

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

**Eighty-Second Session
March 9, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:34 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023, in Room 4100 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:

Assemblyman Toby Yurek, Assembly District No. 19

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Nick Christie, Committee Manager



Funmi Sheddy, Committee Secretary
Ashley Torres, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District
Paul J. Moradkhan, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Elizabeth MacMenamin, Vice President of Government Affairs, Retail Association of Nevada
Isaac Hardy, representing Council for a Better Nevada
Nicole Rourke, Director, Government and Public Affairs, City of Henderson
Leonardo R. Benavides, Government Affairs Manager, City of North Las Vegas
John Vellardita, Executive Director, Clark County Education Association
Lynn Chapman, Treasurer, Independent American Party of Nevada
Alan Munson, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada
Ron Miranda, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association
Laurel Crossman, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Marie Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Dylan Shaver, representing Washoe County School District
Evelyn Garcia Morales, representing Nevada Association of School Boards
Lorena Cardenas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Cyrus Hojjaty, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Alida Benson, Executive Director, Nevada Republican Party
Sheila Moulton, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Chris Giunchigliani, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Anna Binder, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called, and Committee rules and protocol were explained.] Welcome to this Committee. It is National Library Day. As many of you may know, I had the opportunity to serve on the Library District for 11 years in Clark County, so libraries are very near and dear to my heart and a big part of our education system. They are important for kids and adults. With that, let us get started today. We have one bill, Assembly Bill 175, and I will be presenting it along with my colleague, Assemblyman Toby Yurek. I will hand the gavel over to Vice Chair Taylor, and then we will begin the hearing.

[Assemblywoman Taylor assumed the Chair.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 175. This measure revises provisions governing boards of trustees of school districts. To present this measure, as you know, we have our esteemed Chair, Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, and also our esteemed colleague, Assemblyman Yurek.

**Assembly Bill 175: Revises provisions governing boards of trustees of school districts.
(BDR 34-692)**

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

I am joined by my colleague, Assemblyman Toby Yurek, representing Assembly District 19 in Clark County. We are presenting Assembly Bill 175, which revises provisions governing boards of trustees in school districts. I would like to begin with some background information that explains what led to this recommendation, and ultimately this bill. There is an ongoing debate on how to structure school boards to best support their work and student outcomes. Let me say that again: best support their work and student outcomes. Student outcomes are paramount. That is the work the school board should be doing. This issue is one of many studied by the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education this past interim, on which I served as vice chair.

To briefly review board government structure, generally, the board falls into one of these three structures: trustees or members who are elected, those who are appointed, or a hybrid of both. Additionally, some states currently allow appointed boards in specific districts. During this previous year, the Interim Education Committee held two meetings dedicated to the study of the composition and selection of the boards of trustees of county school districts. In these meetings, the committee heard recommendations from multiple stakeholders, including members of the community, regarding school board action. These recommendations included movement to a hybrid board structure as well as consideration of appointing nonvoting members. If you recall, as a few of you were on the committee, we had absolutely robust conversations. We had one meeting in particular where Chair Denis actually walked around the meeting with a microphone and let people weigh in. We realize this is an issue, and we want to have this conversation.

I am going to say, "Is this bill perfect?" I do not think there is such a thing as a perfect bill. If you do, then come to my office, and we can talk because I would like to know how you can get there. But it is a conversation that we need to have, and we need to continue to have. What is the definition of insanity? Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Given these conversations, it is necessary that we further explore what forms our school boards might take to examine how other board structures may provide benefits—most importantly, student achievement and outcome. We also would like to see increased professionalism and many more things.

The intent of A.B. 175 is to recommend a new board structure for certain school districts. Now, I will review the specifics of the bill. I would first like to remind you and remind the public, I will be working off the proposed amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] which I submitted, so this summary will walk through the bill as amended. First, section 1 of the bill, as amended, outlines that for county school districts in which the population is more than 75,000 pupils, which includes Clark County School District (CCSD), the board of trustees shall be composed of 11 members including 7 elected members and 4 nonvoting, appointed members. One appointed member must be appointed by the county commission. The remaining 3 members must be appointed from each of the three most populated incorporated cities in

the county by the governing bodies. I want to point out that number—11. Clark County is the fifth-largest school district in the nation. In comparison, our library district, the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, has 10 members. Currently, the Clark County School Board has 6 members.

Section 1 also states that for county school districts in which 25,000 to 75,000 pupils are enrolled, which includes Washoe County School District (WCSD), the board of trustees shall be composed of ten members, including seven elected members and three nonvoting, appointed members. One appointed member must be appointed by the county commission and the remaining two members must be appointed by each of the two most populated incorporated cities in the county by the governing bodies of the city. For these counties, the elected members must be elected in election districts established by the board of county commissions in the county in which the school district is located.

Section 1 further outlines conditions concerning the election districts, appointments, process, and terms of office. Furthermore, section 5 specifies that any vacancy occurring among the appointed members of the board of trustees must be filled by the appointed authority. The appointee serves the balance of the unexpired term and may be reappointed. I will now turn it over to my colleague for additional comments, and then we will stand for questions.

Assemblyman Toby Yurek, Assembly District No. 19:

I want to say a few words on my purpose for bringing this bill forward and my experience in the subject area. First, I think most of us can agree that there are many strong components in Nevada's educational system. However, I also believe that there are many areas we can find to improve. The Quality Counts 2021 report from *Education Week*, for example, ranked Nevada fiftieth out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, based on data related to K-12 achievement, school finance, and chance for success. I have had numerous conversations across the state regarding the need for changes that will help make improvements to Nevada's education. The intent of A.B. 175 is to examine how we can bring about change at a high level through adjustments to county school boards, with the sole aim, as my colleague said, to impact our schools and our students.

I also want to speak briefly on my experience in this area and the benefits I have seen that come with the ability to appoint board members. I was the chair of a board of trustees for a small private school. While I certainly understand that my experiences in that context do differ from the school boards discussed in this bill, I want to speak generally about what the other board members and I found in our work on that board. In our experience, at different times, certain areas of need would arise where we did not have a significant area of expertise. However, we had the ability to seek out individuals with that expertise and add their valuable perspectives to our board. That contributed positively to the work we were able to accomplish.

The goal of A.B. 175 is to provide our school boards with similar capabilities, so they can add voices to the board that may broaden the perspectives and expertise of the board as a whole. A mixed school board, composed of both voting elected officials and nonvoting

appointed officials, values the input from both community representation that prompts Nevadans to invest greater interest in their schools, as well as the perspectives of local government bodies who, through their appointments, can bring needed areas of expertise to contribute to the conversations and assist in making the best possible educational decisions.

As you know, as originally drafted, A.B. 175 did alter the balance between elected and appointed members of the board to four elected and three appointed officials. The most vocal concerns that we found raised regarding the structure were that the proposed bifurcation would dilute the voice that comes from elected representation. Recognizing and acknowledging this is a valid concern, the proposed amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] to this bill resolves that issue by retaining the existing seven elected, voting members and adding four appointed, nonvoting members, again, with the goal of adding vision, insight, and expertise to the decision-making process. Admittedly, a school board's success is largely measured by its interest in, enthusiasm for, and commitment to excellence. It is our intention and hope that the addition of nonvoting members would enhance the depth and quality of discussion and discourse without compromising the voice of representative democracy.

Again, thank you, Vice Chair and Committee, for your time and consideration of this bill. At this point, I believe Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod and I would welcome your questions.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Obviously, this is not the first time that we have had this conversation. I know we had a similar conversation in 2019. I know that we revisited this conversation during the interim of 2021. I will be abundantly honest; when we had this conversation in 2019, I do not think I was inclined to support legislation that would have made changes to the school board. However, I think a lot of the information we have right now has changed. I have had the opportunity to do more research to see some of the issues that our school boards are experiencing.

One of the things that stands out to me is how large some of our districts are. I do not know that you have the numbers right now, but maybe somebody can get those to us. Specifically looking at CCSD, what size budget does the school district have? How many constituents does each individual representative or trustee have? It seems to me you have a board limited to seven members in southern Nevada that is operating a budget that is extremely large. I do not even think we would have a business in the state that would have a board that is quite that small. I do not know if you have anything to add on that.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I do not have the information on the size of the budget. I do not know if someone in the audience might have that information. I know it is very large, but I do not know.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Do we have staff to be able to get that budget information? We can follow up and get that.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We can probably Google it. Your second question was the size of each district, so A, B, C, D, E, and F. I know they were recently reapportioned, so we probably do have that information, and we can get that back to you very shortly. That is a great question.

