

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

**Eighty-First Session
March 18, 2021**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:33 p.m. on Thursday, March 18, 2021, Online. 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:

Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, Assembly District No. 27

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst
Nick Christie, Committee Manager
Sarah Baker, Committee Secretary
Melissa Loomis, Committee Assistant



OTHERS PRESENT:

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Jennifer Ouellette, Director, Nevada Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Alyssa Gurule, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Erin Phillips, President, Power2Parent

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] We have one bill hearing and a work session today. I will open the work session for Assembly Bill 68.

Assembly Bill 68: Makes various changes relating to charter schools. (BDR 34-286)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Assembly Bill 68 is sponsored by the Assembly Committee on Education on behalf of the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA). It was heard by the Committee on February 23, 2021. This bill exempts a charter school that has been approved to be rated under the alternative performance framework from both mandatory contract termination and the requirement that the SPCSA deny a request to amend a charter contract if the charter school does not meet certain requirements of the performance framework. It also authorizes the sponsor of a charter school to eliminate certain grade levels in and campuses of a charter school under certain circumstances or if they do not meet certain performance criteria. Finally, it increases the time period in which the SPCSA must consider new charter school applications from 60 to 120 days [[Exhibit C](#)].

There is one proposed amendment [page 2, [Exhibit C](#)] from Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority, and Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority. The proposed amendment intends to clarify that the proposed changes related to grade levels in subsection 6 of section 4, and subsection 7 of section 5 are limited to an elementary, middle, or high school and not to individual grade levels, such as the third grade.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I know we do have some clarifying questions from members. We will start with Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Ms. Feiden, thank you for the amendment. It is clearly in response to the concerns that members had, and I know that is the intent you stated on the record during the hearing. I want to clarify that if there was a situation where the SPCSA felt the group was underperforming, they would actually shut down the entire middle school, elementary school, or high school campus. Is that correct?

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority:

Yes, that is correct. The question I believe you raised was, Could a single grade level be closed? That was never the intent behind the bill. Again, this goes back to star ratings. Star ratings happen at the elementary, middle, or high school level. The amendment clarifies that it would be an elementary, middle, or high school, or a combination thereof, that could be closed; not an individual grade level [[Exhibit D](#)].

Assemblywoman Miller:

When we use terms like "elementary," "middle," and "high school," we know that in Nevada, it is different per district. Is sixth grade in middle school or elementary school? Is ninth grade in middle school or high school? Charter schools may have different combinations, such as K-8. Can you give some specifics of which grades these would include, or would it be specific to the charter school's design? What if there was a K-8 and the middle school is struggling. Which grades would you be addressing? Do you understand my question, Director Feiden?

Rebecca Feiden:

Yes. It would always go back to the star rating. In most cases, a middle school star rating is 6 to 8. In fact, I do not believe we have any middle schools that are not 6 to 9. That is typically where you might see some variation in a school district. It would always line up with the star rating. Again, these termination statutes—unless it is for financial purposes, which in all likelihood is not going to see the disparate performance from one to the next—are based on academic performance. That will always tie back to where that star rating occurred, and the grade levels associated with that star rating.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Even within a K-8 school, we may just be closing the 6 to 8, or if there was a high school for 6 to 12 or 7 to 12? That makes sense.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions, I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass Assembly Bill 68.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN NGUYEN MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND
DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 68.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TORRES SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.] We will conduct a roll call vote.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Torres. The next bill on work session is Assembly Bill 88.

**Assembly Bill 88: Makes various changes relating to governmental entities.
(BDR 34-147)**

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Assembly Bill 88 is sponsored by Assemblymen Watts, Nguyen, González, Peters, and Torres, et al. It was heard by this Committee on March 9, 2021. The bill requires that charter schools, public schools, and universities for the profoundly gifted adopt policies prohibiting the use of a name, logo, mascot, song, or other identifier that is racially discriminatory, contains racially discriminatory language or imagery, or is associated with a natural person with such history. However, an identifier associated with a federally recognized Indian tribe may be used if the school obtains permission for such use from the tribe. This bill also authorizes the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) to adopt a similar policy requiring these identifiers be changed, with the same exception for identifiers associated with federally recognized Indian tribes.

