

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eightieth Session
March 15, 2019**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Moises Denis at 12:26 p.m. on Friday, March 15, 2019, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair
Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Vice Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop
Senator Dallas Harris
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Ira Hansen
Senator Keith F. Pickard

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Patricia Spearman, Senatorial District No. 1

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm, Policy Analyst
Shelley Kyle, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Colyn Abron, Youth Legislator, Senatorial District No.1
Sam Brinton, Head of Advocacy and Government Affairs, The Trevor Project
Trista Miller, Community Outreach Coordinator, Tuck and Run Foundation
Rachel Martin, Deputy Executive Director, Born This Way Foundation
Julie Murray, Principal and CEO, Moonridge Group; President, Nevada Medical Center

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Kristy Keller, Project Director, Moonridge Group; Nevada Medical Center
Kelly Thomas-Boyers, Adam's Place
Brooke Maylath, President and Advocate, Transgender Allies Group
Sarah Adler, National Alliance on Mental Illness Nevada; Charter School
Association of Nevada
Joelle Gutman, Washoe County Health District
Shari Brown, United Citizens Foundation
Adele Bohenko, Licensed Social Worker, United Citizens Foundation
Gabrielle Dare
Bonnie Radden, CEO, The Gathering Place
Chiet Brown, Intern, Mingo Health Solutions
Lynn Chapman, Nevada Families for Freedom
Darla A. Lee
George E. Lee
Jorge Sanchez, Nevada Family Alliance
Elizabeth Puvions
Rudy Hernandez
Jill Crandell
Betty Johnson
Allie Mendez
Rafael Mundo
Jesús Salas
Carla Juadro
Jairo Perez
Willy Rameriz
Margarita Urbina
Eunice Urbina
Joshua Torres
David Vasquez, Jr.
Sigfrido Jimenez
Kirt Brannen
Carol Gonzalez
Moises G. Munoz
Josue Rodas
Katherine Mendoza
Tania Brannon
Olivia Garza
Maday Jimenez
Jose Jose

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Natalie Cronza
Leo Beltran
Naomi Chavez
Martha Munu
Marisol Solis
Jose Zalasar
Yessenia Mendez
Kevin Hernandez
Misty Allen
Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Anna Slighting, Honoring Our Public Education

CHAIR DENIS:

We will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 204.

SENATE BILL 204: Revises provisions relating to the mental health of pupils.
(BDR 34-551)

SENATOR PATRICIA SPEARMAN (Senatorial District No. 1):

I will present S.B. 204. This bill requires the elementary and secondary schools of Nevada to develop and implement policies for prevention of suicide.

According to the Office of Suicide Prevention in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), suicide was the leading cause of death in Nevada for children ages 8 to 18.

In January and February 2019, the Born This Way Foundation surveyed over 2,000 young people nationally to learn the youths' views on their own mental wellness, access to mental health resources and what they desired from those resources.

The Foundation conducted a survey and found the following barriers. Nearly 90 percent of respondents said mental health is a priority, but only 40 percent considered themselves mentally healthy. One-third of young people said they lack reliable access to resources to address their mental health issues and cited not knowing where to go for help. The cost of getting help from the mental health resources was also a barrier.

The Office of Suicide Prevention reports the Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey estimated over 85,000 Nevada youth felt sad or hopeless for two weeks or more; nearly 44,000 youth seriously considered attempting suicide and 39,000 made a plan. Of that 39,000 youth, 24,000 made an attempt at suicide.

These are staggering statistics. These are not just statistics, but represent 44,000 youth along with their families and friends; 39,000 youth who had a plan had family and friends. I am almost certain the families and friends of the 24,000 youth who made an attempt at suicide are thanking God the attempts were not successful.

My purpose is not to recite a long list of statistics. Instead, I hope you come to realize the magnitude of this problem. Clearly, our State has disaffected young people who do not see any support system available to them.

A few months ago, Colyn Abron, the Youth Legislator who represents my District 1 in Clark County had an idea to help young people find healthy ways to deal with stress and depression. He submitted his idea to the Nevada Youth Legislature as a possible bill draft request (BDR) for the 2019 Legislative Session. Unfortunately, another BDR was selected.

I asked Colyn if his idea could be used as one of my BDRs for the 80th Legislative Session so our State can have a way to help young people suffering during mental health crisis.

I worked with: the DHHS, Division of Public and Behavioral Health Office of Suicide Prevention; DHHS; former Superintendent of Public Instruction, Steven Canavero; The Trevor Project; licensed clinical social workers (LCSW); licensed counselors; behavioral therapists; clinical professionals from the Nevada Medical Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; clergy and various community organizations whose mission includes improving the mental health of our youth.

This group looked at the issues I previously described and developed a workable model to address prevention, intervention and postvention factors related to suicide ideation. Senate Bill 204 is created to give young people in Nevada a lifeline that will work.

Existing provisions in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* require a school district, board of trustees, the governing body of a university school for the profoundly

gifted and the governing body of a charter school or a private school to develop a plan to use when responding to a crisis, an emergency or a completed suicide. Senate Bill 204 will go further than talk; it will require action.

Sections 2 and 10 of the bill require a school governing body to adopt a policy to include procedures for the prevention of suicide and for intervention with a pupil who is at risk of suicide, procedures for outreach to persons and organizations in the community who may be able to assist with such prevention and intervention and require training for teachers and pupils concerning the prevention of suicide.

Sections 11 and 12 authorize the State Board of Education to deny or revoke a license to operate a private school if the holder of the license fails to adopt a policy for the prevention of suicide. Section 13 authorizes a person aggrieved by the failure of a private school to adopt a policy to file a complaint with the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Sections 3 and 9 require such training for school resource officers and school police officers. Section 5 requires that such training be made available to all school personnel.

Section 8 requires the Council to establish academic standards for public schools to require courses in health to include mental health. Section 14 requires a Statewide program for suicide prevention to include training specifically regarding prevention of suicide by pupils in schools and other educational settings.

Chair Denis and members of the Committee, we are living through a paradox. Technology has increased our means to communicate with each other, but the irony is it is technology that has isolated us and isolated our youth. We have less face-to-face interaction. Our despair can be hidden behind an emoji. Social media can be a means to impose cruelty, targeting some of the most vulnerable among us.

I am asking you to address this alarming trend among Nevada's young people. Imagine such hopelessness at such an early age. Of 44,000 suicide ideations, 39,000 youth had a plan and of the 39,000 youth, 24,000 actually attempted suicide.

If the Committee could imagine taking steps to reach out to those lost individuals and ease their pain, S.B. 204 gives Nevada the tools needed to reach our young people.

We Legislators can opine that we are doing all that should be done, but I submit to you there is more to be done. Youth suicide is both a social and a mental health crisis. There are others here today who would like to speak to the emergency and offer suggestions for a path forward.

COLYN ABRON (Youth Legislator, Senatorial District No. 1):

My name is Colyn Abron, Youth Legislator for Senate District No. 1. This is a note I wrote on February 20th.

Dear family, friends or whoever read this. I am stressed. I am so tired. I really want to die. Like I try to do my best in school, but I can't. I can't because I am depressed. My parents and other people expect everything to be perfect. I have an essay due tomorrow and I can't even focus because of my anxiety and my depression. I do not know why I feel like this. I feel like I am being over dramatic, but I really want to die. I just swallowed a few pills and I do not feel good.

These were supposed to be my last words before I planned on leaving this earth on February 20th. In Senator Spearman's opening statement, she stated that 24,000 youth in our State attempted to commit suicide. I was a part of the 24,000 who made an attempt to commit suicide.

I was fortunate to have a supportive family who helped me reach out for help and I am doing so much better; however, this fairy tale ending is not everyone's story.

Many students lack the resources, the support system and education to reach out for help. People may ask why I did not reach out for help earlier. Many people who are suicidal or who have been suicidal will testify it is hard reaching out for help because the person does not understand what is going on. There is still a stigma around mental health.