To your point about having this discussion, I, too, was not totally for this at all when we first started talking about it, and it has been quite eye-opening over the past four sessions having these conversations. Honestly and anecdotally, we have all seen some issues that have gone on within the school board in our own district. While I think members mean well—I do not want to take anything away from those who are elected—I know they are the doing the best they can, but just like the hummingbird, sometimes doing the best you can means dropping a drop of water. Having some additional expertise would likely help. As soon as we have that information, I will get back to you.

Vice Chair Taylor:

For a little bit of clarity, do you want that information for all of the districts?

Assemblywoman Torres:

I think it would be helpful. I imagine some of my colleagues would appreciate it from other districts. I am mainly focused on CCSD, so as soon as we can get that. I know we have representatives from CCSD here who should be able to get it for us pretty quickly during this meeting, so we can have that conversation.

Vice Chair Taylor:

If there is, we would certainly welcome that information on the size of each district. Can you repeat that?

Assemblywoman Torres:

It is the size of the districts the trustees are representing.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Clark County School District is \$3.5 billion.

Vice Chair Taylor:

That is dollars in terms of size of the budget?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Yes, dollars. There are 300,000 students, so 300,000 divided by 7 is what I would imagine.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We have CCSD here.

Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District:

I have general numbers. I want to be sure to provide accurate, specific numbers for you. I am pulling all of that now, so I will get that over to the committee secretary momentarily.

Based on our CCSD Fast Facts, that is available—and I think that was sent out to most, if not all the legislators—we are looking at \$3.05 billion that is on there. But let me circle back with those specific numbers for you over the past couple of fiscal years, and I will also pull those numbers as far as total number of constituents each trustee is currently representing based on redistricting and reapportionment.

Vice Chair Taylor:

As part of the conversation as we gather that information, is there anyone here from WCSD who can gather that same information? We will gather that as well and get that sent out to the Committee.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I used my calculator to tell you that it is roughly \$50,000 if it is equal per student.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We will get information. That is only for students, but we are looking at constituents. We will get those numbers of constituents so we can share that for Clark County as well as for Washoe County and get it to the Committee.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I, too, was on the Interim Education Committee, and I do remember Chair Denis going around asking these very important questions. It was like you said, a robust conversation, because of some of the actions we have seen at the school boards. I have two questions, and they are relating to the nonvoting members. Number one, how will they be selected? Number two, what value will they be able to bring to the board that these voting members will value?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Specifically in my conceptual amendment [[Exhibit C](#)], I kept that pretty vague. First of all, it will be done by the county commission and then the three largest cities in Clark County, which are the Cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Henderson, and the two largest cities in Washoe County, which are currently Reno and Sparks. As I was saying, I specifically kept it vague because I anticipate the issues we are having right now might not be the same issues that we have in 10, 15, or 20 years. My idea was to give some leeway to the commission or the cities to appoint someone who brought expertise in the area that was needed at that time. Student achievement and outcome are always paramount above all else. But whether it is budgetary issues, there is a multitude of things. That is why the language was left intentionally vague. We are up here in Carson City, and one of the first things I learned my freshman year was when you put people into a box, and what they can do, people do not like that. They too were elected, so giving them that ability to seek what is most important for their city or their county and what they believe that expert will bring. Does that make sense?

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Yes, it does.

Assemblyman Yurek:

I want to reiterate and clarify that point, at least in my thoughts, because it is a valid question. If they do not vote, what value do they add? That is a very legitimate question, and it is quite frankly why I assume it was broken up with four and three as originally presented, so there was equal voting power. There were legitimate concerns that came as a result of that. The best part about this process is hearing different ideas and thoughts. The idea of still adding these individuals without voting power is to give them a seat at the table. We have the various entities, whether it is the county commission or the municipalities, with their perspectives on what the challenges are on the board, from their base, their constituency's perspective. Then, they can identify an individual and appoint an individual to the board that might be able to speak from an area of experience or training or expertise to hopefully elevate the discussion and engage in dialogue that ultimately they do not get to vote on, but at least it would bring more voices to the table, encourage high-level dialogue, and hopefully result in better decisions.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you for that explanation. How many other states have you looked at? How many other states have this model?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We looked at many different hybrids, including the fully elected, hybrid, and appointed. We did not look at this specific—sort of ad hoc—membership. It was something that came after the joint committee had already put in our recommendations. I continued, and I know Assemblyman Yurek continued to have these conversations with people. Overwhelmingly, what we were getting was that people did not want that elected aspect to be taken away. I think we all respect that. I will get that information back. This was a conceptual amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] that we created recently.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

As a teacher in one of these affected districts, you can imagine I have several questions. I value you both as colleagues, and I believe you have the best interest of our kids at heart. I am deeply concerned by many things in this proposal. In Washoe County, which is included in this bill, our board is functional. Its functionality is, in fact, increasing, and I think it is because of democracy that it is increasingly functional. Our voters rejected extremism in our last election, and we have a board that is working. I would like to know why Washoe County is being included in what seems like mostly a Clark County issue?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I do not think having additional expertise and additional voices at the table is ever a bad thing. That would be my statement.

Assemblyman Yurek:

It is the old adage. I think democracy best flourishes when there are more voices that can be heard. I think bringing people with certain levels of experience to contribute to the dialogue is a good thing. Obviously, there is a point where you reach a diminished return. Too many

chefs in the kitchen can be a problem. We do not think, with respect to the size of the school districts, that the additional three or four nonvoting board members contributing to the dialogue with particular areas of expertise would do anything but help those boards.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

My follow-up to that then is, if we are talking about voices in the room and adding experts, then it should not matter the size of the district. Why is this not also being applied to the rural districts?

Assemblyman Yurek:

That is something we are still open to. I would like to reiterate that both Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod and I are still open to speaking with stakeholders and constituents to try to further evolve this bill to try to bring forward the best legislation possible. That is one of the issues that did come up. Should it be equally applicable where we can add one or two members from smaller districts? The challenge is, there could be counties where they do not have municipalities with their own authorities to appoint at certain levels. It was based more on the size of the population and the number of municipalities in these respective counties who might otherwise benefit from contributing to that school board and giving their municipality an opportunity to appoint somebody to speak from their perspective on issues which are important to them. It was kind of scaled in that regard, not with any intention to exclude smaller school districts. We would certainly be open to having those conversations as well.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

To that end, perhaps we could think about having permissive language. I know some of the smaller frontier counties have some issues with finding people, quite frankly. I think my colleague, Assemblywoman Hansen, is nodding her head. We want to be mindful of that as well. That was why they were not included initially, but I would be amenable to putting in some permissive language to include them.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I agree with you on getting more voices in the room. I have long advocated for having nonvoting students and nonvoting educators on these boards. I would like to know if you are open to that, rather than just a general anybody. My concern is if we are asking the city councils or the county commissioners to appoint their friends, then we get some random businessperson or lawyer who might not have any relation to the schools and no idea what is going on in our school districts. I do not see how that adds value, but if we are to specify that we have to have a teacher, an education support professional, or a student, then I could see that value which you are speaking to, especially in regard to student outcomes.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would be willing to continue to work with you on this. My concern initially is that you are putting in "teacher." Am I making the county commission appoint the teacher? Is it a rotating thing, so maybe the county commission does it, then the city does it, and North Las Vegas does it the next time? I would not have a problem giving some examples, but I think

these can be conversations we can have. As always with this legislation, the devil is always in the details. Ideally, we are trying to bring more expertise. The intent of this bill, what we are trying to do is not to have, for example, Bob's Paving president, who has nothing else to do and is retired, so his county commissioner says, "I am going to appoint you. That will be fun." That is not the intent of this bill. The intent of the bill is to bring education leaders in to help move the conversation and improve student outcomes.

Assemblyman Yurek:

I think there is a legitimate concern there because this could become another way for people to appoint their friends, and you specifically said that. I think I would try to point to the fact that there is accountability from the elected officials through their constituency that is going to be reflected by the people they appoint to these boards. They will be accountable to their voters as well. It is the hope there is some accountability when these entities make their appointments; their voters will hold them accountable for those appointments as to whether or not the people they are appointing are making any meaningful contributions to the school board and its decisions.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

We know our city councils and county commissions are not free of dysfunction and are not free of these political games. I would like to know why we believe they will be more accountable to the voters and do a better job of making these maps and making these decisions than the school board trustees who are also accountable to voters. How are they different? One is being held accountable by voters and the other one is not.

