

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

**Eighty-Second Session
March 7, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:32 p.m. on Tuesday, March 7, 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
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig
Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblywoman Erica Mosca
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas
Assemblywoman Selena Torres

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Steve Yeager, Assembly District No. 9

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

Minutes ID: 409



OTHERS PRESENT:

Sheila Bray, Community Partnerships Coordinator for Clark County, Extension,
University of Nevada, Reno
Alexander Marks, Communications Specialist, Nevada State Education Association
Tom Clark, representing Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition
Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League
Mary Pierczynski, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada
Association of School Superintendents
Mathew Weintraub, Deputy Administrator, Division of Outdoor Recreation, State
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Christopher Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State
Education Association
Sydney Williams, Student, Douglas High School, Minden, Nevada
Evan Robinson, Student, University of Nevada, Reno
ShaRhonda Ramos, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Deven Crawford, Student, Las Vegas Academy of the Arts, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jennifer Lanahan, representing Las Vegas Paiute Tribe; and Reno-Sparks Indian
Colony
Marla McDade Williams, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada
Amanda Vaskov, Member, Associated Students of the University of Nevada
Adrian Tom, Private Citizen, Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe
Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission, Department of
Tourism and Cultural Affairs
Meg McDonald, Private Citizen, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
Georgia Grace Dick, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Teresa Melendez, representing Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian
Reservation
Nizhoni Widehat, Community Organizer, Native Voters Alliance Nevada
James Phoenix, Chairman, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Paula Luna, representing Battle Born Progress
Warren Graham, Tribal Chairman, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe
Sylvia Rondeaux, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Miriam Gomez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Colton Desimone, Private Citizen, Walker River Paiute Tribe
Andrea Martinez, Treasurer, Walker River Paiute Tribe
Deanna Hua Tran, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Margie Wilder, Private Citizen, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Jonathan Lowery, Private Citizen, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Naomi Nevers, Private Citizen, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
Selma Meyers, Private Citizen, Southern Paiute Tribe
Delmar Stevens, Vice Chairman, Yerington Paiute Tribe

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called. Committee protocols were explained.] We will begin with the hearing on Assembly Bill 164.

Assembly Bill 164: Revises provisions related to outdoor recreation. (BDR S-487)

Assemblyman Steve Yeager, Assembly District No. 9:

Assembly Bill 164 relates to something that is a passion of mine, which is outdoor recreation. Time in the outdoors, as many of you know, is not only good for your physical health, but it is good for your mental health as well. It improves your social and emotional learning and results in greater resiliency. This bill, in particular, tries to start the process of thinking about how we might take outdoor recreation and pair it with our education system. Today, children can spend, on average, as little as ten minutes a day outside, which is a far cry from when I was younger. That is the reality of the world we live in, and I think the pandemic made that worse with a lot more time in front of the screen. Before I go into this bill, I just want to talk a bit because I have had the pleasure of doing a lot of legislation in this building.

I think I am most proud of some of the outdoor recreation legislation I have been able to do. That started with Assembly Bill 385 of the 79th Session. That was known as the "Kids in Parks" bill, where we gave every fifth grader in the state a free parks pass. I brought the bill signing photo with me, which is still my favorite bill signing ever. We had the bill signing at a state park with then-Governor Brian Sandoval, and students were also invited. This was really the start of that outdoor recreation legislation. I realized when we passed that bill that I had only been to a couple of our state parks. I made it a point over the next few years to visit every one of our state parks in Nevada, and it was a wonderful experience. I hope I am able to do it again because I did not spend a lot of time at each park, but being in those parks taught me a lot of things. One is just how great a state we live in. A lot of us are from southern Nevada and, of course, we have the desert there, but you leave southern Nevada, and there are so many wonderful places in our state. My goal is to help kids get outside and experience that.

Building on that particular bill, in the 80th Session, before the pandemic, we passed Assembly Bill 331 of the 80th Session, which was called the No Child Left Inside Act. That was essentially a microgrant program where the Division of Outdoor Recreation would be able to make microgrants to get kids outside. There was no real tie-in to education for that bill. Right after that bill passed, we had the pandemic. Right now, there is not really any money in that account. I think we have yet to give a grant out, but there are some things going on in the budget that may fund that account. That is the background for a couple of bills I worked on that I am proud of, but I think this one really builds upon that.

Let me tell you what I did not want to do. I did not want to come to this Committee, with a number of educators on the Committee, and bring you a program that says you have to include this stuff in your curriculum. I know better than to do that; I have been in this building long enough. I am not an educator, and I am not the expert on this, but I think what this bill does is get that conversation started for the next legislative session. You will hear

what we are doing is creating an outdoor education advisory working group, which would be housed in the Division of Outdoor Recreation. They are here to speak about this proposal as well. I did speak to them before I put the bill in, to ask if they would be willing to host this group. This is not a group that is going to exist in perpetuity; they are going to have one mission, and it is going to be over this interim.

When you look at section 1, subsection 1, it would require them to study approaches to incorporate outdoor recreation into the curriculum of the public education system in the state. This is not a new idea. There have been a number of states that have started to work on this process. One I want to point out is the state of Georgia. One of my good friends there, Senator Sheikh Rahman, chaired a similar committee, and they came out with a nice eight- or nine-page report about some recommendations which might be used in Georgia. They are working through the process this legislative session. The idea is we would spend some time trying to come up with something which works for Nevada, if we can find something which works. I am mindful that not every state is the same. We do not want to take a cookie-cutter approach from another state and put it in Nevada. That is the goal and mission of this bill.

In that same subsection there is a list of folks who would be appointed to this group. There are 13 people because I think you need an odd number if you are going to be voting on things. Anyone who has ever worked on one of these bills will tell you it is really hard to figure out who to put on these working groups and committees. I have given what I think is a manageable amount of folks, including a couple of legislators, but I am certainly open to suggestions. I do not want to make the group too big where it is not manageable, but I want to make sure we have subject matter experts when it comes to outdoor recreation. A lot of folks in the state are interested in that topic. The idea is to have those folks be appointed quickly. For the purposes of appointment, the bill is effective upon passage and approval. If we get this bill to the Governor's desk and he signs it, we can start making those appointments right away to constitute the group.

Moving to section 1, subsection 2, it talks about looking at opportunities to integrate outdoor recreation with a number of different topic areas that relate to education. The rest of the bill is kind of the mechanics. There would be a chair and vice chair. This is a volunteer group; nobody gets paid for it, and the Division will provide administrative staff. We are not going to need legislative staff. The bill asked the Division to do that and I think they are willing, but I will let them speak for themselves. The real goal here is that by December 31, 2024, we would have a report to the Legislature with recommendations about what we might be able to do to integrate outdoor recreation into the education system. One of the logical questions might be, What do you think would come of this? I am not sure. I have looked at other states, and the state of Washington, in particular, did this; they looked at approaches and came up with the program. It is similar to a grant program much like we have already, but would be able to fund opportunities for educational experiences which would be both in the classroom and during classroom time, and also extracurricular activities. So that is an approach. I want to think about what works for our state and what does not work. Maybe at the end of this, the conclusion is we are not sure we can or should do much, but I think it is worth having the discussion. Another question I will address: sometimes people say, Why

did you not have this discussion before you got to the legislative session? I would have loved to have done that. I would say one of the difficult things of always having a competitive election is there is not necessarily time to work on policy. Rather than bring you something that was not ready, I thought this would be a good first step. I am willing to answer any questions you might have.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I want to say thank you for bringing this bill. I, too, grew up in Las Vegas. My dad was an avid hiker, and I was outdoors all the time. I still camp to this day, so I think it is great. I see a number of Committee members with questions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I remember talking with you about this, and I really like it. My question has to do with section 1, subsection 7, and the report. Is there any sort of language or ideas of possibly bringing forward a bill draft request (BDR)? I feel that would be really important if we were able to bring forward something like that. Also, before you answer that, thank you for bringing this forward during Social Emotional Learning Week. Being outdoors is incredibly important to our kids.