Mental health being taught in health classes is subjective, lacking in our schools and is not mandated. The World Health Organization recognizes the full

spectrum of health "as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

Schools' acknowledgement of health, by not teaching mental health and the lack of resources, has left many students undocumented, undiagnosed and unaddressed.

What are Legislators going to do about it? You have the power as members of the Senate Committee on Education for our State to vote for a bill that will save lives in our State. The Committee has the power to make sure our students are educated about the signs and symptoms of mental health. Studies show students who receive this education are more likely to seek help.

You must vote for S.B. 204 because mental health is a growing epidemic in our youth and society. My peers are turning to alcohol, marijuana and many other drugs not for recreational purposes, but instead to escape depression because they do not know how to deal with it. This is a problem.

One in five people will be diagnosed with a mental health disease. Our State can no longer turn a deaf ear nor a blind eye, because this is an epidemic that affects every aspect of our society. We must support S.B. 204. We need to make a change; educate instead of medicate. By providing information and teaching students the truth about mental health and providing resources, we arm ourselves with the tools needed to promote a more healthy student and society.

SAM BRINTON (Head of Advocacy and Government Affairs, The Trevor Project):
I serve as the head of Advocacy and Government Affairs for The Trevor Project. The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning(LGBTQ) youth. Our 24/7 Trevor Lifeline and digital services are on track to directly serve more than 100,000 LGBTQ youth this year, including daily contact from youth from the State of Nevada. I would like to convey why it is important to pass legislation like S.B. 204 and have submitted written testimony in support ([Exhibit C](#)).

TRISTA MILLER (Community Outreach Coordinator, Tuck and Run Foundation):
I work for the Tuck and Run Foundation founded by former NFL player, Chris McLemore, an organization focused on improving the lives of youth in

Las Vegas and across our State. I have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit D](#)). The Tuck and Run Foundation supports S.B. 204.

RACHEL MARTIN (Deputy Executive Director, Born This Way Foundation):

I am representing Born This Way Foundation co-founded by Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia Germanotta to support the well-being and empowerment of young people by focusing on mental health. The Foundation supports S.B. 204. I have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit E](#)) and a research report by Born This Way Foundation regarding Youth Mental Health in Las Vegas ([Exhibit F](#)).

JULIE MURRAY (President, Nevada Medical Center; Principal and CEO, Moonridge Group):

I am President of Nevada Medical Center and Principal and CEO for Moonridge Group, a firm that provides philanthropy strategy for family foundations and corporate funders. Both of these organizations support S.B. 204. I have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit G](#)).

KRISTY KELLER (Project Director, Moonridge Group, Nevada Medical Center):

I am representing Moonridge Group where we facilitate the work of the Nevada Medical Center. The mental wellness of Nevada youth is of paramount importance. I have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit H](#)) in support of S.B. 204.

MR. BRINTON:

In my earlier testimony, I neglected to say The Trevor Project's Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention was created in collaboration with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselors Association and the National Association of School Psychologists.

SENATOR PICKARD:

Any suicide in our State is an important issue and deserves good intention. The compelling testimony heard thus far certainly gets our attention. I do not want to minimize that fact or sound as if I am not aware or supportive of this issue.

My first question is in section 2, subsection 2, paragraph (a). It states "The policy adopted pursuant to subsection 1 must include, without limitation: ... " and paragraph (a) "Procedures for the prevention of suicide and intervention with a pupil who is at risk of suicide." What are those procedures? Listening to Mr. Brinton, it sounds like we have some tools that are proven to work. Where

do those tools come from? The bill does not mandate a source. How will this look for one of our school districts without a policy or for one of our rural school districts?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

The schools can craft their own policies based on the culture of the community, the student make-up or there are several tools that Mr. Brinton listed on The Trevor Project website at no cost.

The tools on the website can be used as they are or adopted in a way that works for the school site. The bill has no fiscal note in terms of hiring someone or a firm. The Trevor Program, which is already developed, is based on success and bona fide data that these things will work.

Does it prevent everyone from committing suicide? I do not think so, but this will get us farther in the right direction to preventing suicide.

SENATOR PICKARD:

Section 2, subsection 2, paragraph (c), subparagraph (1), sub-subparagraph (I) states, "Appropriate mental health services at the school and in the community in which the school is located and when and how to refer pupils and their families for such services; and ...". Who defines appropriate?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

Appropriate is the common definition. We will be looking at healthcare providers, mental healthcare providers and people who have done this type of work before.

Ms. Murray of Nevada Medical Center and several other people had several conference calls with a lot of people. Instead of prescribing something very strict that all school districts would be unable to abide by, the language was left like this so the schools can adopt the policy to fit their needs.

SENATOR PICKARD:

Then the school district or school administration is not determining what is appropriate? Would the school or administration have to go outside and get experts? Who is determining what is appropriate?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

There is another bill that is coming from the DHHS that will place behavioral health specialists in schools and place federally qualified health centers around the schools. Our group worked together so the bill language was collaborative. We wanted to identify people who have had experience in these situations. This could include members of their own school team. The biggest problem we have is there is not enough collaboration. There are resources and information available, but we have not done a good job of tying them together. Developing the policy and the plan will help us to accomplish that.

SENATOR PICKARD:

My concern is if one piece of legislation we rely on does not pass, we may have a hole. If we are requiring someone outside the schools to determine what is appropriate, it may be problematic for the schools. Perhaps we can get language in the bill to clarify who would determine what is appropriate, just in case the other bill does not go through.

Section 10, subsection 1 relating to the requirements for private schools, many private schools might disagree with others about what is appropriate and what is not. The language does not change. In section 10, subsection 3, paragraph (d) states, "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning pupils". There is no debate this is a topic we are trying to address head-on. This is appropriate and the discussion needs to happen, but there are some private schools that may have a problem with this.

Sections 11 and 12 allow the Board of Education to simply revoke a school's authority to operate if the school does not do what this law requires. The way I read the bill, there is no latitude for difference. Particularly, private schools that may have deeply held religious beliefs; we are telling them to teach something that is inconsistent with their religious structure. Can this be addressed and possibly show this may not be the case?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

In NRS, existing provisions require a school district board of trustees, the governing body of a university school for profoundly gifted and the governing body of a charter school or a private school to develop a plan to use when responding to a crisis.

This is not telling a school that it must include all of these elements. There will be some schools, public and private, where different cultural nuances must be considered. It does not mean every school will have the same policy or plan. This is the reason the bill states, "the school will require and develop a plan". There is nothing in this bill that requires anyone to teach something against their religious principles.

This summer, the Southern Nevada Health District showed statistics that LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to consider, have a plan and complete suicide. If a school does not want to use this language, it is okay; but it does not mean the school does not have a student or students in its school who need this service. Those children are there.

Public schools have requirements and in many cases, private schools opt out. When we compare public and private school education, it is not apples to apples. It is apples to elephants because many times a private school or person will say that something is against their religion or beliefs. There is nothing in S.B. 204 that will force a school or someone to act against their religion or beliefs.

I want to make this very clear. Not saying the letters, not saying the words, does not mean the schools do not have children or students in those schools who need this service. We are in the 21st century, and we have to recognize this. As Mr. Abron stated, when a youth is wrestling with thoughts and feelings and does not know where to go for help, this is a mental health crisis for him or her.

I grew up in a very fundamental environment. We children could do nothing but breathe. We could not dance, listen to the radio, we could not pop our fingers. None of that was permitted. I am not who I was then and had it not been for a very select few friends and one of my sisters, I might have written that note Mr. Abron read earlier. There is no requirement in S.B. 204 for people or private

schools to go against their religion or beliefs. Mr. Brinton has statistics from around the country on how some private schools have addressed this.

SENATOR PICKARD:

That is the point I wanted to tease out. We are not requiring the private schools to address the issues that are in their schools, we are not requiring the schools to take a position on the LGBTQ issues. This bill is to make sure every school has a policy that considers LGBTQ among the other things and not enter into the realm of whether the school must agree.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

In my opening statement, the schools are already required to develop a plan when responding to a crisis. There are fire drill plans and, unfortunately, we have had to talk to students about an active shooter. This bill is par for the course.

