500 per student in special education. If you extrapolate that by the 90,000 students who might actually have dyslexia, we would be spending $325 million a year on children who would be in special education achieving nothing, as opposed to if they were actually properly diagnosed and put into a course that would get them on the right path. If the money is there somehow—and we will worry about that in a minute—would we not be saving $325 million of money that is going to the wrong effort?

Craig Stevens:
I agree with you that the weighted formula is important and adds to this conversation; however, I am not sure that I agree that sending children to special education is a waste, first of all. Secondly, these students are put in an individual education plan (IEP), so it is the folks in the IEP who decide. The parents are part of that. Our process is that as soon as a student is seen to have these issues, we contact the parents because they have to be a part of the IEP with the psychologist who comes to see the student. The IEP decides what is best for that student, whether it is to keep the student in general education or

special education or a mixture of both. A lot of this is decided at the federal level as well.

Assemblyman Gardner:
Are you opposed to the training of teachers to identify dyslexia? I had a teacher in second grade, Miss Campbell, who helped diagnose me. If we could go that way, we could do training for our teachers and that would help save some costs.

Craig Stevens:
Our educators are not trained in this when they become teachers, so it is something that has to come with the job and the experience. Our teachers do the best that they can right now. That screening, as we have heard in this Committee, can be very expensive. We would need additional funding for the training. While we appreciate the resources that are out there on the Internet, we cannot go to a parent or qualify for federal funds by saying that we have this test that we got and it was free. We need to do more than just that. The costs are prohibitive at the moment; however, if this body decides to fund it, we can certainly work within those parameters.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Would you agree to a pilot program at a limited number of schools to see how things would work and expand it from there?

Craig Stevens:
I do not mean to be a broken record. If the money is provided to fund that pilot, absolutely we would agree.

Assemblywoman Swank:
I might be a broken record, too. This is a policy committee. We set policy, we do not worry about the money at this point. That is for the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to do. Looking at this purely from a policy perspective, it seems to me that there is a way forward here. We could probably work out the policy aspect. After that, we could all work together to find the money.

Craig Stevens:
We would be happy to work with anyone willing to work with us on this bill to see what we can do.

Assemblywoman Diaz:
We do need to acknowledge that our universities are not preparing our teachers adequately in this area and many other areas. It is on my to-do list to talk to

the deans of education at all the universities in Nevada that train teachers. I think that we need to realize that we need to invest in our children and get them adequate access. I do not put a price tag on the self-image and confidence in the early learners. We have Daniela's story. I do not want to hear that until they get the help that they need, they have the self-image that they are not trying hard enough or are not bright enough. As a teacher, I can tell you that in the 12 years I have been with the Clark County School District, I have not received training in this area. Even if you try to talk to people about dyslexia, there seems to be a denial of recognizing that dyslexia exists. I think we need to be prudent, thinking that this will save us money in the long run. You invest early on, you get the children the intervention they need in time, and then you do not have the children needing to be identified in third, fourth, or fifth grade when the gap is so huge it is even more frustrating for the children, teachers, and parents. Would this not be a win-win situation?

Craig Stevens:
The short answer is yes; however, this body requires that we do a lot of professional development. We have a lot of things coming down the pike, such as the new evaluation system. We only have a certain number of days in the contract in order to do all of this. If we are going to add additional professional development, which we agree that we need to have, it is going to cost money to have folks come and do the professional development, so that educators can stay and have another day in order to learn this. It is not going to take just one day to learn these practices. This is a long-term investment for our students.

Assemblywoman Diaz:
I think that we need to be more thoughtful and intentional. We already have literacy specialists on most campuses. We need to start with them. They already go into classrooms and observe, so they can start the ripple effect. We need to make sure that the literacy specialists are adequately trained so that they can help the teachers come along. It is called coaching. There is a lot of talk about effective professional development and being the person who coaches the educator in recognizing and doing best practices. We need to acknowledge it. We need a starting point. We need to do it now.

Assemblywoman Dooling:
In earlier testimony from one of the teachers, we heard that it would not be horribly expensive and that it does not take too long to train others. I would ask that you work with everyone to try to find solutions. If I am understanding it correctly, you have to include the parents in the discussions when the children have to enter special education. They will still have to be included in the conversation to go to this testing. If it is going to save money in the long run, I think it is a great thing.

Craig Stevens:
We are happy to work with anyone and everyone to see what we can do here.

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
I understand that we are always sending you a lot of things to do. I have had three sessions on this Committee, and I get it. I have always tried to set the tone that we not talk about what other people can do, we need to talk about what we can do. Personally, I think legislators traditionally have grossly underfunded the school system. I want to make that very clear. I understand where you are coming from on money. I hope that we can think of some creative solutions in line with some of the comments of the Committee. Through the testimony, there is a variable that we are failing to isolate. I am not exactly sure how we isolate it, as I do not understand brain science. I am not an expert, so I am not going to try. We are already doing some excellent reading initiatives at our Zoom Schools. That would seem to be, in line with Assemblyman Stewart's suggestion, a great place to try it out. We have reading specialists there who see a lot of students in small group settings. They might be able to more easily identify someone having an issue that is not accounted for. They spend time with them; they can see when someone is intelligent but maybe not reading well, and where they are compared to other students in that small group setting. Might that be a place where we could focus some training in identifying dyslexia before we have to get into the response to intervention (RTI) process? We all agree that we do not want children to have to go to special education if that is an issue that we can avoid. Is that something that could be worked into the current Zoom Schools?