Assemblyman Yeager:

I agree. One of the hard parts of serving at the Legislature is how rare it is that we get outside of this building during working hours. To your question about the BDR, I did not include language for this group to have a BDR. I am open to that suggestion, but I am also mindful that sometimes people do not like when we do that in bills. Given that it is a one-time committee that is going to meet, if this Committee would like to give a BDR, I would certainly be open to that. I did not suggest it, only because I know there are concerns that we already have too many BDRs in the legislative building. However, I think it is a good idea, and would leave it up to the Committee to decide if and when to process it, and if you would like to add that as an amendment.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Personally, I think it would be a great thing to have a BDR, but I also respect what you are saying. There is also the fact that you, as well as the Chair, have to figure out how to balance all those things. Thank you for bringing this forward.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

I have worked with young people for a long time. We have worked with groups like Get Outdoors Nevada to make sure young people can go outside, and with that, they usually are the ones who decide where we are going to go. They have a lot of thoughts and opinions, and they love it. Have we thought about adding a student, whether it is a college or high school student?

Assemblyman Yeager:

Great suggestion. I had not thought about that until this moment, but I think it is a good one. I am open to that suggestion. I just want to make sure we keep an odd number of members.

I hope the Committee is never deadlocked on something like outdoor recreation and education, but just in case they are, I want to make sure we have an odd number of members, but that is a great suggestion. Thank you.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I think I may have just solved that problem of an odd number. To piggyback on what Assemblywoman Mosca said, I wondered if you had any thinking about adding, perhaps, a superintendent or someone in district leadership in terms of how this might actually apply to them working. It is great to have the teachers—but from a systematic standpoint that might be 15. I do not know if you want that number to be so high. And for my second question, because there is no fiscal impact, I imagine you envision the meetings being via Zoom?

Assemblyman Yeager:

I think the suggestion of a superintendent is good. I will say, I did think about that. Then I started to think about there being 17 different superintendents in the north, south, and frontier. We would have to figure out who would appoint that person. I tried to make this as easy as possible but, to your question, I am certainly open to that suggestion. Maybe we can find a way to balance the regional representation to say if the teachers are from a certain area, or we have Department of Education folks who are based in the north, maybe we pick somebody from the south. To your second question, I do not anticipate a fiscal impact because the Division of Outdoor Recreation has been gracious to agree to staff it. I think it would be open—if the working group wanted to do in-person meetings, they could; if they wanted to do Zoom, they could; and if they wanted to do hybrid, it is whatever would work for them. However, given that people are not going to be paid for it, and they are not going to be reimbursed for their travel, that could be an issue. I do not know that this is written in here, and maybe it should be, but I think we could also allow the Division of Outdoor Recreation to accept gifts or grants to carry out the mission of this council. That would possibly allow some of our outdoor recreation partners in the state, if they wanted, to come forward with a small amount of money to cover travel expenses. I will note that as a suggestion. I think we should indicate they can accept gifts and grants for the purposes of carrying this out.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I agree getting outdoors is critical. As a high school teacher, I can tell you my kids do not get outdoors enough. My question has to do with section 1, subsection 6, where it talks about the compensation. I understand we are trying to avoid a fiscal note, but I know especially for teachers, we serve on a lot of these committees and task forces. Over and over again, teachers give their time because that is who they are, and they want to work for their kids. At some point it does become onerous, and I wondered if there might be some consideration of at least a little compensation for the teachers—or, I guess, the nonlegislative members who are on this advisory working group.

Assemblyman Yeager:

You are absolutely right. This is one of the challenges of being dedicated and passionate about what you do, no matter what area. You are going to get asked to do a lot of things, you

are going to be "voluntold" to do some of those things, and some of those things you will volunteer for. I understand the concern there. I think there is probably a way to do it; I will have to think a bit more about how that would work. To be honest, the no-compensation provision is really for the legislators, because when we go to official legislative interim committee meetings, we do get paid for those, and I wanted to make sure we were not getting paid beyond those official legislative meetings. Let me think a bit more about that and if there is a way to do it—I will connect with the Legal Division on that. Perhaps some kind of travel stipends or something for the day would be good, if we could do it.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

This presentation was really great. In section 1, subsection 1, we mention teachers, legislators, and specialists, but I think we left out parents. I was wondering if we could include a parent, and then you would have another odd number there.

Assemblyman Yeager:

I started with a list that was around 37 people. My first thought was it is hard to run a meeting with that many people, but there are also the appointing authorities. There are a lot of these appointments in statute. They are either the Speaker, the Majority Leader, the Governor. There are a lot of people you have to find. I tried to pare that list down to something I thought was a reasonable place to start a discussion. I am certainly open to including a parent as well. I think what I need to do is take this list and go talk to each and every one of you, because I think we need to keep it under 20 people for it to be effective. We could potentially go to 19, which would give us 6 more appointments, and I have heard 3 so far. Maybe we need another one, but I appreciate the suggestion.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I am an idea person, and I love these ideas, especially the macro. I am all about the outdoors. I always say to my kids, we have all gotten too overcivilized, so get outside and connect. That is super important. I know that you are talking to us about how this might play out, and I am trying to understand how this will be implemented. You mentioned the report from someone you know in Georgia. I am thinking, do they do theirs statewide? As I think about this statewide, I am wondering—not to give school districts more to think about—does the statewide possibly give some guidance like an advisory thing at a school district level, because every school district is a little bit different. I am curious what Georgia suggests. If somebody were asking how we would implement ideas for outdoors, I think about how they can take more field trips that get them outdoors, but is it already a structure in the classroom where field trips are approved? Would it be increasing recess time? I know I have had some major concerns over the decrease in recess time. If you do not mind, could you share some of the Georgia suggestions?

Assemblyman Yeager:

I would be happy to. I can submit this report to the Committee. It is only about ten pages, which is pretty short considering whenever legislators are involved in reports. They had seven different recommendations. One of those was to create an "office of the outdoors," presumably within the Department of Education. I am not sure if that would work here.

They encourage funding or other support so there are regular, meaningful outdoor learning experiences on campus, as well as field trips to other areas. Georgia encourages the support of "green school grounds" pilots around the state. I am not sure what that is, but I would like to look into it. They encourage the creation of a grant program. I think we already have the grant program, but that grant program would be available to both schools and nonprofits to come up with programs. And then, interestingly enough, they had a recommendation to encourage some of their colleges to reinstitute an outdoor education degree program, which I guess they had at one point, and which must have been contracted for some reason. The idea they have there is to get more folks involved in the outdoors. The last one they have, and also something I need to look into, is the study committee encourages the inclusion of an ongoing program similar to the Martin Luther King Jr. Outdoor Learning Trail in Columbus, Georgia. In students' statewide curriculum, students should have the opportunity to engage in nature, civics, and gardening. That must be a program that already exists somewhere in the local area which I think they recommended be expanded statewide. Those are some of the recommendations they made. Obviously, not all of those are going to work for Nevada. Then, this is one example: Washington came up with legislation out of their study which was essentially a pilot program to try to do the integration into the classrooms. I am happy to provide what I have so far. As far as I know, Washington state is the only one that has passed a bill that resulted from the study commission. All of the other states are in the process of hearing the bills in their legislative sessions.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Regarding the statement made by Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch, there is an idea for how to ensure teachers can be fairly paid. In Assembly Bill 72, which we are hearing right after this, there is a provision which says they would not have to make up the time for being absent from work to carry out their duties as a part of that committee or take annual leave or compensatory time for their absence. I think that language might fix it so it could be a part of the workday.

