

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

**Eighty-Second Session  
March 21, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:34 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at [www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

None

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

Minutes ID: 552



**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Katie Broughton, Legislative Liaison, Nevada Department of Education  
Arash Ghafoori, Chief Executive Officer, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth  
Theresa Butler, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada  
Dale A.R. Erquiaga, Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education  
John Sande, representing Las Vegas Sands  
Omar Saucedo, Director, External Affairs, AT&T Nevada  
Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., State President, Nevada Faculty Alliance  
Michael Flores, Vice President, Government and Community Engagement,  
University of Nevada, Reno  
Jonathan Norman, Director, Statewide Advocacy, Outreach and Policy, Nevada  
Coalition of Legal Service Providers  
Constance J. Brooks, Interim Vice President, Office of Government and Community  
Engagement, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Trevor Macaluso, Chief Executive Officer, Eddy House  
Ana Munoz, Director, Community Impact and Giving, Caesar's Entertainment  
Gia Moore, Director, College and Career Readiness and School Choice, Clark County  
School District  
Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education  
Amber Stidham, Chief Strategy Officer, Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance  
Jesse Cruz, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Julian High, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Southern Nevada  
Susie Martinez, Executive Secretary Treasurer, Nevada AFL-CIO  
Danny Thompson, representing Southern Nevada Building Trades Unions  
Nick Schneider, Government Affairs Analyst, Vegas Chamber  
Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada  
Haddee Martinez, Private Citizen  
Angelica Villarta, Private Citizen  
Michelle Valentine, President, Choice Business Group, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Melvin Valentine, Jr., Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Jack Giese, Government Affairs Administrator, Regional Transportation  
Commission of Southern Nevada  
Ricky Gourrier, representing Academica Nevada  
A.J. Delap, representing Opportunity 180  
Cheryl Brewster, Senior Executive Dean, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Roseman  
University College of Medicine  
Lauren Bui Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Irene Bustamante Adams, Deputy Director and Chief Strategy Officer, Work Force  
Connections  
Lisa Levine, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation  
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents  
Ayana Hernandez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.]

We are going to start with the work session. The first bill on work session will be Assembly Bill 164.

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

**Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst:**

As nonpartisan staff, I cannot advocate for or against any measure.

Assembly Bill 164 was heard on March 7, 2023. The bill requires the Division of Outdoor Recreation of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to establish an Outdoor Education Advisory Working Group for the 2023-2024 Interim to study approaches to incorporate outdoor recreation into public education curriculum. The bill outlines the membership of the Working Group, its duties, and certain requirements of the Division related to the Working Group [[Exhibit C](#)].

One amendment was proposed for this measure [page 2, [Exhibit C](#)]. Assemblyman Yeager submitted an amendment revising the bill to provide the Working Group with one bill draft request. The amendment also expands the Working Group membership by adding one superintendent, to be appointed by the Nevada Association of School Superintendents, and one parent of a student or students in the public school system, to be appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly. Furthermore, the amendment allows for the Division and Department to accept gifts or grants to carry out the mission of the Working Group, and it provides that any state or local government employee is excused from their daily duties to attend the Working Group meetings.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Are there any questions from the members regarding the bill or the amendment? [There were none.] I will take a motion to amend and do pass Assembly Bill 164.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND  
DO PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 164.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TORRES SECONDED THE MOTION.

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

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYWOMAN HARDY WAS ABSENT  
FOR THE VOTE.)

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblywoman Taylor. The next bill on work session is Assembly Bill 54.

**Assembly Bill 54: Makes various changes relating to education. (BDR 34-283)**

**Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst:**

Assembly Bill 54 was heard on February 14, 2023. The bill makes certain changes to reporting requirements concerning information on pupils eligible for free or reduced-price meals. It authorizes hospitals and other facilities that provide certain educational services to a child to request reimbursement from the school district or charter school in which the child is enrolled. It also revises the method of calculating the reimbursement amount. The bill also makes various changes to pupil enrollment and attendance, including: (1) making alterations to the evidence needed to excuse a child from attending school; (2) adopting a chronic absenteeism policy; (3) revising provisions for approving a pupil to be absent; and (4) revising provisions for a pupil to be declared habitually truant, among other changes [[Exhibit D](#)].

Four amendments were proposed for this measure that are captured in the work session document [pages 2 through 5, [Exhibit D](#)]. A fifth amendment was also proposed.

1. Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) submitted an amendment revising section 2 of the bill to eliminate the requirement to collect data around students who receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch. The amendment specifies that NDE will continue to collect data around students who are eligible for this program, which is federally required.
2. Furthermore, NDE submitted an amendment revising section 20 to add that certain requests for a pupil to be absent may be made during or three days following the requested absence, in addition to the three days immediately preceding the absence.
3. Steven Cohen proposed an amendment revising section 13 of the bill to allow the full-day attendance requirement to be carved out for the students receiving external educational therapies; and
4. Assemblywoman Torres submitted an amendment revising section 14 of the bill to remove the language that specifies certain care professionals who must provide the written evidence used to excuse a child from enrollment or attendance.

To add, NDE agrees with the fourth amendment above and would like to propose a fifth amendment removing section 14 of the bill as a whole.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

I would like to invite NDE to confirm the amendment.

**Katie Broughton, Legislative Liaison, Nevada Department of Education:**

After consulting with legal counsel, the Department of Education does confirm we would like to remove section 14 from A.B. 54 to maintain the current language and requirements for excusing student attendance and eliminate language that would excuse a student from enrolling in school.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Are there any questions from the members?

**Assemblywoman Torres:**

This will probably clarify what the motion would be. We probably want to accept amendments 1 and 2.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We want to accept amendments 1, 2, 3, and 5.

**Assemblywoman Torres:**

Is NDE okay with amendment 3? I do not remember that being referred to in the presentation.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

They are. Are there any other questions? [There were none.] I will take a motion to amend and do pass Assembly Bill 54.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TORRES MADE A MOTION TO AMEND AND DO  
PASS ASSEMBLY BILL 54 WITH AMENDMENTS 1, 2, 3, AND 5.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON SECONDED THE MOTION.

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

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblyman Koenig. The last bill on work session is Assembly Bill 212.