CHAIR DENIS:

Section 10, subsection 3 states, "The policy adopted pursuant to subsection 1 must address the needs of groups of pupils at a high risk of suicide, including, without limitation". Are you saying the schools do not have to specifically identify the group, but the ones identified in the bill are the ones they would need to identify?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

Is this regarding page 14, line 40?

CHAIR DENIS:

Yes.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

Section 10, subsection 3, paragraph (a) states, "Pupils affected by suicide". There are some students who have circumstances within their homes: a student whose parent is in the military and has been deployed is a group we have not talked about; a student whose parent has been killed in action and students who have experienced various sundry adverse childhood events. When a student has one of these types of circumstances and there is a policy in place, one is able to recognize these signs and symptoms. If a straight A student suddenly starts receiving Ds and Fs, something is wrong.

The bill enables a school to have a plan in place to address those pupils, however they fit in, and address the situation. It is an extension of the crisis or emergency plan the school should already have in place.

CHAIR DENIS:

Is there something specific that the school must identify LGBTQ youth as a group? Is the bill just giving a guideline in section 10, subsection 3, paragraphs (a) through (e) describing groups that might be at risk?

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

It is a guideline. This is what Legislative Counsel Bureau taught me. When you see the phrase "including, without limitation", we cannot think of everything. If there is something the persons who are developing their plan find an issue not mentioned, they should put it in their plan. These are issues to be aware of or look for.

MR. BRINTON:

The LGBTQ youth inclusion is an extremely important part of this bill. As a person who came from private education, I understand not every school will agree or fund that portion. The Trevor Project has found Nevada is only the second state to consider LGBTQ inclusive suicide prevention. This is an important moment in Nevada history that your State is one of the leaders on this type of an issue. The challenge will be when schools do not include a plan for the LGBTQ group, a youth in a LGBTQ situation may not see themselves represented and may not see themselves protected.

It is not a requirement this group is included, but we are encouraging it. Here is an important aspect in terms of research we have found. In another state prior to this type of legislation being passed, 2 percent of the school suicide prevention policies in that state included LGBTQ youth. After the passage of the inclusion legislation, 90 percent of the state schools' policies included LGBTQ youth. This is not a mandate, but the LGBTQ communities need to be included because those youth exist. This is a valuable exercise.

SENATOR PICKARD:

Since we do not have legal counsel, as a law trained person I agree with Senator Denis' interpretation that subsection 3 does state specifically that we have to include these expressed provisions in the policy. The point I wanted brought to our attention is that we are not requiring the schools to take a

position on the appropriateness of LGBTQ youth issues. Merely, that their policy as they adopt it must include that in consideration. From the input I have received, that is an important distinction. I wanted to make that point.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

On page 14, line 40 the last three words are "subsection 1 must address". The schools do not have to adopt a plan, schools do not have to say it is okay, they do not have to change their religion. Let us just address and recognize this issue.

CHAIR DENIS:

We want to get the record clear. Section 10, subsection 3, paragraphs (a) through (e) are addressing the needs of five groups of students at a high risk of suicide which included paragraph (d) that is the LGBTQ youth. People could look at the bill and say they would have to specifically include LGBTQ youth. You are only addressing the needs of that identified group. I will now ask for testimony in support of S.B. 204.

KELLY THOMAS-BOYERS (Adam's Place):

My name is Kelly Thomas-Boyers representing Adam's Place. I express my support for S.B. 204. For the past 10 years, I have been working in the trenches with children who are coping with the loss of a sibling or a parent. There are about 25,000 children in the Clark County School District (CCSD). We were there on 1 October, the Harvest Festival shooting, being one of the only organizations that has been in the trenches working with grief and loss. We have supported employers, the CCSD during these 10 years and moving forward through the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center.

Currently, we are leading groups on a school campus for the children who have lost a sibling to suicide. One young person had to cut his or her brother down after hanging himself. I see these young faces and they are not finding the support needed within the resources currently in the schools. I applaud S.B. 204 to establish the requirement to have a policy. Every effort we can do to make mental health resources available is the right step for our State. I am trained as a grief counselor, trained in mental health first-aid and I am a big proponent on these as well.

BROOKE MAYLATH (President and Advocate, Transgender Allies Group):

Here in Nevada, 67 percent of the transgender community have had suicidal ideation according to self-reported studies. Forty-one percent have a plan to commit suicide. During the 2014-2015 school year when we looked at the anti-bullying bill that was being presented, 14 children committed suicide in that school year. Every one of them either was on the LGBTQ spectrum or was accused of being on the LGBTQ spectrum.

Being able to have support in our schools to be able to identify these things is critically important for the health and life of our community. I am not going to apologize for my existence. These kids do not have to apologize for being LGBTQ. They deserve a right to their lives. They need support. Please understand, suicide is an outcome of a convergence of isolation, oppression, shame, depression and loss of hope because of lack of support. When I was young, I served as an emergency medical technician. I feel for that young man in Las Vegas. Lowering a body and cradling a body down from being hung is one body too many for anyone.

Having resources identified and being able to refer those resources to children is absolutely important. It is not ideological. It is saving a life. When we are seeing individuals who are bleeding out emotionally, we must do something to staunch the bleeding. Just as we would do if we saw somebody physically bleeding and rendered first aid. Senate Bill 204 is mental health first-aid and we must support this. A no vote would indicate we do not care about children.

SARAH ADLER (National Alliance on Mental Illness Nevada; Charter School Association of Nevada):

I am representing the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Nevada and the Charter School Association of Nevada. To add to Colyn Abron's point, school is the locus of the youth learning in our State and NAMI advocates are tens of thousands of caring adults interacting with our youth. School is possibly the most effective place for NAMI to focus on suicide and violence prevention, training, policies and plans. Sadly, the school community must be prepared to respond should the tragedy of suicide happen.

The Office for Safe and Respectful Learning within Nevada Department of Education is a terrific office. This office works daily with the Office of Suicide Prevention and I feel schools are well-supported in meeting these responsibilities. We highlight and support the requirement in S.B. 204 that

school health classes include not only suicide prevention, but also mental health. We need to recognize the importance of student well-being in order for youth to access the educational content our teachers are working so hard to deliver to them.

There are two sides to this coin; academic and student well-being. Together we can do great things for our kids.

JOELLE GUTMAN (Washoe County Health District):

One of Washoe County Health District's priorities is access to behavioral health and addressing this topic in schools is a great place to start. In Washoe County we have a partnership with the Children's Cabinet. We provide suicide education and opt-in suicide screening assessments to seventh graders in our county. It is a successful program, and it was a one-time \$100,000, appropriation we gave to the Children's Cabinet. Unfortunately, we no longer have funds to give to our partner; we are empathetic that S.B. 204 is unfunded.

In 2017, the percentage of middle school students who seriously considered attempting suicide was 21 percent. The percentage of middle school students who made a plan on how to commit suicide was 15 percent in 2017. Middle school students who attempted to commit suicide 1 or more times in 2017 was 8.2 percent.

SHARI BROWN (United Citizens Foundation):

I am the Community Outreach Director, United Citizens Foundation. I have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit I](#)) in support of S.B. 204.

ADELE BOHENKO (Licensed Clinical Social Worker, United Citizens Foundation):

My name is Adele Bohenko and I have been a LCSW for over ten years, having moved to Nevada four years ago from Massachusetts. I was shocked and disappointed with the lack of mental health services after coming from the East Coast to Las Vegas. I am in support of S.B. 204.

This morning I had two students with stories similar to Colyn Abron's story. The students came in crisis with very different backgrounds and very different stories. One is a foster-care student with lots of trauma history and lots of suicidal thoughts. The other student who is fifth in his class and high achieving, has applied and is ready to go to Princeton University.

Suicidal thoughts can be in anyone's mind. These thoughts do not have to come from a particular background or from an LGBTQ student. The thoughts can belong to a high-achieving student or any student walking down a school hallway. This is how we get the kids that come to us. If we were not on a school campus today or on a school campus each school day of the week, I do not know where these kids are going to go.