The bill also requires the Nevada State Board on Geographic Names to recommend changing the name of any geographic feature or place that is racially discriminatory, contains racially discriminatory language or imagery, or is associated with a natural person with such history. The Board must submit a report to the Legislative Counsel Bureau annually on any such recommended changes [[Exhibit E](#)].

Assemblyman Watts has submitted a conceptual amendment to this bill, which removes "a natural person with a racially discriminatory history" from sections 1 and 3, deletes section 2 of the bill, which is regarding NSHE, and deletes subsection 2 of section 4 from the bill. Additional information regarding the proposed amendment is on page 2 of the work session document [[Exhibit E](#)].

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions about Assembly Bill 88?

Assemblywoman Tolles:

I just want to acknowledge that I had a conversation with Assemblyman Watts about the amendment, which was in response to some follow-up correspondence questions we received, to help resolve a concern that was raised. I fully support the bill. I appreciate we had that conversation and that he put forward these amendments. I am looking forward to supporting the bill.

Assemblyman Watts:

I appreciate that. I did speak with Assemblywoman Tolles earlier. I know there were some comments made by the Board on Geographic Names. I believe the conceptual amendment addresses those concerns and allows them to undertake this endeavor within their existing process and timelines. I will reiterate that what this amendment does is establish a processing timeline that does not mandate any particular decision on any particular entity, name, or symbol.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions, I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass Assembly Bill 88.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TOLLES MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 88.

ASSEMBLYMAN FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Tolles. The next bill on work session is Assembly Bill 156.

Assembly Bill 156: Revises provisions governing the waiver by the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada of certain fees for active members of the Nevada National Guard. (BDR 34-23)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Assembly Bill 156 is sponsored by Assemblymen Titus, Roberts, and Ellison, et al. It was heard in this Committee on March 2, 2021. The bill authorizes an active member of the Nevada National Guard who attends a school within the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and who reenlists to assign their registration and lab fee waiver to either a spouse or a child in lieu of using the waiver themselves during the reenlistment period. This assignment is allowed regardless of whether or not the member used a waiver to attend school prior to reenlistment. The waiver may only be used by one eligible person during the reenlistment period for credits toward coursework for an associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or certificate. However, the waiver can be reassigned if the spouse or child to whom the waiver was assigned does not use the waiver to attend a school within NSHE. Finally, Assembly Bill 156 requires the Adjutant General to maintain records of waivers granted, assigned, and reassigned and certify for the Board of Regents that the waiver has been properly assigned or reassigned [[Exhibit F](#)].

There are no amendments for this measure.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions about Assembly Bill 156? [There were none.] I will entertain a motion to do pass Assembly Bill 156.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TOLLES MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 156.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KRASNER SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Krasner. The next bill on work session is Assembly Bill 165.

Assembly Bill 165: Revises provisions governing tuition for veterans. (BDR 34-681)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Assembly Bill 165 is sponsored by Assemblymen Hardy, O'Neill, Wheeler, Ellison, and Roberts, and Senators Buck and Hardy. It was heard in this Committee on March 2, 2021. The bill removes the five-year limitation on assessing tuition charges against honorably discharged veterans. The bill also prohibits the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada from assessing a tuition charge against all veterans that were honorably discharged [[Exhibit G](#)].

There are no amendments for this measure.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions on Assembly Bill 165? [There were none.] I will entertain a motion to do pass Assembly Bill 165.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GORELOW MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS
ASSEMBLY BILL 165.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MARZOLA SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Hardy. The last bill on work session is Assembly Bill 167.

