MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Eightieth Session
February 12, 2019

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chairman Tyrone Thompson at 1:34 p.m. on Tuesday, February 12, 2019, in Room 3138 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. 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/80th2019.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman
Assemblyman Edgar Flores, Vice Chairman
Assemblywoman Bea Duran
Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblywoman Connie Munk
Assemblywoman Sarah Peters
Assemblywoman Jill Tolles
Assemblywoman Selena Torres

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen (excused)
Assemblywoman Lisa Krasner (excused)
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kelly Richard, Committee Policy Analyst
Victoria Gonzalez, Committee Counsel
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Denise Tanata, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance
Jonathan P. Moore, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education
Karen Gordon, State Coordinator, Nevada Homeless Education Program, Department of Education
Linda K. Fitzgibbons, Homeless Liaison, Nye County School District
Sarah Robbins, Private Citizen, Auburn, Washington
Lacey Keele, The Children's Cabinet, Reno, Nevada
Meredith M. Tanzer, Community Outreach Specialist, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada
Katie Deines, Resource Manager, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada
Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Las Vegas, Nevada
Chad W. Buckendahl, Partner, ACS Ventures, LLC, Las Vegas, Nevada
Myisha Y. Williams, President and Managing Member, MYS LLC, Henderson, Nevada

Chairman Thompson:
[Roll was taken. Committee protocol and rules were explained.] Today we have two great presentations before us. There are many vulnerable populations. There are a lot of young people—different subpopulations—that go through different challenges, so our hope is to have presentations from those subpopulations throughout this session. Today we will begin with the problems, the challenges, and the great things that are happening for our homeless youth. Then we will hear from our *Nevada External Outcomes Evaluation* evaluators and their final report of seven of Nevada's educational programs. At this time, I will open for public comment. [There was none.] I will close out public comment and go to our first presentation.

With us today are several agencies and organizations that work with students who are experiencing homelessness. We have asked them to provide us with information on the unique challenges these students face, the role of their organizations in helping those students, and any policy recommendations to the Committee that we may want to consider as we move forward in this session.

Denise Tanata, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance:
We are excited to be here today to pull together a group of really great speakers to talk about barriers and issues impacting homeless youth around educational success.

Jonathan P. Moore, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:
I am joined today by my colleague, Karen Gordon, who is the State Coordinator for the Nevada Homeless Education Program in the Department of Education. She will be facilitating this portion of the presentation.

Karen Gordon, State Coordinator, Nevada Homeless Education Program, Department of Education:

I am the State Coordinator for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. This program is designed to address problems that homeless and youth have faced in three areas: enrolling, attending, and succeeding at school. The U.S. Department of Education has issued guidelines for states to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in relation to this program which was authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The first of two main components of this program is how Nevada and other states would assist our local education agencies in implementing the new provisions of ESSA (Exhibit C). Secondly, and more importantly, each state, including Nevada, must review and revise policies and procedures that present barriers to the identification, enrollment, and success of our students. This set of students, both foster and homeless, are particularly vulnerable populations. We have approximately 17,000 across our state who are considered homeless. We have another 3,000 in the foster care system. We are talking about 20,000 students in all, based on 2016-2017 numbers. A major consequence of being one of these homeless students is the inability to graduate from high school. High schools across Nevada have identified about 4,000 homeless students and about 900 foster youth.

These students have a variety of obstacles including incarcerated parents, chronic absenteeism, domestic violence, conflict with the juvenile justice system, poverty, lack of transportation, food, security, and mental and physical health issues.

Federal leaders and community members across the country now recognize that homeless and foster youth require a response that accounts for their specific situation and stage in life. Without such tailored interventions, youth will remain, most likely, in the homeless system without the necessary supports to become housed, employed, and educated. They would then become our future population of unemployed, uneducated adults experiencing chronic homelessness.

There is a solution, although youth experiencing homelessness and those in foster care are, by nature of their situation, surrounded by risks. Qualitative and quantitative studies have shown that there are definite interventions we can offer, and, in the end, help these same students not only succeed, but excel in school.

There are a variety of ideas. We can provide a road map that is flexible for our population of students and their success in school. We can design curriculums, classes, and programs that are created so these youth are aware of their progress and feel empowered to move forward. We can help foster relationships between teachers and students; the list goes on. These strategies created to meet the unique needs of these students are essential not only to comply with the McKinney-Vento Act, but also to improve academic achievement and reduced dropout rates.

The way to do this is through adding a new section to the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 389.019 via newly created Senate Bill 147. This is the award of partial credits and

exceptions to minimum units of credit required in high school for homeless and foster youth. We can develop and implement procedures to award homeless pupils and pupils in foster care with full or partial credit for satisfactory work completed regardless of the time, place, or pace at which the pupil progresses. Some of the ideas to make this happen:

- Students can demonstrate their competency through a test;
- Earn credit by exam;
- Successful completion of program of independent study, in whole or in part;
- Full or partial credit transferred from an accredited public or private school located in or out of our state;
- Full or partial transfer from summer school conducted by accredited public or private school;
- Correspondence or distance education; and more.

There is no fiscal impact; this is just policy and implementation.

I want to introduce some guests to you because I want to show you an example of what can happen when a homeless student receives the support needed to succeed, given her set of circumstances.

Linda K. Fitzgibbons, Homeless Liaison, Nye County School District:
It is not that often that we come from the district level and share our stories of what we deal with every day at our school district in beautiful downtown Pahrump.

My responsibility as district liaison is to remove barriers preventing homeless students from getting their education. We can help them by providing them basic needs such as school supplies, hygiene items, clothing, food, and transportation. Most importantly, we advocate for them.

Under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, we have been given the tools needed to help those students in various ways. However, sometimes we hit walls and our hands are tied. I work a lot with high school students. These students are experiencing homelessness; some of them have their families and some of them do not. One of the biggest issues we have with these homeless students is loss of credit. They bounce around from school to school, from town to town, and from state to state. When that happens, they lose their education credit. We, or the legislators, most importantly, have the opportunity to make changes for these students and give us the tools that we need to help them succeed in high school and beyond.