GABRIELLE DARE:

This is quite a personal issue for me. At the age of six, I was tired of the world and thought of hanging myself with a vacuum cleaner cord. Fortunately, the ceiling was too high. My first year of college, I held Shelby's wrists together while calling for an ambulance because life had been too much for her.

Earlier this week at the Legislature for a Conservation Lobby Day, I saw the vivid scars of a young veteran who had tried to take his life. There is no question that suicide is a critical issue that must be addressed. We live in a very troubling world right now. There is an inordinate amount of pressure on our young people. Our young people need S.B. 204. I urge the Committee to vote yes on S.B. 204.

BONNIE RADDEN (CEO, The Gathering Place):

I am the CEO of a grassroots nonprofit called The Gathering Place. We reach out to adolescents, transitional age youth also known as (TAY) and homeless youth. I was brought to Las Vegas from Los Angeles. I worked in the mental health field with Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health for many years. I am a mental health professional with a specialization in LGBTQ studies. One in three individuals will suffer a mental health crisis. You have heard the statistics around LGBTQ students. Those are who I work with. Just this week, I had to comfort parents who had to cut their 8-year-old son down from his closet. He was being bullied. He did, what we call, completed suicide.

I am also an instructor and a curriculum writer. One of the things I say all the time is that we must prepare so that we do not have to repair. I am in support of S.B. 204 and I ask you, the Committee, to please be in support of S.B. 204 so we can prepare so that we will not have to repair.

CHIET BROWN (Intern, Mingo Health Solutions):

My name is Chiet Brown. I am completing my student internship in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Mingo Health Solutions. The Mingo Health

Solutions CEO and Director, Dinisha Mingo, M.S., has submitted written testimony ([Exhibit J](#)) which I will read supporting S.B. 204.

LYNN CHAPMAN (Nevada Families for Freedom):

Nevada Families for Freedom have concerns about religious liberties. Geoffrey Surtees of the American Center for Law and Justice wrote:

The First Amendment forbids the government from prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a federal law passed by overwhelming bipartisan support in 1993, precludes the government from substantially burdening religious freedom without satisfying the strictest of judicial scrutiny. Our country, as the Supreme Court noted over 40 years ago, has had a happy tradition of avoiding unnecessary clashes with the dictates of conscience.

The Supreme Court had a decision in which they said, "... The decision of what constitutes crossing immorally impermissible line is for the religious believer to decide, not the government". The government has no legal authority to say that the religious beliefs of a person are mistaken or unreasonable.

The Nevada Constitution in Article 1, section 4 states: "Liberty of conscience. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever be allowed in this State ... but the liberty of conscience hereby secured ...". The *Nevada Constitution* Ordinance provides "That perfect toleration of religious sentiment shall be secured, and no inhabitant of said state shall ever be molested, in person or property, on account of his or her mode of religious worship".

Nevada Families for Freedom wants this information on the record because words and actions sometimes are not the same.

DARLA A. LEE:

I make a distinction between a lot of emotion as opposed to lawmaking. I have heard a lot of emotion and yes, suicide is very bad. Children considering suicide is terrible. Bullying is bad.

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Nevada Family Alliance has submitted a Legal Memorandum from Alliance Defending Freedom for Faith For Justice ([Exhibit K](#)). I want to read a paragraph from page 1 of this document [Exhibit K](#).

Because of its vagueness, this bill could empower government officials to demand that a religious school modify its religiously-based policies and practices that conflict with the "needs" of students who identify as LGBTQ. As a result, a Jewish school could be required to affirm the gender identity of a male student who identifies as a female and possibly even grant him access to female showers, locker rooms, and restrooms. And a Christian school could be required to censor religious teachings that prohibit sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman. The school could even be required to associate with and provide referrals to outside organizations whose missions and values conflict with the schools' as part of the mandated "outreach" efforts under S.B. 204. A school that fails to adopt such pro-LGBTQ policies and practices risks investigation by the state and even loss of its license.

I understand this has been refuted and there will be cutouts, etc, but it has been my experience in the laws that have been happening recently at the federal and state, that again, this is taken far beyond what it is supposed to address. I feel very strongly S.B. 204 should be opposed.

GEORGE E. LEE:

I believe the curtain of protection for youth is that dividing line where we are not allowed to talk about youth. Youth is supposed to be a protected set. It appears that this mental health issue is more important than that line. This bill does not include and does not go far enough in the sense that a list should be kept of everyone who reports suicide or reports a mental health issue so that weapons can be collected from their homes. I support the Second Amendment. But at the same time, all we read in the media is youth attacking their schools with weapons. There was a student with a knife at Hug High which resulted in the student being shot. The student had a mental health issue.

Is a list added to this bill to be kept? You are talking about putting this into procedures and yet, there is no talk about keeping a list of those people who

report. I am not trying to single anyone out, but private schools are private for a reason. It is so that the things that are taught can be taught.

As far as I know, all counties have suicide prevention numbers tied to their 911 systems. I think this State has 911, am I right? There is currently an outlet for everybody to get help through the 911 system. It is not like it is hidden or a secret.

JORGE SANCHEZ (Nevada Family Alliance):

I am representing Nevada Family Alliance and many of the parents are in attendance today. Fifty, we have counted to be exact. This bill really hits close to home for two reasons and I have submitted my testimony ([Exhibit L](#)).

As it was stated earlier, S.B. 204 is simply asking for the governing bodies of schools to address the LGBTQ classification in their suicide prevention policies. By forcing S.B. 204 on private schools, you are threatening for a private school's license to be revoked. I can assure you, once this bill is passed, it will ask more than it addresses. You are destroying the very reason private schools were created by mandating gender ideology be taught in the schools to teachers and students. The word "required" is in S.B. 204. Section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c) states, "Required training for teachers and pupils concerning the prevention of suicide".

The word "required" is there. Further, section 10, subsection 3, paragraph (d) includes, "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning pupils". This bill is overstepping because we are still protected by the First Amendment of our Constitution.

Furthermore, it was in a private school where I found salvation for myself. If it were not for the biblical teaching and the environment that I received in my school, I can assure you I would not be here testifying before you. I would have undoubtedly taken my life. This subject was constantly on my mind from the ages of 9 to 16. No bill could have stopped that. I am asking that section 10 of S.B. 204 be completely removed and anything infringing on the autonomy of private schools.

ELIZABETH PUVIONS:

I oppose S.B. 204 as it is currently written. I agree we need to do something about suicide among our youth; it is definitely an epidemic. We do need

resources available to the youth. I am against S.B. 204 because of its overreach and infringement on the rights of religious private schools and the parents who choose to send their children to these schools. Eighty percent of the private schools in this country are religious institutions.

In the *U.S. Constitution*, parents have a fundamental right to direct the education of their children. In 1925, the Supreme Court recognized that "liberty" protected by the 14th Amendment includes the right to choose a private school that aligns with their religious beliefs. In 1927, the Supreme Court held a Hawaiian law unconstitutional that regulated the teachers, curriculum and text books of private language schools that placed control of the schools in public offices. I quote what the Court said: "Enforcement would deprive parents of fair opportunity to procure for their children instruction which they think is important and we cannot say it is harmful."

The U.S. Department of Education website clearly states, "The challenge to state legislators in regulating private schools is to draft legislation that: 1) respects the fundamental rights of parents to direct the education of their children; 2) protect the state's interest but avoid interference with religious beliefs unless compelling interests are issued and then only in the least restrictive manner and avoids comprehensive relation of private education that would deprive parents of any choice of education". Please remove private schools from S.B. 204 and anything that infringes on private schools.

RUDY HERNANDEZ:

I applaud you for addressing the need for creating a suicide prevention bill. It is an important issue for me because, as a Christian, I am concerned for our youth. I believe suicide is related to the spiritual well-being of a person and is devastating to families and friends.

I am not against the bill. Every person with mental health issues or emotional pain who decides to take their own life is a painful loss. I am not denying that private schools may have a risk of suicide, but the way the bill is structured and the plan of implementation is an infringement on a private school's autonomy. As stated by the *U.S. Constitution*, private schools are a nonprofit organization and they were founded by parents and concerned citizens to break away from government mandates and ideologies that infringe on religious beliefs.