Assemblyman Yeager:

I would hope every member would have a blast doing this when they are out there, but I think that is a good suggestion. I also think we have that in other areas of the statute, so you do not have to take a day off from work. I do not think this commission is going to meet very often; maybe once a quarter to get it done. Thank you for that suggestion. I will take a look at Assembly Bill 72.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are going to hear testimony on the bill. First, we will hear testimony in support of A.B. 164.

Sheila Bray, Community Partnerships Coordinator for Clark County, Extension, University of Nevada, Reno:

The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) is in support of Assembly Bill 164. We thank Assemblyman Yeager for bringing forth this bill with a focus on outdoor education and outdoor recreation for youth in Nevada. The University of Nevada, Reno is home to

Extension, or as many may refer to it, Cooperative Extension, that leads community-based education throughout our state. One of our largest programs is the 4-H Youth Development Program. The 4-H program is a learn-by-doing life skills program for youth that teaches communication, self-concept, team building, problem solving, conflict resolution, and much more. In this program, youth learn through projects, in or after school, in a variety of subjects, ranging from animal science to nutrition, leadership, public speaking, horticulture, and other science and technology programs. These outdoor recreation and outdoor education programs are among the top experiences our 4-H youth offers throughout our great state. In fact, we now have two 4-H camps, our state camp at Lake Tahoe and our newest camp facility in Lincoln County. We echo sentiments of the Committee that outdoor experiences are vital for development throughout the lifespan. We look forward to ways you and UNR Extension in our state 4-H Youth Development Program can engage with this council to build inclusion and access for our youth. We encourage your support for this bill.

Alexander Marks, Communications Specialist, Nevada State Education Association:

We support Assembly Bill 164 to better incorporate outdoor recreation into the curriculum of public schools. The Nevada State Education Association was proud to support Assembly Bill 385 of the 79th Session, and Assembly Bill 331 of the 80th Session, extending outdoor opportunities to Nevada students. As we have heard, many educators and schools already incorporate outdoor education into their curriculum to improve academics, personal health, and appreciation of nature. We believe the outdoor education advisory working group will be a good opportunity to discuss best practices and make recommendations to ensure outdoor education is available to every Nevada student. [Written testimony was submitted [Exhibit C.](#)]

Tom Clark, representing Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition:

I would first like to say, Speaker Yeager is like the poster child for outdoor recreation, as far as speakers go throughout this country. If you look at his Facebook page, he has spent tens of thousands of miles running around this great state. He is one of the few people I know, except for the head of state parks, who has actually visited all 27 of our state parks. For him to bring this legislation is fantastic. The other thing I want to bring to your attention is, this is a natural progression of the work done in 2019, where the lead lobbyists worked with the conservation community to create the Division of Outdoor Recreation. Before the pandemic, everything was going really well for the outdoor recreation industry, and then it got hit hard. However, we saw hundreds of thousands of people go outside because that was the only place they were comfortable. Our urban trails and urban parks were flooded with new visitors. These visitors did not necessarily know how to take care of the places that they were now experiencing. I would hope that this kind of a working advisory group would put into the curriculum in our schools the respect that our natural resources need and deserve.

A big part of the creation of the Division of Outdoor Recreation was joining the Confluence of States. There are now around 20 states that are part of the Confluence. The Confluence is built on four pillars. The second pillar is education. To have this kind of a working group, during the interim, which is looking at what we can do to encourage, educate, and bring youth from urban and rural parts of our state to experience and enjoy the outdoor recreation

which surrounds us is phenomenal. I think it is a great next step. I would add one word of caution. When we were creating the Division of Outdoor Recreation, we also created an advisory board. It is an advisory board, not a policy board like this is, and I was asked by no fewer than 100 people to be on the advisory board. I finally threw my arms in the air and said, We have only 24 hours left; we have to stop this amendment of this bill. What is important to note is these folks need someone to talk to. They need people as witnesses to come forward and talk about their programs. Many times, when you are sitting on the dais, you do not get that opportunity. This working group has the ability to reach out to the OHV [off-highway vehicle] community, the state parks, and the Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition, which has absolutely no interest in being on this working group because we want to testify in every single group meeting they have. I love the idea, and we did it for the Division as well—including in the legislation the ability for private companies, federal governments, and other folks to provide grants and resources to pay for things like school buses, meetings, and other things that will bring these groups together in the integral places that they need to do their business. I applaud the Speaker for bringing this bill forward. It is a natural extension of the creation of the Division of Outdoor Recreation, and I urge your support.

Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress:

We are here testifying in strong support of [Assembly Bill 164](#). Just like the speaker before me, we also helped to create the Division of Outdoor Recreation during the 80th Session. We are very proud of that work and this work as well. Some of my favorite field trips growing up in Las Vegas were to Red Rock Canyon and Mount Charleston. They contributed to my love of our national and state parks. We all know the benefits that outdoor recreation can have for physical and mental well-being, but also for our economy. [Assembly Bill 164](#) would facilitate incorporating outdoor recreation in our public education system, benefiting our young people and teaching them the value of our open spaces and public lands. During the pandemic, we saw a spike in young people suffering from mental health issues, and we know spending time outdoors can help address that. So many of us used our outdoor spaces as a reprieve during that time. We know that young people starting to value and become educated about our outdoor spaces at a young age is critical to protecting our environment for future generations. We hope that this Committee will support this bill, and we want to thank Speaker Yeager for sponsoring it.

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League:

We submitted a letter to the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System that goes through why we think this is such a great bill, with all of the benefits of getting kids outside [\[Exhibit D\]](#). I will not reiterate all of that, but I grew up in Reno and went through the Washoe County School District, and some of my fondest memories are field trips to the Oxbow Nature Study Area on the Truckee River, and the Galena Creek Regional Park. Every child should be able to have those experiences. Those cemented my love for nature, and the great outdoors, and my appreciation for all the opportunities Nevada has to offer. It eventually led to a career advocating for our environment. Growing up, my mom was an elementary school teacher, so I was so excited when [Assembly Bill 385 of the 79th Session](#) was passed. Every year since then, she tells all of her teacher friends about the program, and

many of them did not know it existed. I firmly believe that passing this and incorporating more outdoor education into our education system will allow teachers and students to know more about the program, as well as all the other great opportunities Nevada has to offer and create a love for the outdoors. We would like to thank the Speaker for being a consistent advocate for getting kids outside. We urge the Committee's support.

Mary Pierczynski, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

I want to thank the Speaker for bringing all of this forward because it is important for our young people to get outside and learn how wonderful it is to be outdoors and see our parks. It will be something that sticks with them the rest of their lives as they grow up. I want to thank Assemblywoman Taylor for mentioning that, on this committee, there should be a superintendent, because they are the ones who have to make everything work in the school districts. I think their oversight and their voice on the committee would be very important. Also, I hope the teachers who are assigned to work on the committee are those who are used to putting together curriculum and are very knowledgeable about the physical activities kids in school should be involved in. We are in support.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have anyone else in support of A.B. 164? [There was no one.] We will go to opposition. Do we have anyone in opposition to the bill? [There was no one.] We will close opposition and move to neutral. Is anyone neutral on A.B. 164?

Matthew Weintraub, Deputy Administrator, Division of Outdoor Recreation, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:

The Division of Outdoor Recreation (NDOR) is currently neutral on A.B. 164. Our mission is to advance and promote world-class, sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities throughout Nevada. Among our goals are to affirm NDOR's role in improving public health and wellness, and to increase community capacity for outdoor recreation and stewardship.

