

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Eightieth Session
March 18, 2019**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Edgar Flores at 9:04 a.m. on Monday, March 18, 2019, in Room 3143 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 Edgar Flores, Chair
Assemblyman William McCurdy II, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Alex Assefa
Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod
Assemblyman Richard Carrillo
Assemblywoman Bea Duran
Assemblyman John Ellison
Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow
Assemblyman Gregory T. Hafen II
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblyman Glen Leavitt
Assemblywoman Susie Martinez
Assemblywoman Connie Munk

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Jill Tolles, Assembly District No. 25



STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jered McDonald, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Kirsten Oleson, Committee Secretary
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Zach Conine, State Treasurer
Nicole O'Banion, Domestic Violence Ombudsman, Violence, Office of the Attorney General
J. Kyle Dalpe, Interim Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education
Liz Ortenburger, Chief Executive Officer, SafeNest
Brenda Pearson, Director of Professional Learning, Clark County Education Association
Susan Meuschke, Executive Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Marlene Lockard, representing Nevada Women's Lobby
Denise Yoxsimer, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Resource Center
Staci Alonso, Founder/President, Noah's Animal House Foundation
Kimberly Mull, representing Xquisite
Paul Moradkhan, Vice President, Government Affairs, Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce

Chair Flores:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and procedures were explained.] I would like to open the hearing on Assembly Bill 216.

Assembly Bill 216: Requires the establishment of a database of information relating to funding opportunities for higher education and career advancement. (BDR 18-858)

Assemblywoman Jill Tolles, Assembly District No. 25:

I am particularly excited about this bill. It has been a wonderful journey to get here. I would like to share a bit of the story about how we came to the language for Assembly Bill 216. As many of you know, I have a particular interest in the area of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking; these are issues I have worked on for many years. As I have worked, I have learned ways that we can help to address these issues. During the interim I had the opportunity to tour the Domestic Violence Resource Center (DVRC) up in Reno, Nevada. I was so amazed by all the services that they provide which include counseling, housing for all the people who qualify for the S.A.F.E. [Stop Abuse in the Family Environment] House program, resources, access to transportation, food, and other aid. They even have a place to take care of your pets—which they have found to be incredibly crucial

to reaching out to this population. I asked the DVRC about education—especially for individuals who are living in their assisted living program for two years. They said that it is something that they need to pursue more. The truth is that if you are a domestic violence victim or a survivor of human trafficking—even if we can get you into a safe house and a program for counseling and resources—by the end of those couple years if you still do not have skills to be able to pursue long-term career stability for you and your children, then you are financially vulnerable to go back into those same circumstances.

The visit began my journey of reaching out to all the different education and workforce programs to find out if we could find some sort of scholarship specifically for this population. What I have found is that we have many available scholarships out there. Some of the available scholarships include the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE); the Silver State Opportunity Grant; Pell Grants on the federal level; if you go to the Office of Economic Development in the Office of the Governor there are often workforce training scholarships or grant programs available; and if you go to the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) there are outreach and training programs available.

What we found is that oftentimes it is really difficult for an individual who wants to make a career change or wants to upskill to find those programs that are out there—whether you are a K-12 student, an adult, or part of a vulnerable population. That led to a wonderful, enlightened conversation with our new State Treasurer Zach Conine about how we get people better connected to programs that are out there already. How do we set up a single point of entry online database where you can go and shop various scholarship programs, workforce development programs, grants, donations, gifts, and free apprenticeship classes?

We decided that the Treasurer's Office was a perfect place to house those so that people could navigate all the many options out there—whether it is NSHE, DETR, the Governor's Office of Workforce Innovations, Governor's Office of Economic Development, or any other program that we invent in the Legislature. How do we do a better job getting people easy access to that? That question led to the proposal to set up the online portal through the Office of the State Treasurer. Again, you will see this outlined in the bill in the first part of section 1. The bill is to establish an online portal for individuals seeking scholarships, grants, and other funding opportunities available for educational or workforce development programs in a single location on the State Treasurer's website. This can be utilized by any member of the public, but it is particularly useful for college and career counselors, parents, families, K-12 students planning their future after graduation, and for adults looking for a change in their career or opportunities to upskill in their current profession.

