

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

**Eighty-Second Session
May 16, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:35 p.m. on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Natha C. Anderson
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig
Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblywoman Erica Mosca
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas
Assemblywoman Selena Torres

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None



STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel
Nick Christie, Committee Manager
Funmi Sheddy, Committee Secretary
Ashley Torres, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Derrell Bradford, President, 50CAN; and Board Chair, Available to All
Jana Wilcox Lavin, Chief Executive Officer, Opportunity 180
Anthony Curry, Director of Public Policy, Opportunity 180
Alisa Nave-Worth, Consultant, Opportunity 180
Kelley Williams-Bolar, Private Citizen, Akron, Ohio
Cecia Alvarado, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Daniel H. Stewart, representing Clark County Education Association
Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association
Sarah Adler, representing Charter School Association of Nevada
David Cherry, Government Affairs Manager, City of Henderson
Leonardo R. Benavides, Government Affairs Manager, City of North Las Vegas
Dylan Keith, Assistant Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Amanda Brazeau, representing Jobs for Nevada Graduates
A'Esha Goins, representing NAACP of Las Vegas Branch 1111
Jshauntae Marshall, Co-Founder, No Racism in Schools #1865, Las Vegas, Nevada
Peter Guzman, President, Latin Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, Nevada
Taneka Henry, Chairperson, Rise Up Nevada

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] We are hearing one bill today, Assembly Bill 497. I will be presenting the bill, so I will now turn the gavel over to Assemblywoman Taylor to begin the hearing. We will take a one-minute recess. [The meeting was recessed at 1:37 p.m.]

[Assemblywoman Taylor assumed the Chair. The meeting was reconvened at 1:38 p.m.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will open the hearing for Assembly Bill 497, presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod and colleagues.

Assembly Bill 497: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-706)

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34:

I am here to present Assembly Bill 497 to bring Student Tailored Enrollment Plans (STEP) to Nevada. This is an opportunity to truly eliminate longstanding, persistent inequities within school assignments, boost the family voice and engagement in our school system, and create conditions for every kid to have access to high-quality education. I am joined by Derrell Bradford, board chair for Available to All, Jana Wilcox Lavin, Anthony Curry, and Alisa Nave-Worth from Opportunity 180. Mr. Bradford, Ms. Wilcox Lavin, and Mr. Curry will speak to the various benefits of STEP, but we will start with some background.

In Nevada, students are assigned to public schools based on where they live, which is predominantly determined where the family can afford to rent or buy a home. This often results in concentrations of students from similar income backgrounds being assigned to the same school. Areas of persistent poverty and low-cost housing will see the greatest concentration of 1- and 2-star schools, which leaves students and families with very few opportunities. Student Tailored Enrollment Plans, sometimes referred to as open enrollment policies, address these systemic inequities, providing any student at a given school district the opportunity to attend a public school within that district that has available seats [page 2, [Exhibit C](#)].

A study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Inc., found that open enrollment weakens the tie between housing and schooling, allowing families to enroll their children in any public school with open seats regardless of where they live [[Exhibit D](#)]. Through open enrollment, all children can have access to education options, such as specialized programming that meet their academic needs or good culture or just a good learning fit.

In December 2022, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) adopted open enrollment as an official policy resolution and began to encourage state governments to pass enrollment policies [[Exhibit E](#)]. In their press release announcing the resolution [page 1, [Exhibit E](#)], NBCSL said, "Public school open enrollment policies have also been critical to dismantling the historical injustices of 'redlining,' which segregated communities and created educational inequities that continue to disproportionately impact African American families."

To further explain the connection between neighborhood school assignments and the unjust practices of redlining, we have provided a video which is on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) and was sent to you from Unite for Better Education [[Exhibit F](#)].

Student Tailored Enrollment Plans have made significant progress in desegregating schools and improving academic achievement [page 6, [Exhibit C](#)]. A review of a reformed institute in New Orleans, Louisiana, found that STEP policies lead to more integration, statistically

significant improvements for student outcomes, and to quote, "Our first finding is that the reforms clearly benefited Black and low-income students. We see positive and statistically significant effects for both groups for all measures—test scores, high school graduation, and college outcomes—and for both types of analysis" [page 7, [Exhibit G](#)].

The study from the Fordham Institute [page 37, [Exhibit D](#)] found that students participating in open enrollment demonstrate achievement gains of approximately 3 to 4 percent in reading over students not participating in open enrollment. In math, the gains were approximately 2 to 3 percent.

Another primary benefit of STEP programs is family engagement. Family engagement is a key pillar in ensuring kids have the support they need to succeed in school. According to the national leader in investing in family voice, The Flamboyant Foundation, family engagement leads to increased student achievement rates, higher graduation rates, reduced absenteeism, better student/teacher relationships, and more cultural competency, all of which can have a significant result on long-term student achievement and success. Giving families a greater voice in which public school their student attends is a foundation piece of family achievement [page 7, [Exhibit C](#)].

As I mentioned, this is not a new policy. Open enrollment has been implemented in 11 states with different ways of implementing the policy in a meaningful and appropriate manner [page 3, [Exhibit C](#)]. States use the lottery system, already currently in place for magnet and charter school placement, where families can sign in, select their top choice for their student, and students are placed in the number of available seats. In Washington, D.C., public schools, 74 percent of public school students were able to attend one of their top choice schools, sometimes with a reduced commute from their zoned school [[Exhibit H](#)]. Other states have addressed transportation through a variety of public/private partnerships, enrollment zones for buses, and reimbursement systems. We can look at states like Colorado, Arizona, and Utah for models on how we can equitably and inclusively implement STEP in Nevada. In the true Nevada spirit, learn from them and make it our own.

Lastly, I will say these systems are growing in popularity across the United States. In addition to the eleven states that currently allow open enrollment, 20 other states offer some form of in-district family school selection, and public opinion in support of this is growing. A February 2023 survey of Nevadans found that 86 percent of respondents agree that parents should be able to send their children to a public school they feel is best for their child, even if it is outside their neighborhood [[Exhibit I](#)].