To accomplish this, it is important to pursue programs and partnerships that support diverse opportunities for incorporating outdoor education into pre-K through twelfth grade, as well as postsecondary educational programs. Our Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program, otherwise known as the No Child Left Inside program, previously created by the Legislature and proposed for funding this coming biennium, has the potential to serve as a supportive adjoining state effort to create opportunities for youth engagement, with their local outdoor spaces in school and in extracurricular activities. Recommendations of the working group in this proposed bill may elicit projects that are eligible for grant funding. Further, the working group could serve as a catalyst for partnerships and future opportunities to increase the prevalence of outdoor education in Nevada, bringing together a plethora of known academic, health, and behavioral benefits for students and schools.

Nevada's public schools have the potential to be exemplary settings for implementing outdoor recreation into the lives of Nevada's youth. Access to outdoor spaces is the hallmark of many Nevada communities, though often without program connections to our educational

system. However, expert recommendations paired with grant dollars can start to change that dynamic and afford our communities, especially those which are currently underresourced, greater access to local outdoor spaces, as well as promote regular outdoor activity. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone else in neutral? [There was no one.] I will close neutral testimony. Did you want to make any final remarks, Mr. Speaker?

Assemblyman Yeager:

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, thank you for giving me almost 45 minutes for this bill hearing. I want to say thank you to those who showed up today to testify in support. Thank you for the good questions. I have some good suggestions to take back and work on a potential amendment. As always, my door is open. If you think of questions or suggestions after this hearing, please let me know. I appreciate the time and consideration, and I will bring something back to you for your consideration for a work session. Thank you.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close the hearing on A.B. 164, and I will now turn the gavel over to my Vice Chair.

[Assemblywoman Taylor assumed the Chair.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

We will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 72. To present this measure, we have a very familiar face, our Chair Bilbray-Axelrod.

Assembly Bill 72: Creates the Advisory Committee on the Safety and Well-Being of Teachers. (BDR 34-442)

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

The bill before you today, Assembly Bill 72, is a recommendation from the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education. I had the pleasure of serving as Vice Chair to former Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, who served as Chair of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education alongside several colleagues who are here in the room today, including Assemblywoman Hansen, Assemblywoman Hardy, and Assemblywoman Thomas. I would like to begin with some brief background information which explains what led to the recommendation. School safety has become a primary concern of recent years, in Nevada and nationally. We have heard of multiple instances in our state of teachers being threatened or attacked in the classroom. For context—I know many of you are teachers who might not need this context—but I wanted to remind you of an article from April of last year, where the lead line is, "Three Clark County School District teachers attacked at separate schools - Three students arrested the same day." The article states, "At 9:15 a. m., a teacher defended himself with a chair from a 14-year-old freshman girl who pulled a knife out of her backpack and threatened him with it at Foothill High School." The teacher was able to escape,

thankfully. Additionally, at Grant Sawyer Middle School, a teacher was assaulted, once again, by a student. A 15-year-old girl in eighth grade threatened school staff with a pair of scissors. Finally, on that day in the evening at Palo Verde High School, a 17-year-old male senior entered a classroom he did not belong in. When asked to leave, he pushed the teacher several times before fleeing. To say this is becoming an epidemic would be an understatement, I believe. Teachers are feeling it. I am hearing from my constituents they are scared, and no one should have to go to work and not feel safe.

Furthermore, in 2022, the publication *Education Weekly* noted: 4 out of 10 teachers feel less safe in school now than they did five years ago. I think there are many things that contribute to that, and I think that is why this Advisory Committee on the Safety and Well-Being of Teachers is so important. The publication itself listed a range of issues, from school shootings to increased student and parent aggression, as contributing factors to this rise. Additionally, safety issues in schools may contribute to the retention of teachers, and we know that is a problem. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence Against Educators and School Personnel conducted a national yearlong survey of violence against these personnel starting in June 2020. The task force found that 49 percent of teachers surveyed expressed a desire to or plan to quit or transfer their jobs due to concern about school climate and safety. As we talked about today when I made my floor speech, when most people go into teaching, they say it is not just a job, but a calling. These teachers are willing to leave because of their own personal safety or school climate. Thus, it is necessary we focus on the safety and well-being of teachers. This Advisory Committee will help identify and address these important issues and work toward solutions, which is the intent of A.B. 72.

Now, I will review some specifics of the bill. Section 3 creates the Advisory Committee on the Safety and Well-Being of Teachers. It also outlines certain provisions for the Advisory Committee, including who makes up the membership, the term details for the members, and certain conditions guiding meetings and members. Section 4 of the bill outlines the duties of the Advisory Committee, which include reviewing, investigating, and making certain recommendations concerning any issues relating to the safety and well-being of teachers in the consistent implementation of discipline of pupils. Finally, I want to say, I urge your support to provide a safe environment.

I know, once again, I am talking to a lot of teachers up here, but I had the opportunity to go to El Dorado High School just days after a horrific attack where a teacher was sexually assaulted and left for dead. I did not know what it was going to be like walking into that room. I did not know how we were going to be received. It was me and two other legislative colleagues. When I walked in there, there were a lot of tears and a lot of thankfulness that we were there. These teachers—overwhelmingly, many of them—had actually gone to school at El Dorado, and just wanted it to change. They did not want to give up on these kids. They still do not want to give up on these kids. We do not want to give up on these kids, but it has to be a safe place. No one deserves to go to a job where they do not feel respected, safe, and cared for. These are our teachers. These are people who are teaching the next generation of us, and presidents, and doctors. We need to respect them, and we need to

show our kids that they need to respect them. I hope this Advisory Committee will do just a small part, and I know many people have reached out to me with possible tweaks to the bill. I am open to them. I am presenting the bill as it was written, but I am open to suggestions to making this better. I do defer to—like I said—so many of you as being actually on the ground. With that, I will open it to questions.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Thank you, Madam Chair, for that impassioned plea surrounding the reason for this bill. We do have some questions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you, Vice Chair, and thank you, Chair, for bringing forward the language. More importantly, thank you for recognizing what is happening to the profession that I love, and that my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents loved as well. My question has to do with the term "teachers." I am proud to be a teacher, as you know, but I also recognize that there is no way I can do my job without our support professionals. Our bus drivers are also continually under attack, and so are our aides in our classrooms. I understand the word, "teachers" in there, but I was wondering if there has been any discussion about also including our support professionals who, quite frankly, I cannot do my job without.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Absolutely, and that is one of the things I was talking about. I have had an onslaught of different conceptual amendments come at me. I think this needs a holistic approach to looking at what the issue is. That final example I gave at Palo Verde High School, if I am not mistaken, since it was the evening, it was a support staff member who was assaulted. I think the term, "teachers" was used when we first started talking about it. You are absolutely right; the bus driver situation has become pretty horrific as well. Thank you for the suggestion, and I am happy to work with you.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I think most of us recognize that when you say "teachers," most people assume it also has to do with the support professionals. The other item I want to bring up is similar to our last discussion. I think we have to be aware violence against educators is also impacting our future individuals who want to become teachers. I am wondering if you would be open to having a student—maybe a high school or college student—also be on it, because I know that when I have been in a situation where a student was incredibly rude to me, luckily without violence, it impacted my students in my classroom as well. It is not only my peers who become impacted when there is violence against us; it is also our students. So, I am wondering if that is another element. I recognize; however, you do not want to make it 60,000 people, but that is another consideration—for students and how the violence against educators is impacting students.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We can have additional talks online. That is the first I have thought about that specifically, but possibly a student who is at the collegiate level—maybe working toward becoming a

teacher—what are the obstacles? I often say to people, one of our biggest obstacles, at least in Clark County, is if you Google, "Is Clark County School District a good place to work?" What do you think comes up? I happen to believe in my heart of hearts, it is. So yes, I will continue to have those conversations.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