That is the first part of the bill, but we did not want to forget about where we started—wanting to really help those people in that specific population that I previously referenced. We asked ourselves, how do we do even more outreach to victims and survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking? We wanted to make sure that they know about this portal, that they are given an extra level of assistance to access the information, and to walk through all the steps to properly apply. If there are concerns about privacy—particularly if they have someone who is still actively stalking them—someone could help work with them in the

various institutes to make sure their privacy is always protected. We want to make sure they walk through the process appropriately, get enrolled in programs, and are set up to be successful to graduate and walk away with a diploma or certificate so that they are able to get a job with a stable income for themselves and their families.

In addition, this bill seeks to establish a pilot program out of the Office of the Attorney General to do outreach and provide assistance for victims of domestic violence and sex trafficking. We want them to learn about and apply for available programs and to obtain new work skills and job opportunities to help lift them out of the cycles of financial vulnerability and abuse. I have our State Treasurer, Zach Conine, and Nicole O'Banion—who is the Ombudsman for Victims of Domestic Violence with the Attorney General's Office—to speak to how this bill works in their jurisdictions.

Zach Conine, State Treasurer:

As highlighted by Assemblywoman Tolles, A.B. 216 requires the State Treasurer to maintain a public database with information relating to sources of funding for higher education and career advancement. The database would include a comprehensive list of programs, scholarships, grants, student loans, or any other form of financial assistance to all individuals seeking higher education or career advancement. Listings would include, at least, the relevant contact information regarding the program along with any eligibility requirements. The database would be publicly available by a website overseen by our office. It would link to an email form and telephone number for anyone needing additional information or assistance.

There are currently many great programs offered by the state to help students afford higher education, but many people simply do not know about them. Assembly Bill 216 is seeking to change that by creating a one-stop-shop for Nevadans to find out about all the programs that are already in place and determine which ones are best for them. The State Treasurer's Office, as you know, is responsible for administering a number of college savings programs including the Nevada Prepaid Tuition Program, the Nevada College Savings Program—which has the traditional 529 plans—the Governor Guinn Millennium and Memorial Scholarship Programs, and the Nevada College Kick start program. The addition of this repository will help to foster greater opportunities not only for victims of domestic violence, but also for underserved communities across the state by helping to offset costs of higher education, alleviate student loan debt, and make saving for the future a possibility for all Nevadans.

We are excited and grateful that the Attorney General's Office has offered to assist in marketing these efforts specifically to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Together our offices can work collaboratively to ensure that no victim is left behind and that they have all the tools necessary to get an education and make a better life for themselves. While this is a policy committee, I would like to note that our office is still evaluating the potential fiscal impact of the bill. We are working to make sure that this database gets up and running as inexpensively as possible. [Assemblywoman Tolles also submitted ([Exhibit C](#)), Overview Statement on AB216, March 18, 2019.]

Nicole O'Banion, Domestic Violence Ombudsman, Office of the Attorney General:

The Attorney General's Office supports Assembly Bill 216 and the establishment of this education and training victim assistance program. [Ms. O'Banion read from prepared remarks ([Exhibit D](#)).] The lack of access to resources for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking who are pursuing higher education or career advancement has been identified statewide as an impeding gap that is hindering this population's ability to achieve security and freedom from violence. The Attorney General's Office envisions the implementation of this program to be facilitated through direct and continued communication with domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking service providers; system advocates; prosecutors; and law enforcement statewide. Press releases, brochures, and information sheets, along with a specialized section for the program on the Attorney General's website will be the method utilized in promoting this service. Information on the program will also be provided at all domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking events sponsored by or attended by the Attorney General's Ombudsman. Our presence at these events will continue to raise awareness and expand the program's reach to the general public.

In addition to the promotion of the program, the Attorney General's Ombudsman will utilize an advocate trained in trauma-informed care, victim-centered approach, and the dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking to provide direct services to this special population by assisting them with the information contained in the database. Thank you, and I look forward to working with you to establish this program so we can further achieve our mission to support victims.