Assemblyman Yurek:

I think the intention here is to give that governing body, the county commissioners, the city council members that represent that municipality, they are ideally going to be appointing people who are going to meet the needs or interests that that governing body has an interest in. They see there is a need on the school board, and from the perspective of our city, they will look at that and go, "We need somebody to speak on that board on this issue that is important to us as a community." Again, I will go back to what my colleague said. We are not presenting this like it is a perfect solution that is foolproof and devoid of any potential challenges. What we are trying to do is figure out ways we can identify individuals and have those individuals appointed to the board to elevate the discussion, and to try to identify better solutions to the challenges we know face these school boards. My point is not that they are going to have the perfect appointment every time, but they are not without a check and balance as well with their voters. The idea is that that collective group of individuals might be in a position to represent the needs or the perceived needs of that community and to make their appointments, based on that, accountable to their voters.

Assemblywoman Hardy:

I, too, was on the Interim Education Committee. As you said, this has been addressed multiple times. Having been born and raised in Clark County, I attended Clark County schools, and I have seen over the decades the problems and challenges that have developed and the years we have been dealing with this. As you mentioned, the goal, I think of

everyone, is the student outcomes and achievement and how we can best make progress in that. I appreciate your doing this, and I appreciate all of the work that has gone into this, and the people who are participating in this. This may be just a question to sit on. If progress and improvement is the goal in student outcomes, is that happening if we continue with the status quo? I will speak for CCSD since that is where I represent and where I grew up as well as my daughters. If we continue as we are, how long do we stay in the status quo and expect change?

I know I, and probably many others on the Committee, have received numerous emails. A lot of them were sent before the amendment [\[Exhibit C\]](#) went out. They did not like reducing the number of elected members, et cetera. I think you have addressed this. These appointed members are nonvoting. A lot of these emails ask how they are accountable to the voters. In your answers, you have addressed that. If there is anything else you could say to these people who have been emailing with that concern, maybe you can address that. I see some of these appointees as to who they would be. The budget was mentioned and the size of Clark County. Maybe it would be somebody who has expertise in large budgets. This is not to disparage anybody who is on a school board. All of us who serve in this Legislature, we have certain areas of expertise in our careers, and we bring all of that to this group. That is what I see this bill is. The appointed members are bringing other ideas and other expertise to a group. It is not saying anything negative about them. It is saying they have not dealt in this. Again, it is to help the student outcomes.

Can you address any of the concerns that we have received in emails, just to get them on the record, of what this bill is doing, what these appointed members are doing or not doing, and how they are held accountable? If that is what you intend with the appointed members, maybe they are accountants, lawyers when they need legal guidance, or people that work in education. Is that how you see or hope the appointees would be selected?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

The first question you asked about expecting outcomes to change based on what we are doing, the answer is no. You cannot keep doing the same thing over and over and expect a different outcome. It just does not work.

Education is one of those things—everyone feels like they are a subject matter expert because we all went to school. There is nothing wrong with that. We all have our own experience. We have shared experience with other colleagues who have had similar experiences. When you are dealing with student outcome, it goes so much deeper than that. That is the intent of this bill—to bring in someone who can take a deep dive into the budget and see where those dollars are going. That number is so huge. It is more money than any of us would ever see. This is the budget and what they are dealing with. God love our school board members. I mean it. Anybody who decides to put their name on a ballot and put themselves out there, I have a special place in my heart for those people because it is very thankless 90 percent of the time. I do not mean to take away anything from those folks. I think they think they are doing the right thing. I think sometimes it is a little misguided and

maybe it is misguided because they do not know that they do not know. Once again, the intent of the bill is to bring in those subject matter experts, true subject matter experts, on different areas of education to improve student outcome.

Assemblyman Yurek:

I really appreciate the question and the point that was being made there. The choice to do nothing is a choice to retain and maintain the status quo, which I think—through my limited experience on the campaign trail and limited time in this building—is not something our constituents want. We cannot guarantee this is the be all, end all. There is no one solution to the challenges that we are experiencing in Nevada's education. This is one attempt to try and contribute to a solution. Yes, I do believe that if we chose not to act, we are actually making a choice to not change anything and to maintain the status quo.

To the other question, I will go back to what I alluded to in my opening remarks, that it was largely based on my experience. I will tell you, I have been so impressed with the individuals who are very passionate about this topic for all of the right reasons, with good intentions, and trying to bring solutions to help our students. Everybody has an opinion and thoughts of how that should be. Then, you get elected and now you are in a position to try to offer something. It definitely brings people out. I am not offended by it. I do not question people's motives. I think everybody has a heart to do what is right here and help our students.

When we say making these appointments with individuals with particular areas of expertise, I go back to my experience on the private board I alluded to earlier, and that is, it was no offense to any of the other board members. We just recognized we lacked a certain perspective on that board. We believe these governing bodies—who have a vested interest in educational success in their communities—will be in a position to identify those areas of need, identify individuals who can then make a difference or offer a voice and a perspective on those issues, and contribute to the dialogue. They do not get to vote, but at least they can raise these issues and ideas to elevate the discussion and help the voting board members make the best decisions possible.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Look at what we do in this building. Look at how many people we turn to for additional expertise. When we come up here, we have that ability; people are in the building, and we can talk to them. There are bills we are all voting on that are not in our wheelhouse at all. We do not just close our eyes and press the button. We go to the person who has that information, and that is at our fingertips here. That is the intent of this, to give people that ability to have those subject matter experts at their fingertips, and once again, as my colleague said, elevate that conversation.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

There are obviously two sides, and I appreciate the amendment [\[Exhibit C\]](#), which I believe is trying to find a middle. My experience has been on a state board that was all appointed, and we all had different expertise that worked fine. My question was around your intent and

what you are thinking when it comes to quorum, as well as Nevada Open Meeting Law. We know that if the four are voting, then that would probably be the quorum. What are you all thinking around the appointed members talking beforehand? What are you thinking about that?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Open meeting law is obviously something that needs to be considered. As a member of the board, you can talk one-on-one with someone from here. It is just when it gets to a number, it goes in defiance of the open meeting law. I think quorum would be the same as it currently is, since they are all members. We intend they would be attending meetings. If the appointed members are not attending meetings, that is something we would have to deal with. I do think open meeting law would allow for individual members to speak one-on-one. I am a big fan of open meetings law. It definitely has some challenges at times.

I think daylight is a great sanitizer of the whole process. As you know, that is how I run my meetings. I try to get information out as soon as I have it. I do not think backroom deals are good for democracy. Most of these conversations should be happening on the dais. They should be happening with people seeing them, with people watching, and elevating that conversation.

Assemblyman Koenig:

Quick sidebar on open meeting: it is pretty difficult when you are a county commissioner where there are three of you, and you cannot talk to the other guys, ever, except in the open meeting. The school boards are kind of my thing. I served on a school board for 12 years, and I was part of the Nevada Association of School Boards. In fact, I was even president of that. School boards are near and dear to my heart. Assemblyman Yurek asked me what I thought about this bill before the amendment [\[Exhibit C\]](#), and I gave him three words. I said, I hate it. Now that I have looked at the amendment, I do not hate it as much.

I do have some questions. The first question I have, and you hit on it a little bit, but I want to go more in depth. How do you envision the role of the three or four appointed people? You said they should be at every meeting. Are they supposed to be there for every grievance hearing or for every contract negotiation with every union? Are they truly going to be a part of the board as much as the seven elected members and just do not have a vote? Do you say your accounting person is going to come in on budgets, but if we are talking about expelling a kid for bringing a squirt gun to school, do they need to be there? Are they truly going to be part of the board, or are they going to be advisers? I think that needs to be clarified.

Assemblyman Yurek:

Yes, the intention behind this amendment [\[Exhibit C\]](#) was to give these appointed members full authority and roles as governing board members, trustees, absent the ability to push green or red to make their final vote heard. We limit the potential dilution of representative democracy there. We are making sure these individuals who were appointed by the government entities do have a voice in every other situation and context that the other board

members would have. Of course, it is subject to open meeting laws and all of that. Yes, the intention of this amendment is to have these appointed members be full-fledged trustees minus the authority to vote.

