

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-First Session
May 4, 2021**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:33 p.m. on Tuesday, May 4, 2021, Online and in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/81st2021.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Bea Duran
Assemblyman Edgar Flores
Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblywoman Lisa Krasner
Assemblywoman Elaine Marzola
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblywoman Rochelle T. Nguyen
Assemblywoman Jill Tolles
Assemblywoman Selena Torres

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senate District No. 2
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Senate District No. 8

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst
Amanda Marincic, Committee Counsel
Nick Christie, Committee Manager



Sarah Baker, Committee Secretary
Melissa Loomis, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brad Keating, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District
Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent, Division for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education
Bradley Mayer, representing Southern Nevada Health District
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association
Marie Neisess, President, Clark County Education Association
Joelle Gutman Dodson, representing Washoe County Health District
Lindsay Anderson, Director, Government Affairs, Washoe County School District
Erica Valdriz, Fund Raising Coordinator, Vegas Chamber
Paige Barnes, representing Nevada Association of School Boards
Heather Korbolic, Policy Director, Office of the Governor
Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, Principal, C.C. Ronnow Elementary School
Katherine A. Dockweiler, Ed.D, Director of Government Professional Relations, Nevada Association of School Psychologists
Irene Hernandez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Fatuma Abdullahi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jerania Mancilla, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Brenda Pearson, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Clark County Education Association
Lucero Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] Welcome. We have three bills to hear today. I will now open the hearing on Senate Bill 2 (1st Reprint).

Senate Bill 2 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-429)

Brad Keating, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District:

Especially today, it is an honor to be with all of you in this Committee. I could not be prouder to be wearing purple today in honor of our friend Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson. I am happy to be here with all of you to provide an overview of Senate Bill 2 (1st Reprint), which focuses on efficiencies in education. With this bill, we are hoping to reduce some unfunded mandates, duplicative reporting, and other tasks that are not targeted toward student achievement or take away from the classroom.

This legislation is important to the Clark County School District (CCSD) for several reasons [page 2, Exhibit C]. In terms of reporting, this bill removes the duplicative report dealing with student information relating to IEPs [Individualized Educational Plan] and 504s, which is already included in the State Validation Report. As it relates to BMI [body mass index]

testing and the Brigance exam—a kindergarten assessment—we have worked with stakeholders to review each of these items to see how we can ensure students' achievement is the focus at all times.

There are three sections within the bill that I will walk through [page 3]. Section 1 allows the State Board of Education to prescribe regulations for a new statewide screener for kindergarten students among the choices of early domain options and also gives teachers 45 days at the start of the school year to screen their students. In addition, no student who begins kindergarten after the first 45 days of school must take this new statewide screener.

The reason for this change in the bill is because currently, all kindergarten students are required to be individually screened in their first 30 days of school using the Brigance exam. Clark County School District feels that this test is outdated and takes a great deal of time from our educators since the exam must be administered individually. While our original intent was to remove this test completely, in working with the Department of Education (NDE) and learning their thoughts, we felt that working on a regulation toward a new screener would be helpful for all kindergarten students.

Section 2 of the bill removes the reporting requirements for certain information concerning pupils with a disability [page 4]. This is a redundant report because a count of pupils with an Individualized Education Plan, including disabilities, is already required in the State Validation Report. This data is given to the NDE and then shared with the Aging and Disability Services Division in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Again, I want to be clear with this Committee and the public who may be watching that we are not trying to reduce the reporting on students with disabilities in any way, shape, or form. All this information is already made available by school districts in the State Validation Report.

Finally, section 3 of the bill deals with anonymous height and weight measurements of students that will continue to be collected in school districts in CCSD and the Washoe County School District in fourth and seventh grades [page 5]. Previously, we collected this information in fourth, seventh, and tenth grades, but this became difficult at the high school level, and we were forced to pull students out of English and math courses to collect their height and weight, so we have moved it to just fourth and seventh grades. Since a random sample was pulled by DHHS each year, a new set of teachers and staff also had to be trained yearly to compile this information on their students.

Because of this, the data will now be collected every other year beginning in 2022 and done at the same time as the hearing, vision, and scoliosis screenings conducted by health nurses currently happening in fourth and seventh grades. This language was supported by all our health district partners so they can continue to apply for grants in the future based on the information collected. We appreciate their working with the school district to reduce the burden on teachers, staff, and schools by removing one grade level and only requiring this to occur every other year.

With that, Madam Chair, I want to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to provide a brief overview of this bill. It has been an honor to work with so many stakeholders over the last few months to make sure this bill is something we can be proud to present. I am happy to answer any questions that you or the Committee may have in relation to Senate Bill 2 (1st Reprint).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions from Committee members?

Assemblywoman Tolles:

We are getting rid of the assessment in the first thirty days of kindergarten, but then down in section 1, subsection 3, we are still assessing within 45 days of kindergarten. The purpose of this is to broaden it so we are, perhaps, getting rid of Brigance, but we can use some other assessment in the first 45 days. We are changing the timeline and the way that we assess students. Is that correct?

Brad Keating:

You said it much better than I ever could have. That is exactly what we are doing: we are looking at the statewide level through regulation and what the best screener would be for kindergarten students. We will do that through the NDE and through regulation changes. At the same time, instead of keeping it at a 30-day timeline at the beginning of school, we have increased another 15 days to allow the teacher and staff and principals additional time to test those students correctly. We did not want to miss anybody, so we gave ourselves a buffer to do those screenings.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

Just out of curiosity, what happens if a student were to transfer into kindergarten later on in the year? Do they have to be assessed within the first 45 days?

Brad Keating:

Currently, as the law sits now, the students must be tested within the first 30 days of their enrollment period regardless of when they arrived in the school. We would look to change that to make sure all students are tested within the first 45 days. The reason we would not continue testing after the 45-day period is because we move into MAP growth assessments that the students do, a winter and a spring assessment, so by the time a student arrives, within that 30-day window, they will already be taking their winter assessment, so we will be able to track the growth on those exams.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

We would not have an assessment in that case; instead, we would have a certain percentage of students who might not get assessed during kindergarten, and we wait until we catch them the next year. Is that correct?

Brad Keating:

We would assess them through our growth examinations that all the school districts in the state do through MAP growth tests, but we would not have an individual screener that they would start on Day 1 or Day 30.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

I have a quick question regarding the height and weight data that we are collecting. It is my understanding that that was going to be used to apply for grants. Could you elaborate a bit more about the grants that have been applied for and how much, if any, awards have been given?

Brad Keating:

This bill began, I believe, in the 78th Session (2015) and some changes were made during the 79th Session (2017). During the 78th Session, some grants were brought in through the health districts to help kick-start the program. Since that time, though, there have been no grants attained by the health districts as we moved forward, which is why we looked at tweaking this program and working with the health districts of both Clark and Washoe Counties. They believed if we minimized this to do it every other year, they would still have the data to be able to apply for future grants through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The issue with the grant process is that they can only apply every three or five years, I believe, so they would be preparing themselves for the next application window right now.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

Speaking of the grants and applying through the CDC, what type of programs are they looking to apply for? Is it childhood obesity programs?

Brad Keating:

That is what they have done before—several different family grant opportunities, community wellness, and child obesity grants.

Assemblywoman Torres:

On page 2 of the bill, the addition to section 1, subsection 3 specifies the first 45 days of the school year. Is that business days, school days, or calendar days? Maybe that would be a place for clarification.