**Assembly Bill 212: Establishes provisions governing student transcripts. (BDR 34-523)**

**Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst:**

Assembly Bill 212 was heard on March 14, 2023. The bill requires the Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education, to establish certain policies and procedures regarding transcripts. These include enabling current and former students, including those who owe debts, to access an unofficial transcript and obtain and have transmitted an official transcript.

Furthermore, the bill prohibits an institution from charging a higher fee to a student who owes a debt than a student who does not for these actions. Finally, the bill defines key terms [[Exhibit E](#)]. No amendments were proposed for this measure.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Are there any questions from members? [There were none.] I will take a motion to do pass Assembly Bill 212.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS  
ASSEMBLY BILL 212.

ASSEMBLYMAN D'SILVA SECONDED THE MOTION.

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

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblyman D'Silva. I will close the work session. We do have one Committee bill draft request (BDR) introduction, BDR 34-704. This measure is sponsored by the Assembly Committee on Education.

**BDR 34-704**—Revises provisions relating to higher education. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 372](#).)

Please recall that a vote in favor of a BDR does not imply a commitment to support the measure later. All the action does is allow the BDR to become a bill and enter the legislative hearing process. It does not imply commitment to support final passage. I will entertain a motion to introduce BDR 34-704.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON MADE A MOTION TO INTRODUCE  
BDR 34-704.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAYLOR SECONDED THE MOTION.

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

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will now open the hearing for Assembly Bill 217. To present this measure, we have Assemblyman Watts, who is joined by a representative of Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth.

**Assembly Bill 217: Revises provisions governing higher education. (BDR 34-464)**

**Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15:**

It is my pleasure to present Assembly Bill 217 for your consideration today. It is my sincere hope all the members of this Committee will join me in being part of the movement to end youth homelessness in this state.

This is an issue and an organization that is particularly important to me. Work to prevent homelessness and youth homelessness in particular was a primary cause of the late Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, who was a close personal friend and mentor of mine. It was through some of our volunteer work in the community that I first got connected with the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY) and all of the incredible work they do. It has been an honor of mine to try to continue Assemblyman Thompson's legacy, build upon it, and strengthen it in regard to some of the policies he brought forward. He truly did bring forward some groundbreaking and trailblazing policies to expand access to critical documents to young people who have experienced homelessness, as well as to expand educational opportunities. In fact, what this bill is seeking to do is finish a legacy that started with him.

The whole idea of this bill is to make sure we are making pathways out of homelessness and creating pathways to prosperity, particularly for young people in our communities who often end up homeless by no fault of their own. Homelessness is an issue that our communities all struggle with. One of the best ways we can reduce adult homelessness and prevent interactions with the criminal justice system is to make sure there are economic opportunities and educational opportunities for young people who end up in these situations. That is what this bill, at a high level, seeks to do. We are looking to take some existing tuition waiver programs that were created, as well as a liaison that was created in 2019 by legislation brought by Assemblyman Thompson. At its core, the substance of this bill changes those from being discretionary programs to being required programs in order to get them implemented in Nevada.

I am going to turn it over to my copresenters who will give additional background about why this policy is important, including some personal perspectives on its need. I will then briefly walk you through the contents of the bill and take any questions the members may have.

**Arash Ghafoori, Chief Executive Officer, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth:**

Our state has one of the worst youth homelessness issues in the entire country. Today, I am here to specifically advocate for the urgent need to improve access to higher education for young people experiencing homelessness in our great state.

Post-secondary education is increasingly necessary to move out of poverty and homelessness. According to Georgetown University, bachelor's degree holders earn 31 percent more than those with associate degrees, and 84 percent more than those with just a high school diploma.

This earnings potential is especially critical for young people experiencing homelessness. According to Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, increasing young people's access to education and supporting their educational success is the best chance we have for young people to exit homelessness for good. This impacts not only individual young people, but our entire community.

According to a 2018 University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) study, from 2016 through 2018, the southern Nevada community lost between \$70 million and \$170 million due to homeless youth's lower incomes and lower rates of participation in the workforce. This same study found a huge disparity that illustrates the dire need for A.B. 217. Homeless youth in southern Nevada have significantly lower rates of participation in higher education compared to their 19- to 24-year-old peers. Only 6 percent to 8 percent of homeless youth participate compared to over 50 percent of all of our youth, and around 40 percent of even youth in poverty. Therefore, strengthening access to higher education for young people experiencing homelessness is the key to solving this issue, as higher education is the clearest pathway for higher earning potential for those young people and for creating a positive economic impact for our entire state.

It is time for equity when it comes to higher education for young people experiencing homelessness. In 2018, the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) created the Fostering Success Initiative, which waived tuition and fees for youth who had been in the foster care system, along with establishing a foster youth liaison to help these youth navigate higher education.

Foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth are overlapping populations experiencing many of the same challenges and barriers. In fact, roughly one-third of youth experiencing homelessness nationwide have been in the foster care system. For both populations, lack of family support coupled with a history of neglect, abuse, trauma, mobility, and deep poverty create roadblocks to their path to and through post-secondary education. In 2019, as Assemblyman Watts mentioned, this great body, the Nevada Legislature, was also concerned about homeless youth's access to higher education and passed Assembly Bill 461 of the 80th Session to allow and encourage NSHE to create a similar waiver liaison for young people who have experienced homelessness. However, there has been no action taken as of today. That is why we are here today; because it is time to act. Our state's young people experiencing homelessness cannot afford to wait any longer. According to a 2021 report from NSHE, "The NSHE Foster Youth Fee waiver changed the landscape of post-secondary education opportunities for current and prospective NSHE students who have experienced foster care. Without it, many students convey that they would not have been in a position to pursue a college degree at all." It is time to extend this waiver to the overlapping population of young people experiencing homelessness, and equally the vulnerable population who already receive fewer benefits from the state. Homeless youth deserve this incredible pathway to accomplishing their dreams.



Through no fault of their own, young people experiencing homelessness face an uphill battle when it comes to pursuing higher education. They are often disconnected from their families, lacking the support system many youths have to help them navigate the complicated college admissions, financial aid, and enrollment process. They have no financial support from their families and often have to juggle the financial burden of trying to obtain and maintain stable housing and meet their own basic needs while trying to pay for their college education.

