

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eightieth Session
May 3, 2019**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Moises Denis at 1:09 p.m. on Friday, May 3, 2019, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412E of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada and to Room 102, McMullen Hall, Great Basin College, 1500 College Parkway, Elko, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair
Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Vice Chair
Senator Dallas Harris
Senator Marcia Washington
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Ira Hansen
Senator Keith F. Pickard

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman John Ellison, Assembly District No. 33
Assemblywoman Lisa Krasner, Assembly District No. 26
Assemblyman Tom Roberts, Assembly District No. 13

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst
Risa Lang, Committee Counsel
Steven Jamieson, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

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

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Mark Ghan, Vice President of Special Projects, General Counsel, Western Nevada College

Becky Linville

Lindsay Gowin

Colleen Piacitelli

Lynnette Marie Vega

Morgan Lozano

Wendy Charlebois

Stormy Remington

Sarah Adler, National Alliance on Mental Illness; Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents

CHAIR DENIS:

We will open the meeting with public comment.

J. KYLE DALPE, Ph.D. (Interim Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education):

We are celebrating Rural Higher Education Day at the Legislature. There are about 8,000 to 9,000 students in pursuit of higher education on the campuses of Great Basin College (GBC), headquartered in Elko, and Western Nevada College (WNC), headquartered in Carson City.

MARK GHAN (Vice President of Special Projects, General Counsel, Western Nevada College):

On behalf of WNC, we appreciate your support for higher education.

BECKY LINVILLE:

I am a student at GBC. I am President of the GBC Student Government Association. Thank you for your work to support higher education.

LINDSAY GOWIN:

I am the secretary of the GBC Biological Sciences Student Support Network cohort program for our biological sciences degree. Thank you for all that you do for our higher education.

CHAIR DENIS:

It is good to be able to recognize all of the great work being done in and for the rural areas of Nevada.

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I will open the work session for Assembly Bill (A.B.) 342.

ASSEMBLY BILL 342 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions governing pupils who are children of military personnel. (BDR 34-624)

JEN STURM (Committee Policy Analyst):

I will read the bill summary from the work session document ([Exhibit C](#)).

SENATOR HARRIS:

Assemblyman Roberts, is it your intention that this bill also apply to students of active duty military members who seek an academic zone variance?

ASSEMBLYMAN TOM ROBERTS (Assembly District No. 13):

It is our intent to allow anyone who receives a variance to play interscholastic sports or participate in extracurricular activities. I do not know if the way the law is written precludes someone who is on an academic variance from playing sports. The intent is to provide a venue of participation and shore up the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

RISA LANG (Committee Counsel):

As written, A.B. 342 addresses kids whose families are transferred pursuant to the Interstate Compact. The bill would not apply if those military students were just seeking an academic variance after they have already moved and started at a particular school. It would not apply to children seeking an academic variance that has nothing to do with a transfer that occurs pursuant to the Compact.

SENATOR HARRIS:

That answers my question. If Assemblyman Roberts would like, we can amend the bill on the Senate Floor to provide further clarification.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS:

I will speak with the group with whom I worked to create the bill. I do not believe the original intent of the bill is different from what has been explained. The bill was really meant to shore up the Interstate Compact.

SENATOR WOODHOUSE MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 342.

SENATOR HAMMOND SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR DENIS:

I will open the work session on A.B. 461.

ASSEMBLY BILL 461 (1st Reprint): Makes changes to provide assistance to homeless youth to access opportunities for post-secondary education. (BDR 34-1089)

Ms. STURM:

I will read the bill summary from the work session document ([Exhibit D](#)).

SENATOR WASHINGTON MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 461.

SENATOR PICKARD SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR DENIS:

I will open the work session on A.B. 464.

ASSEMBLY BILL 464: Revises provisions relating to certain eligibility requirements for a pupil to participate in a sanctioned sport. (BDR 34-1127)

Ms. STURM:

I will read the bill summary from the work session document ([Exhibit E](#)).

SENATOR WOODHOUSE MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 464.

SENATOR WASHINGTON SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR DENIS:

I will open the hearing on A.B. 114.