Brad Keating:

In working with NDE, the intent was for it to be 45 school days. If we need to clarify that, we are happy to do so.

Assemblywoman Miller:

I want to go back to the Brigance testing. I will preface this by saying, as someone who has taught in elementary schools when this kindergarten testing is going on, it is quite traumatic and quite an upheaval for the whole school. In many cases, it often takes 45 days for elementary schools to get through it, because you are bringing in five-year-olds, and for

some, it is a bigger adjustment than for others to be in school and away from home for the day. I have seen kindergartners who have never held a pencil or who, after they use the restroom, call on the teacher because they do not know how to handle things themselves yet. On the flip side, we also have kindergartners who can spell and read and write and count. There are all kinds of different levels.

I have seen what this is like, when schools have to put their kindergartners through this, and I have also seen a work-around where some schools start the testing before school starts in a kindergarten or welcome-to-school camp, because instead of spending weeks and utilizing all extra staff and time to get these young kids to take the test, they can actually get it done before school starts. I cannot imagine what that would have done for my education or level of learning if that were my introduction to school.

I have made no qualms about the overtesting we do in the state and the district. I recognize that some testing is required, but there is also additional testing that the districts and individual schools are piling on in addition to what is required at the federal and state levels. I also know there is a bill coming out of the interim Legislative Committee on Education on the Senate side examining the excessive testing to which students are subjected. We know this is a subject that parents, educators, and students all agree on, so if these three groups—parents, educators, and students—are agreeing on it, it is time to look at the excessive testing.

My question is, why are we testing kindergartners to begin with? We are supposed to measure growth and have baseline data. Even if we started every student at baseline zero, we would still see that growth for each individual student. Also, are kindergarten tests required at a federal or state level? I know that at the state level, they will do what is required per the feds. I want to know if the kindergarten test is something that is required. If it is not required by the feds or the state, why are we still doing it?

Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent, Division for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education:

We will connect offline and provide a response from Dr. Jonathan Moore's office.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Does that mean that you must research the answer? Or is that because you want to find the right federal requirements? It seems to me like that would be known information, so I am wondering why it would be offline.

Felicia Gonzales:

That response would come out of Dr. Jonathan Moore's office.

Assemblywoman Nguyen:

As a parent, I am always looking at my kids' student performances on their assessments, and I wonder if it is possible to add clarifying language to ensure those assessments are criterion-referenced. As a parent, I know what the assessment is evaluating. Is it student knowledge, or is it that norm-referenced measurement against other students?

Brad Keating:

I think that would be a question for NDE regarding what type of assessments we are using. Again, for full transparency, when this bill started, we worked to remove this examination period as the Brigance exam. In working with NDE, it was important to them that we continue a readiness screener to make sure students were ready for kindergarten. The best answer I could give you is that hopefully, in NDE's answers on the other questions, they can talk about why the Brigance exam was chosen and how it would apply in this setting.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other questions from the Committee? [There were none.] I will open testimony in support of this bill.

Bradley Mayer, representing Southern Nevada Health District:

We support the collection of height and weight data for the purpose of determining BMI in a sample of students in Clark and Washoe Counties. Obesity continues to be a serious problem in our community. In Clark County, the percentage of people who are overweight or obese continues to increase, and this increase will likely accelerate because of the pandemic. According to the most recent behavioral risk factor survey system and youth risk behavioral survey data, 68 percent of adults and 29 percent of high school students in Clark County are overweight or obese.

We have worked closely with Mr. Keating and the counterparts at WCSD and the Washoe County Health District to come up with an amendment added on the Assembly side to allow us to still collect this data. This amendment would require the information to be collected for students every other year during their hearing, vision, and scoliosis screening. Body mass index is not a perfect measure of this, but this data is the best available source of information, so it is important from a public health standpoint to collect this data so we can increase our ability to identify trends and disparities and secure and direct resources to where they are most needed.

The importance of this data is particularly relevant given COVID-19. We anticipate the pandemic to have a negative impact on childhood obesity due to, in part, increased food insecurity, increased sedentary time, and fewer opportunities for physical activity and organized sports. The Southern Nevada Health District has used BMI data collected in the past to support federal funding and has worked closely with CCSD to support the collection of height and weight data. Between 2010 and 2012, we were able to distribute about \$250,000 to the school districts to buy the equipment.

As we go forward into the future, we understand there are going to be ongoing needs, so as good partners, we will work with the school districts to help provide them more as some of these grants come in—they are not on a guaranteed cycle, so that is why the every other year collection works. We support the continuation of collecting this data, since it is important, and we will continue to work collaboratively with CCSD and other stakeholders to support the efforts to collect this data and ensure it is best used to leverage our abilities to bring additional resources into Nevada to address this issue.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

We appreciate CCSD for bringing this bill forward. We believe it is time to review and revamp some of the testing done, especially with our little children. The revamp for the height and weight assessment to remove it from high school and at the elementary level is a good, commonsense approach to addressing some of these issues. We are in support of this bill.

Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:

We are in support of this bill to bring some small efficiencies to public education. In particular, we appreciate any flexibility that can be provided over the kindergarten screening. Finally, we also want to thank the bill's sponsor, CCSD, for working with us on the pre-drafting phase of this bill to address some of our issues.

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senate District No. 2:

I wanted to come up in support. We ended up with a much better process when it comes to the height and weight assessment. Before, there have been some challenges with communication between the health district and the school district. We were able to get the Washoe and Clark County Health Districts as well as the school districts together, and we talked to the rural counties as well. By doing these assessments every other year and eliminating the high school testing—because they were having to pull kids out of classes to do it—we are now going to end up with a much better data pool, because thousands more kids will be able to be tested.

Usually, when you talk about height and weight, people worry about somebody pulling a child up in front of the class and weighing them, but this is all anonymous, and the data is all anonymous. As you have already heard from the Southern Nevada Health District, not only do they apply for grants, but they are able to use it in their decision making. It is a huge issue. The reason I brought the bill originally was that in my community, the Latino community, we have a disproportionate number of kids who are overweight and obese, and I wanted to make sure we could get the data so that as we look at solutions in the future, we have this timeline.

I think it is important to look back at legislation, especially with education, and if there are things we did that have fulfilled their purpose, we need to look and see if we do not need those anymore. I know that is what they are trying to do—make this process more efficient to make sure we can educate our children to the best of our ability and eliminate things that are taking up time and are no longer productive. I think this bill does that.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I was just made aware and wanted the Committee to know that the Division of Public and Behavioral Health also uses that data to apply for grants. It is used in other ways as well.

Marie Neisess, President, Clark County Education Association:

We support this bill and thank CCSD for bringing it forth. Senate Bill 2 (1st Reprint) takes out redundant requirements for reporting and addresses previously unfunded mandates [[Exhibit D](#)]. By giving the Nevada State Board of Education regulatory authority to prescribe a statewide screener for kindergarten students, the Nevada education system will have the flexibility to ensure the exam we utilize is current and provides the state with reliable data to produce better outcomes related to student achievement. Further, we support this bill because the changes in the height and weight measurements will not take students away from time in the classroom.

We appreciate the efforts of this Committee and all stakeholders for this bill and support all efforts that allow educators to prioritize learning while giving the flexibility that comes with regulations to ensure that the evolution of the education system can happen. We support the restoration to before the pandemic-related budget cuts and the progression to optimal funding of the pupil-centered funding plan.