This bill represents a tremendous opportunity for our state to level the playing field for all students. I will take you through the key provisions of the bill [page 8, [Exhibit C](#)]. The language in this bill requires school districts to draft plans that will demonstrate how students in the district can access the school that best fits their needs. The plan must be reviewed by Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) and will not go into effect until it is approved. I will walk you through some of the key points of the bill. Assembly Bill 497 provides that a student can attend a public school outside the zone of attendance if that school is not at

capacity for the grade or class required by the student. It directs the superintendent of a school to establish an application process, including deadlines and notifications to students, and principals establishing capacity limits for each grade and class and publishing those capacity limits in coordination with NDE. It permits a lottery system, not unlike the current process for magnet and charter schools, and allows a student to remain at that school without needing to complete an application for subsequent years.

It also deals with what cannot be considered in determining whether or not to approve an applicant, including academics, artistic or athletic ability, participation in specific extracurricular activities, and whether a student is a student who has a disability or is an English learner [page 9, [Exhibit C](#)]. This bill also provides that the school districts can, but are not required to, provide transportation to students attending school outside of their zone.

I would now like to introduce Derrell Bradford who is on Zoom and the board chair for Available to All, a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting and defending equal access to public schools. He will speak to the significance of STEP and the future of public education.

Derrell Bradford, President, 50CAN; and Board Chair, Available to All:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on A.B. 497. I want to take a moment to thank all of the members of this Committee for having this discussion. It is a particularly important and timely one, and it absolutely needs to be taken up in this moment. Available to All is an organization that works on open enrollment policies and school zoning policies across the country. As a kid, I can remember a conversation between my mother and my grandmother sitting at the kitchen table in southwest Baltimore where I grew up talking about whose address we would use so I could go to the middle school I was not zoned for. It was not until much later in my life that I realized that was an illegal conversation. This is one families have all across the country, and a conversation families are unfortunately fined for and occasionally jailed for from time to time.

Taxpaying families of all incomes and ethnicities are breaking the law to get their children into public schools that work best for them. Like Kelley Williams-Bolar in Ohio whom you will hear from later, who was jailed and later pardoned by the Governor for sending her child to a public school she was not zoned for. Open enrollment is a powerful tool to address some of these issues.

With that said, I would like to give you three reasons why I support the proposal before you today and, hopefully, other folks in Nevada will support it as well. First, I support open enrollment policies because I think we should not prioritize a child's address over their aspirations. Zip codes seem an imprecise and unfair predictor of student potential. Open enrollment and families matching the public school choice are, in my opinion, far better proxies for helping a child get the education that works best.

Secondly, the evidence of school segregation and racial isolation in the nation's public schools is substantial. Many reports show it to be worse than it was pre-*Brown* [*Brown v. Board of Education*]. I would go so far as to say if you want segregated public

schools, assigning kids to them based on where they live is the most effective way to achieve that goal. Because of this, groups that you have heard about earlier—like the National Black Caucus of State Legislators—have endorsed open enrollment as a way to combat school segregation. If you want more integrated schools and that is your highest priority, open enrollment is also a welcome tool in your toolbox.

Third, and this one is serious, the sad history of early twentieth century redlining and housing policy and the school zones that still sort of conform to those zones is a stain on both our history and our education system. In his seminal book, called *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Richard Rothstein noted how a local Home Owners' Loan Corporation appraiser color-coded the middle class St. Louis, Missouri, suburb of Ladue green, for desirable, because it had "not a single foreigner or Negro." The similarly middle class suburb Lincoln Terrace was colored red for hazardous because it had "little or no value due to the colored element now controlling the district." The Home Owners' Loan Corporation's 1935 underwriters' manual also declared, If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary the property shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in housing values. These factors still live with us today in our school zones and in our housing patterns. As Americans, we can and must do better.

Lastly, and this is the good news, you are not alone in thinking about this policy. Open enrollment is increasingly popular, both in Nevada and elsewhere. Your neighbor, Arizona, embraced open enrollment many years ago, as has Colorado where the Democratic governor signed open enrollment into law last session. Idaho's Republican governor signed what many are calling a gold standard bill just this session. Open enrollment policies are being passed in both red and blue states which is, as I am sure you know, less common as a political trend than it ought to be.

At home, as you heard Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod say, a 2023 survey showed 86 percent of Nevada residents approved of giving parents their choice of public schools even if it is outside their attendance zone [[Exhibit I](#)]. Open enrollment is an idea whose time has come. In closing, I want to commend all the members of the Committee for having the vision to take this issue up. Open enrollment is both good policy and good politics. I urge you all to support its expansion here in Nevada.

Jana Wilcox Lavin, Chief Executive Officer, Opportunity 180:

As Mr. Bradford shared, we are grateful to be a part of this discussion. Opportunity 180 is a Nevada nonprofit that focuses on ensuring every kid graduates high school and is college and career ready and prepared to live the life they dream. Part of our work is ensuring we are supporting the building of conditions for every student to access a great school and to have equitable access to quality education. We also work hard to ensure student and family voices are heard and amplified and communicated in terms of what they need from their education.

One key part of A.B. 497 to establish Student Tailored Enrollment Plans really puts the power of deciding which school to attend in the hands of families. It is critical, as we have heard from the data, that family choice, agency, and student selection really do elevate a student's commitment to their own long-term learning. I think it is also important to note that zip codes should not be the only determinate of a child's school. In Nevada, as we have heard and like most states, traditional school zoning is based on where you live, where you can afford to live, and is also supportive of benefiting organizing students into groups of schools. Oftentimes we see school zones may not send a student to the school that is closest to their home, which may be the safest possible option for those students should their families not have access to transportation.

I also think it is important to clarify that nowhere in A.B. 497 does it suggest that a student would be forced to leave their neighborhood school or would not be able to continue to go to their neighborhood school or the school they are currently zoned for. Should they want to stay there, that choice is up to them.

As we have heard, this was done before and we would not need to invent this policy. We can continue to learn from the data we collect, both here in Nevada and the data we can learn from our colleagues across the country. We do collaborate closely with national partners to continue to learn from those best practices and have been actively sourcing philanthropy that may be able to offset any future costs associated with the implementation of STEP across our state.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to introduce Anthony Curry, who is the director of public policy and will pick up from here.

Anthony Curry, Director of Public Policy, Opportunity 180:

I would also like to take a moment to thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair Taylor, and Committee members for hearing us today. With the growing popularity of Student Tailored Enrollment Plans, Nevada can join states like Colorado, Arizona, and Utah, as well as major metropolitan areas like Washington, D.C., and Camden and Norton, New Jersey, in giving every kid in a given school district an opportunity to attend any school in that district. School lottery programs currently exist in Nevada for magnet schools and public charter schools. Adopting this model on a larger scale would be a significant shift forward in students and families having a greater voice in selecting the school that best fits their needs.