Today, I have brought a very special person to share her story of homelessness. This is Ms. Robbins. I met Ms. Robbins during the worst time of her life. She was at a turning point on whether or not to stay in school or leave school because of her homelessness. Through the support of the McKinney-Vento program, Ms. Robbins was able to finish high school and launch into college. She is the perfect example of a homeless student who was helped through the laws that you are all tasked to enact.

Sarah Robbins, Private Citizen, Auburn, Washington:
I was a McKinney-Vento program participant from 2014 to 2015. I have never had much of a consistent home life, but there are two recurrent themes of my life's story. I have always been homeless or at-risk for homelessness, and my education has always been a top priority in my life.

I grew up in Pahrump, Nevada, in an abusive, single-parent family. My typical styles of abode included living in cars without any heat in the dead of winter, sleeping on the floors of strangers' homes, or temporarily residing in a home of my own for a few weeks until my mom got evicted. In my short life, I have moved 25 times and I am only 21 years old. School served as an escape for me from a violently unstable home life, and I rarely felt as though I had control or felt that I had a place to survive. Education, once received by a person, cannot be taken away. For many, like myself, it is the only opportunity I will get to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness to which I belong.

Pahrump Valley High School had the privilege of offering honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. I took every single honors and AP class that my high school offered. I even took five AP classes and two honors classes my senior year—more than twice the number of classes my peers in the same grade had taken.

In the middle of my senior year, right before the end of fall semester, my home life had become an unbearable and dangerous place to live. I became homeless unexpectedly. I considered moving to Las Vegas, but the closest homeless shelter was over an hour away. I was so close to finishing high school, and I was determined to finish. However, if I were to have moved, it would have sent me behind a year in school because I had not finished my first semester just yet. The schools I could transfer to would not give me credit for all that I had already learned on the subjects I had worked so hard on. I felt that everything I had done in school had meant nothing to anyone. I felt as if my education would be taken from me if I moved.

I was a smart kid. I knew the statistics. Students facing homelessness are more than 87 percent more likely to not earn a high school diploma, due in part to a school's lack of acceptance for unfinished or partial credits. In addition, children lose six months of academic progress when they have to change schools. Homeless students without a high school diploma are more than four times more likely to face chronic homelessness as adults.

Linda Fitzgibbons, the Nye County School District's homelessness liaison, caught wind of my situation. I was offered services from the McKinney-Vento program. They helped find me a place to live in Pahrump so I could finish my high school education. They also provided me with support services and academic supplies so I could focus entirely on school rather than homelessness, as most other kids my age were doing. With the help of the McKinney-Vento program, not only was I able to graduate with an advanced high school diploma, I was able to attend college and earn, not one, but two associate's degrees. I am currently working on three bachelor's degrees as a triple major in political science, public service and public policy, and justice studies.

I would not be where I am today without the support of the McKinney-Vento program and the resources available to homeless youth to keep them in school and encourage them to finish.

I am here today to not only share my story of trying to earn an education while homeless, but to advocate on behalf of the more than 17,000 known homeless students who reside in the state of Nevada and to plead for your support of helping homeless students like me so that we do not become just another statistic. I have confidence that with the passage of Senate Bill 147, Nevada can change the statistics and lead the nation in the highest graduation rates of homeless youth.

You have the power to change the lives of young students and to address and help fix one of the most prominent issues faced by homeless youth. I hope you give the highest consideration to this bill. I would like to give you my sincerest appreciation for allowing me to share my story and to allow a platform where homeless students can be heard by the government that serves them.

Chairman Thompson:
Thank you, Ms. Robbins. You did a great job. You are a special person and we are clapping for you today. We are glad that you were able to achieve that, like you say, in downtown Pahrump. You have two associate's degrees and you are going for three bachelor's degrees. Great! I will open for any questions the Committee may have.

Assemblywoman Torres:
You did a phenomenal job with your presentation. I am a high school teacher, so I work a lot with homeless students or those in the foster care system. I have a few concerns. I am looking at the information you gave us (Exhibit C) and I think it is a great program. What additional support is going to be given to students who are struggling? We know that as soon as they are out of the classroom, they frequently have more instructional needs and support required to make sure they are passing their classes; I am worried that credit by exam is not going to be effective for a lot of students.

Karen Gordon:
Our district liaisons keep track of all of our homeless youth, and at each of the schools there is a point of contact. That person also keeps track of students, and we work on an academic plan to track and make sure that we have a safety net and are meeting the needs of these students. There are so many things that can come up and even stop them from leaving and moving to Las Vegas. As a state coordinator, I am working to tighten up that procedure. I would like to see more data, but that is what we currently have. This would be something that the school districts would put together if this passed. They would put together a plan that would, in my opinion, assure that the homeless would not be left out on their own, sitting in a park or a campground, on the Internet doing their classes. I agree 100 percent with you.

Assemblywoman Torres:
Is there any way this program can work with individuals such as school social workers or counselors who are already on campus?

Linda Fitzgibbons:
One of the district liaison's jobs is to also coordinate with our social workers, who are becoming very important—and thank you all for putting social workers in our schools these last few years. It has made a huge difference. They will not only coordinate with our point of contact, but with the teachers. In some areas, we have special teams just for academics, so we will work with them also. Yes, we put together an entire team to make sure we have a safety net to be able to provide wraparound services for our students to ensure they get what they need.

Assemblyman Flores:
Obviously, based upon the data, it is incredibly important to focus on getting our students to graduate because that is not happening. Clearly, we need to overemphasize the importance of that. What are we doing after we get them across that finish line? What are we doing to ensure that there is a continuous pipeline as opposed to just making sure they graduate? I am not sure what we are doing after that.