However, as we wait for the bipartisan effort to target new revenue for Senate Bill 543 of the 80th Session, we must leverage all partnerships with government agencies to ensure that we provide the wraparound services that our students need. This bill takes a much-needed look at our data collection in coordination with local health districts and will help to provide public health programming in the long run that promotes healthy living and eating habits in our students.

Joelle Gutman Dodson, representing Washoe County Health District:

I want to ditto what Southern Nevada Health District representative Bradley Mayer said. We are in support of this bill, and we are very empathetic to unfunded mandates, so we are supportive of streamlining whatever we can. We also want to mention that we are here to support WCSD however we can; we have offered to pay for scales and set them as well as any sort of education and support we can give them.

Lindsay Anderson, Director, Government Affairs, Washoe County School District:

It is timely that I get to testify after the Washoe County Health District. We are in support of the amended version, and we think this is going to make it a little easier on our school districts to collect this data. I will certainly be reaching out to the Washoe County Health Department and taking them up on their offer; they are already great partners.

Erica Valdriz, Fund Raising Coordinator, Vegas Chamber:

The Chamber is in support of this bill. We believe this bill will provide educators, families, and students with critical knowledge about their children's development and growth. These assessments can provide records of development and lay out approaches to learning. We urge your support for this bill.

Paige Barnes, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:

I will keep it short and say that we are here in support of this bill.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close testimony in support and move on to opposition. Are there any callers who wish to testify in opposition? [There were none.] I will open testimony in neutral. Are there any callers? [There were none.] I will close testimony in neutral. Mr. Keating, do you have any closing remarks?

Brad Keating:

To Assemblywoman Nguyen, I realized that I never answered your question. I will work closely with Jhone Ebert, state Superintendent for Public Instruction, and NDE to provide additional information for the Committee, but the Brigrance exam is a norm-referenced exam.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 2 (1st Reprint). We are going to do our work session quickly and get that out of the way. I will now open the work session.

Assembly Bill 450: **Revises provisions relating to workforce development.**
(BDR S-1108)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

As nonpartisan staff, I am not here to advocate for issues. I am here to assist members with the policy issues brought forward to this Committee. Our first bill on work session today is Assembly Bill 450, which was sponsored by the Governor's Office and heard by the Committee on April 22, 2021 [[Exhibit E](#)].

This bill directs the governor to appoint a committee to conduct an interim study concerning opportunities to align the need for workforce training and the programs offered by community colleges in Nevada to meet the needs of the economy of the state. The bill: (1) establishes the membership of the committee; (2) establishes the subjects that the committee is required to study; and (3) requires the committee to report its findings to the Governor, the chair of the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada, and the Legislature on or before August 1, 2022.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod proposed an amendment which adds one member to the committee who is a representative of a labor organization in this state and who has, or has had, a defined role in a jointly administered apprenticeship program, and provides the definition for "labor organization."

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Before we take a motion, are there any questions?

Assemblywoman Miller:

I have a brief question on this bill. After this bill was presented, I had several different chambers reach out to me, because the bill states that there would be representatives from three chambers of commerce—one from the north, two from the south. Obviously, in Clark County, we have dozens of different chambers, so the questions I received were around the

selection or the application process about how chambers would be able to apply and be selected. With only two spots and dozens of chambers, they were very interested in that process. I was hoping for more clarity on this process.

Heather Korbulic, Policy Director, Office of the Governor:

To answer your question, we have the same process for applying for this commission or board as for any other board, which is an application process on the Governor's website, and the Governor would then choose from members who applied and appoint them to the board.

Assemblywoman Miller:

How quickly after the passage of this bill would that process begin? It seemed like this is something the Governor wants to do quickly. Do you know how soon members could anticipate that?

Heather Korbulic:

We anticipate being willing and capable of taking applications for these positions as soon as the bill passes, and then we will make appointments quickly, because we have a short timeline to get all this work done. It is a priority of the Governor's, and he will be working on appointments as soon as possible.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will take a motion to amend and do pass A.B. 450.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN NGUYEN MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND DO
PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 450.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLER SECONDED THE MOTION.

Are there any comments or questions on the motion?

Assemblywoman Krasner:

I will be voting yes to get this bill out of Committee but want to reserve my right to change my vote prior to floor.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

I am going to be a no on this because I am concerned that it is duplicating efforts with what we already do through the Office of Workforce Innovation in the Office of the Governor (OWINN). I am also concerned with the proposed move of OWINN under DETR [Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation] and duplicating this under the Governor's Office that there would be some silos and lack of coordination, which I think is really important to address. I would rather keep it all consolidated.

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEN HANSEN, MCARTHUR, AND
TOLLES VOTED NO).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will assign that floor statement to Assemblywoman Nguyen. I will now open the work session on Senate Bill 173 (1st Reprint).

Senate Bill 173 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR S-1003)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Senate Bill 173 (1st Reprint) was sponsored by Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop and heard by the Committee on April 22, 2021 [[Exhibit F](#)]. The bill authorizes the board of trustees of each school district and the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) to submit a plan to address learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to the superintendent of public instruction. The plan must include the option for pupils to attend summer school—either in-person or online—and a description of the manner in which schools and school districts, including charter schools, will target pupils most at risk of learning loss. The bill requires a school district or charter school offering summer school to include transportation and meal services.

Additionally, the bill requires that personnel hired for summer school programs receive supplemental pay equal to their contract rate. The bill also requires school districts and the SPCSA to submit a report regarding certain information relating to the plans to address learning loss to the state superintendent by October 31, 2021. The Department of Education must submit a compiled report to the Governor and the Legislature by November 30, 2021.

There is one proposed amendment provided by Senator Dondero Loop, which does the following:

1. Adds English learners to the list of pupils identified as at risk of loss of learning.
2. Requires that retired public employees hired for the summer school program have submitted their fingerprints to complete a criminal history report recently enough that the fingerprints do not need to be submitted again.
3. Revises dates in which certain reports must be submitted.
4. Requires school districts and charter schools to compare the results of certain examinations and assessments administered during the spring of 2021 with the results of those administered during the fall of 2021.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Before we take a motion, are there any questions?

Assemblyman Flores:

I wanted to follow up on a conversation we engaged in during the bill presentations. I do appreciate your adding English language learners to the bill. One of the topics brought up was that there are some organizations like nonprofits or different groups that do a lot of

things during the summer that are adequately captured in this bill. One of the conversations we had was, Why reinvent the wheel when we have such phenomenal organizations out there doing exactly what this bill is talking about? I do not know if you had the opportunity to continue that conversation any further, and I was curious.

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Senate District No. 8:

While we recognize many groups have some type of summer program, this will be a summer school. Also, as a reminder, we have many different types of counties within our state, and they all do different things because of different groups of people who live within their communities. We have some that have 100 kids in a county and some that have 320,000. This is a "submit" plan. We do have American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 money coming specifically for this, and we feel like this is a really good use of that money for our students. We hope that those other community groups continue to do what they are doing, because all kids may not take part in the summer school. We will have lots of opportunities for those children.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I appreciate many parts of the amendment presented with this bill, but I still do not understand why we are not adding that language. I think that this would be very powerful, because these programs follow students not just during high school, not just for that one summer. When we look at programs like TRIO or Dean's Future Scholars, those programs are following kids for many years, often through university and even after graduation. I feel like that would be such a vital part of this legislation that would empower these programs to continue to expand and possibly secure more federal funding. I know that with programs like TRIO, more students in a summer program allows for us to receive more federal funds to expand those programs in the future. I guess I am still a little uncomfortable with that, and I do not understand why it is not being added in since we know these programs are effective. What I love about these programs is that they represent a commitment to follow students for so long.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I do not think anything in this bill prevents any of what you just described. I think this bill enhances that. This is a four-week program offered by any school district in our state, which will allow these students to go to school. I hope the programs you are speaking about would continue to embrace these students and enhance their learning.