In my 12 years at NPHY, I have seen so many young people work hard to overcome the trauma they experienced prior to and during their homelessness go on to finish high school and get into one of NSHE's finest institutions knowing it is their best shot to a brighter future. Yet, we are unable to make it work because that one thing happened: issues with student loans; questions on proving their homelessness status; not affording their housing; not being able to navigate the complexities of higher education; losing childcare resources; a scholarship unexpectedly falls through; they get fewer hours at their job. All of a sudden, they can no longer afford to stay in school despite doing everything they can to make it work.

Assembly Bill 217 would change all of this, guaranteeing young people experiencing homelessness could afford to pursue higher education in Nevada through tuition and fee waivers while supporting their success in a complex higher education environment via homeless student liaison and priority class enrollment.

Thank you for your time today, and for your thoughtful consideration on A.B. 217. We are asking for your support to ensure no young person who has faced the hardships and challenges of homelessness continues to feel forgotten, brushed aside, or discouraged from chasing their dreams. Let us show them that Nevada sees them, cares about them, and together, let us choose to invest in a brighter future for them and our entire state. [Written testimony and documentation were also submitted [Exhibit F](#) and [Exhibit G](#).]

That concludes my comments. I now have the pleasure of introducing Theresa Butler. I have watched Ms. Butler grow up through some difficult circumstances with an award-winning smile and determination. Through her own self-determination, she fought to graduate from UNLV and start a real estate career while advocating for others in her position the entire time. This is the third time I have had the honor of working with Ms. Butler on policy work, and she has been instrumental in the passage of two other state laws positively impacting homeless youth. It is a privilege to introduce you to the extraordinary, the one and only, Theresa Butler, someone I look up to very much, to share her perspective on A.B. 217.

**Theresa Butler, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:**

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am a homeless youth advocate, a UNLV scholar alum, and a former unaccompanied homeless youth. I am here to testify in favor of A.B. 217. [Read from testimony, [Exhibit H](#).]

Assembly Bill 217 is a law that would give youth experiencing homelessness a tuition and fee waiver to receive higher education. Today, I am advocating for youth experiencing homelessness to receive the same tuition and fee waiver foster youth have received since 2019.

Before experiencing homelessness, I knew higher education was in my path. From the beginning of high school, I dedicated myself to Upward Bound Math & Science Center's [Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach, UNLV] college readiness program, participated in anything that would look good on my resumé, and kept As and Bs in my classes. So, during junior year, when I started to be the first one on campus and was the last to leave, I was praised for my dedication, no one knowing I was in the middle of my homeless journey. As you can imagine, homelessness takes its toll, and despite my best efforts, by the end of my junior year, I stopped seeing a future for myself.

It was the day of the ACTs when I realized I had no other choice but to ask for help. When I should have been focusing on the test, I was too busy hoping no one noticed I was wearing the same outfit from the day before, and was even contemplating excuses just in case someone did. I thought asking for help would be the beginning of the end, but watching my counselor X out all but one of the shelters I could go to because I was couch surfing, I started to believe homelessness was the beginning of the rest of my life.

I am not sure how youth get into foster care, but when I never got the call back from Child Services [Division of Child and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services.], I knew that was not going to be an option for me. To be fair, I am not sure if getting that call back would automatically lead me to foster care, but I know I was left with no resources and the heavy burden of feeling forgotten.

After a summer of being forgotten and alone, school proved to be my safe place, and validated my need to pursue higher education. When I expressed my aspirations to my counselor, I was shut down instantly, being told incorrectly that college would not be an option for me since a parent or guardian is needed to fill out FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid]. When federal aid was deemed a dead end, I pursued scholarships, committing to doing one every week until graduation.

While searching for a way into college, the opportunity came from the McKinney Vento Title 1 Homeless Outreach Program for Education (HOPE) office in the form of a homeless verification letter and a partnership between Title 1 HOPE, NPHY, and UNLV. Thanks to the creation of the UNLV HOPE Scholars Program, a scholarship to secure housing for unaccompanied youth only on UNLV's campus, and my immense determination, I was able to walk across the stage at high school graduation knowing I had a future ahead of me.

I wish I could say life before college was the hard part, but truthfully, when you rely on scholarships so heavily, the fear of losing one is comparable to the fear of not knowing where you will be sleeping for the night. Even though housing was paid for through HOPE Scholars, not having enough funds for tuition was the reason I saw many peers give up on their dreams and settle for survival. Despite my roommate being naturally gifted, I watched her stop going to class midsemester after finding out her financial aid was coming up short for the upcoming academic year. If it was not for NPHY, being able to pay my remaining balance the last semester of undergrad, I am not confident I would have the privilege to call myself an alum, let alone a former homeless youth.

Despite being in a similar if not the same situation as foster youth, resources are scarce, even more so for youth who are actively looking for a way out. The only reason I stand before you today as a former homeless youth is because of the opportunity to pursue higher education. Youth who sought out higher education to escape homelessness deserve the privilege to call themselves former homeless youth. Yes to A.B. 217 will be the first step in securing that possibility for youth. Today, I ask for you to vote yes on A.B. 217 so youth experiencing homelessness can pursue higher education and have a clear pathway out of homelessness and into self-sufficiency.

**Assemblyman Watts:**

Thank you so much for sharing your story. I think it highlights the issue, it highlights the struggle, and it highlights what we need to fix and what we need to address through this legislation. I will now walk you briefly through the provisions of this bill.

Section 2 of the bill provides some additional clarity on the role our higher education institutions need to play to support students who have experienced homelessness, primarily making sure information is provided to that liaison, a person with expertise in the issues who can provide them the support they need, making sure any student who is identified through a range of different processes, including the waiver we are about to discuss, gets connected to that wraparound support to help set them up on a path to success. That information is also published so it is easy for young people to find if they are looking.