ASSEMBLY BILL 114 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions governing the prevention of suicide by pupils. (BDR S-647)

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN ELLISON (Assembly District No. 33):

Assembly Bill 114 is part of an ongoing conversation on suicide prevention. According to the Office of Suicide Prevention, Nevada has the eleventh highest rate for suicide in the Nation. In 2015, Nevada had the 22nd highest rate of suicide for youth ages 15 to 24. Kids and teens between the ages of 10 and 17 face increasing pressures from school, parents, responsibilities and peers. Peer abuse comes from many forms of teasing, shunning, name calling, physical harm, degrading sexual gestures and cyberbullying.

Most children and teens spend a significant amount their young lives in school. The teachers, counselors and other staff members who interact with the students every day see the problems that are occurring.

COLLEEN PIACITELLI:

I am a dispatcher in Elko. Suicide is an epidemic that has reached our State and local community. I will read my written testimony ([Exhibit F](#)) which contains statistics on suicide and stories about the impact of suicide in our community. I have also submitted a list of statistics on suicide in Elko County from January to April of this year ([Exhibit G](#)).

LYNNETTE MARIE VEGA:

On January 19, 2008, I received a call from my son. He was crying uncontrollably. He said, "Rachelle killed herself." I asked what he was talking about. He said it again, "Rachelle killed herself." I answered a call from my father. He said that I needed to get home. He said that representatives from the U.S. Air Force were looking for me because my daughter had killed herself in South Carolina. My daughter, Rachelle Marie Sloan, died by suicide at the age of 23 while serving in the U.S. Air Force.

Since that horrific day, my life has taken a different direction. I am an advocate for suicide prevention and mental health in Elko County. I am a mother and a grandmother. I have been an educator for over 19 years. For the past ten years,

I have been a facilitator for Survivors of Suicide Loss of Northeastern Nevada. The group is made up of those who have lost someone to suicide.

Since 2014, I have been a Board Member with the Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention. I am the Coalition's rural representative for northern Nevada. Since 2016, I have worked alongside the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). In February 2018, I started an organization called Zero Suicides Elko County.

Rachelle was raised in Elko. She graduated from Elko High School in 2002 then went to the Air Force to fulfill her dreams. While Rachelle was in high school, some of her friends died by suicide. That is when I should have acted on being an advocate, not after my daughter died. As a mother and an educator, I did not know how to talk to my daughter about her friends who died by suicide. I had no idea where to begin. Sadly, most of us do not advocate or do anything until it happens to someone close to us.

I carry guilt with me that I did not learn about suicide prevention until after Rachelle's death. She did not want to die. She only wanted her pain to end, but she did not know how to stop her pain. Most people who die by suicide do not want to die. They only want their pain to end. I tell my students there are two things that are permanent in life—death and suicide.

Life is always changing. Today is May 3, 2019. You are never going to get another May 3, 2019. You are never going to get the minute back that you just had. It is gone. That five minutes ago is gone. The week, month and year ago are gone. Life is constantly changing. I tell my students to hang on for one more day. I ask my students if they know how to talk to someone about suicide. I ask if they know the warning signs of suicide and what to do if someone has the warning signs.

The 2017 *Suicide in Nevada Fact Sheet* from the Office for Suicide Prevention states that "more Nevadans die by suicide than homicide, HIV/AIDS or automobile accidents."

As introduced, section 1, subsection 2 of A.B. 114 states "The State Board shall adopt regulations establishing courses of study in the prevention of suicide for pupils in Grades 5 to 12, inclusive". Children as young as six-years old have attempted suicide.

How do we increase coping skills and protective factors among our youth? How does someone with suicidal thoughts get through that experience? How does someone get through an abuse? My goal is to educate people about suicide prevention at a young age. My goal is to teach coping skills and protective factors more than one day a year. Education is knowledge. It is ignorant to not talk about suicide prevention and mental health in our schools.

I hear kids talking about how difficult their lives are and how no one cares. They have not developed those coping skills to get past the bad moments. Teachers do not need a special certificate to watch out for their students. All children need is a caring adult who would step forward to initiate a healthy lifestyle in their school. Students have a range of circumstances; their voices need to be heard.