Assemblywoman Torres:

The concern that I have heard from my colleagues who work in TRIO is that we are going to be losing students to these programs because they are going to go to their neighborhood school. We want to encourage the relationship between neighborhood schools, and I hope we can continue to work with school districts to encourage those students who are eligible for TRIO and these programs that are available at the universities to continue to engage with those programs, or we will lose federal funding as a state.

Assemblywoman Miller:

I would like to thank you for adopting the amended version for section 2, subsection 1, and of course I am going to address testing. I love the amendment because I think it gets at what everyone wants to see, which is the growth that is made. Obviously, a major part of this program is knowing that there is some learning and socialization loss this past year and wanting to get our kids caught up. We want to make sure the program is effective, and I think this amendment is great—comparing the growth of students who went through the four-week program and those who did not. The way it is written, I believe this amendment could actually replace any data or type of exam, but it still says, "one or more measures of pupil achievement." You could still give other tests or have other data points, but I think that this itself should satisfy that need.

That goes back to a deeper question, which is that in four weeks of summer school, to think that a student who is severely behind and has such learning loss could make up a whole year in four weeks, I think we all agree that that is probably not reasonable, but four weeks will get you ahead of where you were. I think this amendment suffices, and we do not need the part about one or more measures of pupil achievement. We do not need other measures of pupil achievement; we are just seeing whether these students have demonstrated growth. I think that comparison group of students who went through the program and did demonstrate growth would be enough.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I am happy to have NDE jump in if they like, but our thought was that because there is some connection and there are some issues with doing testing during that four-week period, we decided that maybe what we could do is compare a test that happened this year and a test that happens in the next year as opposed to testing during the summer school session. We all know there is going to be some type of a baseline as I described when I presented the bill. If I am a kindergarten teacher, I am going to flash-card kids to see where they are. If I am doing middle school STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics], I would ask kids what air is, and then we would do a bunch of experiments and some sort of a fun project. I have something I use as a baseline in summer school, not to be recorded, but these are things we will be using. That is why we added that achievement to be measured in post-tests given at the end of the 2020-2021 school year compared with pretests given at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.

Assemblywoman Miller:

I appreciate that and think that is the best way to go, but my concern is still because we all know that there is a difference between what happens here in Carson City and what happens in the classrooms and the school districts. When I see "one or more measures," speaking as a teacher, of course we expect and appreciate all those in-class measurements, but I am afraid that the way it is written still opens the door for the standardized testing and diagnostics during those four weeks.

Senator Dondero Loop:

We will just have to agree to disagree, because that is not the intent of the legislation, and we all know that any legislation that we submit in this entire 120-day process can always be taken out of context if it wants to be, or it can be put into context. I will be monitoring this, and I have had many conversations with the Department of Education and school districts, and I believe that everyone is good with this process. As a teacher for many years who did many different types of assessments, I can only tell you that I feel comfortable with where the bill is. I do appreciate your comments.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will take a motion to amend and do pass S.B. 173 (R1).

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KRASNER MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND DO
PASS SENATE BILL 173 (1ST REPRINT).

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GORELOW SECONDED THE MOTION.

Are there any comments or questions on the motion?

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I appreciate your efforts and the intent. I represent seven school districts in seven counties and multiple school boards, and I have an issue with the jurisdictional aspect of this bill. A lot of them are already doing this—plans are underway and being considered for rollout, and I feel that some of it is duplicative, and I want them to have that authority themselves at the district level. I will be voting no.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

I will be voting yes.

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEN HANSEN AND MCARTHUR
VOTED NO).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will assign that floor statement to Assemblywoman Anderson, and if for some reason you cannot do it, I will take it from you. We will move on to the final bill on work session, Senate Bill 342.

Senate Bill 342: Revises provisions relating to higher education. (BDR 34-845)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Senate Bill 342 authorizes the Board of Regents to enter into an agreement to affiliate with a publicly or privately owned medical facility or related entity to further promote and enhance a medical education or health education program at a university [[Exhibit G](#)]. The bill further provides that such agreements are subject to policies established by the Board. There are no amendments to the measure.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Before we take a motion, are there any questions? [There were none.] I will take a motion to do pass S.B. 342.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KRASNER MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS
SENATE BILL 342.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MARZOLA SECONDED THE MOTION.

Are there any comments or questions on the motion? [There were none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign that floor statement to Assemblyman McArthur. We will close the work session and return to our bill hearings with Senate Bill 352.

Senate Bill 352: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-843)

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senate District No. 2:

Today I have the pleasure of presenting Senate Bill 352, which ultimately helps reduce additional barriers for those who want to become teachers. I am excited to be able to work on this legislation. With me today, I have Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, the principal at C.C. Ronnow Elementary School, and Dr. Katie Dockweiler, State Board of Education member and school psychologist.

Let me give you some background. The phrase "chronic teacher shortage" has been voiced countless times over the years and remains one of the biggest challenges in our education system. This is certainly not a new issue plaguing Nevada's school system. In fact, this was an issue before I even came to the Legislature. What keeps me awake at times is knowing that as more of the state's baby boomers retire, our need for new teachers will only grow, making our teacher core even younger and less experienced.

Nevada is not the only state affected by this problem. Shortages have grown in recent years as enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined nationwide. One report by the Center for American Progress suggests that these programs have experienced a drop by one-third from 2010 to 2018. Districts across the country are facing severe and chronic teacher shortages, especially within certain subjects and specialty areas. We know these persistent shortages can be very costly for districts and can have a negative impact on workforce quality, student outcomes, and school climate, among other things.

Even worse, the greatest impacts of these shortages are typically seen in schools that can least afford them. This Legislature has done a lot of work over the years to address teacher shortages, including strengthening recruitment and retention efforts. In fact, in the report by the Center for American Progress, both enrollment and completion for Nevada's teacher

preparation program slightly increased in the past decade. However, while we have made some progress, it is not enough, and we cannot become complacent.

The bill before you today is another way to help eliminate barriers for those who want to enter the teaching profession, which ultimately helps build our teacher workforce. Senate Bill 352 requires the Commission on Professional Standards in Education to adopt regulations that authorize a currently employed paraprofessional who is enrolled in a program to become a teacher to complete an accelerated student teaching program in the same or similar area in which the person is currently employed. The Commission must also adopt regulations that require the Department of Education (NDE) to accept student teaching experience completed outside of Nevada if the experience substantially fulfills requirements.

As far as proposed amendments, we did have an amendment that did not get turned in that is going to help not only with teachers, but with school psychologists, helping to remove those barriers for them as well. What really attracted me to this was the fact that the future teachers we are talking about removing barriers for are people who are already working in our schools, but they cannot afford to take time off to complete their student teaching. That was one of the barriers, and you will hear about this from Ms. Crawford as she speaks about why she worked on this and the survey she did. I think this gives us an opportunity to bring people who are already living in our neighborhoods and are good representations of our student body who want to be teachers and will have that opportunity. I urge your support of this bill, which ultimately helps address those barriers for those wishing to enter the teaching and school psychology professions. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, Principal, C.C. Ronnow Elementary School:

I am really excited to be here. I am obsessed with removing barriers, and public education is my passion. I am a current building principal at a school with about 85 percent Latinx students and 15 percent African-American students, so I represent a majority-minority community. I also serve in the Air Force National Guard in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Headquarters Sector.