Karen Gordon:
Both yesterday and today we are convening at the Nevada State Library Archives and Public Records Building with McKinney-Vento program liaisons from across the state. That is one of our topics. That is another area that we need to move forward on and push much harder than we have. Our own Ms. Robbins shared with us that she had some difficulty with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Not just completing it, Ms. Fitzgibbons helped her with that part, but with Arizona State University not taking it at its worth. One of the things we need to do as a state, and that I need to do with my liaisons, is to create communication with all of the colleges across our nation. At the same time, we need to have our liaisons follow through even though they are already at capacity. We need to track what is happening with our students once they graduate. You are absolutely right. Thank you for asking the question.

Assemblyman Flores:
If I could put on the record, I think this is a conversation that the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) has to be involved with. They have a responsibility to ensure that pipeline is being pushed here and welcomed here. I do not think we are doing that at all right now.

Linda Fitzgibbons:
One of the things that we do as district liaisons before a student like this leaves, especially if it is an unaccompanied youth such as Ms. Robbins, is to write a letter saying that she was considered an unaccompanied youth during this time in her life at her high school. We package that and give it to each one of the students. At that point in time, the student fills out the FAFSA application and checks the box that they are homeless. It then is sent off

and it sits there; they do not get the FAFSA funding. They actually get turned down. Then the student has to walk in the door with this letter in hand and say this is their proof that they were an unaccompanied youth and a homeless student. Then the FAFSA application will usually be approved. This is a huge area that we are missing. Once again, there is no law in place for this, not only on a state level, but on a federal level for us to have our financial aid department at our higher education institutions accept these types of things. It is hit and miss.

When Ms. Robbins applied online to Arizona State University, I spent 3 to 4 hours on the phone with their financial aid person trying to explain what had happened and convince them to accept that information. That is a huge area that we are missing. If I had not been in my job for the past ten years, and Ms. Robbins had that experience, and someone else had been in my place, I do not think she would be in the position she is in right now. There would not be anyone there to advocate for her who even knew her when she went to school in Pahrump.

Sarah Robbins:
Because there is not very much support at the NSHE level for homeless students, if it had not been for Ms. Gordon and Ms. Fitzgibbons allowing me to follow up with them and to ask questions, I definitely would not be where I am today.

One of the severe disconnects is within the financial aid department in colleges and universities. I have attended three different colleges and universities since graduating from high school to earn my degrees. Their lack of education regarding homelessness is dismal. It is not within their job descriptions to follow us after high school, but they do, and I will be forever grateful for their support in that. It is a shame that I have to go back to the high school level to receive these services when I should be able to go to my college and have a point of contact there, but we do not have that. With Ms. Fitzgibbons and Ms. Gordon advocating on my behalf, I am very grateful. That is one of the ways our community professionals here have helped serve the students once they have gone on to higher education.

Chairman Thompson:
My question is regarding the letter that the students receive. When you were on campus, did you feel a sense of stigma, alienation, labeling, or that you were a student dealing with homelessness? Did you or your peers experience that? If so, how did you overcome it?

Sarah Robbins:
Yes, most definitely. Almost every single time that I have applied to a college and tried to go through the financial aid process, I have felt that this is a recurring theme every single year. Even once you are accepted into college, you have to reapply for financial aid every year. I often find that many of the higher education administrators think I am just playing the homeless card and that I am not really homeless. They do not take my situation seriously; they do not understand my experiences. They think that as an unaccompanied youth, that I am trying to use this to evade the parental information on the FAFSA so I can get the most funding. To be clear, that is not what I am trying to do. That is not what any unaccompanied

youth is trying to do. I do not have access to any of my parents' biographical or financial data. That is one of the severe lack of access points on the FAFSA and for financial aid to attend and access higher education. I am often labeled as someone trying to skirt the rules and take advantage of the system. I am not trying to do that. I am trying to access higher education like any other student who is not homeless can do in this country.

There is not a whole lot of support there. I almost thought I was not going to attend the university that I currently attend because it took a month-long appeal process, with the help of Ms. Fitzgibbons and hours of working with their financial aid department, to prove that I am homeless. It creates a severe disadvantage to students. If you are not advocating for yourself, it can be very discouraging. There have been many times I thought maybe I would wait until I am older so I do not have to deal with this, but that creates a very unfair social and economic burden on the students because they fall behind more than their nonhomeless peers to earn an education.

Denise Tanata:
Going toward Assemblywoman Torres' question regarding wraparound support services, you just heard information regarding the Department of Education and the local school districts' work. There are also several nonprofit organizations in their community that work with these youths to provide some of those wraparounds and supports.

Lacey Keele, The Children's Cabinet, Reno, Nevada:
To branch off of what was just stated, we would like to explore alternative education options. We have a unique campus at The Children's Cabinet, the Redfield Academy, which is part of the Washoe Inspire Academy. Anyone who is aware of Washoe County School District (WCSD) knows that Washoe Inspire Academy falls within our option zone. We have a unique partnership with the school district, so our school is actually run on The Children's Cabinet campus and organized by The Children's Cabinet staff. With that said, they are also WCSD students and they graduate with WCSD credits. Having the ability to have a campus on a nonprofit family resource center really gives an advantage to these homeless students.

Our case managers, as well as our teachers, are all trained on trauma-informed care, social/emotional needs, and crisis management. When we get a student and family coming in experiencing crisis, we really try to break down any barriers or stigma that they may feel with talking about those crises. Many of our families feel a little discouraged to bring those things up because they do not want to be judged. Even worse, they feel that their children are going to be taken away. We work with families to help them to start advocating for themselves and to help them realize that they are going through crisis and that they do need and can benefit from some resource guidance. This help is really beneficial to the student as well.

We have quite a few students who fall into the McKinney-Vento Act, so whether they are couch-surfing, living in motels, and/or just flat-out homeless and living in cars, they are suffering from lack of credits. They are not gaining those credits, or they are not completing courses in time. We honored ourselves by creating a very blended learning system. We have

a 40-student maximum capacity, 3 teachers, and 2 case managers. All of our students and families are assigned a case manager, and the teachers are focused on mentoring these students throughout their process through high school.