Chair Flores:

Thank you. We have some questions.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

My question is about section 1, subsection 3 (d), where it says "May accept any gift, bequest donation, grant, or other source of money for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section." I just wanted to make sure that it would not be for advertising. I would hate to see a university or college paying to have their name up at the top.

Zach Conine:

Thank you for the question; it is a good question. Often when we see these repositories come together, they push certain programs over others. Our intention in the office is to create a full list of programs which can be sorted by population. For example, I am 37 and I am trying to get access to a program. What programs are still applicable to me? The use of grant dollars would be focused more on making sure that we can reach out to as many people as possible and make sure that the technology is as robust as possible—not for an advertising use.

Nicole O'Banion:

The other piece to that is for the Attorney General's Office to be able to apply to any federal grants that would assist us in being able to serve every victim that comes into our office.

Assemblyman Carrillo:

In section 1, subsection 1, on the very last part of the first paragraph, it talks about career advancement. Could you define "career advancement" for me?

Assemblywoman Tolles:

We have the Nevada System of Higher Education where you can get a two-year degree, associate's degree, certain certification programs—I believe we have a representative from Truckee Meadows Community College here today who can speak to those programs—you can get a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or a terminal degree—like a Ph.D. You also have various other career advancement programs through the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, for example. We do not want to only narrow this down to people who already have a high school diploma and are ready to move onto a community college or a four-year university system. We want to be able to reach the population that dropped out of high school as well. They are the population who first need to get their GED certificate or take their high school equivalency exam. We want to make sure that we get them into various apprenticeship programs if they are interested and it is available. There are any number of workforce development or career advancement programs, and we would like to make sure all options are available to each one of these individuals.

Assemblyman Carrillo:

Of course you are mentioning higher education. I personally do not have a college degree; I went to a trade school. There are women electricians or journeypersons. For apprenticeship programs you are not looking for a grant or a step up. If anything, you want to have resources so that unions can hire you—whether you are a man or woman. My concern is that it says pursuing higher education and career advancement. What you gave me was very broad and vague. You mentioned apprenticeship. Not everyone wants to go to a four-year or two-year college. I am concerned that when someone wants to become a phlebotomist, certified nursing assistant, or something like that, it is a start for them. To me, it just seems a little vague when it talks about career advancement. Higher education is really specific but career advancement is real vague. My question is: How do we make sure that people who do not want to go to college will be able to be assisted in this? Some people might want to become cosmetologists. Are we going to help them?

Assemblywoman Tolles:

I could not agree more with you. If there is another set of wording in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* that we could refer to or create a new definition, I am certainly open to it. You are absolutely correct that career advancement, as I said earlier, encompasses all forms of workforce training—which would include a high school diploma if that is the next step for you. It also encompasses trade certifications or apprenticeships. We know that oftentimes trades make a lot more money than our graduates coming out of higher education. Those trades are sustainable, long-time careers where you can absolutely provide for yourself and your family. I could not agree with you more. I appreciate your adding that clarification to the record. I am certainly open to it if there is a suggestion for a way to enhance that language to incorporate all those things. That is what the career advancement is speaking to—it is everything that is not within the higher education system. We want to make sure all those options are available.

Assemblyman Carrillo:

The vagueness is my concern. Regarding section 1, subsection 4, what is currently done through the Attorney General's Office? Are they doing anything? It says to establish a program to market and conduct outreach to victims of domestic violence. Is there currently anything being done at all? Has it fallen on deaf ears?

Nicole O'Banion:

There is a tremendous amount being done for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking statewide through the Attorney General's Office. To help the previously mentioned population, we partner with our nonprofit community service providers, system advocates, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judiciary. We are really involved in almost every single agency or branch. We assume full responsibility to be a part of any and all things related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. At the office, we named it the Education and Training Victim Assistance Program. We wanted the training to capture the entire other population that you were referring to in your previous questions. This has been identified as a gap. The wonderful thing about this bill, and with the participation of the Treasurer's Office and their database, is that it is really giving us a platform to pick up momentum and serve these victims in a greater way on the long-term scope—which is what I am so excited about and the Attorney General's Office is so excited about. We really want to help lift these people out of this cycle of violence and the vulnerabilities that make them susceptible to that. Having a sustainable financial life is critical for that long-term healing and health.