This bill started because I had some open positions in my building, and I started talking to my support staff employees who work in the classroom every day and assist with needs like pulling small groups, instructional needs, diapering, whatever is needed within a special education classroom. I noticed that many of them were going to school very slowly because they made under \$20,000 per year, but they stopped their schooling once they got to student teaching. Student teaching takes about 16 weeks, and in that time, they would have to quit their job and lose their pay and benefits in order to student teach in a classroom they are already working in. I thought this was absurd, and it would be common sense to allow them to remain in their role and do their student teaching in their job if their area of licensure matched that.

The first part of the bill is to allow someone employed as a paraprofessional to do their student teaching while remaining employed as long as the area of licensure matches the job they are doing. The amendment [page 1, [Exhibit H](#)] adds school psychologists, because

currently, they must take a year off in order to do their internship. Currently, within the Clark County School District (CCSD), we have 30 psychological service assistants (PSAs) who are doing the same job as assistants for the psychology departments [page 8, [Exhibit H](#)]. For example, at my school, I have had a new psychologist off and on for the past three years, and when I do not have a psychologist in my building, I have a PSA assess my students. Currently we have 30 PSAs in CCSD, and 29 of them are bilingual, so when you have a student who is an English language learner, you have to put in a bilingual psych request; I have waited approximately six months each time I put in one of those requests. This bill would significantly improve that. We currently have three PSAs enrolled in a psychological program, and this would have a direct impact, and we would see the benefits right away from that.

I want to share a couple of other statistics. Clark County School District recently released a report from the Office of the Superintendent's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Commission, and as you can see, we have significantly more variance in Caucasian teachers in relation to students [page 3, [Exhibit H](#)]. As for African Americans, we have significantly fewer teachers than students, and for Hispanics, we have an even larger disparity between our employee population and our student population.

Why is this important? When students have teachers who look like them, they are 39 percent less likely to drop out of high school and 29 percent more likely to pursue college [page 4, [Exhibit H](#)]. That shows that representation matters, and this bill aims to also help with that, because many of our support staff members better represent our student population.

I have a couple of support staff members who wanted to share their stories about how this bill will impact them through video testimonials [[Exhibit I](#)]. I am having technical difficulties, but I do have four support staff members who are currently waiting to be able to do their student teaching. They make less than \$20,000 per year and would be able to come into the classroom directly after their student teaching next year.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

If you want to cue that up, we can hear their testimony when we move to support.

**Katherine A. Dockweiler, Ed.D., Director of Government Professional Relations,
Nevada Association of School Psychologists:**

This has been a big barrier for school psychologists to get them into the pipeline for many years. We do need to complete a one-year internship in which, as Ms. Crawford mentioned, we would have to quit our employment as paraprofessionals and lose our benefits to pursue that degree. This bill really supports a lot of the work that has been happening in Nevada over the last couple of years through legislation and the regulatory process in terms of getting more school psychologists into our schools to help support our students. This bill will remove that barrier so we can make our workforce more robust and get more school psychologists into the pipeline. If there are any specific questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Senator Denis:

We do have Felicia Gonzales on, and she might want to address the one issue that has come up, which is the implementation date, because I think it is important.

Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent, Division for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education:

The Department of Education and the education preparation institutions will be reimagining what the student teaching experience looks like, but the employers do not need to wait for regulation as this change in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) clearly states that current employees can remain employed while completing their student teaching experience or their internship as they will be employed as PSAs. Because of this, there should be no issue implementing this legislation.

We will be writing regulations to further define the change in acceleration for the education preparation program for those support staff employees and also to write regulations for teachers who live in a foreign country who would like to move here and teach. We will draft those regulations to further define what that looks like, but as far as the support staff employees, this bill clearly defines what that would look like, so there should be no issue with implementation as of July 1, 2021.

Senator Denis:

The other thing that has not been brought up is that this will also bring standardization to the student teaching, which is currently different depending on the institution students attend. This will help to try to standardize that across the Nevada System of Higher Education institutions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions from Committee members?

Assemblywoman Miller:

I am one who does not believe we should keep removing and simplifying the licensure process just because we are in such desperate need of teachers. We have not done what it is really going to take to turn this ship around, and yes, we are in desperate need of teachers, but we keep going back to that ideology that anyone can teach, and we just need people in there. We do not see this happening in other professions. I do not see in the nursing field that we have a nursing shortage, so we just need to take CNAs [certified nursing assistants] and fast-track them to becoming RNs [registered nurses].

My concern is that student teaching really is a clinical experience. I have seen many people fail out of student teaching, which means they cannot become licensed as a teacher. That is something we want to capture, because if you do not have the ability to perform well enough in student teaching, that is a real indicator of what would have happened. I have seen people fail student teaching multiple times and yet continue to be full-time substitute teachers. I do not want to take away or reduce that experience.

That is not to say that there are not plenty of support staff, and I know support staff, too, who have gone through the process and become fully licensed teachers. We know there are many support staff who want to be teachers and who will be fantastic teachers, but I want to make sure we are not reducing the licensure process because when you make it too easy for anyone—that is the perception, that anyone can teach—then we get those "anyone can teach" results. We talk a lot about making sure we have the best, most-qualified people in our classrooms, so I am always going to stand on that side to make sure we have the best-prepared, best-trained, and the best-qualified teachers in our classrooms to deal with the extensive and enormous demands of teaching.

I feel some discomfort with the way the bill is written, because it is written in a permissive way. The Department of Education has said there will be regulations coming, but it is hard for me to picture that. What will be the standards? What will be the expectations? Are we reducing 16 weeks to 1 week? We see the same inconsistencies with ARL [alternative routes to licensure] programs. I have seen people in the classroom following an ARL program after two or three weeks. What are we saying? Oh, instead of doing student teaching, you just do two weeks, or we take your years of working as an aide as your student teaching? There is so much to student teaching. You are evaluated by the college and your lead teacher, you are expected to perform and demonstrate and teach and do everything on your own and all these responsibilities, and that is not only what trains and molds you, but it also helps us capture those who are not performing well enough to do it on their own.

Also, there was discussion last year that this would possibly include individuals who did not even have their bachelor's degrees yet. My first thing is, according to NRS standards, you do need a bachelor's degree before you can become licensed unless it is a substitute or a Business and Industry license, but once that is addressed, can you give me some idea of what this is going to look like?

Senator Denis:

This was not brought to try to find an easy way to become a teacher. Ms. Crawford did not address this, but she did a survey of individuals who are already working and asked what the biggest barrier was for them to becoming a teacher, and it was having to take off a semester. She mentioned the part that they work for the school district, but they have to give up their job, their health insurance, and all of their benefits so that, for one semester, they can do student teaching. The intent here is that they can still fulfill all the requirements you need to fulfill for student teaching and not have to give up their jobs, because these are people who are already working in the classroom every day, and yet they do not become teachers because they cannot afford to take off that semester. We are just trying to remove that one barrier.

The second thing you talked about was the bachelor's degree; these people are already working on their degree, and the last thing they must complete is their student teaching. My son was substitute teaching while going to school, and he had to save up to be able to finish his student teaching. I know there is a big challenge, and many of these people are in that situation where they cannot afford it while earning less than \$20,000 a year. We want to

make sure they are prepared to be in the classroom and succeed, but we want to remove the barrier. If they are already there and working, why can we not incorporate that?