Eleven states have already adopted similar policies to advance equity and ensure zip codes are not the sole determinate of the quality of the education a student receives. The policy also supports better educational outcomes. The Fordham Institute study mentioned earlier demonstrated measurable gains in both reading and math. In New Orleans, Louisiana, STEP clearly benefited Black and low-income students. In Washington, D.C., nearly three-quarters of students matched with their top pick when applying for schools.

This bill empowers school districts to come together with their communities to develop the best plan for the students to attend the school that fits them best. The policy would also provide data that could help inform districts and states on pivotal next steps and shifts, from school budgets to which school programs should be replicated. It can also inform which schools need the most help. These plans will not all be the same. The plan in Clark County will likely be different than the plan in Washoe County just because these are community tailored. They will align to the context and specific needs of a given community. The plans will be reviewed and approved by Nevada's Department of Education.

With that, I will send it back to Ms. Wilcox Lavin in Las Vegas.

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

As a final comment to put a fine point, this policy would benefit students, families, and districts. I think it is important to understand the mutual and collective benefit that is possible in our community, and it will send a clear and powerful message that we all believe kids deserve a high-quality education in the school that best fits their needs.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will stand for questions.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We do have several questions. We will start with Assemblywoman Anderson.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

The book that was mentioned is such a great book. I would also recommend reading it. I have two questions. The first question comes from what is not listed in the bill on page 3 under section 2, subsection 4. There is a list of what cannot be utilized as to why someone would be granted. There is an item missing that I believe is currently being used by the charter schools, and that is the parent volunteer hours or the expectation of a certain number of hours for parents to be able to volunteer. That is not listed. Would there be an expectation of parental involvement for someone to be granted a variance? Does what I am asking make sense?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am under the assumption at our school districts we do not allow that, so that would not be allowed.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I just want to make sure that was on the record. My second question is, Would this also allow for cross district or county lines? When I was looking up the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, school district and possibly one that was in another state as well, that is something the state runs, but is the expectation for that to be the school districts' decision to make?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Yes, it is. I believe we specifically put that in the bill. I will ask Mr. Killian.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

Yes, the bill allows for the transfer outside of the zone of attendance, which would be any school outside of the zone of attendance, whether within the same school district or not. If you look at section 2, subsection 6, it specifically contemplates a situation where a pupil transfers to a school outside the zone of attendance that is in any different school district. If that happens, the pupil is deemed to be enrolled in the school district where that school is located. The bill does specifically contemplate transfers between district lines.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

You mentioned Arizona and Denver, Colorado, as being places that have made the transition into open enrollment school districts. What kind of challenges did those school districts that have made the transition into open enrollment face, and what can we essentially learn from them?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am going to turn that question over to Ms. Wilcox Lavin, but we do love they have already started it so we can definitely take the best practices.

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

To Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod's point, we had a real opportunity to review the policies, lessons learned, and data from those states and cities that have implemented this to inform the policy that is before you today.

One of the lessons learned is one that has come up with many of your colleagues, which is discussion around transportation and successful ways to deploy meaningful transportation policies that fit in alignment with the deployment of the policy. We have learned a lot from what other cities have been able to execute, and we can bring those lessons here with us.

The second is that this should be a district, and community-developed process, and it should not be a system that is developed behind closed doors. In the most successfully implemented open enrollment STEP policies we have seen across the country, families and community members had a significant voice in the development of those policies so it benefited the unique needs of the community. That is one big lesson learned that is obviously informed by the way we would anticipate districts to develop these plans.

The other is around timeline of adoption. What you see when you change a policy that is this significant is there is a need both for education of families to help everyone understand the shift, as well as building your system so it aligns to adoption over time so there is not an expectation that a hundred percent of families would participate on Day One. That is why you ensure every family and student continues to have a seat in their neighborhood school should they not be able to participate in the process. Building into those components and thinking those through were all contemplated and lessons learned from other states.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

I am excited about this bill and appreciate your bringing it. How will we make sure all families know about it? Second, I understand the importance of local control, but how will we make sure there is standardization, especially with the matching process?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

There is a two-line conceptual amendment [[Exhibit J](#)]. It adds a requirement for the State Board of Education to establish regulations providing further parameters for open enrollment plans established by school districts so it will have that upper level. My copresenter mentioned that it is best practice to get that out. Working with Opportunity 180—and this is a mission of theirs—will help a lot in getting that information out. We do not have a fiscal note attached to the bill, which was obviously done by choice. I do not know if we put language in to take grants, but maybe we need to put "gifts and grants" available. I can see there being an opportunity for public service announcements and similar things that could be available. That sort of became a thing in the last few sessions that we realized we need to put in specifically.

Alisa Nave-Worth, Consultant, Opportunity 180:

That is also the benefit of looking at a program that has been deployed thoroughly across the nation with 11 states deploying this and 31 total states actually doing some sort of open enrollment policy. We can look to see how they have best informed the communities to ensure folks can access this equitably and thoroughly.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Since we are proposing a conceptual amendment, we can add that language to make sure we can receive grants and gifts.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Mr. Killian has some information to share on grants and gifts.

Asher Killian:

There is general authority for school districts to accept gifts and grants under *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 386.390. You could have language specific to this program, but the district would have general authority to accept gifts without any additional language.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

This is something our children in Nevada will welcome, especially their parents, putting their kids into schools that best align with how they want their children to learn. My question has to do with guardrails. We sometimes have administrators who will say they are full. I am concerned about available seats in open enrollment. How do we make sure those seats are available? For lack of a better term, sometimes we have people who are prejudiced and will prevent certain kids from attending their schools. I also want to know if they do, what type of requirement will be in place to guard against this?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We were just discussing this a few moments ago. I will turn that question over to Ms. Wilcox Lavin who can articulate exactly what we discussed.

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

This is a critical question. What we have seen across the country, and to reference back to the question on best practices and what we have learned is, STEP programs do remove discretion from school assignment: zoning, in and of itself, is a discretionary practice run by humans at a zoning commission meeting; and direct principal decision-making. If you can imagine what we have seen in other places is an application system that says any student who is currently enrolled in the school gets first choice to go to that school. Every other student who is interested would potentially select that school as an option. In different districts, different preferences are in place. Some schools are selective so those families would have to meet those requirements. Some districts' best practices are allowing for sibling preference to make sure families can be kept together.