Section 3 of the bill asks the Board of Regents to create a priority registration system for either homeless or unaccompanied youth or foster youth. The reasoning behind this is, in general there is a priority registration system, but usually it favors seniority. It allows those who are further along in their degree pathway to get access to those last classes they need or upper division classes that may be hard to get into, and just build a schedule that works for them. They are probably starting to work as well, and it allows them to get the first bite at those classes so they can get their degree. Unfortunately, for some of our young people who are already struggling with so many issues, they are often working and working even harder because they do not have that other support network and are navigating higher education, often for the first time, without that support network. It can be a real struggle within the priority registration system for them to get those classes that work with their schedule and allow them to get on a pathway of completing their education. Section 3 is aimed at creating specifically for those categories of students of the priority registration system.

Section 4 is existing statute related to fee waivers that we mentioned was created in 2019. The most substantial part of section 4, subsection 1, is where it changes the "may" to "shall," requiring the establishment of the waiver program, which has not existed up to this point. In addition, it expands the fees that would be covered, including all mandatory fees. It makes some changes to some of the definitions, particularly in section 4, subsection 4(a). It is one of the things I think there is some bipartisan agreement on regarding how slow the federal government can be in enacting effective policy. However, they have actually done it here. There are some great processes that have been put into place for completing FAFSA and accessing higher education. We have actually taken some of those models and used them for things like access to medical care. Here, we are basically using these updated federal policies as the guideline. The goal is to set up a seamless process for when someone is already doing what they need to do through a service provider, through their liaison in K-12 through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. They are going to have everything they need to complete their FAFSA, and at that point, have everything they need to qualify for a waiver when they apply for it.

The grade point averages are already in place in section 4, subsection 1(b), along with the residency requirements in section 4, subsection 2, which can be tricky because of the circumstances young people have gone through.

One of the things we are trying to do is make sure we are reducing the financial impact of these waivers to institutions. On page 4 of the bill, we are trying to make sure this is something that gets applied after other federal assistance becomes available. The students will need to complete FAFSA and pursue whatever federal grants or other aid is there. The idea is the waiver covers the rest, but it is a safety net that ensures if something happens, because it is not just for academic performance, there are competitive scholarships and other things. This makes sure no matter where someone's financial aid ends up in a given year, the waiver will be there to make sure there is no financial barrier to getting into those classes.

Section 4, subsection 7 requires each institution designate a point of contact to work with students who are interested in pursuing this waiver. Again, we want to make sure homeless youths have a place they know they can go to at the institution they are attending or interested in attending to make sure they are able to pursue their education. The following subsections are clean-up language, amending some definitions and references to match updated federal law.

Section 7 of the bill is existing statute that creates the liaison position within NSHE. In Section 8, subsection 1, it strikes out "[To the extent that money is available, the]." If we are going to make this pathway, we want to make sure the support is available within NSHE to support these students. This will require the creation of a liaison position. The rest of section 8 modifies to consistency with the latest federal law. Based on feedback from NPHY

and from young people who have tried to access higher education, we have modified some of the language. Section 8, subsection 1(h) mentions "Increase awareness among teachers, instructors, professors . . . ", we are adding "financial aid offices, student support services and campus housing services . . ." to make sure every part of the higher education ecosystem is being supported by the liaison and making sure they are creating a pathway to success for any youth who have experienced homelessness.

Section 8, subsections 1(m) and (n) task the liaison with assisting students in resolving any issues related to the waiver. Even when we created it, we did not necessarily tie those two together, but this language is aimed at doing that to make sure this is someone who can help students access the waiver. It also established a plan to ensure pupils have access to on-campus support, including academic support, mental and physical health services, transportation, and life skills instruction, harnessing every single resource on that campus.

That concludes the presentation. I will note we have been in conversations with NSHE. Those conversations have been very productive. We will likely be working on an amendment. We have gone back and forth with a couple of different proposals. I do know there is some particular concern about priority registration. We can see how waivers have expanded over time, so we are going to continue those conversations. We did want to put out there why we think that is an important policy to consider for these young people. I am confident we will be able to get some amendments worked out with NSHE to tighten the language, clarify some of these issues, and reach something that is workable for everyone.

I thank the Committee for your time and attention. We will take any questions you have.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Thank you for your testimony, especially Ms. Butler. Obviously, you are quite passionate about this, as you should be, and I appreciate your sharing with this Committee. We do have some questions.

**Assemblyman D'Silva:**

Do we have a working definition of what constitutes a homeless youth? Is there one within McKinney-Vento, or one we want to work on ourselves for the state?

**Arash Ghafoori:**

For the purposes of this bill, we would be using the exact same definition the federal government uses for the purposes of FAFSA. We do not need to create a new definition. That is a separate discussion in terms of aligning the federal government's definition of homeless youth, but for this purpose we will be using the same definition the federal government uses for FAFSA.

**Assemblyman Watts:**

That definition is fairly expansive, so there are many definitions to what constitutes homelessness. Young people who are couch surfing and other things where their housing situation is completely destabilized would fall under the provisions of this bill.

**Assemblyman Koenig:**

Do you have a ballpark figure on how many students would be affected by this? I know you cannot give me an exact number, but just a ballpark if you have that.

**Arash Ghafouri:**

Ballpark, rough maximum would be about 149 pupils annually.

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

Ms. Butler, I have a question, but I cannot ask my question without giving the comment of just how impressive you are. You cannot see from the outside what you have gone through on the inside. You are truly an inspiration. You are a great example and role model, and you are the epitome of not looking like what you have been through. You look amazing. Thank you for sharing your story. I know it was hard, but we appreciate that.

Because we are dealing with students who are homeless, how do we let them know this is an opportunity for them?

**Assemblyman Watts:**

One of the key pieces is the creation of the liaison position that can work with the institutions and can also work with folks in different schools. The one thing I will say is, while there is still too much struggle that happens, we have established a process in our K-12 institutions to provide support to young people who are experiencing homelessness. The liaison can work with those liaisons in K-12 under McKinney-Vento to make sure, particularly in our schools, as students are approaching graduation, they are aware of this opportunity. That is part of it, and that liaison can also work with institutions to make sure any students who are already pursuing higher education become aware when this legislation is enacted. Of course, there are community partners and all of us who can help spread the word as well. It is a team effort, but the liaison is critical to assisting in that and involves both K-12 school liaisons, our institutes of higher education, and our community partners.

**Assemblywoman Hardy:**

Thank you for bringing this bill and continuing to work on this. To Ms. Butler, I, too, agree with how impressed I am with you. I want to tell you, you should be so proud of yourself that you had the determination to see this through. I think you are a wonderful, shining example of what can happen when you do not give up. Thank you for being here and sharing your story.