Thank you for recognizing the reality for those of us in the classroom, which is increasing violence, threats to safety, and real fearfulness on the part of many of our educators. I appreciate your acknowledging that publicly. My question has to do with section 4 and what this committee is meant to do. I think many times our educators are asked, "Fill out this survey, join this task force, and come and give us your opinion." Educators get hopeful. They think that someone is finally listening to them, someone is finally going to do something, and then it goes nowhere. I think that crushes morale worse than not acknowledging it. It is like acknowledging it and then doing nothing. I want to ask what specifically will be done with this committee? Are we looking at giving them a bill draft request (BDR)? Are we giving them some authority to direct changes within these organizations? What are the concrete actionable steps they can take?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would say so. It is listed that the Advisory Committee shall review, investigate, and make recommendations to the Legislature. Unfortunately, we are bound to say what the next legislative session has to do. I did not think about giving a BDR for the same reasons as Speaker Yeager, in the last bill. However, this is a Committee bill, so I believe the intent, for me personally, is to take those recommendations and see some concrete actions go forward. That being said, we are all up for election next time. It could be a whole new face of people. Who knows what would happen? That is the unfortunate, or some people might say fortunate, part of the fact that we are up for reelection every two years. The intent of this bill though—as far as if I am here—I intend to take those recommendations and turn them into a BDR, most likely through the Committee on Education, and go forward. I cannot imagine if I am not sitting in that chair position, whoever would take over for me would not have that same feeling. It is very difficult to give the next legislative session their marching orders, because it is a whole new thing. I do not know if that answers your question. I can only speak for me personally on my intent.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I appreciate that intent. I think that intent is very clear. I know, as an educator who has been part of many working groups that went nowhere, oftentimes when we ask our educators to put in the hours, especially without compensation to do this, the first thing they say is, "So I am going to go again, I am going to spend 20 hours, and no one is going to listen to me," and I think that has become the trend. I would love if we could put some specificity in there that we are going to do something, but I understand the limitations you are describing.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

As you know, and as you indicated, I was also on the Interim Committee this past summer. I am not an educator and I do not play one on television. I am, though, a mother, a grandmother, and my children are students in Clark County School District. We are always saying that parents should be involved, so is it possible to involve a parent in here as one of the Advisory Council members? I think it is important for our parents to have a voice and to see what is happening. When our children act out—some viciously—we have some parents who do not believe it could be their child, and we have parents who will defend the action of that child. I think it is necessary for us to backtrack a little bit and be active as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members. We do not have those active PTAs right now that we hear about, and I think it is necessary for parents to be involved. If you could, consider putting a parent into this advisory.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the recommendation. I am having many conversations in the coming weeks before Committee passage, so I will definitely take that into consideration.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Obviously, I think it is critical we are keeping our campuses safe for our students and teachers, because I think violence against teachers in the classroom impacts our students and the entire school community. My question is regarding section 3 of the bill. Specifically, it says, in section 3, subsection 7, "The Advisory Committee shall meet at least once in the first calendar year" It does not outline a requirement of how often they have to meet. I think there should be more specificity as to how often they should meet. Additionally, I think it might be helpful if we outline—I would hope, when the report from the Interim Committee on Education is due, have it due before that committee is required to submit the BDRs and before they vote on it, so those can be considered for BDRs from the Interim Committee. All of us are elected, and the elected body will change. However, that would allow for the Interim Committee on Education to make those recommendations.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

That is an excellent recommendation. I think you are absolutely right. I have it called out here that the chair is frequently required to perform its duties, but maybe even say a minimum of four times with a date the report is due by. That could be in September or around August 30. I realize summertime is going to be the easiest for a lot of teachers.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Are there any more questions from the Committee? [There were none.] Before we go to testimony, I want to thank the Interim Committee for bringing this to the forefront. There is a lot of conversation and a lot of things happening. I think there is a big difference between being safe and feeling safe. If you look at your numbers, you might say people are safer, but the fact of the matter is our educators do not feel safe as a whole—teachers, support professionals, bus drivers, the whole thing. I think we can say this is true for all over the state, and our job as elected officials, whether it is in the next session or now, is to keep

people safe. We are going to open it up for testimony now. Do we have anyone who would like to testify in support of A.B. 72?

Mary Pierczynski, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

We are in support of this bill. It is important we have safety for our teachers in the classroom. It is important not only for the people who are there now, but also when we talk about the teacher pipeline. We do not want them to be scared to be in the classroom. One of the mantras we hear from young people is they do not want to teach because it is a frightening position to be in. We are in support of this bill.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Would anyone else like to testify in support of A.B. 72? [There was no one.] We will go to opposition. Do we have anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 72?

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

I am sorry the rules have put us at the opposition table, because we very much support the focus on safety in our schools. As a matter of fact, our association launched the Respect Educators Act largely out of concern for the safety and well-being of educators who have faced a severe uptick in violence and safety concerns at their workplace. We submitted language about a possible amendment to expand the scope of this Advisory Committee to include educators who experienced violence. In addition to teachers—we know that teachers face this—but so do education support professionals. We would associate ourselves with a lot of the discussion that happened at this Committee. I did want to point out the case of Edwin Duarte, who is a campus security monitor at Rancho High School, who was brutally assaulted in October. We hear almost daily about paraprofessionals, especially specialized-programs teaching assistants and bus drivers who face this as well. I look forward to working with the sponsor of this bill and getting either this or an idea of a restorative justice monitoring committee to the point where we can actually impact the conditions at our schools and improve the safety and well-being of all of our educators.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Is there anyone else to testify in opposition? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in neutral on A.B. 72? [There was no one.] Chair, do you have any closing comments for us?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I thank Mr. Daly for knowing that he had to come in opposition. I do think that the bill has a bit of work to be done on it, but I think it is not too far. I want teachers, support staff, bus drivers, and anyone who is involved on a daily basis with our kids to know we thank you, and we are worried about you. In this Social Emotional Learning Week, we know it can be tough. We are doing everything in our power, and we are open to suggestions. I thank you for hearing this bill.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will now close the hearing on Assembly Bill 72.

[Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 73. To present this measure that came out of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education, we have Assemblyman D'Silva.

Assembly Bill 73: Provides right of public school pupils to wear certain adornments at school graduation ceremonies. (BDR 34-440)

Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva, Assembly District No. 28:

The bill before you today, Assembly Bill 73, is a recommendation from the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education. I would like to begin with some brief background information that explains what led to this recommendation. Our students often look forward to their high school graduation for years. However, for certain students, this day can also come with significant frustrations. The *U.S. News & World Report* narrates that, across the country, students have been barred from wearing tribal regalia or other certain adornments during graduation ceremonies. The American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and many other organizations have further explained that such items which may be gifts from parents or tribal elders are of significant spiritual and cultural importance. Several Nevada parents and students spoke about prohibitions restricting these adornments for graduation. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education voted unanimously to put this bill forward to address this issue. I will now review the specifics of this bill.

First, it establishes that a public school pupil, including without limitations, a pupil of a university school for profoundly gifted pupils, is entitled to wear traditional tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment at a school graduation ceremony. The bill also concurrently outlines the abilities of certain school governing bodies to prohibit items that may cause a substantial disruption of or material interference with the ceremony. Finally, this bill defines certain terms used within this bill. I urge your support for A.B. 73. Graduation should be an occasion of celebration for all students. This bill will help to ensure that our students will be able to celebrate their academic achievements while also celebrating their cultures and identities. Thank you for considering A.B. 73. I will now turn things over to my copresenters, Sydney Williams and Evan Robinson, both of whom have important testimonies on this issue.