Essentially, it is an online system that would calculate the number of kids enrolled in each grade in a school based on the number of students who reenrolled for that year, and building capacity, which would be established by the districts. Those would be the number of seats made available. That would all happen through a standardized process and not through the discretion of any one particular individual or small group of individuals. I can certainly go deeper on a technical answer to that question if that does not address your question.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

It does answer my question.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would like to add, because of this process, I think you will see more transparency and more sunlight instead of not understanding how some people end up with zone variances which are currently happening at the discretion of the district. This process will actually bring more transparency.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

How will that computer program determine maximum capacity? Right now, we have a bill going through with class size ratios that are recommended. I think for core subjects it is 1 to 30. However, we know in high school we have classes of 45 and 50. Is it going to be based on the recommended ratios, or is it going to be based on what they currently have, which are the largest class sizes in the nation?

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

Right now, we will have to allow districts to include in their proposed plans and provide some guardrails through the State Board of Education's overview and review of those plans, as outlined in the conceptual amendment [[Exhibit J](#)] to determine capacity. Districts do have

a formula for how they are determining that now. Thinking about implementing class-size reduction is complicated and important, but this bill does not fully contemplate specifically identifying a ratio but rather allowing districts to propose what they believe is the most equitable approach in the development of their plan.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

We mentioned students could possibly transfer outside their school district. Does that mean the funding will follow that student to the new school district?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

That is something I did not contemplate. In fact, when we added that, it was really done for the rural counties. I do not anticipate a lot of folks from Clark County. Ms. Wilcox Lavin, do you have any information on how the funding would follow the child, or if it would?

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

I do believe I heard Mr. Killian share that would be the case. He would have to confirm that to make sure. There are a lot of examples of interlocal relationships between school districts across the country that may have services or programs that are best meeting a student's needs that are outside of the district and allow that student to enroll in a different district. One of the things we have heard a lot about is making sure students in rural communities have access to the same rigor and level of course work. Sometimes the burden on a rural district to bring in teachers who can provide that course work, that scale, is incredibly challenging. This is a way to allow for students to access course work that may not be provided in a particular school district due to capacity challenges and allow them to attend an alternative school district in order to do that. My understanding is yes, and that is to the best of my understanding.

Asher Killian:

The language in section 2, subsection 6 deems the pupil to be enrolled in the school they are attending rather than the county in which they reside. For the purposes of the pupil-centered funding plan, they are counted where they are enrolled. The count would be in the county where the school exists. As the witness just testified, there is a possibility for interlocal agreements between the counties to let this happen more smoothly, but as the pupil-centered funding plan would operate, the funding would go to the county of the school where the pupil is ultimately enrolled.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

My last question is about transportation. This bill does recognize transportation is going to be a challenge. That is part of why section 1 says the school district may elect not to provide transportation, which I think is fair because we struggle to get our kids to their zoned schools as it stands. If we are talking about equity, is that going to be a barrier to students who do not have transportation to get to these other schools that may be across the entire valley, and how do we deal with that equity issue?

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

Mr. Curry, if you have anything to add when I am done, please do. It is an important question. Again, we can look to districts across the country that have successfully implemented meaningful, equitable transportation plans; Indianapolis, Indiana, being one where they developed an integrated transportation plan, including all of their transportation assets to support students being able to choose schools; Denver, Colorado where they have implemented a zoned transportation process to use the data they get from where kids are going to school and then build a transportation process around that data. I do not want to underestimate or not point out how important the data will be in identifying where families want to go and how having that data earlier will help us solve some of these complicated problems.

The other thing to note is sometimes there is an assumption made that kids want to go from one side of the valley to the other. That may be true. I can give an example of some schools in Las Vegas where there are three elementary schools about a mile and a half apart, which is under the transportation threshold, and a particular apartment building is zoned for a school that is a mile and a half away, yet another school is just across the street. Those families who may not have access to transportation would much prefer to send their students to the school across the street where they can watch them walk across the street to get to school safely rather than walk a mile and a half in order to go to the school they are zoned for. Often, families who are in those situations also do not have access to participate in what sometimes can be cumbersome zone variance processes that are currently implemented.

I would also suggest that transportation is a solution that comes over time. We would obviously want to continue talking to all the transportation experts in our state to continue to see how we might be able to leverage their expertise in solving that problem over time.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that comment, I do want to add that when I served on the Library Board [Las Vegas–Clark County Library District], we started a pilot program through the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to help kids. We have an issue, especially in Las Vegas, about getting a lot of people—workers, students across the board—from the north on the east side, south. We started a pilot program, but unfortunately COVID-19 started and that was the end of that. There are thoughts of how we can do this and how we can make it more equitable. This is a good starting off point.

Anthony Curry:

One of the things we see with these policies as they are implemented over time is that early on what we are doing is getting a lot of data, and as it progresses, more people start accessing the system. Additionally, in Washington, D.C., for example, they do not offer transportation there, but once they rolled this plan out, tons of students of color and those from areas of persistent poverty began using the system and there were demonstrated sustained gains for all of those students.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I did miss some of the presentation, so this question may have been answered. I want to understand what the process would look like for the application. Is it going to go through a lottery system, is it going to be created through regulation, or is it going to be preferential like first come, first served, based on those openings?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

You did miss that part of the presentation. It would be the lottery system we currently use for charter schools and magnet schools.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Could you tell me where in the bill that is specifically? Could Legal help get me where that exists for charter schools? I want to see a side by side myself. I do not mind reviewing that offline.

Asher Killian:

I need a minute to look it up for the charter schools in NRS, but within the bill, the reference to a lottery is in section 2, subsection 3, paragraph (d) that the method "may include, without limitation, a lottery system."

Assemblywoman Hansen:

The luxury we have considering this bill now is we do not have to reinvent the wheel. This has happened in other states. You may have mentioned it while I was taking notes, but does this legislation mirror any state in particular?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would say it is most similar to Arizona. How I like to work with drafters for all my bills is to make it less prescriptive because we do it the Nevada way. With a side-by-side comparison, it would be most similar to Arizona.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I had grandkids in school in Arizona, so I am familiar with them. Those are very large school districts, especially Maricopa County. Do we know how long they have had this and how did they address classroom size and the transportation issues? I am curious how long they had to work it out and give us some comfort with how they dealt with those issues. Also, to confirm, is 2024 the effective date for this?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

It is 2024, but I think the section in the bill says it is upon passage and approval. There are sections of the bill that will start in 2024, but others will wait until we get the language from the Department of Education and the State Board of Education.