We offer education from ninth to twelfth grades and make sure that our curriculum is very blended; 77 percent of our curriculum is being done online through the A+ Educators platform, and 23 percent of our curriculum is being done through direct instruction.

We have the ability to send our staff out to meet our students where they are at in their learning. If we have students who are not able to come in, our teachers are jumping out there with an iPad and meeting them and helping them through the process to gain those credits to make sure they are completing their classes. This is an unconventional method. It does not have to be within a Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. time frame. Teachers can meet students on the weekend, after hours, and before hours. We make sure that our staff and our teachers are very well-equipped on how to handle those crises. They go through several trainings throughout the year and make sure that they are meeting the student where they are in their education level. Again, we have this wraparound service housed at The Children's Cabinet. We offer free family counseling, we have the food bank on-site, and we have the hygiene bank. Most importantly, students come to us and feel comfortable sharing where they are, sharing their burdens, and asking for support. They know they are not just a test score. Their overall well-being is our first priority.

Meredith M. Tanzer, Community Outreach Specialist, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada:
I will begin by giving you an overview of who the young people are that we see at the Eddy House, because it is very nontraditional in terms of what people anticipate and think about homeless youth (Exhibit D). We primarily serve nonsystem youth. Maybe they have been homeless on and off for years, but they have never touched an actual system. Maybe they are not identified within the school district and because we are dealing with young people under the age of 24, they do not always identify to the term "homeless." It is very hard to categorize these young people unless they have touched a system and been labeled in such a way.

In 2018, Eddy House saw 682 young people—377 were first-time users of Eddy House or in contact with the system in some way. We had more than 10,000 visits over the course of the year. Something to consider when we are talking about education is their stability factor across the board. Ninety-three percent of the young people who have visited Eddy House lost a parent, family member, or close friend. Thirty-nine percent had previously been in foster care or touched that system in some way. Eighty-three percent moved more than five times as a young child. That takes a bit of getting used to—learning new people, and finding new support systems within the community each time that happens. We serve 12- to 24-year-olds. Young people are not allowed in the Eddy House before 2 p.m., so we are encouraging them to stay in touch with school. We have contacts through WCSD to re-engage kids as often as possible in lower education and then we also have contacts at our community college and university.

Young people come to Eddy House for their basic needs—a safe place, a shower, food, resource acquisition to include their essential documents—and to reengage in schools. We are always focused on job and life skills and in connecting them to anything related to their mental and physical health as a way to make sure that they are starting to build general supports in their life, to be more engaged, and to be able to develop relationships going forward.

At Eddy House:

- 100 percent of our young people identify as being trauma affected;
- 58 percent have received mental health treatment generally by 19 years of age;
- 48.5 percent have an insufficient education;
- 43 percent of our kids had an individualized education program or 504 plan;
- 76 percent have been arrested at least once;
- 66 percent live on the streets, live in motels, or couch-surf;
- 82 percent identify that they are safer on the street than they were at home;
- 52.4 percent of our young people have exchanged sex or labor for food and shelter.

Right now, Eddy House is in a unique situation because we are getting young people every single day who are starting at the very bottom. We know that they need a place to sleep in order to pursue their education and to be able to study. We are lucky to live in Washoe County where there are a handful of wonderful programs for us to coordinate with that are innovative in terms of the way they are working with these young people. But we know that these young people need a place to stay.

Katie Deines, Resource Manager, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada:
What we are going to talk about today is pretty important. The people who spoke first touched a lot that I was going to speak about, and they are the experts. I will go ahead and talk about some of what we do at Eddy House and how that can maybe translate into the school system.

We are 100 percent trauma-informed, which means that every single member of our staff is trained in trauma-informed care. What that looks like is that we are entirely relationship-based; it is a safe space for everyone. When we talk about trauma, we all know that trauma does crazy, whacky things to the brain, and when there is a traumatized student, any educator in this room can attest to what that looks like. What it looks like is being disruptive, being aggressive, being completely shut down, and pushing boundaries. We all see that on a daily basis.

We remain absolutely consistent and steadfast in our support of those kids. They have been shunted around from foster home to foster home. They have had no support from their parents, as was previously stated. They experience domestic violence, mental illness, drugs and alcohol, and other things as bad or worse in their home lives. Add to that, being moved into a system where they have to walk on eggshells because they do not know the people they are living with—over and over again. That creates a kid with a lot of anxiety and with absolutely zero trust and zero connections. If they are homeless, they are moving around

a lot. They have fractured connections, which means if they have made a connection with one teacher or one counselor in that school, when they move on to the next school, they have lost that connection. If they have moved five times in their life or in a year, which is common, they have lost five connections. That does not lend itself to being eager to make new connections.

By the time they get to us they are perhaps 18 years old and they have dropped out of school, graduated with an insufficient diploma or an adjusted diploma, or they have gotten a GED, which is actually great for our kids. By the time they get to us, they are in a situation in which it takes a very long time for us to be able to establish any kind of trust or relationships with them. We do it slowly. We put them slowly into a structured environment. When they get there they cannot handle structure. They are very agitated and they re-experience trauma on the streets every single night. They are hungry; it does not lend itself to a healthy state of mind. Everything that we do is relationship-based, which means we take it slowly. I do not ever force them into something that they do not want to do or that I feel they are not ready to do. We plant the seed, but the most important thing that we feel happens there is that they form connections again—and they form connections that they feel are consistent and steadfast.

Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I would like to quickly talk about many of the same things from the perspective that we are dealing with in southern Nevada. I want to thank everyone who went before me for adding to and painting a picture of what is going on throughout our state, especially with homeless youth, at the nexus of the education system and homelessness.

In the 2017-2018 school year, the Clark County School District (CCSD) identified over 15,000 homeless students enrolled in the CCSD. That is a 39 percent increase from the prior year. Everyone has done an excellent job covering some of the barriers faced by homeless students, especially Ms. Robbins who has given us that first-hand perspective, so thank you.