Assemblywoman Miller:

You bring up another point. In my experience, depending on the school, they will take people who are actually doing student teaching and then hire them as full-time substitutes when there is a vacancy and they need a full-time substitute, and the school will say, Oh, this person is doing student teaching, they have gone through the process, they are licensed, and we have their fingerprints, so we will throw them into this full-time vacancy.

The real benefit of the student teaching experience is that you are working under a licensed professional the whole time, so there is also that supervision that comes with it. That is part of my concern, too, just like when I see student teachers become full-time substitutes and the school says there is someone monitoring them, but running three doors down if you have a question is not monitoring or supervision. Maybe this question is for NDE with developing these regulations: Will these people be supervised? Will there be some student teaching experience? I guess it goes back to the real elephant in the room—why do we not then provide benefits and pay while they are student teaching?

Senator Denis:

I agree. I think Ms. Crawford or Ms. Gonzales could talk about what we are envisioning as far as what the process will be.

Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford:

I hear your concerns. This is the traditional education route, so the support staff members would have their solid 120 credits, their four years of schooling, and then when it comes to student teaching, they would remain in their role if it meets the area of licensure under a licensed teacher. I currently have a special education aide in a special education classroom who would need to take 16 weeks off, which is not going to happen. What happens is we are stopping people from continuing their education because they cannot pay for that. Now, with this bill, she would be able to stay in her position that she has helped set up for the past five years in the new program, and now she would go into some of the teacher roles and responsibilities like direct instruction, planning, parent communication, grading, and IEP [Individual Educational Plan] writing.

What we are doing with this is setting our teachers up for more success, because these support staff members have been working for five or more years, according to my district survey. I had 1,300 support staff members respond who have thousands of hours of classroom experience. They live in the communities they work in, and their recruitment and retention would be much higher because they are invested in their communities.

You also asked why we do not pay. I agree, but I was looking for a bill that was free, because so many times, we have thrown out bills that are not funded and they do not happen. This is a way to remove a barrier that increases student achievement and also creates generations of people who are going to go to college, because students will see that their

teachers who live in their communities have gone to college and want to go themselves. It is basically creating upward mobility by removing a barrier that is very outdated. A lot of districts and states have removed it, it is in President Joe Biden's recovery plan, and it makes complete sense, I think.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

I did have a question regarding the bill amendment that did not make it into this hearing, and it was regarding the PSAs. You mentioned that you were going to propose to add PSAs in this bill, so when you cannot have a licensed psychologist for the school, you will use a PSA. What will the level of education be for a PSA? Will they have a Ph.D. [doctor of philosophy] or a Psy.D. [doctor of psychology]? What will their job duties be?

Katherine Dockweiler:

The PSAs are support staff. At least in CCSD, we use them to help assist us with evaluations, so they do need to practice under a licensed school psychologist, and a lot of their duties include scheduling meetings and assisting with basic testing functions. They do not have the level of education licensed psychologists have, so there are some limitations on what they can do, but they do practice under the supervision of a licensed school psychologist.

The idea for PSAs is to get them into the field to help support school psychologists, and in doing so, we can create a pipeline moving people through an education program and support them along the way to make our workforce more robust. The PSAs typically have about two to three years of education, and it is really that one-year internship that prevents them from moving on to becoming a licensed school psychologist. They take years and years of schooling, but it is that one year they must take off to complete that internship that prevents them from moving on.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

Will there be any minimum qualification of education for a PSA? You said previously that when you do not have licensed psychologists, you will use these PSAs. In those instances, who would they be working under if not a licensed psychologist if there is not one available?

Katherine Dockweiler:

The minimum requirement for PSAs is currently about two to three years of schooling. That is something we can also work on with NDE through licensing and regulation. The PSAs all need to work with a licensed school psychologist. For example, here at my school—and this is how it works everywhere—if we need assistance with any referrals we receive, then we put in a request for a PSA to come assist us. They are not allowed to handle a complete evaluation on their own, they can assist with the specific parts we task them to do, and then we are responsible for supervising and making sure that everything is done correctly and according to all the legal procedures that are established.

Senator Denis:

Also, you probably heard in the presentation where Ms. Crawford mentioned that she had a PSA come in. This amendment says, "... school psychologist support staff and enrolled in a program to become a school psychologist to complete a program of internship while employed as a school psychologist support staff" [page 1, [Exhibit H](#)]. The amendment for the school psychologist is similar to the teacher one in that they are already working for the district as a PSA, but this would give them the opportunity to continue to be employed while they do the internship instead of having to do an unpaid internship for a year.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

I thought maybe they might at least have a bachelor's degree and then be working toward a master's degree or Ph.D.

Senator Denis:

I believe that they are in the process of becoming a school psychologist, and they need to have that internship in order to do that.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I really like this piece of legislation, and I appreciate Ms. Crawford for reaching out to me to talk about the idea long before it was even in the Committee. I am really excited to see this piece of legislation before us today. I am hoping you can give some clarification about what this looks like for administrators right now, just to compare two programs.

My understanding is that when an educator becomes a principal, they have to do something similar where they are shadowing a principal or something of that sort, but they are not required to leave their profession; they are able to find a more administrative position within the school that they can do, or a coaching position, and still also do that shadowing or student teaching. Is that correct?

Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford:

Yes, that is correct. In my experience, we do unpaid internships for people who make the least amount of money. Administration has a lot of flexibility. When I did my hours, I was able to continue my role as an instructional coach.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I appreciate that, because I think it highlights the disparity and inequities that exist within the system. We know that we really do not have enough teachers, specifically teachers of color. We know that we are underrepresented in our schools and our communities. I think it would be phenomenal for us to create a program that does not fast-track becoming a teacher, because that is not what this legislation is doing. It is streamlining that process so the people who are working in the school can easily get the requirements done and still complete the other training they need so they can become educators. I think this respects that paraprofessionals play a vital role in our school communities and should have access to moving up and becoming educators, and we should encourage them to do so. I have a lot of

people in my family who have had a lot of issues getting their student teaching done because of the time commitment of taking off work and changing professions. We want to encourage them to stay and work in education as much as possible. I really appreciate this piece of legislation.

Assemblyman Flores:

I was interested in knowing if we have any numbers showing what this is going to look like. Do we have any understanding of how many people we think we are going to be pushing through this pipeline? I think it would be useful for us to know how many people we can really help.

Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford:

I conducted a survey within CCSD that I sent out to paraprofessionals and gave them approximately three weeks to respond. I had 1,398 people that this would help immediately or within the next few years. I took that number and have created facilitation groups where we are mentoring 800 support staff members, helping them enroll in college courses for licensure, pass their Praxis tests, and whatever other help they need with licensure. Immediately, it would impact about 1,300 people on the road to licensure, and that is just within CCSD.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will move on to testimony in support. I will first go to Ms. Crawford. I hear you are ready with your video testimonials, so we will start with you.