Alisa Nave-Worth:

To clarify, the actual legislation was modeled off the enabling legislation in Arizona, but the implementation of what the plan looks like will be Nevada specific. In Arizona, they

adopted a system by county that was unique to large districts such as Maricopa and other districts that are not as large as Maricopa, which is similar to what we have here in Nevada. I hope that is clarifying.

As to the implementation of the Arizona program, including the implementation date and transportation, we will follow up with you and other members of the Committee.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Mr. Killian has a response to Assemblywoman Torres's earlier question.

Asher Killian:

The sections in NRS dealing with lotteries for charter schools are NRS 388A.453 and 388A.456. The appropriate regulations are in *Nevada Administrative Code* 388A.535 and 388A.536.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Mr. Killian, in terms of the effective date, can you give us some insight on that?

Asher Killian:

In section 4 of bill, the bill generally becomes effective July 1, 2024, but it is effective upon passage and approval for adoption of any regulations and any other preparatory administrative tasks that are necessary to carry out the act. Between now and July 1, 2024, the school districts and the State Board of Education can do everything they need to do to stand it up, but on July 1, 2024, all of that needs to be completed and the provisions of the bill actually become operative.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Our next question is from Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

My question has to do with transportation. I do not know if it is a question. This is parent or family select, meaning when we send our kids to magnet schools or charter schools, the parents or those families take a part in that. They would basically rely on their own transportation to send their kids to that school. I do not know about the rurals or the north, but I do know Clark County does provide transportation for magnet schools. Not all of them, but I think high schools may have been different at one time because my kids were in the magnet program. I do not know if they continued providing transportation for that program, but it is still up to the parents. If they want to send their kids across town, then the parents provide the transportation. I just wanted to put that out there because I think it is necessary, especially when we are dealing in school choice. To me, this is part of school choice.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

My daughter goes to a magnet school, Las Vegas Academy of the Arts. The way they solved their issue is we have to get her to her zoned school. Her zoned school is

Cimarron-Memorial High School. She has to be there in the morning. I will tell you, my husband has done the timing, and he just drives her to school because he has to get her there about an hour earlier, and teenage girls are not great an hour earlier.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

My daughter went to the same school and we had to do the same process.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I was talking about this bill with Councilman Isaac E. Barron in North Las Vegas. We are both teachers and both elected officials now, so we have a strong interest in this idea of open enrollment and moving kids around the valley. Has there been any sort of conversation or coordination with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) or some of these other entities that could maybe help with public transportation?

I know for a fact one of the issues will be utilizing public transportation because if you look at the actual premise of the bill, parents are going to have to drive kids or the kids will have to get there themselves. This may cause some socioeconomic issues where certain students in certain parts of our city might not be able to access a ride to school. Is there any sort of coordination with our public transit systems?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

This will be a community-wide conversation, and we will absolutely have them at the table. That is sort of why I brought up the Library District working with RTC. This is something we realize we want everyone involved in. I know RTC in the past has provided bus passes for some kids. Whatever that looks like, we will have people come to the table. I anticipate the conversations in the next year before this is actually enacted to be very robust. We would certainly like to have as many people involved and have solutions as much as we can to have this be the impactful legislation I think it could be.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I want to thank you for the discussion and also the people who have been working with you. They have talked to me a few times about it. I know part of our discussion at one point had to do with what happens if you have someone move into that district in November and they are zoned for one school but they want to go to North Valley High School because it is wonderful, and yet with those numbers mentioned earlier, it is already full. How is that handled or is it, Bummer for you, you moved in at the wrong time and have to wait until next year for your zoned school. How is that handled? I know we have had this discussion, but I think it is important to put that on the record.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

My understanding is with this bill, you would go to the school you are zoned for.

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

The only thing I will suggest in addition to what Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod shared is when districts put together their plans for how they want to handle this situation, they can

lean on what they do now when new families move into our community, which in Clark County is pretty frequent. Other cities have contemplated ways to think about how they might predict for new families coming into town in different ways over time. I would say that would be a key component of what the districts need to contemplate as part of the plans they put forward.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

As we were talking, it made me think of some more things. I have one more question. We talked about a lot of things that need to be worked out. I think we have heard over and over again we will look at the data, we will look at what is happening, the school districts will make a local plan. It sounds like we have to figure out transportation, maximum capacity, and the system of applications, but they only have one year to do that. How do you foresee all of that happening and being ready to go within one year?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have great faith. We have had these conversations with folks. Because this has been done in other places, there is a lot of stuff we do not have to reinvent. If we were coming up with this concept from scratch and we were the first state, which we are a lot of times, but we are not this time, we can use a lot of best practices that are already there. I have not personally had any pushback from state agencies that would be involved saying there is no way they can get it done. Maybe they just do not want to tell me, but I think I have a pretty good relationship with most of them. I believe Mr. Curry would like to add something.

Anthony Curry:

I know it seems like there is a lot of ambiguity, and that is because all of our communities are different. If we put it into the bill it has to be exactly one way, it may not work for Washoe County, or it may not work for Clark County, or one of the rural districts. It is not a policy that would be able to work overall. Yes, there is a one-year time frame to get that done, but the different communities already know the challenges and resources they have, so once we have this policy in place, we can start those conversations and come to something that will work for each community.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

I said I appreciate the bill, but I will say more. I appreciate the bill because I feel it is assets-based toward our communities where I have seen families have to be entrepreneurial to make sure their young people have access. Could you share the data, if you have it, of how many young people do this with the current practices? Are we going to make sure we have translated information for families?

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

My understanding when I spoke with the Clark County office that implemented their change of school assignment—I do not have this in writing, I am sorry—there were about 20,000 change of school assignment requests. I can certainly follow up with them to receive that formally and to clarify. I will take that as the next step.

In terms of language—I would imagine again a key part of this is around sharing information and, to Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod's point, making this a community-wide effort and activating and engaging on the ground community groups that are going to be a part of distributing and disseminating this information in other languages. That it is accessible to families is a critical component. What we have seen in other states is that the actual system for enrollment is translated into the top three languages that are spoken in a particular community. Again, that is a best practice we can adopt here.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I do have a couple of questions myself, and then we will go to testimony. Thank you for bringing this forward. I love being on this Committee because it makes me think about doing things differently than I am used to doing. This challenges me to think a little differently. Someone mentioned that we have some programs now, like the magnet programs in Clark County and a couple of career technical education programs—one in Las Vegas and one on the way in Washoe—where there is already a waiting list and they have a lottery. How would that selection process be impacted, or would it, by a selection process done in this way?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I actually think it would be helpful because it would be at the same time and we would all have the same data. Right now, what happens is a lot of times you do not find out, even if you are on a wait list, if you got in and then end up going to a different school. Having it all be on the same system would actually have more transparency on where kids are actually going to land within the district.