Assemblyman Hafen:

Part of the discussion was about how some of this would be marketed. I am specifically looking at section 1, subsection 3 (c), where it discusses employing staff at the State Treasurer's Office. I am going to assume that the websites are being developed by an outside source and not an internal source; therefore, would this be too limiting to allow that outside source to do the website and the database? Maybe you do everything internally, I do not know.

Zach Conine:

We do most of our web development through our information technology resources internally or through Enterprise Information Technology Services. To the extent that we wanted to use an outside group, I do not have a problem putting that flexibility in there.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

I have a student who is a freshman in high school. I can see myself utilizing this. I was wondering, especially for people who might be interested in changing professions, what about also including some loan forgiveness programs? I know that there are some teacher forgiveness programs which might encourage people to go into that profession. Would that be a possibility of something that we could add?

Zach Conine:

One of the reasons why I was so excited when Assemblywoman Tolles and I had the first conversation was because the possibilities here are endless. We are able to effectively create, an opportunity repository, a central place. When new programs are created or we have a conversation and say that is the kind of program that we want everyone to have access to, we can add them. I see this database getting larger and larger in perpetuity. It can be as all-encompassing as possible.

Assemblyman Assefa:

Oftentimes the challenge for people seeking to pursue advanced degrees or a career advancement is the hurdle they face to find resources to pay for higher education. It is oftentimes daunting and very discouraging. This creates a centralized location for people to go find those resources; that is a great thing. In section 2, it says July 1, 2019, is the effective day. My question is, how soon can you get this rolling? By July 1 will you have the database built up and launched?

Zach Conine:

We started developing the database after Assemblywoman Tolles and I spoke for the first time so that we could start collecting the information together. Obviously, post-passage of the bill is where we would take the time to develop the web resource that would host it. Our hope is that the time line is extremely possible. Of course over time, as I mentioned before, it will continue to get broader, deeper, and more effective as we include more programs for everyone.

Chair Flores:

Seeing no more questions, I will invite those wishing to speak in support to come forward.

J. Kyle Dalpe, Interim Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education:

I am the proud father of my final kid going through higher education. I could not find all this stuff. I appreciate this bill coming forward. The Nevada System of Higher Education supports A.B. 216 to provide a centralized database portal to connect potential students with scholarship opportunities that are eligible and available to offset the cost of postsecondary education. Access is one of our strategic goals to support participation in higher education, and funding is often the obstacle of participation for potential students. The establishment of this database will ensure that funding sources through scholarship opportunities will be visible to potential students—in particular those mentioned in section 1, subsection 4—to train and retrain in their local community and secure a more stable life. A variety of scholarship opportunities are currently available. Most of them you know: the Silver State Opportunity Grant—the state's only need-based financial aid program for community and state college students. In addition there are many other public and private scholarships from a variety of organizations and donors, as well as federal options, to assist students in their program of study.

If I could address some of the questions that came up from Assemblyman Carrillo in terms of career advancement. Again, as Assemblywoman Tolles mentioned, the high school equivalency is one piece, but when we talk about career advancement, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that with more education from high school all the way up to a professional degree there is a progression in salary. More important to that is when you have more postsecondary education, you are less likely to be displaced in a downturn in the economy. When we talk about career advancement, especially at the technical levels, we are talking about careers that put you on a path where you are starting at a level-one technician, say at a local Gigafactory near you. A level-one technician would progress you with some more skills to level two, three, and four where you become more stable going forward. The programs that Assemblyman Carrillo mentioned—with the exception of cosmetology—are all offered at our community colleges and are available for scholarships like any other program. This also includes apprenticeships where we articulate credits to the union so a student comes out from apprenticeship to journeyman and also has college credits moving towards a certificate or degree program. We talked about that as a way to help them maintain a solid career that will hold them going forward.

Liz Ortenburger, Chief Executive Officer, SafeNest:

We are a domestic violence agency that serves Clark County. We see over 25,000 victims annually suffering from domestic violence. I wanted to thank Assemblywoman Tolles and this Committee for overseeing this bill. Financial independence is one of the most crippling aspects of domestic violence. SafeNest employs over 75 staff members, 80 percent of whom are focused on providing direct services to victims. We deliver over 120,000 hours of direct support every year and an additional 700,000 hours in shelter support. It is not enough. This database will help streamline one portion of our work so that as we are trying to find pathways from victim to survivor, of financial independence and livelihood independence for these victims, this bill makes that streamlined and easier.