Nevada cannot and should not govern how private schools operate. The way Senate Bill 204 will infringe on the rights of private schools is by a mandate in the training of teachers and pupils in the prevention of suicide. Mandate, as I understand, means being forced to do something that otherwise carries consequences. The average requirements as provided by the Office of Safe and Respectful Learning Environment in section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (b) does not give specifics of what values will be brought to the table.

Section 12, subsection 1 authorizes a person that is offended and is unfairly treated to file a complaint with the Superintendent. This policy opens many doors to great and real threats for private schools; it will get to the point of denying or revoking the license to operate as a private school.

I am asking to completely remove section 10 of S.B. 204 and anything that infringes on private school autonomy. We place our children in a nonprofit school for a reason. Not only because public education in Nevada is ranked 50th, but also because private schools work with their students' moral and spiritual lives.

JILL CRANDELL:

I do find much that I am in agreement with in S.B. 204 on both sides. I am the administrative educator in charge of the budget of a small private school. I have two concerns on this bill. The first is budgetary, and the fact that this bill is unfunded and will remain unfunded for private schools because of separation of church and State. Although there are free resources available, I would like to have the latitude to develop our own program within the context of the world view in which our school exists. There are costs associated with any new program, whether the resources are free or not in terms of man hours, etc.

I do not oppose the idea of suicide prevention. Earlier in my life, I spent many long hours and nights taking calls on a suicide line; I ask you to consider the topic of suicide prevention and funding.

My second concern is that the wording in the bill is muddy for those of us reading without the benefit of legal training. I appreciated your discussion earlier that clarified things, but it does concern me that the bill leaves the possibility of opening a different interpretation that has been presented today. I urge you to amend this bill to either remove section 10 or remove private schools from the bill. The bill needs to be clarified so our sectarian school will not be required to

do something against the religious beliefs of our sponsoring church and those who have chosen our school.

BETTY JOHNSON:

I am in opposition of S.B. 204. Suicide is a sad subject, but I would like to remind you that if we have our children in a private school it is because we do not have to go to anybody for help. Please do not try to implement your agenda in our schools. If you want students to have an environment free of bullying, start a program for the parents who need help with their children to prevent the issue of bullying.

I believe strongly that education, moral values and support starts at home. Do not come and tell me that you want to implement S.B. 204 for the good of my children. Let my kids be kids. They do not need to attend school to learn gender ideology. Leave our private schools alone. If we choose to pay for private education that is exactly for this reason. Stay out of our program and do not pass this bill.

Senate Bill 204 is not about suicide prevention; this is the government trying to implement and infiltrate ideology to our private schools.

ALLIE MENDEZ:

I value my kids' lives and strongly believe that every life is valuable. Section 10 of S.B. 204 will infringe on the rights that we deserve as private citizens. In forcing private schools to comply with S.B. 204, you are forgetting to respect my decision and freedom to teach my children my Christian values.

I want to remind you that most private schools do not receive government assistance. Private schools were created by private citizens, not by the government. Allowing S.B. 204 would interfere with private schools and is a violation of the First Amendment and an abuse of power.

After reading this bill, I found this is not about preventing suicide. It is clearly about forcing me and all the Christian parents here to practice an ideology that completely goes against our beliefs. I am 100 percent against suicide, but I am 100 percent against anyone forcing me to deny my faith in my Lord Jesus Christ. Section 10 of this bill will do that. I will not accept that. If you believe that my children and I deserve respect, please remove section 10 from this bill.

RAFAEL MUNDO:

I am a concerned citizen and parent. I agree suicide is an issue, because each life is precious. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit M](#)) in opposition of S.B. 204.

JESÚS SALAS:

I am representing my children today. Senate Bill 204 states in its preamble "... authorizing the denial or revocation of a license to operate a private school for failure to adopt such a policy ...". I have heard several times today private schools would not have to adopt anything. It clearly says in the bill private schools would need to adopt such a policy or the private school license would be revoked.

If I am reading the bill correctly, private schools like the one my children attend are in danger of being closed. The reason I chose private schooling for my children has always been that I could choose a school whose values and morals would closely align with those of my faith. America has always been a safe haven free from government imposed indoctrination and regulations or policies.

My children's school, along with many other schools in Nevada, would have to close simply because they would refuse to adopt a bill such as S.B. 204. This bill promotes support and affirmation for LGBTQ ideologies and forces schools to adopt policies in accordance to those ideologies. This violates the freedoms of the students and teachers who do not support this ideology. There are many Christian, Catholic, Muslim and even sectoral schools who do not favor the LGBTQ ideology. This is outrageous. If a school would not adhere to such a bill its license would be revoked? We hear these things from North Korea or other socialist countries that use government to impose radical ideologies.

My family came from another country to seek its religious freedoms. This bill will leave thousands of parents with only a possibility of homeschooling. What is next? Will the government regulate homeschooling? Senate Bill 204 severely infringes on the autonomy of private schools and the freedom parents have to choose schools that align with their faith. Please remove section 10 in its completeness or S.B. 204 altogether.

CARLA JUADRO:

We all have experienced some type of depression at some point in our lives. This is rooted for the most part, if not all, in ungratefulness. This dissatisfaction

makes a person sad and hopeless and leads to suicidal thoughts. We must find ways to battle the issue of suicide. In an attempt to help, the State instead will trespass the fine line between church and State. The State does not have a right to deny or revoke a religious private school license because school views are not aligned with LGBTQ and the State. The State should not legislate how private and religious schools should implement measures to prevent and treat suicidal ideation. I oppose S.B. 204. Private religious schools do not need your advice on how to prevent suicide in their schools.

JAIRO PEREZ:

I strongly oppose S.B. 204 which enforces and demands to adopt radical gender policies in our private schools. The bill is unconstitutional because the *U.S. Constitution* protects the autonomy of private schools guaranteeing the freedom to operate consistent with their beliefs and values. As a reminder, I have spoken about this in the past. You government leaders like to pass laws according to your personal gain, personal preferences and personal views. Laws are passed regarding a certain group of people which is not right.

Secondly, this bill violates parental rights. The freedom of private schools to operate consistent with parents' beliefs is closely tied to the right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children. Section 10 of the bill strips parents from choosing schools that teach their family beliefs.

Lastly, the bill violates academic freedom. It prohibits the government from interfering with parents' rights on what may be taught to their children. The First Amendment protects academic freedom of private schools to determine what these schools teach and how it is taught at these schools. I am directing these three points to this Committee because these points are avoided or ignored.

WILLY RAMERIZ:

My English is very bad. I am a father of five and have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit N](#)).

MARGARITA URBINA:

I oppose S.B. 204. My heart hurts when I hear a child has taken away his or her life. It hurts me to know there are children now who have no hope. They do not feel accepted and they do not feel loved. Senate Bill 204, section 10 will not solve this problem. Religious private schools have their own procedures. They

have their own tools to deal with this problem in the school community. In some religious schools these tools come from the Bible.

If these tools are saving 29,094 lives of children in Nevada and we have given them a safe place to be, why would you infringe on their rights to do so? Private schools have been doing an excellent job without nonprofit organizations getting involved. Section 10 of S.B. 204 has the word "require" which means "needs to". Section 10 also states "must include".

I understand that nonprofit organizations will be opposing procedures of outreach to assist with the prevention of suicide which will overstep private schools' beliefs.

Many parents, even parents from the Education Savings Account (ESA) program, testify of choosing private schools after their children suffer months of bullying in public schools. Now, these parents refer to private schools as a safer environment for their children. Section 10 of S.B. 204 is threatening to invade privacy, contradict beliefs and impose programs that will violate private schools' Constitutional rights. Let us not take Venezuela's government infringing on the rights of its private schools, but instead, let us practice democracy and respect the Constitutional rights of all.

EUNICE URBINA:

I want to tell you about my experience with suicide. It is difficult to talk about suicide when it involves someone you love and care for very much. In my case, it was my best friend in middle school. Her life was far from perfect and her parents showed no support or love to her.