Alisa Nave-Worth:

It would be nondisruptive to the magnet and charter school programs. Initially, they would be parallel programs so parents would apply to magnet schools and charter schools and then to the larger policy. However, it would be at the discretion of the school districts if eventually they want to combine the stream and do one large pool. The timing would be consistent with magnet and charter schools, which is why we believe this would create greater predictability for school districts in terms of staffing and other issues, and it would align them. It would also create greater predictability for parents as well.

Jana Wilcox Lavin:

For sure it will not have any impact on the current charter schools because they are not included. You would imagine every school now would be on a similar approach to magnet schools, as Ms. Nave-Worth articulated, so if a district chose, it would not necessarily disrupt any of the selection criteria for a magnet school, if that is what the districts put forward in

their criteria. It would not change the way a student gets into a magnet school, but it would essentially have all schools on the same type of approach where families could rank order their schools and then be placed in the school that has the availability that is the closest to their top choice.

Alisa Nave-Worth:

It would also give school districts a holistic set of data to understand why kids and families want to go to particular schools and whether or not they should be providing more than one Las Vegas Academy or more than three technical academies. Districts can actually do their programming and build a school system that is responsive to the needs and desires of families and how they want to educate their kids in a holistic way, not as a certain substantive school, such as the magnet schools.

Vice Chair Taylor:

When I think of something like this—and I have had an opportunity to have some conversations when you have come by my office—it is the equity issue. In looking at the data and the information you shared, on the one hand there are two- or three-point gains in some areas, but we also showed where part of the value in this and what makes it work for those who do it really well is the consistency. It also shows Black and Brown kids were less likely to be consistent. How do we mitigate that?

Anthony Curry:

I do not know if I am 100 percent understanding your question.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will pull up the information I reviewed last night from the presentation. It was around where it showed consistency is a big piece of this, which does make sense. It did show Black and Brown kids were less likely to be consistent, so that stuck in my head.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Was it in the PowerPoint presentation?

Vice Chair Taylor:

I do not remember. I read it all, but I cannot tell you exactly where it was. I know I did not make it up. We can take it offline if necessary, but that was a concern. It certainly makes sense that consistency is important.

Another question I have is how this impacts sports. We know how that is and people are diehards. I certainly understand there will be a lottery system and there should be no favoritism based on whatever curricular activity a student may be involved in. Honestly, I have a little less faith that would necessarily be the case. I say that as a sports person all my life. How do we mitigate that?

Alisa Nave-Worth:

We discuss this all the time. Section 2, subsection 4 explicitly prohibits athletic, artistic, or academic ability to be a part of the criteria established by a school district for choosing where a student goes. The other fact is there are over 20,000 kids, particularly in southern Nevada, who are already accessing waiver systems. Oftentimes, those are driven by a number of factors, and arguably athleticism may be one of them. Those kids have parents who are tenacious in accessing the system. What this does is creates and opens a system of school choice and empowerment for all Nevada families but with the requirement and discretion of individual principals to make those unique decisions on behalf of tenacious parents, as Ms. Wilcox Lavin has said numerous times. What this says to all Nevada families is they have the right; they are empowered to make the choice that is best for their student in a neutralized system based on a set of criteria approved by the State Board of Education. We can never fully eliminate backdoor bias or other things, but this creates transparency, predictability, and clear data sets so you as the Legislature and other folks who oversee education in Nevada can really see if there is a trend where there is an unfair advantage given to certain people, whether or not it is based on academic, artistic, or athletic ability.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I love your faith. It is spelled out in the bill and is absolutely prevented, but it is the tenacious coaches I am most concerned about.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

For the record, as Ms. Nave-Worth said, right now 20,000 kids are using zone variances, and those are completely discretionary. When she says tenacious parents, I have known people my whole life who talk to the right people and they donate. This bill, if anything, would probably tamp that down. The intent of the bill is to give everyone an opportunity.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I appreciate that. I know you are putting as many guardrails as you can. I have this vision in my head that we are going to have schools—because of transportation and challenges around that—of the lower-income serving schools that have the students with parents who cannot afford to take them someplace or are not those all-state athletes who get picked up and go someplace else. They are going to be limited to some schools that are underresourced or undersupported. That is what I am thinking about, whether it is athletics, academics, or what have you. I want to educate all kids. This is just me sharing openly what the inside-my-head conversation has been.

We have one more question from Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Something was triggered by what Vice Chair Taylor was saying. I think it would add competition. Perhaps Clark County School Districts, instead of being underperformed, will raise up and do the job we taxpayers want them to do.

Vice Chair Taylor:

These are all Clark County School District schools, so it is their pulling from each other, at least within the district.

Mr. Killian found on page 26 of the Fordham report [page 30, [Exhibit D](#)] is the one that talked about Black and Brown kids being less likely to be consistent. That is where my concern came from. If you give us stuff to read, we will read it. If you look at the executive summary, it gets right to that part as well. It is something to consider in terms of what made me think about consistency. Consistency matters. It certainly makes sense that the data backs that up. Are we making sure to include all kids in that? That is something to think about in the data you shared with us.

We do have support testimony, but we have someone on Zoom.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will follow up with that. Our first person in support is Kelley Williams-Bolar on Zoom.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We will hear from her first and then open it up to in-person support testimony.

Kelley Williams-Bolar, Private Citizen, Akron, Ohio:

Today I want to share my testimony. In 2011, I was newly divorced with two daughters. I was going to college and working part time at a school district. We lived in the same county, but my parents lived in the Copley-Fairlawn [City School District] or rural suburban area. I lived in the inner city of Akron, Ohio. One year my father said, Bring your kids out here and I will watch them. My father had recently retired. He owned his own business and was a successful person. Finally, I took him up on that and enrolled my kids in his district. I started getting signs. The district would come to my parents' house and would want to look in the closets or in the bathroom to check how many toothbrushes were there, and different things like that. They kept tight tabs on me.