Sydney Williams, Student, Douglas High School, Minden, Nevada:

I am a senior attending Douglas High School, and I am a proud member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe based in Schurz, Nevada. I want to thank Assemblyman D'Silva for inviting me to present this bill with him. I also want to thank the members of the Interim Education Committee for agreeing to introduce this legislation. Last year, my cousin was unable to wear his beaded cap during his graduation ceremony, only being told so about three weeks

before the ceremony itself. As his cap had already been made, he spoke with the principal and was told that if he wished to wear something from his culture, it would have to be under his gown where it could not be seen. In addition, he was told that if he chose to wear his cap in his ceremony, he would not walk the stage. As a Native American who grew up off of my reservation, I already feel as though I am not doing enough to stay connected to my culture, and I know that I am not the only one. Depriving Native students of this experience can damage their mental health during a time that should focus on the celebration of their academic accomplishments. Schooling has been on the forefront of students' minds for the vast majority of their lives, with graduation being a driving force behind the pursuit of their education. Students are told that their graduation day is there to celebrate their hard work, but it can hardly be a celebratory occasion when a student is told to put aside a part of themselves and hide it to satisfy the ideals of others. We have gone through 13 years of school and have earned our degrees. I would hope that school officials would recognize that we have done the responsible thing in earning our degrees, and that we are capable of making decisions with respect to the education we received.

In Las Vegas, Latino students were prevented from wearing stoles that were important to their culture. Polynesian students are sometimes challenged to wear leis which have significance to their culture and to their families. I was a freshman when the pandemic caused the closure of schools. It was an incredibly hard time for me, and I am sure it was for a multitude of other students. Given the challenges that we faced, it is unfortunate that we have to come forward and ask for legislation to allow us to express who we are on our graduation stage. It is unfortunate that there is a lack of trust by officials that we cannot handle and be responsible about it. I am here advocating for us to wear cultural items that are meaningful to us, as a Native American student, but I believe that all students should be able to adorn their caps in ways that show their uniqueness, and that they can be trusted to do it in a way that is not disrespectful to our ceremony. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my support for this bill, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Evan Robinson, Student, University of Nevada, Reno:

I am currently a double major in political science and gender, race, and identity at the University of Nevada, Reno. I am speaking in support of Assembly Bill 73, which establishes the right of public school pupils to wear regalia related to their culture during graduation ceremonies. This is an important measure I would like to see passed. I recently graduated from Rancho High School in Las Vegas in 2022, and I had to fight for the right to wear my cultural items at graduation. The Rancho High community and I did this by spreading a petition, talking with administrators, and giving public comment to school board members. We then organized a peaceful demonstration in front of Rancho High School which garnered news attention and caused the Superintendent, Dr. Jesus F. Jara, to delegate the decision to individual schools. If this bill were enacted, it would standardize that choice to all public schools within Nevada, guaranteeing representation for every culture, heritage, and identity. Graduating from an educational institution is a celebration of not only passing test scores and grades, but of culture and identity. Many students want to showcase this to their family, friends, and peers. The time to pass this bill and create representation for marginalized groups is long overdue. Although this bill cannot make up for the years of

mistreatment my people have suffered in America, it is one of the many necessary protections that are needed to begin healing racial problems within our community. Thank you for hearing my voice, and I look forward to seeing this change enacted. I am also happy to answer any questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are always very moved when we have students coming up to testify. It is very meaningful for us, so thank you for taking the time out of your day. We will open it to questions. I am going to start. I was under the assumption we were going to be working off of an amendment that had some sort of—if a school board denied it, that we would go to—does anyone?

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for bringing this forward. I had mentioned to the Chair as well as to, I believe, Assemblyman D'Silva about if there is an appeal process. Then, some snow happened, and I completely forgot to bring that up. I am more than happy to bring forward an appeal process that has to do with section 1, subsection 2, that if a board of trustees makes a decision that it is a substantial disruption, that there is then a possibility of bringing that forward. Please accept my apology, Chair, for not doing so.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

You are fine, and I am happy to work with you too, because I have some ideas on that as well. We will move on to other questions.

Assemblywoman Torres:

This might be a better question for the Legal Division, who I know is not present, or our research staff, so we might get it later. Given the conversation today regarding tribal regalia that might be worn on the head, and then the requirement that a cap be worn over that—technically, with the definition of "adornment" that is used in section 1 of the bill, that still would not cover that. If that is the intent of the bill, I think we need some clarifying language, because the definition used in the legislation says that it cannot replace the cap and gown that is customarily worn at school graduation ceremonies. I think if that is the intent, and it seems that it is, then we might want to look at that definition a bit more.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I do agree with you. This is something that was brought to my attention recently, and I think there is some need to clarify the language there, because the bill clearly states "cap and gown," and that these adornments are supposed to be worn as part of the parcel of the cap and gown for the graduation ceremony. I know that sometimes headgear is very important and culturally significant to some of the communities that will be participating in these graduation ceremonies. I think that is a question we should examine the definition of—"regalia" vis-à-vis "headgear."

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have any other questions? [There were none.] I will open for testimony in support.

ShaRhonda Ramos, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am the mother of a high school junior. It is a monumental thing for us: the opportunity for him to have spent 13 years in school with the support of our culture, learning through church and the arts community, of which he has been a part and received many awards for. For him to be able to say he completed this process and walk across that stage, showing the pride in all of the people that have supported him throughout 13 years, in addition to the summers and extracurriculars he has put into this, walking across the stage and proudly showing that to all of the people that have put into him—he has done it. We support that for everyone. This community has so many different cultures here. To navigate that and allow them to come without being obviously disruptive or having things too large for people to see behind—but being able to wear that regalia, whatever it may be, so that it is not offensive but it is absolutely representative of that student, is very important and we absolutely support that here.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is this your son? Is he speaking? Please go ahead.

Deven Crawford, Student, Las Vegas Academy of the Arts, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I think it is very important for everybody to wear what they think is important to themselves. Memorabilia, such as where they come from, or awards, or church, or anything from outside of school that means something to them. Not just because it is there, but because it is a part of their life, a part of where they come from, where they need to be, and where they want to be. If that is what they want to graduate with and continue with for the rest of their lives, then that is what they should end with and walk away with.

Jennifer Lanahan, representing Las Vegas Paiute Tribe; and Reno-Sparks Indian Colony:

We want to thank the Assemblyman for bringing this bill forward, and we are fully supportive right now.

Marla McDade Williams, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:

For me, this is an issue of fairness. As you know, students cannot really choose which public high school they attend. They do not have the option of being at a school that might honor their culture and differences. Some high schools allow students to matriculate wearing their cultural items, and others do not. It is all up to the administration of the school. While I recognize being a leader is difficult, and you cannot please everyone, I think it is past time high schools place these restrictions on matriculating students. My daughter was one of two young women representing Nevada who were selected to attend American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation in Washington, D.C., over the summer. The other was Samantha Glover, who many of you know. At Girls State, this issue is one my daughter made as part of her legislative package. She had an opportunity to vet it with other young women throughout Nevada, and there was not any true opposition to the proposal. I am encouraged by the discussion about an appeal process, because I think it is important and that those decisions be made timely if there is a decision against an item. In closing, I want to say I have always appreciated citizen access to the legislative process. This is one of those measures that truly

starts with one person being willing to step up and advocate for change, recognize our state's diversity, and move us toward inclusion.

Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

We are in full support of A.B. 73. We want to thank Assemblyman D'Silva for bringing this proposal. For us, on the postsecondary level, our partner organization, Asian Community Development Council, has cohosted "Graduasian" for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; the University of Nevada, Reno; Nevada State College; and College of Southern Nevada for many years. We get to celebrate students with their Asian/Pacific Islander heritage, where they were able to bring their cultural adornment, decorated, and be fully decked out with their families. They are able to show that pride, be able to honor their ancestors' sacrifices, and their families' sacrifices to be there. Being able to also see this for high schools, where more than 7 percent of the students are Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian, is something that we would love to see and support. We are in full support.

Amanda Vaskov, Member, Associated Students of the University of Nevada:

I would like to bring attention to the letter of support from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) Multicultural Greek Council for this bill in your exhibits [\[Exhibit E\]](#). They support A.B. 73 because their organization is made up of university students, but they were in high school at one point in their lives. According to their letter of support, Multicultural Greek Council at UNR urges this Committee to codify protections for K-12 students to honor their educational successes in a way that their families and communities of origins understand and dress. Thank you very much.