Assemblyman Koenig:

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch said Washoe County is functioning now. When I was first on the school board, Churchill County was about as functional as possible. When I was board president—and I think it was right before Assemblywoman Taylor got on the Washoe County School District board—Washoe County was a train wreck. It goes in cycles. I have not been paying close enough attention lately, but it sounds like Clark County is having a lot of issues. I am looking at this as getting help. Let us bring in some help. They cannot vote, but we are going to strenuously argue against having some people come in and potentially offer help.

My last question is why not the rurals? I was in Churchill, and it was a train wreck. We were a mess. We could have used another adviser to come in and maybe give us another opinion. Maybe add one more person to the rurals for someone to come in and help? You are offering this resource and this help to the big counties, and now all the little counties are suffering. I guess if we are going to make people mad, we might as well make everybody mad. If it is good for the goose, it is good for the gander. If it is important that the big counties have someone come and help them, the little counties need that also. That is my question. Why not consider offering some of the rurals help too?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have no problem including rural and frontier counties. As I mentioned, I thought from what my feedback was, it is sometimes hard enough to find people to run for the actual seat and then to find someone to serve. I think we could put in that language, but then we might have to add some language that it would not count against the quorum if that position was not filled or something. That is the concern that has been stated to me. I appreciate your comments, and I hope not everyone hates it.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

You provide great insight. I am a city boy all the way. I went to school in Clark County, and I teach there. My focus is going to be on Clark County. This is a district that has 325,000 students, 18,000 teachers, and 40,000 staff altogether. I think the budget is about \$3 billion to \$3.5 billion, and it is in one of the fastest growing urban-metro areas in the country. This is really important when we talk about who is making these appointments to this hybrid board we are discussing here.

There is so much talk of connecting education to the economy. If you want to look at economic growth, diversifying the economy over the next decade and beyond, education has to be a foundation of that. I think there is great merit and potential of bringing those factors into the decision making of our school boards. In Clark County, I, myself, have seen so much inaction and so much dysfunction. My students bring this up to me. They are saying they are over there literally cussing at each other, so this is something that has to be

addressed. In order for us to see our students succeed, we need to make sure that our trustees are in a position to be successful, and this is going to require bringing some sort of expertise to the table. I wanted to go ahead and put that on the record.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I have three questions. First, is there anything to stop a board from doing this on their own? I think, as Vice Chair Taylor has mentioned, we have in Washoe County a student who is a nonvoting member. I hope one day we can get a teacher on there as well, in that same area. Is there anything to stop a board from doing this if they wish to do so?

My second question has to do with the training. As was mentioned by my colleague from Clark County, there are some actions, and also from the rural counties, there are some actions of some board members which are creating frustrations. I think this is where this bill is coming from. What is the training that would be required, not only of the appointed, but also the mandatory training of the trustees who are elected to make sure that they are, in fact, embracing the student-centered learning, which we are celebrating this week?

Finally, what would be the process of drawing those lines? When we draw the lines for the trustees that is done by a commissioner, and when we draw the lines for the Legislature that is done by, again, a group of individuals, what would be the process of drawing the lines of those appointments? Would it just be a city council that gets to make a decision? Would it be a county commission? I realize this is in the weeds, but quite frankly, the devil is sometimes in the details.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will correct you. The devil is always in the details. The intent of the bill is that the entire county commission would appoint one of the appointed positions, and then each city within the city boundaries would appoint the others.

As for the training, I think we are going to see a bill that deals directly with school board governance and training. I know it is currently being worked on, but we anticipate that bill will be making it over to our side, which I think is extremely important. An overlying thing I felt, as Chair of the Education Committee, is that we cannot expect people to not know what they do not know. As legislators, think about when we came in and a lot of us probably thought we knew what we were doing. When we went through our training, we realized we had a lot to learn. I think we need to support our trustees and give them every opportunity to succeed. We cannot keep electing folks, not give them the tools they need, and be mad at them for not succeeding. What good is that doing anyone? I do not think this bill will necessarily address the training aspect, but we will see another bill, and it is extremely important to me, and I intend to help shepherd that through.

The last question was, is there anything to stop a board from doing this? I was not aware that Washoe County did that. I would think that typically—maybe this might be a question for the Legal Division—but I would think we would have to give permission to do this. That is typically how the Legislature works. Mr. Killian?

Vice Chair Taylor:

It would be fantastic to have a legal opinion on that.

Asher Killian, Committee Policy Analyst:

Generally, the membership of boards of trustees and the number of trustees who are allowed to serve are defined by law in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) Chapter 386, but NRS 386.350 gives boards of trustees general powers "as may be requisite to attain the ends for which the public schools . . . are established and to promote the welfare of school children" I am not familiar with the Washoe County School District situation in particular, but it might be a reasonable reading of that power—which also allows boards of trustees to appoint people like attorneys and other staff who are necessary for them to carry out their duties—to also allow for pupils or teachers to regularly attend meetings to advise the board in a similar fashion. I think that is a possible reading of that section. I do not know if that was necessarily the intended purpose of that section. If Washoe County School District has been creative in making that reading of that section, it is not prohibited by law, and it is also not required.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

You talked about what the maps look like, and that is also laid out in this. That was an important aspect, that we had those municipalities at the table because as my colleague mentioned, perhaps the City of Henderson might want to appoint someone with a specific area of expertise that is a different area of expertise than the city of North Las Vegas, based on their population.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for that clarification on the maps and who to go to. Also, thank you for the legal language around there because I think that is something that helps tremendously. My last follow-up is, is there anything to stop—or maybe instead, an encouragement between—the school district from working with the cities and counties that the school district is currently part of? For example, is there already a plan that a school district or county might decide that they will have a monthly meeting to go over these items with the leadership of the two items? I realize that neither of you might have that information, but if there is a possibility from the two large school districts, if they do decide to come up to testify, if they could possibly mention if there is a monthly, regularly scheduled meeting to discuss these items. I think that is where part of this frustration is coming from. I might be misstating, but I did not know if you wanted to comment on that one as well.

Vice Chair Taylor:

In terms of the lines in the districts, based upon the amendment [[Exhibit C](#)], the lines for those seven districts that are already drawn in Clark and Washoe Counties would not change. That had to do with those appointees from those counties. I thought that was it, but I wanted to get the clarification.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

That is correct.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Being part of that Interim Education Committee and having been here when we heard the hybrid school board bill in 2021, I had consistent concerns across the board that I was very transparent about and had good engagement. I appreciate that you have done a yeoman's work to really work this. I know you are trying to find a solution. I want to put on the record—and I think I have discussed this a little bit with Assemblyman Yurek—while I think we are trying to find a solution in good faith, the solution is not going to solve personalities. Our disruptions in school board meetings will sometimes come from personalities of elected members or personalities of citizens, and that can be a frustrating thing, but I do not know if that will fix this. I am glad we addressed training because that did come up in the interim. I think that is a component. I was stunned by the minimal amount of training that is required for elected school board members, so that certainly needs to be addressed and increased.

When we talk about this advisory nonvoting, which I love that idea, but can I have examples? I am not saying you are going to have these, so perhaps those in the audience. What are some examples of problems which some professional or somebody with some experience is going to be able to solve? Maybe somebody could address in testimony if you do not have one off the top of your head. I know here, we are a lay Legislature; we are a citizen Legislature. We deal with billions of dollars in state budget and in education, and we rely on our staff. If I am not mistaken, I think school districts have their chief financial officers, they have their attorneys, and they have that support. I need to be convinced a bit stronger what these appointees bring to the district that is not already supplied to them through their school district.

Assemblyman Yurek:

You indicated we have had these conversations. Quite frankly, the proposed amendment comes as a result of a lot of these conversations. I want to reiterate what Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod said earlier, which is what is happening now is not functioning as well as we would like it to function. This is not an attack on those people who are working hard, trying to do the best they can to get better outcomes and achievement results for our students. We know a decision not to at least try something at this point is a decision to choose the status quo, and that is what is motivating this. This is a human business, and anytime humans and their individual personalities are involved, I do not think there is any solution we could offer that is going to solve that problem.

Again, the aim of A.B. 175 is to bring individuals with a needed area of expertise—as it is perceived by the local governing entities, as I have already indicated—who have a vested interest in a good school/student outcome to appoint individuals to the board that may be unique to that jurisdiction. There may be some economic growth potential or opportunities they have which they think might be considered on the board of trustees. It is bringing those people with that specialized area of expertise and interest to have a voice at the table.