My daughters attended that school for two years. The second year, the school hired a private investigator who followed me around for 14 days. They wanted my children to be removed because I did not live there every day with my parents and with my daughters. We were successful with a grandparent power of attorney, but the school fought against it. That June, the judge sent me a letter that said to remove the kids, the school did not want them there. My two daughters were good kids. Were they A students? No, but they were not troubled children at all.

I removed my daughters. Two years later I received an indictment and my father received an indictment for grand theft and tampering with documents. Kelley Williams-Bolar versus the State of Ohio. The same with my father. We went to court, and that is when the process began. I was not certain what was going on because I had never been in trouble before. My father was 64 years old at the time and he had never been in any form of trouble either. Come to find out, it was Copley. They were charging us with grand theft and tampering with

documents. They said I stole \$70,000 total from public education. I went to jail for ten days. My father went to jail. My father never came home and died in jail. He was shackled to a bed like he was some murderer or rapist or something horrible. All we ever wanted was for my daughters to be safe and educated. To this day, I am still fighting for other parents, guardians, and grandparents to make sure they never have to endure what I went through.

I know I only have two minutes, and I have so much more. As time went on, things just kind of slipped by, but this is the meat and potatoes of what I am trying to convey today. As a parent, and I speak for so many parents, we just want our kids to have an opportunity. We want our children to have a chance at a life. Why not give them an opportunity like that? Why be so biased and not let other people into a district for whatever reason? Thank you for listening to my testimony today.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Thank you for sharing your story. We are so sorry. Your story did get national attention, so many of us are familiar with it, followed it, and were appalled. It is an honor to have you here and that you would take the time to share your story. We will continue support testimony for anyone in Carson City.

Cecia Alvarado, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here in support of A.B. 497, representing myself as a parent of a student attending Clark County School District. Before I start with my testimony, I want to say one of the biggest fears for people of color, especially for some of us who come from mixed immigration status families is if there is not something written protecting us, we are scared to go through the processes. I want to base my testimony on my own experience dealing with COSA [Change of School Assignment].

My daughter started attending Palo Verde High School in her freshmen year. She is a senior this year, graduating next week. Since her freshman year, she was zoned at Palo Verde. Unfortunately, at the end of last year, zoning was impacted. We were literally across the street. I tried working with the school. There was nothing the principal could do. I went to the district and COSA was proposed. She was rezoned from Palo Verde to Centennial High School. My daughter takes advanced placement Japanese. She is vice president of the speech and debate club. She is very active in her school. Centennial High School did not offer English honors or any of those classes. As a senior, this would impact her resumé for applying for college. We went through the COSA process. I applied in April 2022, waiting a couple of weeks but did not hear anything back. This was the only option we had. I spoke to someone over the phone about the process, explained what was going on, and explained Centennial High School agreed they did not have the same level of education and she would not have access to the same level of education.

The scenario they presented was we could send her to Green Valley High School, which is a 27-mile commute from our house to Green Valley each way. That was just a conversation. We had to reapply to COSA every two to three weeks because we did not hear back, thinking at some point they would make a decision. I still have not gotten a call.

Since my daughter started first grade, I moved around Las Vegas anywhere I could get her access to a good education. As an immigrant parent, that is my American dream. I want my daughter to have access to the best education. I acknowledge that I have been fortunate enough to move around, but it took a lot of personal and financial sacrifices.

Assembly Bill 497 will prevent this from happening to students and families in the future. Students do not have to worry about being pulled out of their schools where they have established relationships and friends, in addition to the education. Parents will not have to worry about trying to move in order for their children to have access to the education they deserve. Every child and family will have the opportunity to access quality education. I hope you support this bill.

Daniel H. Stewart, representing Clark County Education Association:

Clark County Education Association is in full support of this bill. We support all improvements to the delivery system of education in the state of Nevada. We think this is an important step forward. Often, it goes unnoticed about how much choice currently exists within the public school system. This is a way to expand it.

From personal experience, I have three kids in K-12 in the Clark County School District, two of whom will be attending magnet schools on the other side of town. It has literally been life transforming for my kids to attend these schools and to have these opportunities. We believe this bill will help expand those opportunities to as many kids as possible within the district.

Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association:

The Washoe Education Association represents the certified professionals in the Washoe County School District. We are here in support of A.B. 497. I would like to thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod and the other presenters.

A lot of the other counter arguments, for lack of a better term, around public education are wrapped up in the idea of parental choice. When I have conversations around public versus charter or private schools, I tell folks we need to try to emulate certain areas within charter or private schools and bring them into the public school setting. To be clear, public education is the only educational system that is accessible to all of the children in our community, and public education is paramount to the health and success of our society. Incorporating family choice within the public school system will help provide more options and flexibility to families, which we believe can strengthen our public school system and ultimately make public school more desirable to all families in our community.

It is also important to remember that variances or waivers are things that already exist, but are based more on who you know. We believe having an open enrollment system provides more equity to this process and opens those same opportunities that more affluent families may have and are already taking advantage of. Ultimately, we need to look at how we can evolve public education in many forms. We believe this idea is a new, creative way for Nevada to support that process.

One key idea that was conveyed by members of this Committee we would also like to echo is the immense importance of making sure the lottery system is truly equitable. We know there are guardrails in the legislation already, but making sure that component is a top priority is crucial.

Sarah Adler, representing Charter School Association of Nevada:

I am also speaking on behalf of some Washoe County-based charters that I represent. We agree with our colleague from the Nevada State Education Association that this bill is a good step forward in creating more opportunities for families to find the fit for their child within public schools. We are in support of A.B. 497.

I would like to add a couple of points. To Assemblywoman Anderson, parent participation is not a requirement within charter schools. That would have been considered your time being an asset that you would have to contribute, so that is not part of it. Another point I would like to emphasize, as Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, Assemblyman D'Silva, and Assemblywoman Thomas did, is transportation assets. Regional Transportation Commission assets and school assets are all publicly funded assets. We need to use all of them for public school children to access the best education for them.

I want to let you know, if you were not here in 2019, Assemblyman Thompson's bill, Assembly Bill 462 of the 80th Session, took some positive steps in creating access within charter schools to kids who need educational choice and access to different schools. This is another step forward in that line.

Finally, Mr. Bradford mentioned Richard Rothstein's book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. It is heartbreaking, but this body can be proud that Senate Bill 368 is moving forward in removing discriminatory covenants related to property ownership.