Craig Stevens:
I am not sure if we can work in the Zoom program because of how localized those programs are to the needs of the students in those neighborhoods. You are correct. We believe that by including the pre-K program and full-day kindergarten we can get our educators and professionals in front of these students sooner and longer so that they can be with them to do these types of things in order to get them the help. We heard testimony that the earlier you can do this, the better. If we are able to provide pre-K and full-day kindergarten, we believe that we can get ahead of this problem much more easily.

Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Eagle Forum:
I am here in opposition to the bill, but I am liking it a lot better now. I was really concerned about section 9, with kindergarten and grades 1 and 2. I would feel a lot better if we can have that amendment to raise the age for developmentally disabled children up to age nine. I have never been in favor of starting mandatory kindergarten for age five because there are so many children

who are not ready to start school at age five, especially little boys. I think it would be wise to raise the age to nine.

When my daughter started to print, she would write her s's and y's backwards, which drove me crazy. I wondered how the heck she could do that. That is not easy to do. When she was eight, she had some school testing. Her results showed her reading level at eleventh grade, but in her writing, the spaces between words was off and some of her letters were backwards. All of a sudden one day, that stopped. I did not know why.

I found Dr. Raymond Moore, who is an author and researcher. He wrote a book called *School Can Wait*. He talks about how children—not all children with dyslexia and learning disabilities, but some—can outgrow some of the situations. There is a lady named Carolyn Forte who had two children. She met Dr. Moore, who helped her by explaining that some children take a little longer to read. Her oldest daughter did not read until she was eight years old; her second daughter did not read until she was ten-and-a-half. She worked with her on other things and did very well. This girl had problems with her hand-eye coordination. She turned out to be an accomplished artist. Things do sometimes come together, although it can take a little time. I am in favor of the amendment that would allow nine-year-olds to be included, but we should remember that sometimes children learn at a different rate and do things at a different rate.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:
I think that Assemblyman Ohrenschall should be congratulated on bringing this problem to the forefront with this particular bill. It is an issue that has not been talked about at the Legislature or addressed for several years. Dyslexia is real and is a real issue. Our only objection to the bill and the reason we oppose it is because it does not have any money to carry out the bill's mandates. Dyslexia is very special, and the people working with dyslexic children who are successful have some very specific training. They know what to do. Even if this bill is passed, we are going to have to get on it at the university level or wherever we get this training. It needs to be identified what folks are going to need to be dyslexic-qualified. If we are going to have paraprofessionals working with dyslexic children, they have to be well-prepared and able to work with them correctly or it will be no help.

Joannah Schumacher, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am here in opposition to A.B. 341. I have dyslexia. I have three brothers and one sister who have dyslexia. I suspect that almost all the members of my family have dyslexia, but they are much older and were not diagnosed. I was not labeled as dyslexic until I was in high school. If a school is full of

high-performing students, why are we mandating testing? Forcing a school to spend its funds on testing instead of on something the school might like to use elsewhere is problematic, a symptom of what we are seeing constantly at the school level. We are not addressing what those individual schools need. I am very much opposed to this unilateral forcing of testing for things or teaching of things that may not fit what a school needs based on the area or the luck of the draw, or they might have a whole school full of dyslexics. If this information was set up to offer free testing and training as a nonprofit, I would be donating money to it right now, but adding another mandate to our schools is not the answer. We are inappropriately tying our schools' hands in preventing the creative innovation that can happen when schools are allowed to explore a different answer and a different pathway. I would ask you to vote no on A.B. 341.

Juanita Cox, representing Citizens in Action:
I also had a problem with section 9 and the age. I appreciate the amendment to raise the developmental age to nine. I think that would be a good solution. I am also against this bill because of the unfunded mandates in sections 10, 12, and 13. I come from a rural area and can see that for those smaller counties like Humboldt, Lander, Mineral, and Storey, that are already struggling with their costs, perhaps having an employee that has to be so specialized could be really costly and almost impossible for them. Sitting here, I thought maybe the smaller school districts could have a traveling expert. That could cut down some of the costs. The costs and the mandates for small school districts concern me.

Chair Woodbury:
Is there anyone else in Carson City or Las Vegas who would like to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 341? [There was no one.] Is there anyone who would like to testify as neutral to Assembly Bill 341? [There was no one.]

What if teachers were required to select those students who were struggling with reading and writing in those early grades? They could have them tested. Is it a waste of time to test those students who come in reading and writing or are progressing at an average-to-above-average rate? Is there a reason all students need to be tested?