You mentioned there is a foster youth liaison in the institutions. Is that working well? The follow up to that would be do we know why the liaison was not pursued for homeless youth?

**Assemblyman Watts:**

There may be others who can also speak to this, but from everything I have heard, that program has been a rousing success. I have had the privilege of listening to some young people who have benefited from the waiver itself and the support that comes from that program. It has been a game changer for them from the time it was put into place. From what I understand, that liaison position is extremely effective and critical to the success of that program. The financial barrier is a real and substantial issue, but there are other things, and having someone who looks at it holistically for the needs of that population, is familiar with that, and can help provide the wraparound support, is equally important to their success.

As far as why this has not been implemented; this legislation was put into place in 2019, and then we were both there in 2020. I think it has largely been a resource issue, as we had to make a lot of difficult choices and pull back a lot of investments across the board. Something that had not yet gone down the pathway to implementation was probably an easy one to press the pause button.

**Theresa Butler:**

I remember asking the chancellor why homeless youth did not receive this law as well. He said, "I did not know you guys wanted it." Before he could get it implemented, he left NSHE. It was hard for me to get in front of someone who wanted to pursue it as well. It was the wrong time, wrong people, I guess.

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

My question is regarding section 4, subsection 5(a) and (b), where we are saying if the student has the federal education benefits from the FAFSA money for the semester. A lot of times, FAFSA will include the subsidized and unsubsidized loans. Are we hoping the grant covers that so young people do not have to take those loans?

**Assemblyman Watts:**

That is something we have discussed as well. Our intent and hope are this is grant funding because while loans are a completely valid option to help pursue a higher education, they can also be a very difficult financial burden for people to deal with. Ultimately, the goal of this waiver is to remove those financial barriers, not to kick them down the line. The ultimate intent—and we have also been discussing the language—is to minimize the impact to the institution by getting all the resources available on the front end and then making sure whatever the balance is when it comes to these fees is covered by the waiver.

**Assemblywoman Torres:**

I looked back at my notes from 2019. I know we had discussed this in 2019 with Assemblyman Thompson. I know when we passed Assembly Bill 461 of the 80th Session, part of that conversation included giving the permissive language. My understanding, and correct me if I am wrong, Assemblyman, is this would be mandating that language. We had

given permissive language from NSHE to do that, but now we are saying this is something we will do. It is a very similar conversation and very similar dialogue, but I think we are going back and saying this is something we have a capacity for the state to do and would like to require it. As your testimony suggested, it is such a critical issue to ensure our students have access to the tools they need.

**Assemblyman Watts:**

That is correct.

**Assemblywoman Anderson:**

Ms. Butler, you make me proud to be a teacher. You are exactly why we teach. Thank you for reminding us of what really matters. My question has to do with the FAFSA I am currently working with NSHE about first in money, et cetera. Could you go over the intent again on how you are trying to use the FAFSA, or if we should work together in trying to get consistent language if possible?

**Assemblyman Watts:**

Yes. I have been in conversations with NSHE about this program and this legislation, but also about streamlining some of the language and process for waivers overall. A couple of my colleagues in front of me have relevant legislation related to that. I hope we can all get together and figure out how we can get some consistency across the board. I am open to anything as long as it delivers the benefits to the students at the end of the day. I am also trying to be thoughtful in limiting the financial impact to institutions from the waiver program as well. I look forward to continuing those conversations.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Seeing no further questions, I will open testimony in support of A.B. 217. As a reminder, 20 minutes for support.

**Dale A.R. Erquiaga, Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education:**

I am pleased to be here in support of this measure. You have heard a lot of conversations about NSHE's role here. I appreciate the Assemblyman's history. In context, I would represent to you that the foster youth program is a good model, and he is right to follow it. We are very happy to support this bill and very happy to work with the sponsor on this bill and other bills, as the Chair knows.

**John Sande, representing Las Vegas Sands:**

We are happy to be here in support of this wonderful measure. We want to thank the Assemblyman for bringing this legislation. It is an important cause for our entire state. The Las Vegas Sands asked me to testify. The message they sent me is a good reason for the support. I told them I had not had a chance to look at the bill and asked if they would give me some reasons for their support. They asked me to take a look at the bill because the reasons would be self-evident.



This is a bill that provides a handout to those who most need it in our state. It is a good policy to utilize our resources. On behalf of the Sands, I want to say thank you and I appreciate the opportunity.

**Omar Saucedo, Director, External Affairs, AT&T Nevada:**

AT&T, through the Believe Initiative, has been a partner with help for southern Nevada. We are critically aware of the homeless youth issues and the plight they face as they go through their journeys in school. That is one of the reasons we wanted to come here and lend our support to this bill. We understand this is going to create an additional tool for the toolbox to make sure they continue their educational path and make sure they have a pathway to be a self-sustaining, efficient, and productive adult.

**Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., State President, Nevada Faculty Alliance:**

The Nevada Faculty Alliance supports A.B. 217 for better access to higher education and making college affordable. The long-term trend of declining state support for higher education has led to higher student fees. As faculty, we see students who struggle because they are cash poor. A change, as was mentioned earlier, in any piece of financial aid, family, or work situation, can cause them to drop out or, too often, just disappear until it is too late to catch up. Students without stable shelter obviously fall into that category.

We could not be more enthusiastic—and I have said this about other fee waivers generally if they came with funding. Unfunded waivers incentivize NSHE to raise fees for other students. A policy fix would be to create a fund at the Office of the Treasurer to reimburse fee waivers upon documentation from NSHE. That would allow the money committees to consider an appropriation and for the fund to receive grants and donations.

My colleague, Douglas Unger, submitted written testimony and is not here because of work [The written testimony was not received.] I would like to put part of his comments on the record. Quoting from Doug: I also want to share personally that I lived a similar experience in my own youth in a different time. Save for a lucky break or two, I could easily have been one of the youths to which A.B. 217 is directed. That situation is a hard one. The hope of an education offers at least one part of a solution our state leaders can provide.

There is a longer story there. Thank you to Assemblyman Watts and to the Committee for your attention to these students.