Your point is well-taken. There are resources that are available to the existing boards of trustees. The difference between what is existing there now and what our proposed amendment offers is that this allows those individuals a seat at the table. It is not just

a resource that can be sought out and questioned, but it actually allows—in the public meetings and in front of everybody—a voice at the table. We think that is the line of delineation here that makes this a little bit different, but again, keeping in mind and respecting the valid concerns of representative democracy and not allowing that to dilute the otherwise democratic voice.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you for that. Again, I am here being open. I really want to try to find a solution with you as well. It was brought up about personalities. We are dealing with human beings. We need decorum. My own opinion about why we see a breakdown—because I have been involved in school boards clear back to the '80s—is when we talk about a voice at the table, I think the frustration, whether it be from the members on the board or the public at large, is they need to have a voice at the table. This is a suggestion for school boards; do we find a way to bring the public in and validate their voice in more of a collaborative sort of area rather than us against them? We collaborate quite well with our constituency and other members here. Is there a way to bring the public in by way of subcommittees? Maybe they already do that. My kids have graduated and I, unfortunately, have not been as involved as I should. We need to work on giving a voice to that frustration. People need to learn how to voice their opinions better and not take it out on those who have stepped up to the plate to run for office on school boards. I think there is a lot of work in the training and in helping the public feel more engaged. This is just food for thought as I am thinking out loud. Thank you for taking this on and helping us understand it better.

Assemblywoman Torres:

This will be quick because I know there was a conversation earlier about ensuring there would be a diversity of the nonvoting members that would make sense to the needs of the board. In previous sessions when we have conversations about what that commission looks like or who the commission can appoint, it might be helpful now to include a list of individuals who would be possible candidates for this to outline the specificity. I do not know that it is necessary, but I think it might be helpful to get to the intent. I do not think we want the county to appoint a random person. We want the county to appoint somebody who understands big budgets—education, chief financial officers, or whatever that is with those different experiences. Industry, for example, might want somebody who understands business or economic development. I think it might be helpful to include that in there somewhere.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have that in my notes, trying to come up with something from when Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch brought that up. It will not be a completely inclusive list because we cannot, but giving some ideas which would lay out the intent of the bill. It would be very clear. I had made that note, so thank you for reminding me to bring it up.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I have a couple of questions, and then we will go to testimony. These are a couple of questions that I have received. I think you will want to get responses on the record or

consider it as we move forward. There is nothing in the bill that addresses a term. It says they can be reappointed, but it does not say how long they can be reappointed for. Can they be appointed and keep serving, or is there some kind of limitation that you have in mind?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

The intent of the bill would be that it be the same term limits as the school board.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Second, their role would be in alignment with the elected members in everything other than the vote, which is the intention of the bill. One is getting paid, and one is not. Is there any consideration to what that might feel like for that appointed member who is doing the same thing, spending the same time? They are going to want to visit schools and go to activities because they want to be informed, I would imagine, but they are not getting paid.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I know what we get paid, which is like nothing, and I know they get paid even less.

Vice Chair Taylor:

It is pretty close to nothing, so it is not like they are going to be fighting over \$1 million. It is \$9,000 a year.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

It is not our intent to have those members be paid. We can have that discussion, but that is not our intent.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I was not making the recommendation. If they are doing the exact same thing, that could create something.

Assemblyman Yurek:

There is nothing that mandates that an individual accept their appointments. They would be accepting the appointment with the understanding that they are not getting additional compensation for it. As we have already indicated, I do not think anybody is coming to these positions for the pay. The local entities who would make these appointments would identify individuals with a heart for students and a particular area of expertise, who would be willing to come in for nothing and serve the students.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Lastly, because of the additional voices that were mentioned, why not the same recommendation for city councils and county commissions?

Assemblyman Yurek:

That is not something that we considered because we were truly focused on the challenges we are seeing in education and brought this bill forward to address those issues. If there are other issues and troubles that belie our county commissions and city councils, certainly,

I would think they might bring forward some bills to address, legislatively, the challenges they are experiencing. This was limited to school boards. Unfortunately, I do not have anything to add to that.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

That would not be in the purview of this Committee.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Before we go to testimony, we did get some information, and Ms. Drozdoff is going to put that on the record for us regarding population numbers for each of the districts within the Clark County School District, since that was asked about specifically. We are also going to be looking for those numbers for the Washoe County School District as well.

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst:

The total population provided by Clark County School District for District A is approximately 324,000; District B is approximately 319,000; District C is approximately 324,000; District D is approximately 329,000; District E is approximately 319,000; District F is approximately 324,000; and District G is approximately 324,000. This is a total of approximately 2.2 million.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We are going to move to testimony. Is there anyone wishing to testify in support of A.B. 175?

Paul J. Moradkhan, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:

The Vegas Chamber is in support of A.B. 175 as introduced, along with the proposed amendment [[Exhibit C](#)]. This also resolved the work undertaken by Southern Nevada Forum. As many of you know, the Southern Nevada Forum was a collaborative effort that was established by this chamber, the City of Las Vegas, business organizations, community leaders, and concerned citizens. This was part of the process in the interim period to discuss education issues that were important to the residents of southern Nevada. It is a transparent and collaborative approach that we have adopted since 2011 in our community.

In regard to A.B. 175, it is a direct result of collaborative work which has been done by our stakeholders, our community, and the residents of southern Nevada. This is being driven by a desire to see greater accountability by our community on decisions made by local school boards. There needs to be stronger community engagement, commitment, and leadership for our school boards to be successful for the benefit of our students. The reality is the existing governance model has not been effective for many years. It has not been a one-off, but an ongoing situation in our community. It has been rife with internal struggles and a loss of faith by community members and the business community. That is why the Vegas Chamber believes it is appropriate that Clark County, Henderson, North Las Vegas, and Las Vegas have a direct representation to the school board. These cities represent minority populations and the diverse communities that need to have a voice in our local school board.

It is our belief that these reforms need to happen now for the sake of the over 300,000 students enrolled in the Clark County School District. This bill is about student achievement and success. The business community, as you know, are the future employers of these students. Our business community pays significant taxes to fund education, and they are vested stakeholders with their support in our community and local schools.

In regard to the question about expertise, these school board members appointed from our local jurisdictions will bring expertise in financial management, land use, construction, building maintenance, food services, purchasing, leadership development, partnership and collaboration building, and communication. That is why we believe this bill is vital to our community and to move education forward for the sake of our students, not just today, but for future generations.

Elizabeth MacMenamin, Vice President of Government Affairs, Retail Association of Nevada:

For over 20 years, I have been listening to these conversations about education in the state of Nevada. We have had abysmal outcomes going on for a very long time. When Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod said something about the definition of insanity, I thought, She is absolutely right. We keep doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results, but we have not gotten them.

Looking at this bill and reading this, going forward, this is one solution that possibly could bring some expertise and professional experience to the school to help these children, because that is what this is about. This is about educating our children to be prepared for the workforce. Our members at the Retail Association of Nevada are looking forward to an educated workforce in our state. As we grow, we are feeling those pains of what we have not addressed over the previous years. The Retail Association of Nevada supports this measure. We look forward to working with the sponsors on this bill. We thank the Chamber and everyone else involved who has come forward. We hope this is one of the solutions to help our children so they can be successful in the future.

Isaac Hardy, representing Council for a Better Nevada:

We are in support of A.B. 175 as amended.

Nicole Rourke, Director, Government and Public Affairs, City of Henderson:

The City of Henderson supports A.B. 175. Appointing school board members can provide greater accountability to parents and the community. The city council receives numerous constituent concerns regarding our education system with no direct means to address them. By appointing a school board member, municipalities can ensure leaders of the school districts have the experience necessary to guide such a large organization and be responsive to parents and families.

There are many school boards across the country that have authorized some or all members to be appointed. According to Education Commission of the States, these states include Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina,

and Virginia. Several large school districts have appointed or mixed boards including Boston Public Schools, New York City—whose 13-member board is entirely appointed with 8 members selected by the mayor and the remaining 5 seats filled by each borough's president—and New Jersey has also long provided for mayoral appointment of school board members. Additionally, five out of ten school districts with the largest per pupil spending have appointed school board members, according to a 2020 research paper on the topic by University of Nevada, Las Vegas, student Yanelli Llamas.