Elizabeth Gray:
I think early screening at the kindergarten and first-grade level is appropriate, but it is very short and simple. I would never screen everyone for dyslexia. I would probably do as you said and screen that 10 percent who are struggling readers. They are the ones I would target. I appreciated your comment about the possibility of a pilot program. I think that is a wonderful idea.

Karen Cavallaro:
Screening would not be necessary for every student, as long as the teachers were trained in the warning signs. The warning signs are classic and very clear. Teachers just do not know what they are. That is what frustrates us as parents. The warning signs are clear, but educators do not know what they are.

Chair Woodbury:
As a former special education teacher and a current first-grade teacher, I wish I had those tools, that I knew what to look for and how to help students.

Assemblyman Ohrenschall:
When I was first contacted by Ms. Misuraca in Las Vegas and asked to work on the bill, I did not know about the 1984 study. I did not realize that the issue had been waiting for 31 years, and that the recommendations from 1984 were substantially similar to what we are looking at here. Some version of this bill will move. I do not think we should wait any longer. From what we have heard, there are creative ways to act in trying to help these young people early, having great benefits to them and to us. I have been very moved by the young people who have spoken today.

Chair Woodbury:
I am going to close the hearing on Assembly Bill 341. Is there anyone here for public comment in Carson City or in Las Vegas?

Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:
Madam Chair, while everyone is getting up, I just want to thank you for managing these hearings today. I know doing a work session and having two bills with a lot of public interest is a challenge.

Jonathan Denwood, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:
I am British, so I am used to the Parliamentary rough-and-tumble. You are so polite here. I am a businessperson and do not have much time for politicians, but I actually feel sorry for this Committee. After hearing the litany of excuses from the Clark County representative, if you had that type of attitude running a business, you would go broke the first week. Talk about a dismal, intellectual rubbish argument to this Committee. That individual ought to be ashamed that he had the audacity to put those types of intellectual arguments to this Committee.

Chair Woodbury:
Seeing no one else here for public comment, our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6. Committee members, if you are working on an amendment for any bills we have heard or anyone listening who has an interest in a bill, please provide updated information or a finalized amendment in the next day or two so that we can schedule your bill for a work session before the fast-approaching deadline. If there is no further business to come before the Committee, we are adjourned [at 8:41 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Joan Waldock
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: April 1, 2015 Time of Meeting: 3:24 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 166	C	H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst	Work session document
A.B. 178	D	H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst	Work session document and proposed amendment
A.B. 178	E	H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst	A.B. 178—Student Discipline
A.B. 351	F	H. Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst	Work session document
A.B. 303	G	Assemblyman Jones	PowerPoint presentation introduction of bill
A.B. 303	H	Assemblyman Jones	Truth in Education map
A.B. 303	I	Assemblyman Jones	Republican National Committee Resolution Concerning Common Core
A.B. 303	J	Assemblyman Jones	Clark County Democratic Platform
A.B. 303	K	Assemblyman Jones	Common Core agreement letter
A.B. 303	L	Assemblyman Jones	Proposed amendment
A.B. 303	M	Karen Gray, Nevada Research Policy Institute	Written testimony
A.B. 303	N	Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D., Professor Emerita, University of Arkansas	Written testimony
A.B. 303	O	Ze'ev Wurman, Private Citizen, Palo Alto, California	Written testimony
A.B. 303	P	Allison Serafin, State Board of Education	Nevada Academic Content Standards in English Language Arts

A.B. 303	Q	Mark Newburn, State School Board	Nevada Academic Content Standards in Mathematics
A.B. 303	R	Don Gallimore, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 303	S	Kenneth M. Coll, Ph.D., University of Nevada, Reno	Letter in opposition
A.B. 303	T	Teruni Lamberg, Ph.D., University of Nevada, Reno	Support document in opposition
A.B. 303	U	Amy Weber-Salgo, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 303	V	Christina Leventis, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Testimony in support
A.B. 303	W	Christina Leventis, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Magazine article
A.B. 303	X	Danny Klingler, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 303	Y	Carrie Buck, Pinecrest Academy	Written testimony
A.B. 303	Z	Assemblyman Jones	Magazine article
A.B. 303	AA	Assemblyman Jones	Watchdog testimony
A.B. 303	BB	Dr. E. Michael Nussbaum, University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Executive summary
A.B. 303	CC	Dr. E. Michael Nussbaum, University of Nevada, Las Vegas	UNLV Academic Content Standards
A.B. 303	DD	Dale A.R. Erquiaga, Department of Education	Letter in opposition
A.B. 341	EE	Assemblyman James Ohrenschall	Video presentation
A.B. 341	FF	Karen Cavallaro, Consultant, Decoding Dyslexia-Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	GG	Elizabeth Gray, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	HH	Ryan Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	II	Cheryl Misuraca, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	JJ	Jessica L. Salts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	*Study of Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Disabilities*

A.B. 341	KK	Jessica L. Salts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	LL	Spencer Flanders, Private Citizen, Minden, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 341	MM	Susan Lacey, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada	Proposed amendment
A.B. 341	NN	Bethel Jeanne Baglin, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada	Written testimony