A secondary effect to this bill, while not its intent, is provoking critical conversations about resources that are being provided. Actual access to victims will become much more apparent. There is a gap between intent and implementation on some of these. This bill will help highlight that for future conversations. In addition, it may also highlight the extreme lack of resources currently available for domestic violence victims. This will help with future legislation and solutions for this epidemic. We are the second-most dangerous place for women in the country, rated on domestic violence homicides.

Brenda Pearson, Director of Professional Learning, Clark County Education Association:

In education we speak about the need for Nevada's children to be college- and career-ready upon graduation, but there is a lack of support for students who do not want to go into higher education and, instead, want to go into a career—perhaps trades or apprenticeships. This online portal will reveal opportunities and programs that are available to all of our students. It will serve as a mechanism that can support the work of our school counselors, enabling counselors to share these multiple paths that are available for students to pursue after they graduate.

Susan Meuschke, Executive Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence:

We are the statewide coalition of domestic and sexual violence programs in Nevada. I am here today to testify in favor of A.B. 216. While education will not stop the violence—that is in the hands of the abuser—it will help survivors move on in their lives while also providing them with the skills to support themselves and their families. According to a study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 73 percent of the respondents said that they stayed with their abusive partner longer than they wanted to or returned to them for economic reasons. Sixty-six percent said that an abusive partner had disrupted their ability to complete education or training. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, earning a college degree brings people an additional \$427,000 for a two-year college degree, and \$822,000 for a four-year degree—that is an average. Attaining these degrees is often difficult; survivors often have limited resources and many other needs that take precedence. The database envisioned in this bill would provide access to information about funding for education that would help overcome other barriers. We are eager to work with the involved parties to help market this information and make sure the survivors have access to these resources.

Marlene Lockard, representing Nevada's Women Lobby:

Obviously, we are very much in support of this legislation. As we all know, education leads to the success of all of us. We encourage these efforts. I also wear a different hat. I have the privilege of being the chair of the board of directors of the Nevada Domestic Violence Resource Center. A couple of years ago it was known as the Committee to Aid Abused Women. A lot went into the name change—particularly because we were and are a resource center. We offer so many services for domestic violence victims. I would like to introduce the executive director, Denise Yoxsimer. She will talk in a little bit more detail about some of those services and why this program will help us disseminate this information to our clients.

Denise Yoxsimer, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Resource Center:

[Ms. Yoxsimer read from prepared remarks ([Exhibit E](#)).] Last fiscal year, staff at our organization provided one-on-one advocacy to more than 8,500 individuals. We provided residential services to 919 individuals—which includes 446 children—residing in our emergency shelter, and transitional housing staff and volunteers responded to 1,500 crisis calls on our 24-hour emergency hotline.

We know that domestic violence takes many forms—it ranges from verbal abuse and put-downs to devastating physical violence. Once the bones mend and the bruises fade, the impacts of the violence lives on in many ways. The impact of domestic violence is magnified through its affect on the current and future financial well-being of the victim and his or her family.

Financial abuse is defined by the National Network to End Domestic Violence as behavior that seeks to control a person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain economic resources and threatens their self-sufficiency and financial autonomy. Financial abuse occurs in 99 percent

of domestic violence cases and has economic impacts on survivors throughout their lifetimes. As Ms. Meuschke mentioned, a survivor might be forced to stay with an abuser due to concerns about economic stability. In a 2012 survey, three out of four victims said they stayed with their abusers longer due to economic reasons. Of the 85 percent of victims who returned to their abusers, a significant number cited an inability to address their finances as the reason why. Finally, 25-50 percent of homeless families cite that they have lost their homes as a result of domestic violence. As I said earlier, we see the devastating impacts of financial and domestic abuse at our agency every day.