Assembly Bill 167: Establishes provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-749)

Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst:

Assembly Bill 167 is sponsored by Assemblyman Leavitt. It was heard in this Committee on March 4, 2021. The bill requires that certain mental health resource information be included on the back of any identification (ID) card issued by the board of trustees of a school district; the governing body of a charter school; and a community college, state college, or university within the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) [[Exhibit H](#)].

Assemblyman Leavitt has proposed an amendment to this measure, which does the following:

1. Clarifies that schools that currently do not have ID cards are not required to print new cards to comply with the bill language. It further clarifies that no institution will be required to reprint student IDs to comply with the bill, and that the requirements would only apply to new IDs or reprinted IDs.
2. Requires the new language included be specific to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and list the telephone number as well as provide the option to text.
3. Provides that NSHE must include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline information as well.
4. Provides that information received by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline may be shared with SafeVoice about Nevada students if it complies with the current or future policies of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
5. Removes the requirement to print the information on the back of the ID card and instead, allows the information to be printed on either the front or the back of the ID card.

The mock-up amendment begins on page 2 [[Exhibit H](#)].

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I believe we wanted to make an additional amendment to add some members to cosponsor the bill. Assemblyman Leavitt is also here. I believe there are some questions on the amendment. Can you raise your hand if you want to be added as a cosponsor on this bill? I see Assemblywomen Hardy and Krasner. Is that okay with you, Assemblyman Leavitt?

Assemblyman Leavitt:

Yes, Chair.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

I would be happy to be a cosponsor as well.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you, Assemblyman Leavitt, for addressing the questions and issues that came up during the hearing through the amendment. All of us have the same intent, which is to provide the most resources to our youth that we possibly can. One student lost to suicide is one too many. We are all trying to work in that mental health space to reduce that. Unfortunately, I am still not there with some of this. It does not seem to reduce it or clarify it

for me. I am also uncomfortable with feeling we are trying to undermine SafeVoice. We have been spending years building up that support with SafeVoice. I will vote the bill out of Committee, but I reserve my right to change my vote on the floor. I think SafeVoice and what they do for our youth and knowing we will not be able to capture that data remains a concern for me.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Assemblyman Leavitt, would you like to respond? I know you worked with the folks at SafeVoice.

Assemblyman Leavitt:

Assemblywoman Miller, I appreciate your comments. We did work with SafeVoice. If SafeVoice had an issue with this bill, we probably would have revised it in some way, shape, or form. However, we brought SafeVoice together along with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline director and came to a good resolution as to how we should move forward. I appreciate your comments, and I appreciate your desire to have as many resources as possible.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions, I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass A.B. 167.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TORRES MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 167.

ASSEMBLYMAN FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I want to thank the sponsor for meeting with me before the hearing and throughout to address some of my concerns. I am excited to support this legislation.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Marzola. I will close the work session. I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 247. Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson, welcome to the Assembly Committee on Education. Please begin when you are ready.

Assembly Bill 247: Revises provisions relating to the Western Regional Education Compact. (BDR 34-472)

Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, Assembly District No. 27:

I am going to tell you a little bit about what the Western Regional Education Compact is and walk you through what their programs are. I will then hand the presentation over to Director Jennifer Ouellette to walk you through the specifics of the bill.

For those of you who do not know about this program, it really is wonderful. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is an interstate compact. The WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions to address some of our society's most pressing needs.

Since 1953, WICHE has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. Nevada has been a member since 1959. Nevada's participation in the regional consortium is overseen by three commissioners whom the Governor appoints. Nevada also has a small but mighty staff of exactly 1.4 full-time equivalents comprised of the executive director.

One thing we want to make sure does not get confusing is WICHE is the name of the compact, and our specific office is also called WICHE, but which we will refer to as the Nevada WICHE. You will hear us talking about the Nevada WICHE programs that are specific to Nevada.