According to the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), the most significant barrier to unaccompanied youths' educational success is the fact that they must struggle daily to provide for their basic needs while managing the extreme physical and emotional stress of homelessness.

Some of the barriers include basic needs. Homeless youth are lacking stable access to food, clothing, hygiene items, and a safe place to sleep. This often renders them in something called "survival mode" in which they are lacking a lot of the basic needs to even stay awake or stay focused in school, or even do their homework. Unfortunately, too many times a student may be sitting in a chair, but if they are homeless, they may be in the room, but are they really thinking about their math test next week and how they are going to study for that? Or, as we have been reporting and have seen firsthand, are they thinking more about where they are going to sleep tonight? Are they going to be able to have food in their belly?

How can they avoid being victimized? I have a student who goes to school just fine Monday through Friday, but on the weekends she is suicidal because of the extreme housing instability and some of the issues that are going on in her family environment as well.

Additionally, when students change schools frequently, as many other speakers have discussed, it is very difficult for educators to correctly identify their needs and ensure proper placement. Lack of stability can also prevent students from being able to study, focus, learn, and grow. According to NAEHCY and other providers, many youth who have experienced homelessness have been in multiple schools, sometimes five, six, or more in one year.

Documentation barriers for homeless youth arise by not having the proper identification for school records, appropriate placement, missing medical records, immunization records, previous school transcripts, and proof of residency, and for unaccompanied youth, parental permission slips. They face transportation barriers, and, of course, they face self-esteem barriers and the emotional/social effects of homelessness.

The homeless youth are aware and really consider school their last refuge. They, more than many of their housed peers, are aware that school is often their only hope for a brighter future. However, it is shown that compared to peers who graduate high school, youth who do not have their GED are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness after high school. This is a huge problem that we need to get ahead of.

Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY) plays a big role here in Nevada to help youth stay in school and be successful in school. We are one of the most comprehensive service providers to thousands of homeless youth in southern Nevada. Like prior speakers, we use a lot of evidence-based practices, including trauma-informed care, positive youth development, et cetera. All of our case managers in NPHY are licensed social workers.

We will not go into all of our programs today, but we will say that all of our programs are designed to accomplish two things. One, we want to get youth out of survival mode because we know that youth are never going to be future-oriented without making sure their basic needs are met. The Eddy House speaker said something that I would really like to stress: This takes time. These youth are often service-resistant, meaning they have been jaded or let down by many adults and even institutional environments. Sometimes the building of rapport after getting youth out of survival mode can be a journey of several months or longer. However, NPHY is half-hour programs. Once youth are out of survival mode, we focus youth on future-oriented programs—how we can arm them with the skill sets, time, support, emotional support, safe places, et cetera so they can empower themselves to be self-sufficient young adults. We have entry points on virtually every street corner in southern Nevada through our Safe Place program. We serve youth 12 to 21 years old. We serve both systems and nonsystems that involve youth, but mainly nonsystems-involved youth. As the Eddy House speaker said, they are usually starting at the bottom, not having been really connected to any other system.

Our wraparound services get youth out of survival mode by meeting their immediate needs and providing a safe, supportive environment while other programs provide a path for self-sufficiency. How we directly work with education is that we break down barriers to basic needs directly by providing food, clothing, hygiene items, and a safe place to sleep via our shelters, housing, or even family reunification. Our drop-in center also provides a computer laboratory, a safe place to study, tutoring services, an address, and 100 other services on-site.

The point is that when it comes to the nexus of youth homelessness and education, it is not a problem that is only confined to the hours that schools are operating. Youth homelessness is a 24/7 problem. It does not close for holidays. It does not discriminate. All of the solutions that we need to have in our community need to be across the system and across sectors. We all need to play a role in making sure that we have eyes on youth and are providing them services and resources 24/7 that holistically help them overcome their challenges.

In terms of youth, we also break down transportation and documentation barriers by providing bus passes and helping youth access identification and other needed documents. We provide youth with intensive one-on-one case management with licensed social workers who help them reengage or succeed in school by providing educational counseling, enrollment assistance for high school, high school equivalency, and/or higher education, paying school fees, connecting with tutoring, and accessing needed supplies. We also provide weekly life skills and classes on our own around education-related topics.

As someone alluded to earlier, this is not just a K-12 [kindergarten-Grade 12] problem. We need to be thinking about that next step and what we can do to have our youth begin accessing higher education. We also work closely with CCSD. We train with Title I Homeless Outreach Program for Education advocates, and we work with our clients to ensure that they receive in-school services that they have a right to access. We have also started working with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to actually create a program for homeless youth entering into college by not only providing scholarships, but by lowering a tremendous amount of barriers, including moving onto campus the day after they graduate high school, enhanced financial aid advocacy, et cetera.

At NPHY we also do an incredible amount of advocacy. We recently released the first-ever Southern Nevada Plan to End Youth Homelessness (Exhibit E) that has 60-plus strategies that focus on areas of legislation, policy, fund-raising, partnerships, housing and services, and, most importantly, system intersectionality. This plan paints a picture in which we need to improve collaboration between systems, including data-sharing between a school district, NSHE, and homeless student providers, and conducting intersystem care coordination of major milestones, including graduation, intake, exit, and school enrollment. This is where school counselors and case managers should be talking to one another and to probation officers at different entry points in a youth's life.

We need to expand services, both in K-12 and in college, not unlike the new foster care bill for higher education.

Chairman Thompson:
We appreciate that because we know that you all do amazing work. We could talk all day long about all of the great things you do and all of the issues. At this time we will open for questions.

Assemblywoman Torres:
I have a specific question regarding the Redfield Academy. How do you work with the Washoe County School District? Is this a program that students are referred to? Is it part of a charter school, or is it a part of the district?