In an effort to directly address the long-term impacts of financial abuse and to increase our capacity to support victims as they work to increase their financial stability, our organization invested in a financial literacy program for all of our residential clients. This program began in April 2018, and in less than one year we have seen some pretty significant and promising results. Of the 16 transitional housing residents who have participated:

- One resident has obtained full-time employment after being unemployed for 11 months;
- One resident has moved from part-time employment to full-time employment at a higher hourly wage;
- Five payday loans have come due for this population, and they are all now paid in full—education about predatory payday loans is a focus for all residents;
- Three residents now have savings and checking accounts for the first time—one of these clients has saved \$2,000 in approximately 10 months—which is huge;
- More than 65 percent of transitional housing residents have increased their credit scores—the highest jump has been approximately 257 points;
- Two residents have purchased cars in the past 10 months;
- Five residents have been able to afford getting their cars “legal”—insurance, registration, and other Department of Motor Vehicle fines that were levied have been paid;
- One resident was able to save money and use cash to pull her car out of repossession and is now current with her car payments; and
- Finally, two residents have now successfully moved out of the transitional housing program and independently moved into their own “market rate” apartments—no longer receiving subsidies.

A common goal that is cited by our financial literacy program participants is a need for career and educational advancement. As you just heard, with the appropriate support they can be very successful. That is why we strongly support A.B. 216. This legislation will gather educational and career advancement opportunities in one convenient place for victims to access. It will also help our advocates work with our victims to help them access this information. Finding support that enhances economic stability will help to create healthier and safer individuals and families, and will significantly reduce the recidivism rate among domestic violence survivors.

Staci Alonso, Founder/President, Noah's Animal House Foundation:

I am here to also express my support for A.B. 216. Noah's Animal Houses reside on the campuses of both the Domestic Violence Resource Center (DVRC) in Reno and The Shade Tree shelter in Las Vegas. We were the first pet shelter to open on the grounds of a domestic violence shelter in the country in 2007. We have assisted on what is now known as the federal Pet and Women Safety Act of 2017—previously known as Pets Included in Protection Order.

The survivors at The Shade Tree shelter, DVRC, and Noah's are actually some of the strongest, most courageous individuals you could ever meet—they just do not know it. Many of them have been denied access to their household finances as a form of control under the false view that they are incompetent to manage their own finances. Their abuser often fails to support them or controls their access to employment because it could lead to freedom. We have served thousands of clients through their pet care—it is only a percentage of those touched by Mrs. Ortenburger at SafeNest, The Shade Tree shelter, and Ms. Yoxsimer at DVRC.

I believe my voice is a little bit unique. We are the voice of hope. We see the transformation of spirit in our clients when they walk through the doors of Noah's and see their pet on the other side. It is an unconditional love that often shows up in the wagging of a tail or a wiggling of a butt. We know that the women who have been staying at the shelter with a pet at Noah's have a recidivism rate of less than 2 percent. The women without pets have a recidivism rate of over 15-20 percent. What that simply states is that when they have support and the unconditional love of a pet, they break the pattern of abuse and build self-worth, self-sufficiency, and move forward. They deserve every bit of help that they can get to move forward, which might include early educational resources, access to information, employment coaching, and training. Those things help to bring confidence in a path to self-sufficiency—similar to that wagging of the tail.

In my professional life, access to information in a one-stop shop, quite honestly and respectfully, seems very simple. Yet, to these victims it is like being able to take a step forward with concrete shoes on. Thank you for your time. Please help Nevada victims of domestic violence and human trafficking get out of the life they know and into the life they deserve. With the passage of A.B. 216, you too can help reduce recidivism and play a role in their journey to self-worth and self-sufficiency.

Kimberly Mull, representing Xquisite:

Today I am representing Xquisite. Xquisite is a 501(c)(3) based in Carson City. Their vision is to empower women. They work with women in the sex trade in all stages of life—mainly women in the brothels in the area. Oftentimes these are women who just want a cup of coffee and want to visit for information. A lot of times it is for information about their rights as an independent contractor. However, this often turns into conversations about being sexually assaulted and drugged and their wanting to know what resources and information they have available. Also they want help getting "out of the lifestyle." This is where it comes into play where Xquisite has a contract with Skill Center LLC, which helps them connect these women with learning, getting certification in work programs, building resumes, and getting skills they can put on resumes. They help them get out there and get a job. We are very excited about A.B. 216; this is something that we can use to offer an additional resource to these women.