Right now, suicide responses are crisis driven. We need to get to our youth before the crisis occurs. Section 2 of the original version of the bill discusses training for licensed educational personnel employed by the school. I taught a vice-principal in the three-hour Suicide Alertness for Everyone: Tell, Ask, Listen and KeepSafe (safeTalk) program training. The next day he approached me and told me he was glad he took the training because a fifth grader and his father had come into his office to tell the vice-principal that the son was contemplating suicide. The vice-principal told me that if he had not taken the class, he would not have known what to say to the young man and his father. The safeTalk program was developed by LivingWorks Education. The Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention has trained instructors to facilitate classes in the State.

This bill will give back to our communities. One suicide affects 165 people or more. For every completed suicide there are 25 attempts. In every high school classroom, there are two or three kids who we do not know about who attempted suicide the night before. These kids wake up and wonder why they are still here and why they are still alive.

If this bill is passed, you will help save hundreds of lives in Nevada. Laws are put into place to protect us and let us know that someone cares. We need to shift the "crisis-driven" model to a "protective factor" model. We need student engagement while connecting with trusted adults. We need to spread social change and strength. It is okay to ask for help. Do not wait until your son, daughter or grandchild dies by suicide to do something about suicide prevention and mental health in education in our schools.

The "pushback" for this bill is funding. If possible, every school district should oversee the writing of a grant. Owyhee Combined School got a Sources of Strength Grant from the local hospital. Sources of Strength is a positive mental health program which puts students in charge. Ending the Silence is a free program that NAMI presents to the middle and high schools. The money would not come from the State. Work is not added work to the teacher who does not want to do it. All that is required is a trusted, caring teacher who sees and feels the need for the program to be at the school.

Ninety percent of those who die by suicide had a mental health condition diagnosis or an undiagnosed mental health condition. Mental health is just as important as any other ailment. We need to change the norm, not take our kids to a mental health clinic. It is difficult for our children to be successful when they are in physical and mental pain. They need our help. I need your help. Let us stop making it normal to die by suicide when things become difficult. The bill will save the lives of our loved ones and of our children's dear friends. Suicide is preventable through proper training.

I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit H](#)).

SENATOR PICKARD:

Suicide is tragic and leaves a devastating mark on families. Most childhood suicides are the result of depression, addiction and other self-destructive behaviors that are nothing less than self-medication. The children are trying to resolve their pain. My wife and I served for years as mentors to children suffering from addiction and other destructive behaviors. Through our training, we learned that research shows we can teach children coping skills like problem solving, controlling feelings and the ability to turn to trusted adults. These skills better protect the children from the risk of suicide. Is this part of the training you are proposing?

ASSEMBLYMAN ELLISON:

Yes. Teachers see this on a daily basis. Teachers can pick through signs that the child's parents might not see. Cyberbullying has led to a dramatic increase in suicide rates. The teachers know what is going on there.

MORGAN LOZANO:

I support A.B. 114. I work with a church group of young women ages 12 to 18. We have seen a marked increase in social anxiety, loss of social skills and loss

of coping skills. As a local community group, we have been concerned about this issue. My focus is mostly on social media and the impact it has on children's anxiety, depression and other problems throughout our society.

Social media gives children unprecedented access to one another and all the embarrassing things they have ever done. It all ends up on social media; people have access to it forever. You can no longer escape the gaffes and foibles that you make when you are in seventh grade. A lot of bullying and peer pressure happens on social media. It is important for us to have some sort of program through which teachers can be educated to help the children they see every day avoid ending their lives.

WENDY CHARLEBOIS:

I have been a social worker for 35 years. My son died by suicide seven months ago. I support A.B. 114. I am retired now, but as a U.S. Department of Defense contractor I trained soldiers about family violence for 5 years in the 1980s. For 16 years I also worked at the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in early intervention. The last 14 years of my career I taught social work for GBC.

Suicide has been a common theme in my work. While training young soldiers on family violence prevention, a young man or woman would often speak out about their own childhood trauma or express past or current thoughts of suicide. The soldiers would talk about their own addictions. They would express how they wished they had some kind of training about stress, coping and reporting family violence while they were growing up. It was sometimes very difficult to listen to the stories of these young soldiers as they recounted their childhood trauma.