I will start with the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). In this program, students receive substantial tuition support for high-need fields, such as pharmacy, physical therapy, and physician assistants. Students accepted into the program receive admission preference and reduced tuition. Students from Nevada enroll in either out-of-state programs or in-state private institutions. Forty-six students were served last year. Out-of-state tuition is reduced by a support fee which varies from academic field and are uniformly set by the WICHE compact office [Office of the Western Regional Education Compact]. Twenty-five percent of the support fee is a loan which must be paid back with interest within five to ten years after graduation. That is a Nevada-specific rule you will hear us talk about. The other 75 percent of the support fee is a stipend that can be waived if the student returns to Nevada to practice for the same number of years they used the stipend program. That is also another Nevada-specific rule.

We also have a Health Profession Education Program. In 1997, the Nevada Legislature expanded the mission of our Nevada WICHE program by providing an option for students to receive financial support while earning graduate social work or psychiatric nursing student degrees. In 2020, it served 43 students. When students received a support fee, that support fee provided repayable loans with interest, which is 10 percent of the loan. However, we are weaning away from that practice and we will talk about how we would like that statute changed as well. Ninety percent of that support fee could be considered a stipend and repayment can be waived if they practice in Nevada for two years in a medically underserved area.

Lastly, we have a Behavioral Health Program, which funds three psychologists to pursue careers in rural and underserved areas of Nevada through internships. The cool thing about this program is it does a lot of good work and serves a lot of good students, and has done so

throughout the years. The statute in *Nevada Revised Statutes* Chapter 397 is written in a rigid way. Specific information, such as the amount of interest that needs to be charged and how these loans are handled, remain static. We have found better ways for this program to work, be a little more flexible, and go further for students when they are accomplishing their degrees.

To walk you through the specifics of A.B. 247, I am going to hand it over to Ms. Ouellette.

Jennifer Ouellette, Director, Nevada Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education:

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson did a wonderful job introducing the program and all of the nuances. We go by many names right now, which is one of the things we are going to be addressing through this legislation. Nevada has been part of this compact since 1959, which was congressionally ratified in 1953 and was originally signed by Governor Grant Sawyer. We are going on 60 years of participation for Nevada.

There are four primary objectives for A.B. 247 in what we are trying to do. The bill's first objective is to remove confusion when referencing the Western Regional Education Compact, which is a compact that was ratified by Congress; the WICHE organization, which is a nonprofit organization based in Boulder, Colorado, that manages the compact; and our participation as a state in both the compact and through WICHE. Currently, the legislation uses all of those terms interchangeably. This legislation would differentiate when we are referring to WICHE in Colorado and the Nevada Office that is participating in WICHE's programs.

The second goal of the legislation is to phase out the loan component of our funding. Currently, we require students in the PSEP to go through two requirements on the front end to receive our funding. They must sign an employment commitment and they must also repay a portion of the funds, 25 percent, as a loan. No other state in the western states does this except for Nevada. I think it has been around since we joined the compact in 1959. It is something that makes it difficult to attract students to our program and requires a lot of staff time to administer. I think there are other ways we can make up for that revenue.

The third goal of the legislation is that a lot of our program policies are written in statute. This is probably just a function of beginning the statute in 1959. Interest rates, payback provisions, and penalties are all included in statute. We would like to move those from statute to regulation so they can be revised regularly with public input through the regulatory process.

The last goal is to clean up some of the existing language and terminology. Again, because Chapter 397 was created in 1959, a lot of the terminology has been updated or is not used anymore. We have gone through and simplified the chapter so it is easier to read for people who are not familiar with our programs.

I am going to take some time to go through section by section of what the bill will do. Please let me know if you have any questions as I go through the sections. I will try to be quick and concise. Sections 2 through 5 add definitions to commonly used terminology throughout the chapter, with section 4, in particular, clarifying the Nevada agency as the Nevada Office participating in WICHE.

Sections 6 through 8 add Guam as a participating U.S. territory. The WICHE has submitted a friendly amendment [[Exhibit I](#)] to clarify references to Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states.

Sections 9 through 10 and section 12, again, clarify provisions regarding WICHE and the Nevada Office, differentiating those two items.

Sections 11 and 13 simply update out-of-date terminology to reflect the goal of enrolling Nevada participants in programs administered by the Nevada Office.