She shared with me that she felt lonely, insecure and I saw how as her situation escalated at home when she began to cut herself and hurt herself out of desperation. She did not know what to do. We attended a private school. My friend approached the teachers and told them what was happening at home and how she was feeling. The teachers took her in and gave her the support and love she was needing. The teachers provided all the resources she needed using the Bible and Christ. Those are the tools the teachers used to save my friend.

I wanted you to hear that if section 10 is not removed and S.B. 204 is passed, the tools will be taken away from private schools and hindering the children

who need those tools. Please do not force private schools to not be able to use their tools.-

JOSHUA TORRES:

I would like to point out on page four, lines 26 and 27 and have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit O](#)).

DAVID VASQUEZ, JR.:

We all agree suicide is bad, but S.B. 204 is not the way to prevent suicide. This bill is a direct violation of the rights of private schools. Let us not forget most private schools are independent from the government and not funded by the government sometimes. I do not understand why S.B. 204 is trying to change private schools. Why not fix the fact Nevada is ranked last in education in the United States?

That is one of the reasons private schools are created in our State. Parents did not like that the school district was so horrible. Enacting S.B. 204 would remove the right of private schools to function.

Section 10 of this bill is extremely vague. One good example of its vagueness, in section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c) states, "Required training for teachers and pupils concerning the prevention of suicide ...". It does not specify what kind of training; however, section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c), subparagraph (1), sub-subparagraphs (I) and (II) just gives other possibilities. This sub-paragraph and sub-subparagraphs do not specify. Does it mean it could be things like gender ideology or if the private school is religious? Will this be forced? With such vagueness, how can this bill be voted on? This bill crosses boundaries.

I do not know where I would be now if I had not attended my private school and graduated at the age of 15. Next year, I will be receiving my associate degree in biological sciences and I am only 16. These are not the most important parts of my life. In my private school, I received Jesus Christ. He is the greatest truth I have known. I am asking that section 10 be removed from S.B. 204 and any wording that infringes on the right of private schools. May God bless you.

SIGFRIDO JIMENEZ:

I work as a mental health professional and there is no doubt suicide is currently a big issue in our society. I came across the issue almost every day and I take the issue very seriously. It is an issue we cannot ignore. I am for suicide prevention. Where I am having an issue is in section 10 of S.B. 204 which infringes on the rights of private schools to operate their school according to their beliefs.

First, it is suicide prevention and once you are in the private schools, what is next? The mandate to support information of the LGBTQ ideology? With due respect, we will not allow this to happen. The State cannot require private schools to support and affirm ideologies that conflict with their beliefs. This bill clearly violates the pre-exercise and establishment clauses which will take the religious schools rights to teach and communicate its faith. You do not care about private school students; you want to implement your hidden agenda. If you care, you will start with our educational system in Nevada. We are 50th in our nation. This is an embarrassing fact.

The more I practice, the more I see the brokenness in people. The more I realize there is no theory or intervention that can truly prevent suicide. I have found there is only hope in Jesus Christ. I have seen his power in my own life. He has given me hope and purpose in my life. This is what is needed in our schools as it is the only true solution, along with the encouragement for parents to get more involved in the lives of their children. This is the big issue and parents are failing to do this. Everything begins within the home. Please remove section 10 of S.B. 204 and anything that infringes on the rights of private schools.

KIRT BRANNEN:

I believe that suicide is a tragedy. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit P](#)).

CAROL GONZALEZ:

There are cases of suicide attempts in my family. None of the attempts were successful. These were horrible situations where everyone around these individuals suffered and went through hard times.

Suicide is happening more due to many factors, not forgetting the help of technology, computer games, etc. What I do not agree with in S.B. 204 is addressing the prevention of suicide and not respecting the autonomy of private

schools. Some private schools have different beliefs and have saved many lives according to God's word, not by teaching sexuality.

Most private schools are not funded by the government and are protected by the *U.S. Constitution*. We should keep in mind these private schools were created for a reason. Senate Bill 204 is not respecting this at all. This bill is forcing a religious school to create curricula that are against God's words, such as teaching sexual content and gender ideologies.

My junior high education was in a Christian school where I learned even more about Jesus Christ who saved me, and I saw life in a different way. Because of the Lord Jesus Christ and his mercy, I am able to see consequences and not even think about suicide.

Senate Bill 204 is not about addressing the needs of groups of people, but to impose government ideology on private schools. For this specific reason, I please ask that section 10 of S.B. 204 be removed and anything that goes against the autonomy of private schools.

MOISES G. MUNOZ:

I am in opposition of S.B. 204. Suicide is a hot topic and I agree suicide is not a great idea. Senate Bill 204 is taking the private schools' rights and the reason the schools exist. Private schools are not funded by the government; they are run differently than public schools. A private school's rules, beliefs and expectations are different from public schools. This is especially true with religious private schools.

Section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c), sub paragraph (2) states, "May include, without limitation, the review of appropriate materials concerning the prevention of suicide". So students have no limitation of what is appropriate to them and in a way how far they will go? Let me remind you that if a student wants to join a private school, let it be. The student will have to comply with the private or private religious school rules.

If a student does not want to comply by the rules of the school, then they do not need to apply. It is that simple. In a private school, everybody can help each other. There is not one solution to prevent suicide; there are many different ways to solve suicidal prevention. Please delete section 10 and private religious

schools from this bill. Also, anything that would infringe on private religious schools.

JOSUÉ RODAS:

Suicide is a horrible and tragic issue that is real and which schools are facing today. I fully support a bill that attempts to deal with suicide prevention. In my family, I have known people who have attempted suicide or dealt with people who have.

My uncle took his life by an overdose. This incident created problems within our family. Everyone in the family was down after the experience. Knowing this is happening to children in schools and how the children's family can be hurting is very sad to me.

There are some things I am concerned about and do not agree with. There are plenty of things that private schools must provide for their pupils. Section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c) states, "Required training for teachers and pupils concerning the prevention of suicide." Also in section 10, subsection 2, paragraph (c), subparagraph (1), sub-subparagraph (II) states: "Other persons and organizations in the community in which the school is located, including, without limitation, religious and other nonprofit organizations, that may be able to assist with the response to a suicide."

This is stating that private schools are being required to open their doors to an organization to deal with the school's own students. This defeats the purpose of the word "private" in the term "private school". The private school I attended as a kid was a Christian Baptist private school. We used the Bible to deal with suicide. Also, section 10, subsection 3, paragraph (d) deals with the LGBTQ community. I feel private schools, like my own, do not agree with this perspective and they will be required to do something against their faith. Please remove private schools from S.B. 204 because it is allowing certain organizations to reach into schools that should be constitutionally protected.

KATHERINE MENDOZA:

I am in opposition to S.B.204 and personally have not experienced suicidal thoughts. I have submitted my written testimony, ([Exhibit Q](#)).

TANIA BRANNON:

Suicide is a tragedy for everyone regardless of race or personal beliefs. This is a personal topic, because I contemplated suicide twice in my life. Fortunately, my family and faith got me through each of these times. Senate Bill 204 sounds nice, but it attempts to put in place certain prevention programs. When a person digs deeper into the bill, you realize the vagueness of the bill's wording, and the obvious attack on religious freedom is a large component of S.B. 204.

The bill suggests private schools implement different programs that will meet the needs of its students. Senate Bill 204 is not clear what programs it is referring to. With the passage of this bill, private schools will now be required to meet the needs of the LGBTQ community, and if the community needs are not met, the private school license could be revoked. This is a direct attack on our religious freedom, because most private schools exist to provide religious teaching to their students. I ask this Committee to remove any wording from S.B. 204 that allows the State to interfere with private schools and religious freedom.

OLIVIA GARZA:

I am against section 10 of S.B. 204. Every life is valuable and we need to prevent suicide in our schools and in our communities. We already have suicide preventions policies implemented in many schools. The bill is adding a violation of the autonomy of private schools. I do not agree with enforcing the gender ideology to be taught to students. I ask that you completely remove section 10 and any wording against the autonomy of private schools.