Our schools and community need strong leadership at the school board level. At no time has this ever been more evident than now. These last few years have presented unprecedented challenges for every organization and working with our regional partners has been essential to providing the leadership and support needed by our community. We have seen the amazing work that can be accomplished in our community through true collaboration, hard work, and mutual respect. Schools are the cornerstones of our communities, and our kids deserve nothing less than professional leaders prepared to take on our greatest challenges.

We look forward to the opportunity to appoint a board member to the CCSD Board of School Trustees who will raise the level of accountability, professionalism, and collaboration, as well as bring the expertise required to make crucial decisions for an organization with a \$3 billion operating budget and a capital program in excess of \$4 billion.

The city supports appointed members with full voting rights. However, if this Committee chooses to adopt the amendment presented by the sponsors, we would like to see language that specifically grants them the same rights and responsibilities as their voting counterparts. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to add items to the agenda, participate in closed door sessions, evaluate the superintendent, and participate in all briefings. Thank you for allowing me to express the City of Henderson's support for this bill, and I assure you our council will take this appointment very seriously and look at the experience necessary to be added to the school board for success in this endeavor.

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

I just want to echo the sentiments from the City of Henderson. We appreciate the bill sponsors for amending this to include the City of North Las Vegas. It is very important to have a conduit to the school board in real time and have a seat at the table. This is especially true for our communities of color, which have suffered through a lot, especially in the last few years coming out of COVID-19 where we see a lot of disparities in education. Thank you so much for your time, and we are glad to support A.B. 175.

John Vellardita, Executive Director, Clark County Education Association:

I just want to share a few comments. First and foremost, I think this is intended to improve the governance model of school districts. I am going to speak in relation to the Clark County School District because I am very familiar with it. This is a compromise for those who have issues with taking away the right of the community to vote for their elected school board trustees. This appointment process is essentially doing two things by involving the local municipalities. They now have skin in the game in terms of our education delivery system.

This is what I would ask the Committee to consider. Our education delivery system is an integral part of the economy. If we are not producing students to be the workforce for tomorrow, we are never going to improve that economy. Clark County, the Cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Henderson are very much preoccupied and proactive in trying to develop their economies. They all recognize the need to have a robust workforce so they can attract new industries. In that context, I think they are going to be very much vested in this process to bring support and assistance to the school board elected trustees. After all, this is about making outcomes successful. In this case, it is student outcomes, and student outcomes that are successful improve workforce development.

Briefly, I think this is long overdue. In 2015, there was a bill in the Legislature to try to improve student outcomes by reorganizing the school district and having a decentralized model where the hub of delivery was a school. School trustees blocked it and threatened to go to court. In 2017, Assembly Bill 469 of the 79th Session had to be adopted by the Legislature to try to improve the delivery system. In 2019, then-Speaker Jason Frierson worked with us on Assembly Bill 309 of the 80th Session to find local revenue to fund pre-K activity because pre-K is so foundational for kids' education. There was a meeting with the county commission and the school board trustees, but nothing was worked out. The school board trustees balked at the idea of having additional funding to improve student outcomes around pre-K. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Henderson, North Las Vegas, the county in particular, as well as Henderson all stepped up to try to provide learning opportunities during the moment when it was needed.

I support A.B. 175 with the amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] as proposed, as well as some of the critical comments that people made to improve it.

[A letter in support, [Exhibit D](#), was submitted but not mentioned and will become part of the record.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

If you have more comments, you can submit them to the staff there, and we can make sure we get them to the Committee. Is there anyone else wishing to testify in support? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 175?

Lynn Chapman, Treasurer, Independent American Party of Nevada:

We oppose A.B. 175. I am from Washoe County, and our school boards in Washoe County and Clark County are very important to the citizens. It is the government that is closest to the people. The school board controls the schools' policies and budgets and oversees the academic, legal, and financial health of the school district. They hire and evaluate the district superintendents, resolve conflicts, and allocate funds. They represent the public interest and serve the diverse values and needs of their community. The people need to see high academic standards, transparency, and accountability from our school board. We the people want what is best for our children and our families. Making the decisions for our community is important to us, and using our rights as citizens to be able to vote for people to work in our favor is of utmost importance to us.

The amendment that was proposed includes the intent which states the elected positions would still be elected, but three positions in Washoe County and four in Clark County would be nonelected positions, advisory only, and not voting. I believe we already have attorneys who are present for legal advice. If there is other expertise and professional experience needed, I know the expertise and professional experience can be obtained only when needed. Why would you not have the professional sit with the parents, who are experts and professionals as well, and give information that is needed at that time? We appreciate the amendment, which we feel is a significant improvement over the original bill, but we feel the additional appointees are not needed on the board.

Alan Munson, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada:

I am really heartbroken. I am opposing the bill, but the heart brokenness is that every one of us here is concerned about solving a very serious problem, and I support a hundred percent doing that. I know each one of you is concerned with that. Some of my concerns are, as a previous speaker said, the needed expertise can be achieved, invited, or otherwise facilitated to deal with the problem. It was mentioned that in Washoe County they do have some volunteers or people who can come and speak. There are a lot of questions I have. What is the expertise? What is the problem we need to solve by bringing in people? The budget has been mentioned. Do we not have certified public accountants or people in the school districts dealing with the finances? We know there are some issues.

In my first career, I was a social worker, and I have a master's degree in social work, and that was human problems and trying to solve them. I have learned today that the biggest problem we are dealing with is student achievement. As I was hearing the speakers, I was thinking, to achieve something, we need discipline. As a retired person, I try to learn a new gift. I play music, and I have to practice every day and be disciplined. That is a big issue in our school system, and if we have rules and structures, I think that has fallen down a little bit in our school systems. I hear teachers are assaulted and not respected. I think we have got to bring that back, and that does not need giant expertise. That is bringing back discipline in our school system.

Ron Miranda, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada:

I oppose this bill. Assembly Bill 175 is an affront to voters who elected our school board trustees. The attempt to appoint additional members, whether they are permitted to vote or not, shows a blatant distrust of the competency of our elected school board trustees and voting public of Nevada. Adding insult is the compensation of proposed unelected consultants, and no one works for free. I do not believe that one. They are paid by the hard-earned taxes of Nevada voters, federal or local, paid out in compensation and benefits. Why would this additional tax money needlessly be forced onto the hardworking taxpayer? This is taxation without representation.

If the bill's intent is to get a consultant, if you are looking at Clark County and its \$3.2 billion budget, maybe you need a consultant there. We passed around Albert Einstein's doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome is the definition of insanity. When you look at corporate America and how we have pay for performance and efficiency,

Lee Iacocca with Chrysler back in the '70s and corporate reworks. Maybe they do need a consultant to cut out the fat. I feel a little bit upset when they talk about teachers and all the staff who are doing the hard work, but obviously, we might have a problem at the upper levels. Maybe that is what we need to do. We need to look at that and quit throwing money at problems. That is all I have to say.

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

I am going to be brief in these comments. The Nevada State Education Association appreciates the conceptual amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] to preserve school boards as democratically elected bodies. We seek a further amendment [[Exhibit E](#)] to include educator voice on school boards by lifting the prohibition on service by active educators from the district and by requiring at least one appointed, nonvoting member to be an active educator. We have consistently advocated for the inclusion of educator voice in the decisions that impact us. Preventing active educators from participating on their school boards takes away one of the most important and knowledgeable stakeholder voices from these deliberative bodies. The Nevada State Education Association believes incorporating educator voice onto school boards would go a long way to increase the professionalism, productivity, and standing of our county school boards.

Laurel Crossman, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:

I am a school board member in Carson City. I have been on the board for the last ten years. This is my eleventh year. I am not speaking on behalf of my district but as an individual. I appreciate the effort to improve student outcomes in the state. That is something that we have all been working for. I also appreciate the preservation of the elected members of the board because the elected members are accountable to their communities.

This amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] to include appointed advisers is based on the presumption that student achievement and outcomes will improve if we have these appointed advisers. Is there any data to support that? What evidence is there that this will actually improve outcomes? There could be a hindrance by adding additional advisers with no voting.

I understand we want more representation on school boards. We want everyone to have their voice. My concern with having these appointed representatives be from the other government entities is that there is more likely to be partisan appointments. School boards function as nonpartisan entities. In ten years, I have rarely known the political affiliation of my fellow board members because we make decisions based on what is best for students, which is not a party-specific matter. In the last couple of years, I have seen extreme partisan politics entering into school boards. I would hope we can avoid that in the future.