On a personal note, I know that many of you know that I am a survivor of sex trafficking and sexual assault. I am also a survivor of domestic violence. I got married very early—that is what we do in the South. I got married when I was 20 years old. One of the things that I struggled with when I was very young was that I wanted to go to college. I wanted to go to school but my ex-husband—my abuser—only had an eighth-grade education. As part of the power/control dynamic, he told me no. Essentially, I was to stay at home and be a wife. At the time, colleges still sent paper catalogs to you. I would wait for those catalogs to arrive. I remember I would get the Georgetown Law School catalog. I would look through it and then hide it before he got home so that he could not see that I got that.

Education is a big thing for victims. It is something that victims dream about. It is not just something that can be a skill; it is a means of escape. It is a powerful tool that victims can use. It is something that can be life changing—as it was for me. I was able to go to a trade school. I started out with a real estate license. I was able to use the license and then get my associates, bachelors, masters, and hopefully my Ph.D. or J.D. I was able to take that basic step with the trade school. I do hope that is something that is very spelled-out in the bill. I appreciate Assemblywoman Tolles for bringing A.B. 216 forward.

Paul Moradkhan, Vice President, Government Affairs, Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce:

The Chamber is in support of the creation of a one-stop database for our students—as it relates to higher education development. As you know, the Chamber has supported efforts to increase public awareness of resources and tools that are available to all Nevadans as they pursue their workforce and career development needs. The Chamber appreciates the efforts of the Treasurer and Assemblywoman Tolles.

Chair Flores:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in opposition? Seeing no one, is there anyone wishing to speak in neutral? Seeing no one, Assemblywoman Tolles please proceed with closing remarks.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

Thank you for the questions. I will certainly see if there are any other ways to further clarify the language on the workforce development/career advancement piece. I welcome any input. I am very excited about the opportunities that this provides for families, parents, and working adults who are looking to change positions or upskill, and for the special populations that we just outlined. You heard some pretty compelling testimonies.

If I may close with one final story. Taking us back about ten years ago, I was teaching at Truckee Meadows Community College. I had what we call a nontraditional student—an adult student in her mid-forties—who, using my own term, went gray. She was a straight-A student, always early to class, always participating, but about midway through the semester she went blank. She stopped participating and was clearly distressed. I pulled her aside after class one day and asked if everything was okay. She immediately apologized and said she would do better. She said that her husband did not like the idea of her getting an education so he beat her in front of her two daughters. She realized that it was not just about her life, it was about their lives and the message that it was sending to them. She did not want to be trapped in the cycle anymore and she did not want her daughters to enter into that cycle, so she moved out. She made a choice. Her education was so important to her that it was worth fighting for—not just for herself, but for her children. She was really worried about whether she would be able to keep going and be able to afford it. Had this program been available ten years ago, I would have been able to direct her to resources.

I do not know what happened in her later story. I hope that she continued to find the help that she needed, and she stayed, completed, and successfully got back out of that cycle and never went back. I cannot change what happened ten years ago, but we can change what we do moving forward. I hope this bill will help countless others if they find themselves in that situation. If they are willing to fight for their education, then I would like to join them in that fight. I would invite you to join as well. Since I will possibly be bringing forward an

amendment to further clarify the language, I would welcome anyone else who would like to join as a cosponsor. Thank you.

Chair Flores:

I will now close out the hearing on A.B. 216. Is there anyone here for public comment? [There was no one.] This meeting is adjourned [at 9:57 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Kirsten Oleson
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblyman Edgar Flores, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is an overview statement on Assembly Bill 216, dated March, 18, 2019, submitted by Jill Tolles, Assemblywoman, Assembly District No. 25.

[Exhibit D](#) is written testimony presented by Nicole O'Banion, Ombudsman for Victims of Domestic Violence, Office of the Attorney General, in support of Assembly Bill 216.

[Exhibit E](#) is written testimony presented by Denise Yoxsimer, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Resource Center, dated March 18, 2019, in support of Assembly Bill 216.