Adrian Tom, Private Citizen, Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe:

My people come from the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe and the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe. I am also Lakota from a tribe in Montana, but right now I work as an education specialist for the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe. We are in support of A.B. 73. The county I work in will not allow our kids to wear their regalia, and when you talk about the regalia—when you call this graduation a "ceremony," we are a ceremonial people who like to wear ceremonial things that were given to us. A lot of our students do not graduate, who come from the rez. When we graduate, we earn a feather that we like to wear on a hat, as part of our cap and gown, which we hang off to the side. It does not interfere with any of the graduation gear traditionally worn. When you talk about replacing any of the gear, what they do is they bead the cap and gown, and a lot of people pay a lot of money for this beadwork, and earning beadwork is also part of our tradition. When you call this a ceremony, we are a ceremonial people who like to wear ceremonial things we have earned. Most of the time, it is a feather and beadwork. The Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe is in support of A.B. 73.

Alexander Marks, Communications Specialist, Nevada State Education Association:

We echo the sentiments, and we are in full support of A.B. 73.

Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs:

I am a citizen of the Walker River Paiute Nation. On behalf of my family, including 27 second cousins who are all attending public high schools in Nevada, and who are looking forward to wearing beaded mortar boards when they graduate, please support this legislation further. I have discussed this important legislation with my supervisors at the Nevada Indian Commission, and I ask you again to support this important legislation.

Meg McDonald, Private Citizen, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California:

I am in support of this bill. I have a granddaughter who is a senior at Reed High School in Sparks, and she plans to wear a beaded cap, hopefully with the eagle feather. I want to see that you will be in support of this, and I am definitely in support of this also.

Georgia Grace Dick, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:

I am in support of A.B. 73. I liked what everybody had to say in their testimonies. This is important for the students who will be graduating from high schools and colleges, and also for the younger ones. It is important because the caps and gowns—or the caps and the eagle feathers and the regalia they will be wearing, like the ribbon skirts or their buckskin dresses or outfits—those are traditional to our Paiute people and other tribes too. It makes the students have pride in who they are, and they look forward to it; the families look forward to it. In our family, we are always looking for eagle feathers or getting someone to bead the caps, and it takes time. Sometimes, it takes months for them to do the beadwork on the caps. Being First Nations people, we need that because we have been deprived of a lot of things throughout history. I am in support of A.B. 73, and I hope that you will make the changes you need to make to this bill to make it complete.

Teresa Melendez, representing Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation:

I am here to provide testimony in support of A.B. 73 on behalf of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. I would like to ditto a lot of things that were already said, but to add to that, Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch said something I think I am going to quote a lot throughout this session. That is, Indigenous people are often asked what we need through surveys and studies—we do not have enough data. We also often experience the same things that teachers or educators do. This is a low-bar ask: the ability for our students to wear their honors. The eagle feathers on their graduation cap, or to bead their graduation cap, or to wear an outfit like I am wearing right now, underneath their gowns. We have several big asks this legislative session, where we know reservation-based schools—public schools and reservations are some of the lowest funded and supported schools in the state. This is a simple thing we can do to help those who work in Indian education, like the gentleman behind me. What Indian education activists and teachers have been asking for, and what we are asking for, this is not new. We are falling in line with what other states have already provided for their students. When I talk about Indian education, my background is in Indian education. Nevada is about 30 years behind other states when it comes to Indian education. Assemblywoman Anderson, as you know, has been bringing us forward, honoring Indian tuition waivers here in the state, and we are seeing more progress and more

attention on Indian education. I thank this Committee for your work on that, and there is a lot more that needs to be done. I want to reiterate our support for Assembly Bill 73.

Nizhoni Widehat, Community Organizer, Native Voters Alliance Nevada:

I am Navajo, Rosebud Lakota, and an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation. I am also the northern community organizer for Native Voters Alliance Nevada. We are in support of A.B. 73. When I graduated, I wore a traditional dress and moccasins to walk alongside my classmates. I was adorned with full sets of turquoise and silver, with my hair wrapped in a traditional bun, as my Navajo culture called for. I only got to do this because I hid my turquoise under my robe, and I did not attach the feather given to me for my accomplishments on my cap. I had to blend in as much as possible. Indian education, which is housed in the Office of Inclusive Education, Department of Education, was a large help to me in school and even provided me with the cap and gown that I could not afford at the time. I am an enrolled tribal member and received assistance in school because of my heritage. Why was I required to hide the outward display of my people from such a momentous event? Please pass and approve this bill so future generations of youth can stand with their chests held high and honor the culture and community that keeps them strong.

James Phoenix, Chairman, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe:

I am the chairman of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe in northern Nevada. I am an alumnus of the University of Nevada, Reno. I am a retired police officer with the Reno Police Department, and lieutenant colonel of the Nevada Army National Guard. I support A.B. 73. A student at a public school, specifically a Great Basin Native American student, without limitation, should be profoundly entitled to wear traditional regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance at a school graduation ceremony. As you heard in testimony earlier, it is who we are. It is what we represent. By passing this bill, it will bring consistency and set the foundation through legislation for all students of our great state of Nevada and moreover, for our Great Basin Native American students. Therefore, please take the time and commitment, and show and demonstrate that you are here for us in passing this bill. In closing, I want to thank all Committee members. I support A.B. 73, as proposed by Assemblyman D'Silva.

Paula Luna, representing Battle Born Progress:

I am here to testify in support of A.B. 73. We want to ditto everything that was said by everyone before us. On a personal note, I want to add that when I graduate this spring with my master's, I will not only be celebrating my hard work, but also the obstacles my family has overcome as immigrants from Mexico. I cannot imagine a better way to celebrate and honor them proudly by displaying where we are from. We support this bill, and we hope the Committee will too.

Warren Graham, Tribal Chairman, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe:

I am representing my tribe today in full support of A.B. 73. Being able to wear our traditional regalia at graduation ceremonies is a way of practicing our American Indian Religious Freedom Act rights. In there, it states that there is an inherent right to freedom to

believe, express, and exercise traditional religions of the Native American people. Allowing us to wear regalia supports our rights.

Sylvia Rondeaux, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:

I want to say ditto to everything before me in support of A.B. 73. I would also like to say that my son has been in a leadership program since the fifth grade. He was sophomore class president, junior class president, and he just won the election for student body president for Carson High School. He is the very first Native American student to accomplish this at his high school. It is very important for him to be able to represent his heritage. His whole life, I have spoken to him about resilience and how education was once weaponized against Native American people. That has helped him in his journey of being in leadership roles, and diversity is very important to him. Thank you very much. I hope that you will hear us. It is important that we will be able to be seen.

Miriam Gomez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I would like to ditto everything that people have said. I am a first-generation college student that is in full support of A.B. 73. Working with high school students, we are in a mostly Latinx population. It is important not only to them for their own identity, but to their families, culture, and being able to fully express themselves.

Colton Desimone, Private Citizen, Walker River Paiute Tribe:

I am the cousin of Sydney Williams, which she mentioned in her testimony. I graduated from Douglas High School last year and spent four years of my high school career positively representing the school. I was on the honor roll, varsity academic team, varsity soccer team, and the audition choral group, the Douglas Dynamics. At the end of my senior year, I was hoping that my school would be excited to represent me from my culture on my graduation day. Unfortunately, when I asked if I could wear my beaded cap while I walked across the stage, I was told that it would be unprofessional and distracting. My principal told me if my cultural traditions were really that important to me, I could wear something underneath my robe as long as it could not be seen. I was told if I decided to wear my beaded cap, not only would I be denied the right to walk across the stage, but my cap would be taken from me. The year before, my brother was allowed to wear his beaded cap and gets to look back at pictures of his graduation with pride of being able to share his culture among his cohorts. However, I was stripped of this and will never be able to look back at these pictures with that same pride. Instead, I look at these pictures and see how I was told my culture was a distraction. I am deeply disappointed that the state who prides itself on Native American education does not already protect and sanctify the Native American culture. However, this bill brings new hope, and will hopefully protect Native American students and their culture, showing not only us, but the rest of the schools across America how important Nevada deems Native American heritage.