The final thing is, I am concerned about what accountability nonvoting advisers would have to the board. School districts do have advisers. They have financial advisers. We have presentations on everything, and we can ask questions. There is quite a bit of information that goes into the decisions. School board members I have met across the state in the last ten years have come from a wide variety. We have engineers, we have lawyers, we have

teachers, we have principals, and we have other community members. They are committed to improving outcomes for students. If there is any documentation that student achievement will actually benefit from these advisers, I hope you can supply that.

Marie Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am opposed to A.B. 175. My only child is grown, so why does this bill interest me? One reason is that A.B. 175 does not offer a clear explanation for the proposed change, and it is a significant change. This to me is a great concern. It is somewhat vague. It sounds like they are asking for consultant expertise, but specifically in what areas? If appointed with the inability to vote, they are kind of tying their hands anyway. If an area of expertise is needed and they want board members with this expertise, why not seek out such persons and suggest they run and get voted in? That seems to be very simple.

Each seat of every school board trustee in Nevada should continue to be decided by election. With the election process, the citizens of each district are offered an opportunity to get to know the candidates and choose who they want to represent the best interests of the school, staff, and children. Our future parents, doctors, educators, civic leaders, scientists, public servants, artists, athletes, and business owners are the school students of today. They are our future adults, and they will have an impact on our society in a few more years. Our public schools are directly connected to Nevada's future.

During this past election, I had coworkers and friends with school-age children comment on how unconcerned they were with who the school board candidates were because their own children are either homeschooled or in private schools. This is wrong thinking. This is where we need the change: with our voters. Whether their kids attend public schools or not, their future still depends on the kids who are in public schools. I think it is important that several of our newer school board members here in Washoe County have children in the public school system. That tells me their interest in what is best for our schools is a personal commitment.

We must have a voice. Do not allow this bill to take away our choice of representation for school board members. What next, appointment by outside offices for city council members? Where would that stop? Our thirty-second president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, said, "Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting." Do not allow A.B. 175 to prove former President Roosevelt wrong. Allow all trustee seats to continue to be an elected position. Talking of the status quo, let us change it with the voice of the voters. This is what we did with the Washoe County election.

Dylan Shaver, representing Washoe County School District:

I do have a little bit of housekeeping to take care of at the front. You asked for data on the district itself. The budget comes in at about \$1.1 billion worth of total expenditure on a student population just shy of 62,000. There are 7 trustees and 300,317 voters in

Washoe County right now. Those trustees would each represent districts of about 60,000 in size because there are two districts that are at large and represented by larger segments of the city. Those would, of course, have larger representation. You asked for data, and here I am.

I had never met Trustee Crossman before today, and actually still have not met her. She was sitting two seats away from me for the first time. What was amazingly impressive about her though, was that she took my notes without looking at them and then said them to you. But for the fact that I get paid by the word, I would say, ditto.

Nevertheless, there are two things I really wanted to bring up. One, there was a lot of discussion about accountability today about municipalities having skin in the game. I am not sure how adding appointed nonvoting members on behalf of a municipal, voluntarily organized corporation creates more accountability. If this bill were to expand the number of seats—so the districts would be smaller or something like that—I can see how you get there, but the accountability in place would be to the voting majority of a school board or county commission. I can tell you, and some of you have been here long enough to remember, I had a major hand in running one of the large cities of this state for a short period of time. I do not think we do ourselves any service by grossly overestimating the amount of thought that goes into those appointments.

The other piece Trustee Crossman brought up is, these are nonpartisan boards. Your county commissions in this state are not. They are partisan entities. If we look at Washoe County in 2022, we could say sometimes they are fiercely partisan entities. However, if you look at Clark County, that county commission is dominated, primarily, by my understanding, by one political party. Giving them an appointment adds the din of partisan politics to a place where, heretofore, it has not belonged. That is no disrespect. You are elected on a partisan level. I vote on a partisan basis much of the time, but when we sit down and have meetings at the school board, I think you all said it best when you said it is about the kids. I know it is dicey for a school district to weigh in on the manner in which we are governed. Ultimately, this is your policy decision. Nevertheless, we do have real concerns with this bill. We look forward to working with the sponsor and cosponsor on hopefully sorting through those and coming back here with something a little more helpful.

Evelyn Garcia Morales, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:

I am here in opposition of A.B. 175 and its amendment [[Exhibit C](#)]. Three years ago, I filed to become a school board trustee. At that time, I remember looking at the state of education with a special focus on student outcomes and wondering what I could do to improve our students' outcomes. I asked myself back then, "Why not me?" I saw an opportunity to make a change that could move a district in a positive direction, so I took that responsibility to heart, and I have over the last two years, during which I have had the privilege to serve on the school board. This position has humbled me in many different ways. I am so grateful to the people who have elected me to serve in that capacity. I know the challenges the Clark County School District experiences are universal across our entire state.

The reason I am here today to talk about this in opposition is for three reasons, with the support of the Nevada Association of School Boards. We talk about the importance of student outcomes. It is our number one priority. To some degree at some point, as a member of the Committee mentioned, personalities are challenges sometimes in any elected body. When it comes to focusing on student outcomes, the priority for school boards is to focus on board governance so we are able to move personalities aside. It can cause a real disruption if we are not focused on student outcomes.

The other piece I think is important to mention that has not been mentioned already is, at this time, we have not seen any effective local-government examples of this model. This model is only demonstrated for state regulatory agencies, such as the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education is not similar to the school board. They do not oversee schools, collective bargaining agreements, or multimillion dollar budgets. For these reasons, we have to continue to trust our voters and the democratic process to elect their local representatives on school boards. Any effort to dilute an elected body with an appointed member or a consultant distances voters and their representatives. I still wonder what else I can do to support student outcomes to address the real pain that exists in our community and in our education system at the state level. For me, it is focusing on student outcomes through strong board governance.

Lorena Cardenas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I oppose A.B. 175. What a way to further cut parents out of the equation. I think we can all agree that any action our legislators take on education should be solely for the purpose of improving education and for improved outcomes. How does this bill do that? By robbing parents of their voice? School board members were not meant to be experienced with degrees and certificates. They were meant to be seats filled by a person chosen by the taxpayers, who are funding them, to represent them in their child's education.

We are getting numerous messages in our group from parents who are utterly disgusted by this violation of their democracy. Shame on Assemblymen Yurek and Bilbray-Axelrod for sponsoring this. This bill is a slap in the face to taxpaying citizens. We do not send you to our capital so you can come up with ideas to silence us. To Trustee Evelyn Garcia Morales, I know we do not always see eye-to-eye, but thank you for being there. I really wish we had more trustees who are concerned in their hearts to see our children do better in education. It says a lot that she is there in person. I encourage all our representatives to vote no on this bill because it really is an attempt to silence us even further.

Cyrus Hojjaty, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

We would like to thank the sponsor for bringing this very important issue. I understand we need restructuring, and in some ways this does help. I am in opposition simply because this does not really solve the problem. I do not believe in people being appointed by counties or cities. I believe the real solution is, we have to add more trustees because there is one trustee for every approximately 300,000 people. That is what really needs to be done. This is a very local issue.

I also wanted to point out that the real issue is the Clark County Commission, which I have concerns about. To be honest with you, the real solution is to consider not only adding more county commissioners, maybe even consider breaking up Clark County, which may likely result in the school district being broken up. For an example, I think we can have Henderson be its own independent city. When you have an independent city like Carson City, what happens is they can handle their school matters a lot more effectively. That is the way I see how it should be done.

Honestly, I think the real issue when it comes to local matters is we have too much central control. We have a monopoly of the Clark County Commission. This is a problem because in this massive population growth we have experienced in the last several decades, we failed to update our boundaries and our structure. While this is a step forward, this does not solve the heart of the problem. Either change some parts of the bill, or do not support this at all.

Alida Benson, Executive Director, Nevada Republican Party:

I am testifying in opposition to A.B. 175 on behalf of the Nevada Republican Party. As parents have woken up to the disaster that comprises public education in Nevada—where only 4 percent of children test proficient in mathematics—they have become more involved in school boards to drive accountability and transparency for our school districts. Sadly, this bill is an attack on those Nevada parents fighting for better schools for their children by attempting to remove accountability from our school boards by stuffing them with teacher union-friendly appointees who are hostile to commonsense reforms.