Section 14 is the loan component of our funding. As mentioned, 75 percent of the funding is required to be met with an employment commitment. For the funds that we provide students, they must sign an employment commitment, usually one year of employment, and that will forgive 75 percent of the funding that we offer. The other 25 percent is repaid as a loan irrespective of where the student is employed. While many western states other than Nevada also require an employment commitment, no other western state requires a loan component for people who are actually returning to Nevada, which is the goal of our program. Section 14 would make 100 percent of the funding a stipend that is forgiven in exchange for employment for any contract signed after July 1, 2021.

Section 15 clarifies that the provisions apply to the Nevada Office and simplify some out-of-date terminology.

Section 16 clarifies that the provisions apply to the Nevada Office and updates language to account for removal of that 25 percent loan component. Section 16 also strikes some language that applies to accounts prior to 1985, which we no longer have on our books.

Section 17 is part of what we were talking about earlier with moving some program provisions and policies out of statute and into regulation. If a participant who accepts our funding does not fulfill the employment commitment, then 100 percent of that funding becomes a loan that needs to be repaid. That will remain the same with these changes to the statute. However, a lot of the provisions of that loan, including interest rates, how long they have to pay it back, penalties, and delinquency fees are written in statute. I do not believe they have been changed in quite a long time. This would move those provisions into regulation, where we would seek public input and go through the regulatory process in order to update those provisions as interest rates change and to help the program stay with the times.

Section 18 updates old terminology, strikes language for accounts prior to 1985, and clarifies the requirements associated with both of our tuition assistance programs, the PSEP and the Health Profession Education Program. The requirements after graduation, other than the populations that are served, are similar, so this puts them in one section so students can easily reference what they are supposed to follow. In order to have the funding we provide successfully forgiven, all participants must graduate with a degree for which they were funded, be employed for one year for every year of assistance received, begin their employment commitment one year after graduation, and keep our office informed of any changes in their residency or any changes in their employment. This puts all of those requirements in one place.

Section 18 also allows the Nevada State Commissioners to set penalties for not completing the employment requirement, which is something that is different for both of our programs currently. It is anticipated that if we were allowed to set penalties for nonfulfillment, we might actually increase revenue to the state.

Sections 19 through 21 simplify out-of-date terminology and transfers the authority to set specific policies on submitting a formal petition to the Nevada State Commissioners from statute to regulation.

Sections 22 through 24 clarify the provisions applied to the Nevada Office and the Nevada State Commissioners.

Section 25 clarifies that all changes will apply to contracts signed after July 1, 2021.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would like to point out to members, there is a website, wiche.edu, that has good information about what WICHE does. You can actually go to the Nevada aspect. It says Nevada has a 1,777 percent return on investment. That is about as good as you can get. Thank you, Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson, for bringing this bill and enlightening me to this program. We do have questions from members.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I love this bill. Whenever we can recruit students and help serve some of the populations with services that we need, I think it is a win, and it also updates things I think probably need to be updated. I have a question for Ms. Ouellette. You stated that the overall goals were to clarify the names of the Nevada Office versus WICHE. It was hard to recruit with the existing language because they had to pay 25 percent of the loan. Help me understand that part.

Jennifer Ouellette:

It is very confusing to our students as well, so I am glad you asked. If we take a fictional number of \$20,000, which is the amount Nevada will provide a student to help with tuition to study physical therapy, out of that \$20,000, \$15,000 is a stipend. In order to have that \$15,000 be forgiven, the student has to return to Nevada and work as a physical therapist in Nevada. The \$5,000 left over, which is 25 percent, is a loan that the student must pay back. It is very unusual, and I do think it is a carryover from a very long time ago. To not have to administer this 25 percent would be great for the students and the office.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

The new structure changes it so it would be treated as a 100 percent stipend. The students can have 100 percent forgiven if they come back to Nevada and work a year for every year of the program. Is that correct?