Irene Hernandez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

[Prerecorded testimony, [Exhibit I](#)]. I am a specialized programs teacher assistant (SPTA) at C.C. Ronnow Elementary School. I currently work with the Inclusion Title I Pre-K program, and I have also worked in self-contained early childhood. I have been an SPTA for about seven years, and prior to that, I was a substitute for about four years at the same school. I have made it a career, and as a single mom of four kids, every day is a struggle with finances and child care. That has been a block in my career path; it seems like as soon as I want to get going and finish my degree, something always stops me, and they are things that are always out of my control. I keep blocking those punches and rolling with it even though I go slowly, but it has been too long. Those are my biggest struggles—finances and child care. I work full time and then come home and study and still take care of my family, providing the basic needs for them and still trying to finish what I need to finish with schooling and finish my degree. Those are my struggles.

Fatuma Abdullahi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

[Prerecorded testimony, [Exhibit I](#)]. I am currently at C.C. Ronnow Elementary School. I am a functional living skills (FLS) SPTA. Before, I did the kids program, and the kids program turned into the FLS program. I substituted for the district for seven months before I found

my current, full-time position, and I have been here for five years now. Right after high school, I knew I wanted to be a teacher, so I have been going for it, taking one class after work over and over, because working full-time means that I cannot take the full-time classes. Now, I am at the point where I am almost done with one year to go.

Jerania Mancilla, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

[Prerecorded testimony, [Exhibit I](#)]. I currently work at C.C. Ronnow Elementary School, and I have been here for three years working with the FLS program. Initially, I started working with the STAR [Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research] Program, but now I am with FLS, and I really like it. I do not complain at all; I have loved every program I have been in so far.

I have been attending the College of Southern Nevada for two or three years, and, honestly, it has been a struggle adapting to working full time and coming home and helping with family. I am the first in my family to graduate from high school, so I have to set an example, but at the same time, I have to work for my goals, so not only am I going to school, I am going to work and helping out financially at home sometimes.

Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford:

I will stop it there, but the next question was what they would do with doubling their income, and they all said they would buy a house and help their siblings go to college.

Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:

We support S.B. 352 to allow paraprofessionals seeking a teaching credential to complete an accelerated program of student teaching [[Exhibit J](#)]. We represent paraprofessionals in most Nevada school districts. Paraprofessionals perform a critical function helping to deliver a high-quality education to Nevada students. This ranges from assisting students with learning their alphabet to assisting their education to become functioning members of society. Paraprofessional duties are numerous and include assisting with evaluation of student work, reports on student progress and behavior, conducting small group sessions, helping develop differentiated lesson plans, assisting in instruction, enforcing classroom management strategies, and assisting students with assigned activities. Paraprofessionals are critical to all programs throughout the district. During this time of online engagement, they have been the backbone to special education educators helping students online.

Facing a chronic teacher shortage, especially from Nevada's diverse communities, the career pathway for paraprofessionals to become licensed teachers is of great importance. Many paraprofessionals are already working full-time in a Nevada classroom and already possess many of the skills to be developed through student teaching. There have been many paraprofessionals who have had to leave their jobs just to student teach. This has made choosing between paying rent and finishing their degree a concern for the Nevada State Education Association. We also believe that adding experienced educators to the classroom improves student achievement. We believe accelerating this 16-week requirement removes a significant obstacle to obtaining a teaching credential.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

We are in strong support of this bill. Obviously, there is a teacher shortage in Nevada and throughout the nation. Our support staff, when they are working in schools and working on becoming teachers, understand what they are getting into. So often, you have young people who go to college and think they want to become teachers, so they prepare for the teaching profession, but they get in and teach a couple of years before realizing this is not their cup of tea. It is very different than what they expected. When paraprofessionals are working in the classroom every day and going to college to become certified teachers, I think we can count on them to stay with us and continue to help our students. We are in support of this bill. It gives more people an opportunity, and I think it is good for our kids and our school districts.

Brad Keating, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District

We appreciate one of CCSD's own and are proud of Principal Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, who spoke with you today. Working closely with Senator Denis and several community partners, including The Public Education Foundation, I am bringing this idea forward. Ensuring there is a healthy teacher pipeline is incredibly important to CCSD and the entire state of Nevada, and there is no better way to work toward this than by using the incredible, hard-working support professionals we currently have in our schools.

When I had the privilege of teaching at West Career and Technical Academy, I had an SPTA in my classroom who worked alongside me every single day. It was incredible to watch him work with the students, and I know if he had this opportunity back then, he would have been a teacher today. He could not because he was unable to afford taking off that time in order to go for his dreams and become a licensed educator. I appreciate this bill being brought forward so it helps people like Rodney Jordan, who I had the opportunity to work with, and make their dreams come true as well. Because of this, we urge your passage of this bill.

Lindsay Anderson, Director, Government Affairs, Washoe County School District:

I do not think I can add anything more than what you heard from Dr. Keating and Dr. Pierczynski, so we are in support of this bill.

Brenda Pearson, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Clark County Education Association:

We are testifying in support of S.B. 352. This bill removes the barrier of student teaching to create a pipeline of paraprofessionals who are eager to advance into the teaching profession. This bill creates a much-needed, diverse teacher pipeline since paraprofessionals across our state more closely match the diversity of our students. Recruiting a diverse teacher pipeline is a prioritized goal of education systems across our nation, and now, S.B. 352 provides Nevada such an opportunity.

An important component of this bill is the ability of paraprofessionals to utilize their time within schools to satisfy student teaching experience requirements. Since the student teaching experience lays the foundation of support for traditional educators entering the field, consideration of a high-quality student teaching experience must be central to the development of this program. The better we can prepare teachers upon entry into the field,

the less likely they will be to leave the profession within the first five years. There must be a careful balance that allows for an expedited course of study and a high-quality experience that will pave the way for these new educators to enter the field prepared.

We believe S.B. 352 will give us the opportunity to develop a carefully well-balanced course of study. As Nevada continues to create opportunities to build our educator pipeline, we must also be aware of the preparation educators receive prior to entering the field. Nevada's efforts must not only increase the number of teachers employed, but also must positively influence teacher practice and student outcomes. This cannot be done without a consistent and stable investment in Nevada's education delivery system.

We have continuously voiced our support of optimally funding the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan, and we know that this investment will be the catalyst to change. As we wait for the bipartisan effort with leadership by the Governor to target new revenue for Senate Bill 543 of the 80th Session, we know that the students and families in Nevada cannot wait another legislative session. We need change now. We are in support of this bill and eager to continue conversations with the bill sponsor surrounding the need for high-quality student teaching experiences afforded to all future educators.

Erica Valdriz, Fund Raising Coordinator, Vegas Chamber:

The Chamber is in support of S.B. 352. We believe adopting these regulations will be an effective way of recruiting when we look at qualified out-of-state or out-of-country student teaching experience while mitigating the negative effects of teacher shortages and creating a more sustainable supply of well-prepared, quality teachers. This bill will not only provide the necessary accountability for our Nevada students and education, but also aid with the process of additional teachers we need in our state.

Lucero Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am voicing my support for S.B. 352. This is something that would have benefitted me. Right now, I am in school to gain my master's degree in early childhood education. I only had the opportunity to do this through an ARL route; otherwise, I would have had to take 16 weeks off without pay, losing my health insurance as well. I really hope you also support this bill, because it would support a lot of people who need this opportunity in their lives.

[[Exhibit K](#) and [Exhibit L](#) were submitted but not discussed and are included as exhibits for the hearing.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other callers in support? [There were none.] We will move on to testimony in opposition. Are there any callers? [There were none.] We will move on to testimony in neutral. Are there any callers? [There were none.] I will close the hearing on S.B. 352 and open the hearing on Senate Bill 363.