This bill is also opposed to the values espoused by the platform of the Republican Party, which states our public education system needs substantial improvement. We support local control of public education with the money following the child, giving parents and guardians more options in school choice. Parents and guardians should be able to choose between public, charter, private school, or homeschooling as the best option for their children.

What is the goal of this bill: less accountability, less responsiveness to voters and constituents? This would remove stakeholders from the education system who at least have some incentive to care, as they have an election, and replace them with unaccountable appointees representing interests that do not advocate in the best interests of families and children.

We are also opposed to Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod's amendment [[Exhibit C](#)]. We need less government appointees at every level. We need parents' voices advocating for their children to be amplified; and we need to encourage them to run for the school board and be part of the process of improving student outcomes and cutting bloated salaries like in Clark County School District and returning that money to educators. On behalf of all Republicans in the great state of Nevada, we oppose A.B. 175.

[Letters in opposition, [Exhibit F](#), [Exhibit G](#), [Exhibit H](#), and [Exhibit I](#), were submitted but not mentioned and will become part of the record.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

Is there anyone else wishing to testify in opposition? [There was no one.] We will now turn to neutral testimony on A.B. 175.

Sheila Moulton, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am speaking purely for myself. I am affiliated with groups that work with school boards. I serve on the State Public Charter School Authority. I had some observations as I sat in on this meeting. I have watched many meetings having to do with this topic, and I appreciate the discussion. First of all, let me mention that for 12 years, I served as a CCSD trustee from the years 1998 to 2010. I do have some experience in this. Several of you on the Committee do know me and have worked with me.

In the Clark County School District currently, the trustees have access to an audit committee made up of community members, a bond oversight committee, a zoning committee, a sex education committee, and maybe many others.

My second point is, as I have worked with charter schools, it was interesting that when the Public Charter School Authority came forward in around the year 2010, as boards were being made up there, it was prescribed to them by statute that there would be someone from the board who had legal experience, finance experience, human resources experience, education, and a parent. I think it is great they have that diversity.

A third point I would like to make is, I think it would be very hard to have someone as an adviser, and give their all as a trustee does, without any compensation. I will tell you why. When I served, it was always 20 to 40 hours a week. Back then, we did not even get the \$9,000 a year.

The fourth point I make, and I thought it was brought forward by your Committee member, is a lot of the challenges are personality-related. I was excited to see more training for them for professionalism. One thought I have is that boards would have the opportunity to censor or deal with rogue board members. This concludes my testimony.

Chris Giunchigliani, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am calling in neutral because I am still trying to figure out what the bill, whether it is hybrid, appointed, or advisory, will do to affect student outcomes. I think Ms. Moulton, and I have known her for many years, summed it up to some extent. We have all sorts of boards and commissions. Over the years, even since Ms. Moulton served, the policies have changed from a policy of governance to what they call "balanced." What is taken away is the voice of the trustees to actually weigh in on everything and, therefore, they are the ones blamed. We have to look at the personalities. Some superintendents are great, but some have a leadership style that pits people against each other. Unfortunately, that has happened in Clark County. This is not going to fix the problem. We need to make sure we identify what the problem is.

In the long run they are underpaid; they should be paid a salary—if you have outside employment, there are different models out there—anywhere from \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year, depending on the size of the district.

You could do a hybrid model and put a retired teacher, retired principal, and someone appointed by the chamber of commerce onto it. We should have a voice of a student. There are other ways and models to look at this, but I do not want to assume all trustees do not care. They do very strongly. This is one of the most thankless jobs out there. Simply putting a bunch of county commission or city council appointees on, I do not believe will benefit and do what you are trying to accomplish.

There are ways to look at training, although the trustees in state statute are the only ones still as an elected body that even have required training, and I believe it is six hours within their first year of serving. It is not just about training. Training can be a cover-up for what is going on. We have to find a way to make sure parent voices, student voices, and others are listened to in the districts they come from. Otherwise, you are not going to fix anything if you simply go into this model. I would be happy to work with you on some hybrid ideas if that is the direction you want to go in. That is not necessarily my preference. I do think there are ways to accomplish it where we do not lose the voice of the people.

Vice Chair Taylor:

That sounded a little more like opposition than neutral, so if it is appropriate, I think we should put it in that category.

Anna Binder, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:

I know I am definitely not in support of this. We defeated this measure in the last legislative session for very good reason. I want to express that I have spent countless hours the last couple of years as a very invested parent in trying to communicate and trying to fix things amongst other community members. Our biggest issue is that balanced governance. I can very easily go back and map, from 2019 forward, how the balanced governance has taken away all of the oversight of the trustees.

I am also an Audit Advisory Committee member for Clark County School District, as well as being on the Attendance Zone Advisory Commission. Those committees are district-run; they are not trustee-run. What good do they really do if central office and superintendent are running them, which is not what it is supposed to be? I have taken effort on that. I testified more yesterday. I spent over nine hours today compiling an email I forwarded to you, Madame Chair, which includes financial and all kinds of other things that central office does, and how the current board of trustees allows for these things to happen.

Right now, I want to vomit, and I am about to have a breakdown. It is not just about personality differences or who is sitting on that board; it is central office, it is the superintendent, and it is everyone who works in the offices of Clark County School District who allows a perpetuation of generational problems. We always have an opportunity to be bold and do what is right. Instead, we keep talking about it. We need to do what needs to be

done. If that winds up being an appointed board in some way, shape, or form, then great. I am an invested parent who is willing to run with no pay, and I will invest my whole life in it to make it better. I cannot say the same about other trustees who currently sit.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Is there anyone else wishing to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] We are going to invite Assemblymen Bilbray-Axelrod and Yurek back to the table for any closing comments or remarks you would like to share.

Assemblyman Yurek:

We are truly grateful for everybody who took the time to come in and speak on this important issue today. I want to reiterate; I think everybody who is opining on this has come with a heart to help our students. I was talking with Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, and we look forward to continuing discussions and working with all of our stakeholders to find solutions that will improve student outcomes.

One comment I heard today made me want to reiterate that this bill is not about disruption. It is about discussion. It is what I said earlier. I firmly believe democracy best flourishes when there are more voices that can be heard. We believe that A.B. 175, as amended, is a solution that addresses the legitimate concerns related to our school boards. While not altering the landscape of a conventional school board or inhibiting the democratic process that is essential to representation, it does add another layer of insight, expertise, and experience we believe can contribute to the issues that our school boards must address.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Everything my colleague said. I just want to remind you that this bill is about giving school board members resources and expertise to help them do their job. I know it has come up in testimony that there are already chief financial officers (CFOs) and lawyers. Remember, those CFOs and lawyers work for the district.

Another thing that came up was that this bill dilutes the votes of elected members. Only elected members are voting. Once again, the intent of this bill is to give members the resources and expertise to help them do their jobs better. Someone came up in opposition and said the cities or the counties will not take their appointments seriously. I have a big problem with that. I think they will take those appointments very seriously because these are our kids. I am very proud of this legislation, this bipartisan legislation. As a mom, as a legislator, and as the Chair of the Education Committee, we cannot keep doing what we are doing. I urge you to support A.B. 175.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will now close the hearing on A.B. 175. I am now going to turn the gavel back over to Chair Bilbray-Axelrod. [Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Our last order of business is public comment. Is there anyone wishing to give public comment? [Public comment was heard.]

Our next meeting will be back in our normal room on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. That concludes our meeting for the day, and this meeting is adjourned [at 4:04 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Funmi Sheddy
Recording Secretary

Julie Axelson
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 proposed amendment to [Assembly Bill 175](#), submitted by Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter signed by Sylvia Lazos, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 175](#).

[Exhibit E](#) is a proposed amendment to [Assembly Bill 175](#), submitted by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association.

[Exhibit F](#) is written testimony submitted by Bruce Parks, Chair, Washoe County Republican Party, in opposition to [Assembly Bill 175](#).

[Exhibit G](#) is a letter dated March 8, 2023, submitted by Janine Hansen, State President, Nevada Families for Freedom, in opposition to [Assembly Bill 175](#).

[Exhibit H](#) is letters from members of the Washoe County School Board, in opposition to [Assembly Bill 175](#).

[Exhibit I](#) is a packet of letters in opposition to [Assembly Bill 175](#).