**Michael Flores, Vice President, Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Reno:**

On behalf of the University of Nevada, Reno, I am here in support of A.B. 217. I appreciate the conversations happening with the bill sponsor and NSHE.

I have met Ms. Butler a number of times. She is a fearless advocate. I am so thankful for UNLV HOPE Scholars and that program because I know it gave her an opportunity. I did not know she was doing these things in her life, and I am just so proud of her. The work NPHY does in southern Nevada and throughout the state is incredible. I have had the

opportunity to meet with some of the young people. We do need to do a better job of opening our doors to make sure they have all the services and support they need to get through our institutions. In our institution in Reno, we are looking forward to working closely with this population. I look forward to the conversations.

**Jonathan Norman, Director, Statewide Advocacy, Outreach and Policy, Nevada Coalition of Legal Service Providers:**

We work with foster kids and obviously have a lot of overlap with NPHY in our populations. We could not be more supportive of this bill. It is removing barriers for kids. Whether it is foster kids or homeless youths, they have the same overlap in that they do not have resiliency in having a core family they can fall back on when they make mistakes or have fees. I think this is important and we support it. Thank you for your consideration.

**Constance J. Brooks, Interim Vice President, Office of Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

I want to echo the sentiments of my colleague, Michael Flores, and congratulate Ms. Butler, UNLV HOPE Scholar alum, for her fearless advocacy as well as her inspiring testimony this afternoon. I was deeply moved by all she had to say.

We are in support of this legislation. We would like to thank Assemblyman Watts for his dedication and compassion for this vulnerable population of students. As was made known throughout Ms. Butler's testimony, we do have the HOPE Scholars Program, which is in partnership with Clark County School District as well as NPHY. We enjoy this partnership. We look forward to it flourishing and having the opportunity to serve more of our students on campus. We offer our support and look forward to working with NSHE as well as the bill sponsor and others who are interested in streamlining the fee waiver opportunities that have presented themselves throughout this session. We look forward to that opportunity as well. Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Is there anyone in Las Vegas who wishes to provide support testimony? [There was no one.]  
Is there anyone on the phone wishing to provide support testimony?

**Trevor Macaluso, Chief Executive Officer, Eddy House:**

It is the mission of Eddy House to work with homeless and at-risk youth to help them develop the life and job skills necessary for sustainable independence. We are in enthusiastic support of this bill. We have several youths we serve who struggle to pay for higher education given the situations they are in, and many who are unable to meet the financial strains of obtaining higher education. As NPHY stated so clearly at the beginning of presenting this bill, the ability to obtain higher education can impact positively the life of any individual in the youths we serve by growing their income and job opportunities. We are in great support.

**Ana Munoz, Director, Community Impact and Giving, Caesar's Entertainment:**

We come here today in full support of A.B. 217. We believe as a community we have a duty to remove barriers to both education and economic empowerment for the most vulnerable among us. This includes our homeless and foster care youth. As a long-time supporter of community partners like NPHY, we recognize these pathways to education and ultimately employment are critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness and achieving long-term independence.

As a major employer here in the state, we also value the impact education can have on pursuing employment opportunities and achieving upward mobility. We want to ensure that our unhoused or unaccompanied young people receive every opportunity to flourish here. We offer our support of A.B. 217 and ask you vote in favor of this bill.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Having no other callers waiting, we will move to testimony in opposition. Is there anyone in Las Vegas or Carson City in opposition? [There was no one.] Is there anyone waiting on the phone to testify in opposition to A.B. 217? [There was no one.] We will move to testimony in neutral. Is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Is there anyone waiting on the phone to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.]

[Written testimony in support was submitted, [Exhibit I](#) and [Exhibit J](#).]

Assemblyman Watts had to return to his committee. Since there was no testimony in opposition or neutral, I think it is wise I close the hearing on Assembly Bill 217. Thank you all for being here today. I will open the hearing for Assembly Bill 256. To present this bill, we have our own Assemblywoman Mosca, who is joined by her copresenters on Zoom.

**Assembly Bill 256: Revises provisions relating to work-based learning programs. (BDR 34-534)**

**Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14:**

Today I will share a summary of the purpose behind the why of this bill, the problem Assembly Bill 256 is trying to solve, and then we will hear from Gia Moore on Zoom, the director of College and Career Readiness and School Choice in the Clark County School District, who will share how this actually happens on the ground. Finally, I will go over the bill summary [[Exhibit K](#)].

What is the problem? The background check law, Senate Bill 185 of the 80th Session, makes it so any local business, organization, or agency that would like to participate in work-based learning essentially become an internship host and must have their entire company background checked. On the ground, how this plays out is if you are a young person who is part of a career or technical program or a magnet program, you cannot leave school to practice work-based learning.

As an example, if I were a young person majoring in the culinary arts and once a week I wanted to go for two hours either to a bakery to practice baking or to a casino that has a bakery, the law says whether the small business bakery was 6 people or the casino property was 4,000 people, everyone would have to be background checked. Logically, what could happen is any of those employees could do something inappropriate with a young person. The intent of the law made sense, but practically what is happening on the ground is no one can actually intern. We will hear about that from Clark County School District (CCSD) later today.

As a solution, we are proposing A.B. 256, which calls for the student's manager to get a background check. The person in charge of watching the young person should for sure be background checked, and they are the person who would be on the hook if anything happened.

For statewide alignment, the bill also calls on Nevada's Department of Education's (NDE) work-based policies to be adopted by local school districts with local control of work-based learning hosts. I want to share for the record, after touring the state and speaking to superintendents and staff from the 17 different school districts, that piece was added acknowledging that different communities will have different work-based learning needs.

Finally, I would love it if we could hear some more from Ms. Moore, who can share what actually happens on the ground.

**Gia Moore, Director, College and Career Readiness and School Choice, Clark County School District:**

I oversee a number of programs in CCSD, including our magnet schools, career and technical academies, as well as our career and educational department. I believe Assemblywoman Mosca outlined the challenges surrounding the current background check law.

At CCSD, our goal over the past several years has been to increase offerings and enrollment in high-skill, high-demand, and high-wage career and technical education (CTE) programs of study that align with our state workforce needs. While we hear this constant need from our employers to have skilled professionals, our ability for our students to engage in work-based learning opportunities is often hindered by the current background check process.