**Senate Bill 363 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to charter schools.
(BDR 34-530)**

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senate District No. 2:

I am here to present Senate Bill 363 (1st Reprint), one of the shortest bills you will read this session. If you have not read it yet, you could finish it before I am even done talking. This bill requires charter school governing bodies that enter into contracts with educational management organizations (EMO) to report certain information to their sponsors in the Legislature. The bill before you today comes as a recommendation from the 2019-2020 Legislative Committee on Education (LCE). I had the pleasure to serve as vice chair to Assemblywoman Miller, who was the chair of the committee in the interim, and Assemblywoman Gorelow and Assemblywoman Tolles also served.

I would like to begin with some brief background information that explains what led to this recommendation. During the LCE's September meeting, the executive director of the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) provided the committee with information on the services provided by EMOs to charter schools. These services included academic supports such as professional development or coaching, back office support, bundled services such as human resources, information technology, payroll, and facilities maintenance. The amount paid to EMOs depends on the level of service provided to a school. Testimony indicated nationally that schools on average pay approximately 12 percent to EMOs. In Nevada, EMOs report to the governing bodies of the charter schools in which they serve. This evaluation may include a review of the school's annual revenue and expenditure report and its financial audits.

With that background in mind, I would now like to cover what the bill does. In order to better inform the governing bodies and policymakers how charter schools are operating with respect to EMOs, this bill requires that each of Nevada's charter school governing bodies that has a contract with an EMO to report to the sponsor of the charter school the amount paid to the respective management organization. Additionally, each sponsor of a charter school that has a contract with an EMO must submit a report with the same information to the Legislature by November 1 of each even-numbered year. I urge your support of S.B. 363 (R1), which further supports transparency efforts. I am happy to answer any questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions from Committee members? [There were none.] I will move on to testimony in support.

Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:

We support S.B. 363 (R1) requiring charter schools to report the amount they pay to educational management organizations [[Exhibit M](#)]. Over the last several years, we have been calling for greater accountability for charter schools. This bill is a small but important

reform that will help shine some light on what happens to millions of taxpayer dollars directed to charter schools.

We know the explosive growth of charters has been driven by deliberate, billionaire-backed efforts to exempt charters from the basic safeguards and standards that apply to our neighborhood public schools. This growth has created an uneven dynamic, undermining local public schools and communities, without producing an overall increase in student learning and growth.

However, it was not until last June, when the *Nevada Current* reported on a dispute between the American Preparatory Academy in Las Vegas and their Utah-based, for-profit management organization, that we were able to view more of the inner workings of the charter industry. This included large payouts to education management organizations that the charter claimed provided little in terms of services and complicated financial relationships related to charter school facilities. We urge your support.

Erica Valdriz, Fund Raising Coordinator, Vegas Chamber:

We are in support of S.B. 363 (R1). The Chamber supports the requirement of each charter school's governing body to submit a report to the SPCSA. We believe these reports would be beneficial when we look in terms of continuing progress in our charter schools and their operation performance. These reports will help each charter school's governing body to understand the current performance levels, set goals, and evaluate areas for improvements. This bill will provide transparency and accountability for our students and the SPCSA.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will move on to testimony in opposition. Are there any callers? [There were none.] We will move on to testimony in neutral. Are there any callers? [There were none.] With that, I will close the testimony in neutral and invite the sponsor to make closing comments.

Senator Denis:

Thank you for letting me spend the afternoon with you and talk about lots of important issues on education. Again, this bill brings more transparency.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Senator, for joining us this afternoon. With that, I will close the hearing on Senate Bill 363 (1st Reprint) and move on to public comment. Are there any callers who wish to provide public comment? [There were none.] I will close public comment.

I have a couple of comments. Today is the second anniversary of the loss of the former chairman of this Committee, Tyrone Thompson, affectionately known as "T-Squared" to many of us. When I found out I was chairing this Committee, I knew that I had really big shoes to fill, and I have to be honest, I think of him every day when I walk into my office. Even asking, "Anyone in the room or on the Zoom?" makes me think of Dr. Seuss, which makes me think of him as well. He did so much for the kids in this state, and we miss him a lot. We really do.

I just wanted to bring that up, but to bring us back to something a little happier, it is Teacher Appreciation Day. I am not a teacher myself—though I guess my daughter Molly would say I am one—I do not get paid for it, but it is an amazing profession and I would be lying if I said I did not think about it. I think I would be a kindergarten or a first-grade teacher, because I just love that age. For those of you in our Committee who are teachers, thank you for doing what you do.

My older sister, Bridget, who taught in the Clark County School District for over 25 years, is just amazing. I see how hard she works every single day to this day, and I am amazed. I always think of, "If you can read this, thank a teacher," and it is so much more than that. All of us can think of that teacher who inspired us. Even when you did not get what they were trying to teach, they would work with you after school or do whatever. I took Latin in high school and college, and in my third year of Latin, I was sure I was going to fail. I was with seminary students, and I did not even know how I got there, but my teacher worked with me every single day. I do not know any of it, if you were wondering. Thank you to the teachers out there for all you do, and we miss you, Tyrone.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

Thank you for the opportunity to remember our good friend. I served with Chair Thompson since the 79th Session (2017), and before that, I knew him as an advocate when I was a mom advocating for education and child abuse prevention. He always had the door open, both when I was an advocate and a Committee member, and he was such an incredible friend, an encouragement, and a presence in this building. He is deeply missed, and I think he would be very proud of the way you are chairing this Committee while having an open door to all the advocates—parents, teachers, and Committee members. Carrying on that legacy is so important because education is something that impacts all of us, whether we are parents, teachers, or employers. It is not a partisan issue; it is a family of Nevada issue, and I really appreciated his legacy, his friendship, and his leadership, and I appreciate this Committee and how I believe we can say we have carried that on. I am so proud to be a part of this.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Tolles, for saying those nice things about me. I really do feel like I am filling big shoes.

With that, may the fourth be with you. This meeting is adjourned [at 3:40 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sarah Baker
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a copy of a presentation titled "[Senate Bill 2](#): Efficiencies in Education," dated May 4, 2021, presented and submitted by Brad Keating, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter dated May 4, 2021, submitted by Marie Neisess, President, Clark County Education Association, in support of [Senate Bill 2 \(1st Reprint\)](#).

[Exhibit E](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 450](#), presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit F](#) is the Work Session Document for [Senate Bill 173 \(1st Reprint\)](#), presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit G](#) is the Work Session Document for [Senate Bill 342](#), presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit H](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation and a proposed amendment to [Senate Bill 352](#), presented and submitted by Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, Principal, C.C. Ronnow Elementary School.

[Exhibit I](#) is a collection of video testimonials titled "Paraprofessional Barriers & Perseverance," presented and submitted by Michelee Quiroz Cruz-Crawford, Principal, C.C. Ronnow Elementary School, in support of [Senate Bill 352](#).

[Exhibit J](#) is a letter dated May 4, 2021, presented and submitted by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association, in support of [Senate Bill 352](#).

[Exhibit K](#) is a letter dated May 3, 2021, submitted by various individuals on behalf of Nevadans for the Common Good, in support of [Senate Bill 352](#).

[Exhibit L](#) is a letter dated May 5, 2021, submitted by Kamilah Bywaters and Tracey Lewis, representing Las Vegas Alliance of Black School Educators, in support of [Senate Bill 352](#).

[Exhibit M](#) is a letter dated May 4, 2021, presented and submitted by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association, in support of [Senate Bill 363 \(1st Reprint\)](#).