MADAY JIMENEZ:

I am in opposition of S.B. 204 and specifically, section 10. Suicide is a big problem and it has been for a long time. In middle school, I had suicidal thoughts because girls made fun of me and picked on me because I was a quiet girl. Many other things in school contributed to my suicidal thoughts. I had low self-esteem and there was no point in living.

I spoke to my parents about my feelings and they helped me through those tough times. I enrolled in a Christian private school and this was life changing for me. I did not need a policy in my life; I needed Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can change lives. Section 10 would prevent private schools from teaching their beliefs. Private schools exist for a reason. They do not want the

government to control what they believe. Please remove section 10 from the bill because it infringes on a private school's rights.

JOSE JOSE:

I am in complete support of a bill that will help students who are dealing with suicidal thoughts. I value human life because we are all created in the image of God. I would be devastated if someone in my life committed suicide.

I am against the complete insincerity of the people who create such bills. I have attended countless meetings and every meeting that I have attended revolves around pushing the LGBTQ ideology. Many students deal with suicidal thoughts through addiction. What irritates and baffles me is the fact people who create such bills use human problems to promote such agenda and ideology.

Please revise section 10 of the bill and give proper privacy and respect that private schools deserve. If lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth (LGBTQ) communities want to teach their own agenda, the LGBTQ communities should make their own private school to teach their ideology.

NATALIE CRONZA:

I am opposed to S.B. 204 because it infringes and imposes on the religious rights of private schools. Private religious schools are freely able to teach their religious beliefs to their students when a student is in need of spiritual help during a difficult time. Please remove section 10 of S.B. 204.

LEO BELTRAN:

Suicide prevention is prevalent in this bill; however, it is toward a particular agenda. In section 2, subsection 3, paragraph (d), "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning pupils;" are mentioned. If this bill is meant to help all students, why are not religious groups mentioned in S.B. 204?

Nevada Constitution, Article 1, section 2 states, All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for the protection, security and benefit of the people ...". We, the people, elected you to enforce our voice and expect that you will please hear our voices. The First Amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; ...". If private schools were created to keep the government out, I believe it should stay that way.

NAOMI CHAVEZ:

I am in opposition of section 10 of S.B. 204. This section infringes on the rights of private schools, especially the rights of religious private schools which are protected by the establishment clauses of the First Amendment. Suicide is a great concern to all of us in our community. It is important for people to have a support system within that community; however, the State's excessive regulations eliminate that support system by forcing religious private schools to support and affirm the LGBTQ ideology. This is clearly against the sacred beliefs we have on sexuality, morality and marriage which are established and well-rooted in the Bible.

You have heard today many who have expressed their faith freely without fear of offending someone or being punished. This is in jeopardy by S.B. 204.

MARTHA MUNU:

I am a concerned parent and know the challenges children face when thoughts of suicide come to them. Most people have had suicidal thoughts at some stage of their lives. I have had those thoughts. When I found religion, it enabled me to solve those thoughts.

I have the responsibility to be involved in my children's lives and I am glad we have help for the suicide problems in Las Vegas. I oppose S.B. 204 because it takes away my power and rights as a parent to deal with a situation with my child. Homeschooling education is growing because of these kinds of laws that allow special interest groups to implement their own interests that are not for everyone. Parents need to be educated on their responsibilities. If parents do not take responsibility for their children, that responsibility will go to the government. This will not solve the problem. Please remove section 10 of S.B. 204. Education begins at home.

MARISOL SOLIS:

I oppose S.B. 204 and ask you to completely remove section 10 and wording that infringes on the rights of private schools. I agree suicide is an issue in our society, but suicide policies are already in place. Why not enforce them instead of creating another policy? The policy is for one specific group, LGBTQ, and not for all students. Most private schools are not government funded and the autonomy of private schools is protected by the *U.S. Constitution*. Our State cannot require private schools to support and affirm ideologies that conflict with their beliefs.

On several lines and pages in this bill, I see gender justice and planned parenthood that want to indoctrinate children to conform to their beliefs. This is not a suicidal prevention, but a hidden agenda. Only religion can change life, not this bill. Government has no authority to interfere in the education of beliefs of private schools.

JOSE ZALASAR:

As a Christian and a human being, I am in disagreement with suicide. I imagine the great pain when someone loses a person to suicide or in other ways. This does not justify passing S.B. 204 as an excuse for suicide, because suicide does not only happen with transgender people, but all people who have depression. I ask to completely remove section 10 of S.B. 204 and any wording that affects and destroys the autonomy of private schools. The bill's agenda and ideology infringes on the rights of private and religious schools which is against the First Amendment.

This agenda is a well-planted agenda appealing in a manipulative and disloyal way of deceiving the community to vote in favor of this agenda of gender ideology. This Nation was made great by God.

YESENIA MENDEZ:

I am speaking for my children. As a parent, I am extremely concerned about section 10 of S.B. 204. My husband and I found a private school that was based on our beliefs and we have been working hard to keep our daughters in this school. We are extremely thankful for the teachers and advisor who have been having meetings with us concerning one of our daughters. I am so grateful these people are there in the school to see things that my husband and I cannot see at home. As parents, these meetings have allowed us to work with our daughter at home. I cannot imagine later on my daughter might have suicidal thoughts and possibly attempt suicide.

Religion is a freedom mentioned in the Bill of Rights. We decided to enroll our daughters in a private school because education in Nevada is not the greatest. We wanted our girls to be prepared when they attend college. Please remove section 10 for S.B. 204.

KEVIN HERNANDEZ:

Senate Bill 204 infringes on private schools. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) states its policy to encourage and enable its citizens an education commensurate to their respective talents and desires.

Many before me have testified in opposition because the bill infringes on private schools. I attended Nevada public schools from kindergarten through fifth grade, and Nevada is listed last in our nation. During these years while in the public school system, I dealt with instances of suicide. Public schools did not help at all. This is because in my community, many dislike Mexicans and other races, and we are bullied. From sixth grade until my college years, I attended a private school. When I enrolled in private school from sixth grade until my college years, I was embraced by the students and teachers.

I oppose S.B. 204 and I will end with a quote from former President Ronald Reagan, "Government is not a solution to our problem; government is the problem". I urge you to oppose S.B. 204.

MISTY ALLEN:

I am the Suicide Prevention Coordinator for the State of Nevada. I am speaking in the neutral position on S.B. 204. I am grateful to Senator Spearman shining a light on this important issue, which we have fought for for over two decades.

Nevada was ranked 11th for suicide in the nation in 2017. Our State has been out of the top ten only twice. A report last fall showed that Nevada was the only state in the nation whose suicide rate did not increase since 1999. Nevada's suicide rate is still very high; we have a long way to go. Preliminary data for 2018 shows, except for the youth population, our State's suicide rate has decreased in all ages or has held steady.

In previous testimony from Ms. Keller, Nevada's youth suicide statistics have doubled. In 2018, Clark County youth suicides increased 90 percent from 10 deaths to 19 deaths. In the remainder of our State, youth suicide increased from 5 deaths to 8 deaths which is 60 percent in 2018. I am grateful hearing the stories testifiers have shared about their thoughts of suicide or their attempts and how they survived. This is important; I am grateful these people had support systems.

It is important to note, however, that a report released yesterday stated that in the past year, major depression has increased 52 percent in ages 12 to 17. For young adults, the increase was a 65 percent increase in the past 10 years. This issue is increasing and comprehensive suicide prevention is important. There are incredible tools available at no charge and there are model policies that can guide our schools. I must say that any adult working with youth needs to be aware of what to look for, how to help and who to connect to these young people, who are struggling with thoughts of suicide or any mental health concerns.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

The Nevada Association of School Superintendents appreciates Senator Spearman meeting with Brad Keating, Lyndsay Anderson and me so we have a better understanding of S.B. 204. School districts are aware of the crisis in suicide and the work needed in suicide prevention. There is screening and referrals that happen in the school districts. We want to ensure, however, that the current efforts are supported by S.B. 204 and any additional enhancements are fully funded. We are in the neutral position because of our usual mandates that are not funded.