For some perspective, about 65 percent of all CCSD high school students are enrolled in a CTE program of study. Each year, our students graduate having earned industry recognized credentials and are hired in areas such as manufacturing, health care, and technology. We want our students to be able to make these connections with potential employers prior to graduation and build relationships so their hard work does not evolve into missed opportunities to retain our talent in Nevada.

While the current background check law was well intentioned, we have missed out on countless opportunities with employers who are unable to have every employee screened, particularly with larger industry areas. As an example, in partnership with the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, we were asked to be part of a portal with a one-stop internship matchmaking service for students to access. This opportunity was formed out of our common goal in strengthening southern Nevada's workforce by dramatically enhancing internship placements. This opportunity was unable to come into fruition, however, as each employer and employee of the partnering businesses featured in this portal would have had to complete background checks for our students to be able to participate. This is just one of many examples.

I appreciate your time and consideration in helping us remove obstacles for keeping our talent here in Nevada.

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

I will now briefly summarize the bill. Section 1, subsection 1(b) adds that only the person who directly oversees the student must be background checked.

Section 2 directs NDE to create work-based learning guidelines, which they do already have, and the board of trustees in our state must adopt them and have local control in which internship placement sites are chosen and how the internship is executed.

In conclusion, I did speak to the original bill sponsor, Senator Seevers Gansert. She did share it was not the original intention of the bill for what is happening right now. We are just trying to find a state solution. We know some districts have 400 students; others have 200,000 students. We are trying to find a practical solution. I spoke with businesses, industries, students, parents, educators, lawyers, et cetera. People are pretty varied about how they feel about this potential bill, but everyone wants to balance student safety and student opportunity. I feel this is one of the policies our Committee is going to have to decide if we allow young people in our state to intern or not. In my own experience, I have executed an after-school internship program and found the real-world experience of young people learning how to write an email, how to be on time, how to not be on their phone, was worth it. I believe we have exhibits from different people [\[Exhibit L\]](#). One of them is about a young person in high school who interned at NV Energy and because of that internship, got a job there while he was attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

This bill supports social capital development, access, and networking. There are places in our state that do allow young people to do this. Cristo Rey St. Viator College Preparatory High School allows young people that opportunity, and other states, such as Colorado and Michigan, do have robust work-based learning experiences. I am open for questions.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Thank you for being such an advocate for the young folks in college. It is nice to see that. Are there any questions from the Committee?

**Assemblywoman Torres:**

Has there been any consideration for how we are teaching students? If we are removing this requirement, I want to ensure students understand safe relationships within a workplace as well as what harassment would look like. Those are common things that would take place in any workplace if you were to be hired. I remember my high school job and that was the first thing I did for eight hours. I sat in a backroom with no lights and took all these classes that are required before you are allowed to get out on the floor. Could we add some type of language requiring those conversations and that type of training and support for our students?

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

I think that is a great point, especially to balance the idea that young people have the opportunities but are also safe. I would be happy to add that language.

**Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:**

Thank you for trying to expand opportunities for our young people. In a couple of sections in this bill, for example in section 1, subsection 1(b) it talks about only the employee who is directly overseeing the student would be subject to fingerprinting and background checks. However, in section 2, subsection 3, it says, "If the board of trustees of a school district determines the employment of a pupil in a work-based learning program pursuant to this section is appropriate . . . any volunteers employed by the business, agency or organization are exempt . . . ." Could you clarify when they would be required or when they would not under this bill.

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

I always appreciate your detailed orientation. That is the section when I was referring to a statewide solution for 17 different counties. We know this is solving a problem for CCSD, but when I talk to the other school districts, they brought up issues where there is only one business who offers the internship, and everyone knows the business. They wondered if there could be another way to follow. The NDE's work-based learning guidelines are based on best practice. It could include that, or it could include something else, but we are still working on the language here. We will hear from the Nevada Association of School Superintendents whom I believe will also say we are working on it. The intention is that everyone will be background checked, but leaving the local control for a district that only has one high school having a different option if needed.

**Assemblywoman Hansen:**

As usual, we are impressed with your legislation. I am trying to get an image in my mind of how this is going to play out. I will give you a real-life scenario. Some companies do background checks anyway, and some do not. For instance, our plumbing company is small, but we want to offer an opportunity to be connected with one of these programs. First, I want

to know how that works. Do businesses sign up with the districts? How do they get connected? For our business, we background check all our employees, so I would assume we already qualify for a student placement. However, not all plumbing companies may background check their employees. It would mean we could qualify to work with the district, but other companies could as well as long as they background check at least one person who is overseeing the youth.

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

I am going to defer to Gia first and then I will answer.

**Gia Moore:**

As a district, our engagement opportunities for our students to be involved in work-based learning opportunities happen at the central level with our work-based learning coordinator. They assist us in vetting businesses and aligning students with those opportunities. It also happens at the school level in terms of aligning students with those opportunities.

I apologize, I missed the second part of your question.

**Assemblywoman Hansen:**

The way it works now is if there was an opportunity—and it sounds like these opportunities are more limited because of this hinderance from 2019—what happens now? If this bill were to pass, how do the districts get connected with those businesses?

**Gia Moore:**

That happens at the central level with our work-based learning coordinator. They are the conduit who works with business and industry to create those opportunities for students to be able to be engaged. It also happens at the school level. Many of our schools, particularly at our magnet and career and technical academies, have an individual who organizes those community partnerships and arranges for those opportunities for the students. It also happens with our instructors. The instructors who are in the CTE realm also arrange for those opportunities because oftentimes they come out of the industry themselves and have had those connections.

In terms of background checks, I will give a couple of examples. With our certified nursing assistant students who are engaged in clinicals, or our emergency medical technician students who do ride alongs, those businesses are not required to do background checks because they have a process that is similar to ours in the school district. That meets our measure of not having to do that. Those are really the only examples that have the rigorous process we do in CCSD. Outside of that, we have individuals who vet those businesses and align those opportunities with our students. It happens both centrally and at the school level.

**Assemblywoman Hansen:**

I hope this allows us to engage more students to have these opportunities.