Jennifer Ouellette:

For every year that the student is funded, which is typically at the beginning of their program. For example, a physical therapy student would go to school for three years. We would fund them for three years. In return, they would return to Nevada and be obligated—because we make them sign contracts—to work in Nevada for one year for every year they received funding.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

They work for it and help us out.

Jennifer Ouellette:

They do work for it. It is not a gift.

Assemblywoman Tolles:

The predecessor to this program is what got me to move to Nevada at the age of 19. I am a big fan. Thank you for bringing this bill forward. I do need clarification on something. If for some reason a loan is not repaid, what obligation is there for Nevada and does that ever make its way into a fiscal note? I see there is an impact on the state. I just want to get clarification for the record.

Jennifer Ouellette:

We did submit a fiscal note, but it was not processed in time for today's hearing. However, it will eventually reduce revenue to the state by approximately \$205,000 per year. That will not happen right away because there are many individuals who are already in the pipeline and paying loans. They have to complete their schooling and they also have a one-year grace period before they begin repayment. I do not think we will see the full effects of that through the 2023 to 2025 biennial budget. I think in the 2027 budget, we will be able to see the impact.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

When you brought up a physical therapy student usually paying for three years, does that mean this would go toward a graduate physical therapy student or are we also loaning toward bachelor's degrees? What is the average loan or stipend that is typically awarded?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

These are all professional degrees in higher education. In the Professional Student Exchange Program, there is occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant, and pharmacy. In the Health Profession Education Program, there is a master's of social work, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), psychiatric nurse, geriatric training, and master of science in nursing. I will let Ms. Ouellette answer the other part of your question.

Jennifer Ouellette:

The amount of funding, or support fees, we give participants varies depending on which program they are in. For example, physical therapy received \$15,750 in tuition assistance this year. It ranges depending on the field. It ranges anywhere from \$5,000 for social work, \$7,700 for APRN, and as high as \$32,400 for veterinary medicine students.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

Knowing that it is for graduate students, this got me thinking. I recently did a tour of my alma mater with my daughter. They have a program for occupational therapy, but it combines the bachelor's and master's programs. I have seen that happening with some physical therapy programs also. How would this work for a program that is a combination program?

Jennifer Ouellette:

I am not sure of the answer to that question. I can definitely look into that for you. I am not familiar with any examples of our students currently doing something like that.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

There is a separate program out there called the Western Undergraduate Exchange. I am not sure if you are thinking about something they may do or if you are thinking about a fellowship. We can talk offline about your alma mater and whether they are part of this compact or another compact.

Assemblywoman Gorelow:

They are not part of this compact, for the record. It was a program I knew they were doing. I was not sure if it was being done around this area and how it would work if there were some. We can talk offline.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

This is a wonderful program. Since we have such a shortage of physicians in our state, does this also include medical doctors?

Jennifer Ouellette:

We do not fund medical doctors. In the PSEP, there are only 10 fields selected for support. Those are decided by the Colorado WICHE. Since we have two medical schools, there really is not a need for us to send our students out of state or to private universities to obtain their medical degree. We are really focused on programs that are either not available in Nevada or do not have enough capacity in Nevada to meet our demand.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

Not in this bill, but there are separate programs and funding through Nevada for graduate medical education that the state started four or five years ago specifically for the purpose of hiring and retaining physicians to stay in Nevada. We are just getting data as to whether or not students stay. We are setting the bar high in terms of Nevada retention with this program.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

To that end, we would love to see programs where we do this for teachers as well. As we know, there is a nationwide shortage and we would love to keep homegrown teachers. Thank you for your work on this bill.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I just thought about something with the last exchange. When you were talking about the programs designated by the Colorado WICHE in determining what programs they will work with, I am assuming they are basing it on need. Do they have data to find out where Nevada has real needs in specific areas?

Jennifer Ouellette:

When we determine how we are going to fund our particular budget, which is limited to the PSEP program and graduate health students, we use workforce data to decide where we are going to invest and in what fields.