Lacey Keele:
It is actually a part of the district. We are privately funded, so we do not receive per-pupil funds at the district or at any other school level. That gives a bit of a unique ability to unconventionally educate our students. We do have one district-issued teacher who signs off on our district credits. Our other two teachers are certified, licensed teachers, but they work with The Children's Cabinet. Again, we have a very unique setting. Our students are WCSD students, and we fall under the option zone through the Washoe Inspire Academy, but we get our referrals from all over the community. We get them via the Washoe County Department of Juvenile Services, the Youth Parole Bureau within the Division of Child and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as word of mouth. We get kids who have a sister or a cousin who has been successful, so they will come in. We have students who come to us, already homeless, who have heard that our program is a little bit more accessible and meets them at their level, unlike most of the traditional high schools.

Chairman Thompson:
We would like to thank all of our presenters. The whole idea of bringing the various providers here from both north and south is to share the concerns and issues that our homeless youth go through. Of course, there are numerous programs in our communities. We want to thank Ms. Robbins for sharing her experiences with us. You are already successful, but you are going to be pretty sharp. At this time we will move on to our final presentation.

Chad W. Buckendahl, Partner, ACS Ventures, LLC, Las Vegas, Nevada:
Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to come again to present the results of the *Nevada External Outcomes Evaluation* study which analyzed a number of Nevada programs that have been funded over the past couple of years (Exhibit F). When we were here a couple of years ago, we talked primarily about the implementation of the programs. Many of the programs at the time were either brand new or in their infancy. We spoke largely about whether or not the components of the programs were being put into place—policies and procedures that each of the programs were going through in order to have capacity for success. Now that we are a few years into these programs, we have some preliminary outcome data and can evaluate whether or not the programs are starting to have their intended effect.

Myisha Williams and I will highlight some aspects of each of the programs, then give the Committee members the opportunity to ask questions regarding the findings or any of the conclusions.

As context for the evaluation, it is important to highlight that our job as evaluators is to be neutral. Our goal is not to advocate for or against a particular policy or a particular outcome, but to simply take the collection of evidence from each of these programs, and provide that information to you as policymakers in order to make those decisions.

The qualitative evidence collected for this evaluation includes interviews with stakeholders involved in the programs: program leads from the Department of Education, individuals who are engaged with the programs within the school districts and schools, and a broader survey of participants in which we ask questions regarding the effect of the program on curriculum and instruction, student motivation and behavior, student achievement, and public perception.

For most programs, we provided some information in the form of either student achievement data, or in the case of Zoom schools, some of the language acquisition achievement data. We also provided some information for things like the Social Workers in Schools Program, climate information, and some of the student behavior information that is intended as desired outcomes of the program.

As context for interpreting the evaluation, the underlying theory of action for each of these programs is unique to what the programs are designed to do. For example, within Zoom schools, the underlying theory of action says that additional support for students for whom English is not their first or primary language is a prerequisite in order for them to succeed academically in other subject areas in school. It is a two-step process in order for that to occur.

In comparison, a program like Social Workers in Schools is really saying that some of the social/emotional needs of students have not been met previously. If we can provide some of these additional supports for students, students will have a greater opportunity and capacity to succeed academically, as well as in broader aspects of their life.

As evaluators, we ask ourselves whether or not we are looking for immediate returns or more long-standing returns. If you think about this from the investment standpoint—and I am someone who likes using stock market analogies to help understand this—are you looking for something that is a growth-type of investment in which you have a short-term time horizon with an expectation of some sort of catalyst for that investment to pay off in a relatively short period of time? Or are you thinking more from a value standpoint in which an investment will have a five-, ten-, or twenty-year impact on a system? Many of the programs that you are looking at, like the Victory school program, the Social Workers in School program, or the Great Teaching and Leading Fund, are looking at systemic change and longer-term types of investments. Those are the kinds of things to keep in the back of your mind as you are evaluating the underlying theories of action for each of these programs and considering the policy.

It is also important to highlight the types of data in terms of outcomes. Two years ago, we talked about the different tiers of data from which we could draw some conclusions or inferences. We could look at data from the state level, versus the district level, versus the school level, versus the individual-student level. Sticking with the stock market analogy, I could do a comparison of something like the Dow Jones Industrial Average, or the S&P 500 Index as compared to a particular market sector or an individual stock. Depending on which lens I look through, I may come to different conclusions. Different sectors of the economy will perform better or worse even if the overall market averages go up or down. Those are things to keep in the back of your mind as we are looking at the combination of qualitative and quantitative data that went into the evaluation. For example, the Underperforming Schools Turnaround program looks as if things are going well—with implementation in place, schools and participants that are engaged in that program are seeing some of the positive outcomes. It does not mean that every individual school or every individual student may be experiencing those same outcomes. However, the preponderance of evidence suggests that information is moving in a positive direction as intended by the legislation.

Within the Zoom schools program in particular, we see gains in both linguistic and academic achievement. That is an important piece. The ability to acquire language is a precursor to success in some of the state-level achievement tests of English language arts or mathematics. In order to function in a language, you must have access to that language as a starting point. Longer length of time in the program was related to even greater performance. Schools that tended to be in the program longer tended to do a little bit better than the schools that did not. Aggregated at the state level, this is the level of data that we were looking at.

Another highlight is if the Legislature or future evaluations are looking at this, being able to go down to the school level allows the opportunity to provide additional information. This means we may see that schools are doing particularly well. Why are they doing well? What is it about their context? What is it about what they have done through curricular or instructional practices that has helped them succeed at levels different from other schools in that peer group? Those are things that were beyond the scope of the capacity of this evaluation, but those are things that absolutely provide more interesting qualitative data for future work.

Similarly, with Victory schools we see a general increase in achievement for students in some of the summative assessments, but it is important to highlight that these are for some and not all. For some of the academic achievement, we see increases. We also see relatively flat increases or similarity to the state average. In some cases, it is below the state average. Being able to answer why is an important element of this study.