David Cherry, Government Affairs Manager, City of Henderson:

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today and to express the City of Henderson's support for A.B. 497. School choice is not only about options outside of the traditional school district but can also include providing the opportunity for students to choose which schools they attend within a public school district. Education should not be one size fits all. Families should have the ability to access educational opportunities that are best for their individual children's needs.

Assembly Bill 497 expands the public education options available to families so they can find an environment that works best for their children, regardless of where they live or their income level. A majority of U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have policies explicitly permitting interdistrict open enrollment. In many of the districts that have implemented open enrollment, the result has been academic gains for students.

Assembly Bill 497 will allow families to access schools beyond their neighborhoods while still recognizing the constraints of transportation by not requiring busing for students attending schools outside of their intended zone.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I urge you to take the right step to support A.B. 497.

Leonardo R. Benavides, Government Affairs Manager, City of North Las Vegas:

I am here to testify in support of A.B. 497. I will echo the general sentiments from my colleague in Henderson about the importance of choice for parents, especially within the public education system as a proud graduate of a magnet school myself.

Superintendent Jesus F. Jara himself has stated multiple times that the quality of a student's education should not be determined by their zip code. We agree, and believe A.B. 497 helps to address this and reduce the equity gaps we are seeing throughout the valley, especially in North Las Vegas.

We want to thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod for bringing forward this important initiative in order for families to have more choice than ever in their children's education.

Dylan Keith, Assistant Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:

The Vegas Chamber would like to thank the sponsor, Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, for bringing this bill forward. The Chamber is in support of A.B. 497, as it provides parents and students options when they look for the best option for that student's educational achievement. This bill also provides a more equitable process for our education system. For those reasons, the Chamber is in strong support, and we ask for your support as well.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We have five minutes left for support testimony. We still have those here, a couple in Las Vegas, and we have two callers. If everyone takes one minute, everyone gets in.

Amanda Brazeau, representing Jobs for Nevada Graduates:

Student Tailored Enrollment Plans have been shown to improve student outcomes by giving students and their families the choice on where they can go to school. Jobs for Nevada Graduates supports A.B. 497, and we want to thank the sponsor for bringing it forward.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Seeing no one else in Carson City, we will go to Las Vegas for those wishing to testify in support.

A'Esha Goins, representing NAACP of Las Vegas Branch 1111:

We support this bill, and we thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod for bringing this bill. We also stand in support with Opportunity 180.

Jshauntae Marshall, Co-Founder, No Racism in Schools #1865, Las Vegas, Nevada:

We are in support of this bill and stand in solidarity with Opportunity 180.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Seeing no one else in person in Carson City or Las Vegas, we will go to the phone lines. Is there anyone waiting on the phone wishing to testify in support of A.B. 497?

Peter Guzman, President, Latin Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod for bringing such an incredible bill forward. Assembly Bill 497 would establish a new policy where students and families are the ultimate decision makers in where their child attends school. It removes zip codes from being the sole determinant of where a child attends. That is critical.

In Nevada, like other states, traditional school zoning contributes to achievement gaps. In Nevada, school assignments are determined by where you live, placing kids in schools based solely on their address, therefore, often by wealth or ethnicity, dividing kids and limiting opportunities. In areas of persistent poverty, kids have been traditionally underserved by the school system. This results in poor academic performance that kids carry with them throughout their education and throughout their life.

This policy is good for students, families, districts, and most importantly, our community. We need to pass this bill.

Taneka Henry, Chairperson, Rise Up Nevada:

I am calling in support of this bill. Rise up Nevada is a local education advocacy group for parents from parents. We are in support that this will increase our school choice. Our zip codes and area codes should not affect our access to high-quality education. Thank you for presenting this bill. Again, we are in full support.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Is there anyone else waiting on the phone to provide support testimony? [There was no one.]

[[Exhibit K](#) is written testimony in support of A.B. 497 that was submitted but not discussed and is included as an exhibit of the meeting.]

Is there anyone wishing to provide opposition testimony in Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to provide neutral testimony in Carson City, Las Vegas, or over the phone? [There was no one.] Are there any closing remarks?

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you Vice Chair and Committee. I feel like Assemblywoman Mosca with all the support coming out. It is a nice feeling.

Nevada's greatest moments have been driven by nimble, future-forward thinking. We do things faster and better on a larger scale than most places on earth. Some of the ideas we come up with, we are like, No way, but we get it done. We are Battle Born in every sense of the word, and we have a real opportunity to address long-standing systemic inequities, family engagement, and student success.

While this Committee knows there is not one silver bullet to solving our issues in education, this bill does address several of them, and we can apply that same will and fortitude to ensure every single student in Nevada has an opportunity to attend a public school that is right for them. This bill is a STEP in the right direction.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will close the hearing for Assembly Bill 497.

[Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

That brings us to the last item on the agenda, which is public comment. Is there anyone in Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone wishing to provide public comment? [There was no one.] I will close public comment. We will be meeting Thursday at 1:30 p.m. This meeting is adjourned [at 3:10 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Funmi Sheddy
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 a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Student Tailored Enrollment Plans, Putting Students on Equitable Paths to Success," submitted and presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit D](#) is a document dated June 2017, titled "Interdistrict Open Enrollment in Ohio: Participation and Student Outcomes," authored by Deven Carlson and Stéphane Lavertu, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Inc., submitted and presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit E](#) is a document dated March 16, 2023, titled "National Black Caucus of State Legislators Adopt Policy Resolution On Public School Open Enrollment To Increase Education Opportunity," submitted and presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit F](#) is a copy of a video titled "Unite for Better Education," published by Stand Together, submitted by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit G](#) is a policy brief dated July 15, 2018, titled "What Effect did the New Orleans School Reforms Have on Student Achievement, High School Graduation, and College Outcomes?", authored by Douglas N. Harris, Tulane University and Matthew F. Larsen, Lafayette College, submitted by Alisa Nave-Worth, Consultant, Opportunity 180, and presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit H](#) is a chart titled "Total Applicants and Results from 2014-2023, submitted by Alisa Nave-Worth, Consultant, Opportunity 180, and presented by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit I](#) is document titled "Quality Public Education," submitted by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34, regarding [Assembly Bill 497](#).

[Exhibit J](#) is a proposed conceptual amendment to [Assembly Bill 497](#), submitted by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34.

[Exhibit K](#) is written testimony submitted by Tim Hughes, Member, Nevada State Board of Education, in support of [Assembly Bill 497](#).