For undergraduate programs, the programs managed by the Colorado WICHE, they have a ton of data that may be able to help answer your question, if you have some sort of specific question. However, the Nevada Office is not heavily involved in those undergraduate programs.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

At the state level, we do use the Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) to help give us clues about where the need is. There have been some recent shifts in the program where some legacy programs did the job. A good example would be veterinarians. For a long time, this program funded veterinarians and then data showed we had a sufficient number of veterinarians in the state and no longer had a shortage according to OWINN and GOED. The board was able to take those specific slots and determined where there were still underserved medical needs. There was reallocation to additional physician assistants because we want to keep working toward those unmet needs.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

On that point, is the Nevada Office able to make those types of changes? Is that part of the regulatory process in the *Nevada Administrative Code* that you can make those changes, or is that something that is done by the Colorado office?

Jennifer Ouellette:

You were explaining it perfectly and demonstrating some of the confusion that arises from the Nevada Office borrowing the WICHE name so heavily. We do that particular portion through the budgeting process. Those of you who are on the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means will have already heard our budget and the shift in the fields we are funding and how we decided what fields to fund based on workforce data.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions, I will open the hearing for testimony. Are there any callers wishing to testify in support of A.B. 247? [The caller was unable to unmute the phone line and could not testify.] Caller, I apologize that we are not able to hear your testimony, but if you would send your testimony in writing, I will make sure the Committee receives it. Are there any callers wishing to testify in opposition? [There were none.] Are there any callers wishing to testify as neutral? [There were none.] Are there any closing remarks?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

I do want to bring to the member's attention that there is what I consider a friendly amendment coming from the Colorado WICHE [[Exhibit I](#)], making sure that in some of our compact language we are properly identifying the number of people in the compact. We have no concerns with that amendment. It just makes sure our compact language matches their compact language.

[[Exhibit J](#) was submitted in support of Assembly Bill 247.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I believe Ms. Ouellette mentioned that amendment. Thank you for clarifying that it is friendly. I will close the hearing on A.B. 247. The next item on the agenda is public comment. I would like to remind those calling in for public comment that this is an opportunity to discuss general matters that fall within the purview of this Committee. We allow two minutes for each person testifying in public comment. Are there any callers waiting to testify in public comment?

Alyssa Gurule, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am an intern with Battle Born Progress. I would like to thank Assemblyman Watts for bringing forward Assembly Bill 88. I would like to thank the Assembly Committee on Education for passing that bill this afternoon. This final piece of legislation will put us on the path for a greater Nevada.

Erin Phillips, President, Power2Parent:

I want to speak briefly about Assembly Bill 167, brought by Assemblyman Leavitt. Even prior to the pandemic, we have had a mental health crisis in this state. Distance learning has exacerbated this crisis in Clark County. We have had 21 suicides confirmed of [unintelligible] during this school year. We did not do everything in our power to identify those students who were struggling with mental health to provide the resources they needed. We believe this bill is an important step in providing greater access to a resource that can potentially save the lives of our youth. We want to thank Assemblyman Leavitt for this piece of legislation, and we are in support.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any further callers for public comment? [There were none.] If you were calling to testify in public comment but were not able to get through, please send the Committee an email and I will make sure all members receive it.

Are there any comments from members of the Committee? [There were none.] Our next meeting will be Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.

This meeting is adjourned [at 2:40 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sarah Baker
Recording Secretary

Lori McCleary
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 68](#), submitted and presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter dated March 1, 2021, submitted by Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority.

[Exhibit E](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 88](#), submitted and presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit F](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 156](#), submitted and presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit G](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 165](#), submitted and presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit H](#) is the Work Session Document for [Assembly Bill 167](#), submitted and presented by Kristi Robusto, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit I](#) is a letter with a proposed amendment to [Assembly Bill 247](#), dated March 15, 2021, submitted by Demarée K. Michelau, President, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Boulder, Colorado.

[Exhibit J](#) is a letter submitted by Jennifer Zhu, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 247](#).