Something else to highlight with the Victory schools program is that there are some challenges in terms of concerns about the timing of the funding. With the funding not being available until a certain time after the session ends, that makes decision-making for schools or districts more challenging—to be able to make proactive decisions that align with the academic calendar. That was one of the consistent highlights that we heard during the survey component.

Moving on to Read by Grade 3, this particular program is similar in its implementation to at least a dozen other states at different points in the maturity of the program. It is one program in which you have the opportunity to look at how other states have implemented this program and see the short-term and longer-term consequences of the implementation of some of the policy decisions. In general, the underlying theory of action of early identification of at-risk students and notifying and bringing parents and other parts of the support network into the learning process early, has helped to try to reduce the number of students who are at-risk by end of Grade 3. That does not mean that every student in the state is succeeding or reading at grade level by that point.

A highlight of the Read by Grade 3 program is one of the policy elements of the program which includes the potential for retention if a student is not succeeding. That part of the policy has not been implemented yet, so it is difficult to evaluate the impact. Essentially, you are treating that part of the program as similar to a graduation test. One of the things that the state noticed a couple of years ago, when the end-of-course assessments were taken away as part of the graduation test requirements, was that you saw graduation rates jump. By removing that assessment component, there was an artificial jump in graduation rates. By removing that requirement, you are naturally going to see people graduate who would not have otherwise met that requirement.

Within the Read by Grade 3 program, there are elements of legal risk that I think are worth considering because it is being treated as a de facto graduation test or a promotion test. Some of the work in that area revolves around opportunity to learn. Some of the research that comes out of the seminal court case, *Debra P. v. Turlington* from Florida in the late 1970s really speaks to the need for students to not only have the opportunity to have this information in the curriculum, but to actually receive that instruction and those types of supports in order for them to have the opportunity to succeed by the time that accountability element is implemented. That is my slight departure into the policy realm from the evaluation on that.

The next program is the Underperforming Schools Turnaround. That particular program, similar to the Great Teaching and Leading Fund, is somewhat difficult to look at in the aggregate. Each one of the underperforming schools has a slightly different plan for how they ultimately are intending to try to turn that school around. In some cases it may be an emphasis on leadership. In some cases, it may be an emphasis on improving or updating curriculum or instructional strategies. In the full report, we highlighted some of the individual schools in that sample to illustrate how different schools are engaging with that program. To make holistic recommendations around that program is difficult because of the customized needs of each of the schools that participate.

Similarly, with the Great Teaching and Leading Fund, each one of those funded grants has an opportunity to provide value. The professional development piece for these programs represents that value investment. Engaging in professional development for teachers can have 3- to 5- to 10-year residual effects on the investments you are making now.

Those cases, the Underperforming Schools Turnaround and the Great Teaching and Leading Fund, represent subprogram specific elements. The highlighting of some of the particular things that were funded within each of those programs is what you will see in the report.

With that, I want to hand this presentation over to Myisha Williams to speak to a couple of our other programs.

Myisha Y. Williams, President and Managing Member, MYS LLC, Henderson, Nevada:
I am actually the program manager on this evaluation, and I hope to coordinate the evaluators from both the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, their Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment department, and the evaluators at ACS Ventures. I am going to cover two of the programs that the evaluators have summarized.

First is the social workers grants to schools. I am referring back to Dr. Buckendahl's mention of theory of action. This is when we are expecting longer-term gain. The state has made rapid progress in creation of guidance documents for program implementation and service delivery in forming partnerships to assist students and families. The program has galvanized these products and seems to have created a centralized mechanism stemming from the commonality of education for service provision.

One of the secondary items that we see coming from the program is that the qualitative data from the evaluation survey of nearly 1,000 educators provides concrete examples of how the program is affecting students by providing resources for the staff at schools.

We are seeing variability in outcomes. We have seen declines in student transiency and habitual truancy. However, there have been increases in violence against students and reports of bullying. There is also an increase in responses to those reports by the schools. These findings are similar to the state averages.

The lack of a statewide implementation of a climate survey made it really difficult for us to make an analysis across the state because those are done at the district level. We have done our best to compile that information into the qualitative summary. There appears to be substantial variability with how the schools are enacting the program and the differences and needs across the geographic regions and at grade levels. We expect that the implementation timing for the program needs to be a bit longer.

At present, it is not clear if the program is having an impact primarily on students in the most critical need, or if the program effects have made their way to improving the environment for all students. Some educators felt that the impact in their classroom through supports from the program to implement social/emotional curriculum and developed strategies to manage behavior have been positive. Others only saw impact on the students in the most critical need. We did get feedback in both ways.

In summation, short-term outcomes included changing school climate in immediate health and safety-related behaviors—which in turn should have an impact on longer-term social/emotional and academic outcomes for students, teacher effectiveness, and family engagement.

Moving into Nevada Ready 21, implementation of this program was seen in about 27 percent of middle schools in Nevada. They followed the proposed models for a school selection, technology equipment supply, and resource allocation to maximize the impact of devices on the learning environment. The survey findings indicated that as teachers received more professional development opportunities, they shared ideas in growth of their ability to integrate technology into instruction, creating assignments, monitoring student programs, and providing student feedback. The survey responses were extremely positive. Some of the more positive ones that we saw in terms of direct change to the classroom were observed by teachers. Seventy-eight percent of the educators reported daily use of devices, and 90 percent reported positive change in student behavior in classwork quality, skills, and use of research strategies. Students showed: increased motivation, based on both the educators themselves and the administrators that were surveyed; more control of their own learning; and increased engagement in twenty-first century skills. One example of this growth was observed in students' information technology in literacy—students are now comfortable working online, communicating with their teachers online, and researching information online. Teachers felt that they are better able to focus their time on providing students with individualized instruction by monitoring the students' activities and progress, assessing their strengths, where they need to grow, and creating specific assignments that will help to achieve goals. Both teachers and administrators reported that the program increased the students' ability to collaborate and to work in teams and the teachers' abilities to collaborate with one another.