While working for DCFS, I cannot tell you how many times foster children expressed thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideation. Some kids as young as seven-years old required admission to child and adolescent psychiatric facilities. Childhood trauma and addiction are risk factors for suicide. Learning coping skills and self-care from a trusted teacher trained in recognizing the symptoms of depression and anxiety will help all children navigate the stresses and trauma in their daily lives.

In the 14 years I taught at GBC, 3 students in the social work program killed themselves. I support A.B. 114, so children can learn to ask for help and take care of themselves.

STORMY REMINGTON:

I am a mother of four children. My brother died by suicide on December 17, 2010. Since my brother's death, I have been a facilitator for the Survivors of Suicide Loss of Northeastern Nevada and a part of the Zero Suicides Elko County group. I have gone to many schools in Elko County to talk about suicide prevention, but one or two times a year is not enough for these kids.

Our children and teens spend a significant amount of time in school. The personnel and teachers who see and interact with these kids every day are the first line of defense in seeing a change in their mental health and suicide risk. It is imperative that we promote preventative measurements and connect our young people with the resources they need. Suicide intervention, prevention and education in our schools can be a lifesaving factor. It can raise the awareness of caring for a peer's mental health and reduce the negative stigma. We get "thank you" notes from many of the students after we talk to them in their schools.

SARAH ADLER (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

The realities that have been described here are common throughout our State. A man from Alaska recently came to a behavioral health center I work with in Elko. He was stunned by the suicide incidents in Elko. Some free resources are available to help. Because school safety encompasses student wellbeing, Senate Bill 89, the comprehensive school safety bill, is going to fund more social workers and school counselors. Public charter schools are eligible for that help too.

SENATE BILL 89 (1st Reprint): Makes various changes relating to education.
(BDR 34-331)

It is hard to give teachers something else to do in their days. Teachers are heroes; they will stretch to meet the requests of A.B. 114. The National Alliance on Mental Illness appreciates and supports A.B. 114.

ASSEMBLYMAN ELLISON:

If this bill passes, if we save one life, it is something important. I hate to put one more thing on teachers, but they interact with these children on a daily basis.

I lost a son to cancer at age 16. I know what these parents go through. It is a little different, but you never get over the death of a child.

It is important to get students the information and guidance at an early stage in their lives, because this problem carries on to their adult lives.

CHAIR DENIS:

We will close the hearing on A.B. 114 and open the hearing on A.B. 261.

ASSEMBLY BILL 261 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to the safety of children in public schools. (BDR S-590)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LISA KRASNER (Assembly District No. 26):

Under current law, teachers and administrators are mandatory reporters of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Teachers and administrators participate in yearly training about child abuse and child sexual abuse. This would not change under A.B. 261. The bill will require that each school district report the amount of time received in such training, the number of administrators and teachers who participate in the training, a description of the content of the training and the number of incidents of child abuse or child sexual abuse reported to law enforcement. This information will then be compiled and reported in aggregate to the Department of Education. The Department will then report the aggregated data to the Legislative Committee on Education or to the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

SARAH ADLER (Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence):

Many have become familiar with the concept of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Child abuse and child sexual abuse are considered ACEs. These ACEs pile up to the kind of distress that leads to educational failure and self-harm. Awareness and training are critical. The time in the school day is already full, but we have to figure it out.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents)

We support A.B. 261.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KRASNER:

I noticed an error in the bill language. In section 9.3, subsection 3, paragraphs (a) and (b) have incorrect dates. The dates should be September 1, 2020, and September 1, 2021. I will submit an amendment to change the dates from "August" to "September".

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CHAIR DENIS:

I will close the hearing on A.B. 261. The meeting is adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Steven Jamieson,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit / # of pages		Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	5		Attendance Roster
A.B. 342	C	1	Jen Sturm	Work Session Document
A.B. 461	D	1	Jen Sturm	Work Session Document
A.B. 464	E	1	Jen Sturm	Work Session Document
A.B. 114	F	4	Colleen Piacitelli	Written Testimony
A.B. 114	G	2	Colleen Piacitelli	Elko County Suicide Statistics January through April 2019
A.B. 114	H	2	Lynette Marie Vega	Written Testimony