Andrea Martinez, Treasurer, Walker River Paiute Tribe:

I am in support of A.B. 73. Here in our district, we take part in an eagle feather ceremony, and our young adults take pride in their accomplishment of graduating. They get their caps beaded and attach their feathers to their caps. It is honorable for them to include their culture

in such an important life accomplishment. Not until 2017 were our students allowed to include their culture in their graduation ceremony, but this is not the case in other districts. That is why I am in support of A.B. 73.

Deanna Hua Tran, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

We are in full support of Assembly Bill 73. Cultural and tribal regalia are symbols of one's identity, heritage, and tradition. It signifies the connection to one's ancestors and is a significant way to honor one's personal cultural heritage. Allowing students to wear their tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance promotes acknowledgment and celebration of students' unique identities and cultural backgrounds. It promotes cultural awareness and understanding among students, faculty, and the broader community who have different cultural practices. In a state with such diversity, our students should be able to freely express the pride that they have in their cultural and tribal heritage. We ask that you support Assembly Bill 73.

Margie Wilder, Private Citizen, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe:

I am a member of Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and I have worked in Indian education for the last 15 years. I also served as the coordinator of Indigenous Students Services at UNR. I am in full support of A.B. 73. In my role at UNR, I get to celebrate each semester with the cultural affinity celebration. It is a beautiful celebration, full of graduating students of color. It is sad to see our freshmen who come into this space in an identity crisis, not knowing who they are. I believe if we pass this bill, our students will be able to move forward. It is a celebration of their embracing their resilience and everything that their ancestors have brought forward. You get to see the diversity in our state, and we get to celebrate that. In closing, I support it.

Jonathan Lowery, Private Citizen, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe:

I am a member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. I also worked for Nevada Urban Indians in Reno as an outreach specialist for our youth program. I was told to call in to testify on behalf of beaded caps for graduates. I have advocated in the past in Washoe County School District (WCSD) to have the ability to bead caps. We did have a Johnson-O'Malley (JOM) Program where we were trying to have youth from a high school—one high school youth contracted to bead caps for about 25 graduating seniors. We approached one of the high schools here in WCSD and they stated that caps could not be altered at all. I brought this up to the Washoe County Board of Trustees for the district. I went to that meeting numerous times. I was able to speak during public comment. It was not an action item on their agenda, so there were no votes, but I did reach out to outlying districts here in northern Nevada. I reached out to Lyon County; in Fernley, they are able to bead and alter their caps. That is a policy they have for graduation caps, as they do have members from the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe who attend their school. I also reached out to Carson City and Douglas Counties, as they do have Washoe tribal members who attend their schools. They had capabilities to allow that. Pyramid Lake Junior Senior High School is a Bureau of Indian Affairs school, so they obviously encouraged that. For our youth, we want to give them that ability. In passing this bill, I think it would be great for future use to have more Native American appeal, and it would be a great thing for them to have. I am in support of A.B. 73.

Naomi Nevers, Private Citizen, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California:

I am in support of A.B. 73. I have younger kids who will be graduating later on. As a parent, I am in support of it. Right now, I am in the JOM Program, on the Parent Committee for the Washoe Tribe, but we do service all tribal members. We want to service our senior students. We have been in discussion, and we are offering to pay for some beaded caps for our students as well as sashes. We really want to support these kids. I believe Douglas High School has said they will not allow it. Carson High School will allow it. Obviously, we service a couple of different high schools, so it is kind of unfair to offer that to one and not the other. I do understand that there is a distraction and that you have to keep it under control. However, for things like this, beaded caps, these are things that do not cause disturbance. I am in support of that. I am asking you to pass this bill, so that our Johnson-O'Malley Program can fund all these seniors for all of their hard work.

Selma Meyers, Private Citizen, Southern Paiute Tribe:

I am calling from southern Nevada. I am the Southern Paiute Moapa education chairman here, and I am in support of A.B. 73. I know that here in Las Vegas, as well as in the rural areas, we have many tribes that come from different states, and we see a lot of students who request the district to allow them to wear traditional and cultural regalia. You will see that we have not had any support. I have been hearing many individuals calling in support, and we would also like to see that become available. We know this is a tough route to work, but it is doable.

Delmar Stevens, Vice Chairman, Yerington Paiute Tribe:

I am the vice chairman of the Yerington Paiute Tribe. I am a social worker with the Division of Child and Family Services in Lyon County. I have been in that role for the last 20 years. I am a traditional believer. In the last two years, I conducted the eagle feather ceremony for the Yerington Tribe and Walker River Tribe. I did so to honor and acknowledge our youth, because it is so important to acknowledge them in their hard work. They earned the feathers we provided to them—that my family provided to them. It is so important to acknowledge our youth at a time when negative rites of passage are viewed by our youth. We hope to instill cultural pride in our youth by acknowledging them in this way. We hope we do not have to depend upon the county political flavor of the time on whether or not it will be approved. We seek consistency. I also want to mention that I am the father of Kutoven Stevens, who graduated from Yerington High School last year. Kutoven is the founder of the Remembrance Run. In 2021, he was acknowledged as the *Reno Gazette-Journal* Citizen of the Year. He is also the subject of the *Remaining Native* documentary that should be out this year. I want to say that, when Kutoven wore his beaded cap and the feather he earned, he did so with dignity, grace, and honored our traditions and ancestry. I stand in support of A.B. 73, so we Native people can honor our youth in the way that is deemed appropriate.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone else in support? [There was no one.] We will move to opposition testimony. [There was none.] Is there anyone who wants to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] That is what we call a testimony slam dunk. Congratulations.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

In closing, I again want to highlight the fact a good policy is oftentimes a confluence of a desire and need from our constituents and community, and also a problem that has an easy solution. That is oftentimes the real foundation upon which a good policy is made. I think this is an excellent example of a policy that has been vetted and that is also coming from the very people it is going to affect most: young people. I want to thank Ms. Sydney Williams for her advocacy, not only at the local level, but also at the national level on this issue. Also, Evan Robinson, he went through the struggle at Rancho High School last year during his graduation. I think there were some folks who said, if you have a problem with this issue, go change the law, and he is over here working out that process in front of us all. Again, I want to thank our young people for being a part of this. Thank you to all the advocates here in this room who brought this bill forward, and also the Interim Committee on Education, who made this possible. Again, I urge your support, and if there are any questions, I am here to answer them.

[[Exhibit F](#) and [Exhibit G](#) were submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that, I will close the hearing on [A.B. 73](#). We will move to our last agenda item, which is public comment. [There was no public comment.] We are adjourned [at 3:40 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Funmi Sheddy
Recording Secretary

Elizabeth Lepe
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 written testimony submitted by Alexander Marks, Communications Specialist, Nevada State Education Association, in support of Assembly Bill 164.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter dated March 6, 2023, submitted by Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League, in support of Assembly Bill 164.

[Exhibit E](#) is a letter dated February 24, 2023, submitted by Multicultural Greek Council at the University of Nevada, Reno, in support of Assembly Bill 73.

[Exhibit F](#) is written testimony submitted by Nikki Haag, in support of Assembly Bill 73.

[Exhibit G](#) is a proposed amendment to Assembly Bill 73, submitted by Sara Quintana, Board Member, No Racism in Schools.