This discussion underscores the necessity for more counselors to be in our schools; it has been tremendous help to have social workers in our schools. We hope we can continue to receive more funding for the social workers in our schools.

ANNA SLIGHTING (Honoring Our Public Education):

I am representing HOPE, Honoring Our Public Education, and have submitted written testimony ([Exhibit R](#)).

SENATOR HARRIS:

I would like to give a short statement. As a LGBTQ person, I am not an ideology, I am a human being. My reading of S.B. 204 does not ask anyone to support an ideology, but it does ask that you support children. I would encourage everyone to think about this for a minute. The fact that there has been so much testimony about supporting other children, except the LGBTQ group, speaks to why this group needed to be included in this bill. I am a human, these students and children are human and my understanding is that we are taught to love all. That is my understanding of S.B. 204 and I would ask

each and every person to not exclude any child in trying to assist them in their needs and giving them tools needed to have a better chance at surviving life.

MR. ABRON:

In closing, I am a Christian, I believe in God, play the violin at church and participate in many youth activities including the Nevada Youth Legislature. When it comes to the topic of LGBTQ and someone wants to die rather than to be who they are, this is a problem. I see this as a problem with our youth, and I urge you to consider S.B. 204; the LGBTQ issue is serious. We can no longer turn a deaf ear nor a blind eye; we must consider this issue.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

I do not want us to leave with the erroneous points that have been made. The most pressing error is that I continue to hear from many of today's testifiers that section 10 imposes certain religious mandates. It does not.

Section 10, subsection 1 states, "The governing body of each private school that provides instruction to pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall, in consultation with pupils, parents or guardians of pupils, school employees, persons who provide mental health services to pupils, persons and organizations with expertise in the prevention of suicide and other interested persons and entities:"

I am disappointed several people were convinced S.B. 204 will infringe on their rights; the bill does not do that. The governing body of the school in consultation with pupils, parents or guardians of pupils, school employees, persons who provide mental health services to pupils, persons and organizations with expertise in the prevention of suicide and other interested persons and entities, decides and develops the plan.

I heard a lot about the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a Christian, I am saved and I believe in God and I am also a member of the LGBTQ community. I believe God loves me, too. I am not a statistic. I am not an ideology. I am a person. To listen to the people who want to discount the personhood, simply because they do not agree with people like me who refuse to remain in the shadows and not live a lie and allow me to live my truth; that is offensive.

Most "Christian" schools would not admit someone like me. I do not think I would be admitted. These schools would not have to deal with this issue. For

sure, these schools are probably admitting students who are still in the closet. We know for a fact, members of the LGBTQ community have served in the military, some are buried in Arlington National Cemetery and they are buried there because they gave their lives for the freedoms of this Country. I, too, served in the military. I was one of the fortunate ones; I did not have to give my all, but I respect those who did. There are several people still serving in the military who are members of the LGBTQ community.

As an ordained minister, as someone who has been seminary trained, someone who studied Hebrew and Greek in order to graduate to receive my Masters of Divinity; I do not think this bill is ignoring other people's beliefs. For me, in my Christianity, I do not think ignoring other people's beliefs is Christian. During the testimonies, I heard a lot about scripture and heard if we would just read the Bible.

What many major dominations are beginning to do now is provide mental health services for clergy persons because of the escalating number of pastors who are committing suicide. These pastors know God, they talk about God and they preach about Jesus. They do those things and help other people. At the end of the day, no one was there to help them.

It was asked earlier today, who is going to decide. I want to refer you to section 14 on page 17 of the bill.

NRS 439.513 is hereby amended to read as follows: subsection 1: The Coordinator of the Statewide Program for Suicide Prevention shall employ at least one person to act as a trainer for suicide prevention and facilitator for networking for Southern Nevada. Subsection 2: Each trainer for suicide prevention: paragraph (a) Must have at least the following education and experience: (1) Three years or more of experience in providing education and training relating to suicide prevention to diverse community groups; or (2) A bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree in social work, public health, psychology, sociology, counseling or a closely related field and 2 years or more of experience in providing education and training relating to suicide prevention.

Section 14, subsection 4, Each trainer for suicide prevention shall:
(a) Assist the Coordinator of the Statewide Program for Suicide

Prevention in disseminating and carrying out the Statewide Program in the county in which the trainer for suicide prevention is based;

People need to read section 10 subsection 1 where it is stated, "The governing body of each private school that provides instruction to pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall, in consultation with pupils, parents or guardians of pupils, school employees, ...".

It is the governing body of the school in consultation with all of those people who develop the plan. The State does not develop the plan for the suicide prevention in our schools. It is each school or school district and their governing body that develop a suicide prevention plan to follow in their locations. I cannot leave here today without including some of my scriptures:

John 3:16: King James Version For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Verse 17: God did not sent his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Romans 8:37: What shall separate me from the love of God neither height nor death, angels, principalities nor things present, nor things to come. Nothing shall separate me from the love of God.

What the original Greek version is saying is that God is always holding us constant and no one can take us out of God's hands. Just like a mother who would protect her child; in an accident, nothing would separate the mother from her child. This is the Greek version.

First John: If you see your Brother or your Sister in need, and you do not reach out and help them, how dwelleth the love of God in you.

James: You show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works because faith without works is dead.

We talk a lot of faith. We talk about all of this; it is time for us to do something because these kids deserve this service. If you do not want to talk about LGBTQ, do not do it. What I would ask is that people not try to relegate me to some theory, to some ideology; I am not that. I lived most of my life in the closet and I will not go back to appease someone else because they are afraid to acknowledge my person who God made. If it is good enough for God; it is good enough for me.

CHAIR DENIS:

I will now close the hearing on S.B. 204. I will open the meeting to public comment.

MS. MAYLATH:

At the beginning of public testimony for S.B. 204 it was stated that personal attacks are not permitted at the meeting. Yet, several in opposition fueled by ignorance, myths, lies, and extreme rhetoric propagated by hate groups has purposefully indulged in statements that denigrate and dehumanize people who identify as LGBTQ. If speech that dehumanizes who I am is not personal, what is? I respectfully ask the Chair to restrict these types of attacks in the future and I offer to sit with him to help gain a greater understanding of the comments that I refer to.

MS. M. URBINA:

I want to clarify that no one convinced me. I read S.B. 204 and this is how I understand it. If all of these people understood section 10 the same way it means that there is something that is not ...

CHAIR DENIS:

We have already finished the hearing on S.B. 204. I want to limit the comments on all other items.

MS. M. URBINA:

I am sorry. I am so desperate for you to hear me, I did not understand what you said.

CHAIR DENIS:

You can submit your additional comments on the bill for the record. If anyone would like to clarify any of your comments, you may write and submit it to the

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Committee and it will be part of the record on S.B. 204. I will close public comment and with no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Shelley Kyle
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

Bill	Exhibit / # of pages		Witness / Entity	Description
	A	10		Agenda
	B	11		Attendance Roster
S.B. 204	C	2	Sam Brinton / The Trevor Project	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	D	1	Trista Miller / Tuck and Run Foundation	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	E	2	Rachel Martin / Born This Way Foundation	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	F	26	Rachel Martin / Born This Way Foundation	Research Report
S.B. 204	G	1	Julie Murray / Moonridge Group, Nevada Medical Center	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	H	1	Kristy Keller / Moonridge Group, Nevada Medical Center	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	I	1	Shari Brown / United Citizens Foundation	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	J	1	Chiet Brown / Mingo Health Solutions	Written Testimony / Dinisha Mingo, M.S.
S.B. 204	K	6	Alliance Defending Freedom	Legal Memorandum
S.B. 204	L	2	Jorge Sanchez	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	M	1	Rafael Mundo	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	N	1	Willy Rameriz	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	O	2	Joshua Torres	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	P	2	Kirt Brannen	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	Q	1	Katherine Mendoza	Written Testimony
S.B. 204	R	1	Anna Slighting / Honoring Our Public Education	Written Testimony