There is evidence that the program is enabling teachers to successfully integrate tools and technology in their classroom, allowing them to become more effective in reaching students who are inefficient with their time.

We believe that funding of this program does represent a fundamental shift toward aligning students with the real world. However, we as an evaluation team would caution that if there continues to be a funding priority for this type of program, the state should think about the impact on students and educators in schools transitioning out of the program as well as integration into the secondary level, so students who have become accustomed to using technology in the classroom at the middle school level have a point of continuity as they move into higher levels of education.

We have limited empirical evidence of impact on student achievement as far as through test scores, but there have been indications from educators that they do expect improvement at that level over time.

The only other thing we want to mention is that there is not a clear contrast group right now, and there are schools operating in 101 environments which are not funded by this program

and not included as part of the evaluation. As part of the Senate meeting yesterday, it was requested that we do a follow-up to see where and how that is affecting the overall evaluation.

Chad Buckendahl:
As evaluators, part of our charge was to provide a recommendation as to whether or not funding should continue for the program. However, again, we are not here as advocates for or against either of the programs. The way we interpreted that charge is really to say that if the Legislature continues to fund these programs, there is nothing in the programs suggesting flawed underlying theories of action, or that the qualitative and quantitative evidence collected thus far suggests the programs are, or are not, beginning to show evidence of what they are intended to do. With that, part of the role of the Legislature is to ensure accountability for these investments and the spending of public dollars.

Chairman Thompson:
The *Nevada External Outcomes Evaluation* is an exhibit uploaded on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) (Exhibit F).

I have a question regarding Nevada Ready 21. Where can we get a list of the schools that were awarded? Is there a way you can share a bit more about the criteria? Do we intentionally look for students who may go to a school where most of them may not have access to Wi-Fi at home to try to close that achievement gap? For a student who already has technology at home, of course they are going to do well, but to try to bridge that gap—I would think we would be trying to reach out to those students who do not have technology at home.

Myisha Williams:
I would be happy to forward to you the list of schools that were part of the evaluation following today's meeting.

Chad Buckendahl:
This is a program that is grant-funded, so districts or schools are required to apply for the grant. That would be something in terms of the materials for each of the programs. So, as Myisha Williams is collecting that list of schools, we can contact the program lead to get the application materials and the evaluation criteria for how the schools are actually selected.

Chairman Thompson:
Is the criteria for the grant conducted through the Department of Education? If so, sometimes in these situations, it maybe should not be a grant process. Sometimes, schools that really need it may not have the ability to write a perfect grant proposal versus those that may have that ability. Again, are we creating barriers for our students when we should not? Can you answer that?

Chad Buckendahl:
We would need to look at the specific evaluation criteria to know what is prioritized in terms of the selection process. That is done, I believe, through the Department of Education review of those applications. One of the things that Ms. Williams mentioned regarded the statistic of 27 percent of schools participating in this particular program—that is not inclusive of the additional schools in the state that may be receiving funding from other sources. There are other types of technology access programs. In terms of how schools are selected or the process by which they are identified and selected—yes, this could be something that is looked at further.

Chairman Thompson:
I think you mentioned it, but we would like the same information that the Senate requested. Could we have someone from the Department of Education come forth and share the basic guidelines for the grant and tell us if the Department sets the parameters?

Jonathan Moore:
Regarding the Nevada Ready 21 program, we do set the priorities. It is a competitive grant. I do not know if one of the competing priorities is need. I believe that as part of the application, districts and schools must articulate why they need the funds and how they plan to use the funds. I can certainly find out what the specific application criteria are.

Assemblywoman Torres:
I am an English teacher. In the classroom we always say that all language instruction is going to benefit all students. Have we done any research with Zoom schools to see how students whose first language is English and students for whom English is their second language—or maybe their third or fourth—are being helped?

Chad Buckendahl:
That is a great question that is not specifically looked at in this particular evaluation. In terms of language acquisition, during those first three to four years, we typically see the biggest gains in learning the structure of language—introductory vocabulary, verb tense, structural things like that. Then you begin to see a plateau as the complexity of the vocabulary and the domains—speaking, reading, writing, and listening—become more complex. The extent to which supportive or complementary instruction would help all students is not something we specifically looked at here. We can see if there is existing literature out there, because it is a good question. Typically, once English language learners (ELLs) tend to get beyond the ELL system, they tend to perform very well. Then, within English language arts, mathematics, and other course areas, they have that prerequisite language skill to succeed in these other academic areas.

Assemblywoman Torres:
When you are taking courses for education, there is always a heavy emphasis on the fact that any language instruction is going to benefit all students, even that student who may not be an

English language learner, but those additional structure and support systems—graphic organizers, background information—are helping those students. How do the Zoom policies help the other students?

Chad Buckendahl:
That is something we will take a look at. It is not something we looked at specifically in this particular evaluation.

Chairman Thompson:
We will move onto our final public comment. [There was none.] This will conclude our meeting.

The meeting is adjourned [at 2:59 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Sharon McCallen
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A is the Agenda.

Exhibit B is the Attendance Roster.

Exhibit C is an untitled document regarding the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, presented by Karen Gordon, State Coordinator, Nevada Homeless Education Program, Department of Education.

Exhibit D is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Eddy House: House of Help. House of Hope.", submitted by Michele Gehr, Executive Director, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada, and presented by Meredith M. Tanzer, Community Outreach Specialist, Eddy House, Reno, Nevada.

Exhibit E is a document titled "Southern Nevada Plan to End Youth Homelessness," submitted and presented by Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Exhibit F is a report titled *Nevada External Outcomes Evaluation*, dated January 7, 2019, prepared for the Nevada Department of Education by ACS Ventures, LLC; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Las Vegas Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment; and MYS Project Management; and presented by Chad W. Buckendahl, Partner, ACS Ventures LLC, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Myisha Y. Williams, President and Managing Member, MYS LLC, Henderson, Nevada.