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

I know you mentioned approximately 65 percent of students in Clark County—probably high schools, I imagine—are engaged in CTE programs. There are CTE programs and then there are work-based learning programs. Those are very different. Do you have any idea how many students will be impacted who are involved in work-based learning programs across the state? Do we have a baseline? It is different than CTE, correct?

**Assemblywoman Mosca:**

May I phone a friend?

**Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education:**

Assemblywoman Taylor, could you repeat your question?

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

Do we have any idea how many students across the state are engaged in work-based learning programs? Not CTE programs, but who are actually in the workplace in some of those examples mentioned by Assemblywoman Hansen.

**Craig Statucki:**

For the 2021-2022 school year, we had approximately 3,700 students who participated in work-based learning activities. A little over 400 of those students participated and earned credit for those courses.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Are there any other questions from the Committee? [There were none.] I will open the hearing for support testimony. We will start in Las Vegas.

**Amber Stidham, Chief Strategy Officer, Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance:**

We are here strongly urging your support of this bill. As the economic development authority for the southern Nevada region, we are working together with our partners to bring diverse industries and careers to our community. We are chiefly asked about two things. One is developable lands, but the other is our region's talent pipeline. The ability to expand and secure work-based learning opportunities really affords students the ability to develop job specific skills while also earning an education to enhance not only their experience, but to better position them to be immediately desirable as a candidate for their industry.

From an economic standpoint, security work-based learning programs also increase workforce productivity, encourage talent retention, promote career advancement, and works to address skill gaps.

We encourage your support of having this conversation about how we can expand these work-based learning proposals, and again urge your support.



**Jesse Cruz, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a current sophomore at the College of Southern Nevada. I am here to testify in support of A.B. 256. As a product of the Clark County School District, specifically a magnet high school program graduate from Canyon Springs High School and The Leadership and Law Preparatory Academy. Resources or assistance concerning internships required by our school in order to graduate with our magnet major diploma were nonexistent. Personally, I had to use a resource given to me by an outside organization in order to complete the internship requirement as a sophomore in high school.

Assembly Bill 256 would assist in easing the burden, both on schools and internship general employers, to allow students to work for and with them. This bill would be a great leap forward toward accessibility and safety, as students like me would not have to do their own research. My own school would be assisting in the process, as they should be doing with introduction of these imperative magnet program requirements. It is my sincere hope the Committee votes in favor of A.B. 256.

**Julian High, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Southern Nevada:**

I am here to testify in support of A.B. 256, sponsored by Assemblywoman Mosca. United Way of Southern Nevada supports programs that promote student success and workforce support in our community. We strongly believe in the power of internships, so much so that I am joined by our external affairs intern who is a sophomore at Cristo Rey St. Viator College Preparatory High School at this very moment. He is here in the audience to learn and plan his future as a member of the Nevada State Assembly.

We support A.B. 256 because we believe in the real value that workplace internships provide to students in preparing them for life after graduation. This legislation proposes provisions that would streamline the process for businesses, agencies, and organizations seeking to partner with schools to provide the valuable experience of an internship.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

It is nice to know there are folks who are going to take our jobs from us, but I think we are okay with that being he is still in high school. We will continue support testimony from those in Carson City.

**Susie Martinez, Executive Secretary Treasurer, Nevada AFL-CIO:**

On behalf of over 150,000 members and 120 unions, we are in full support of A.B. 256. No person should be obstructed from opportunities that would help them grow professionally. If we want to increase student retention and build a stronger workforce here in Nevada and across all industries, we must get rid of these needless and outdated obstacles.

Assembly Bill 256 is a commonsense approach toward streamlining these work-based learning programs and ensuring we continue to provide more accessible opportunities for students to learn and grow professionally. I want to thank Assemblywoman Mosca for bringing this bill forward, and I urge the Committee to support A.B. 256.

**Danny Thompson, representing Southern Nevada Building Trades Unions:**

It is my honor to testify alongside Susie Martinez, the new secretary treasurer.

Background checks are expensive. It does not make any sense to have an entire organization go to that expense when the people who are interacting with the students are the ones who need to have that done. This is really a commonsense piece of legislation, it saves money, and gets the job done. On behalf of the Southern Nevada Building Trades Unions, we support this bill.

**Nick Schneider, Government Affairs Analyst, Vegas Chamber:**

Thank you to Assemblywoman Mosca for bringing this bill forward and for speaking to us during the drafting process. The Vegas Chamber is in support of A.B. 256, as it simplifies the process of businesses and organizations to provide work-based learning programs. We believe students should have the opportunity for professional growth, and this bill results in more work-based education opportunities. We urge your support.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We will now take three callers waiting on the phone.

**Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada:**

We are in strong support of A.B. 256. We would like to thank Assemblywoman Mosca for bringing this bill forward and ensuring the safety of students while giving them valuable experience in their academic career. We urge your support. Our full comments have been submitted [[Exhibit M](#)].

**Haddee Martinez, Private Citizen:**

I graduated from Veterans Tribute Career & Technical Academy in 2021, and I majored in criminal justice. During my four years of being in a criminal justice major, I did not feel as though I got to get hands-on experience, or even being able to get a scope of what the career required or even what different types of things were available with majoring in criminal justice. By implementing something like this in the school districts, it keeps students more interested in education after high school, whether it be trade schools, colleges, or even universities. It also allows students in Nevada to know there is more available than what is being told. This bill also helps students know the exact career path they want to go down sooner.

I am currently a student at the University of Nevada, Reno studying pre-nursing. If this option were available for me when I was in high school, I would have known earlier that I wanted to switch to the medical field. I highly encourage this bill to be passed.

**Angelica Villarta, Private Citizen:**

I am in support of A.B. 256. Assembly Bill 256 removes the barrier many of our corporations and organizations, especially those with five employees or more, of offering work-based learning opportunities due to cost, frequency of employee transitions, and timelines. It can upset the whole student learning environment when it is assigned under

a single supervising authority. If a company has to continually do background checks every time management changes, it disrupts the whole learning environment. I believe removing this barrier can simplify the vetting process for businesses in allowing the potential for smaller, minority-based and diverse communities to get and remain engaged. As we saw in 2021 and 2022, this aggregated data showed students in special populations and students in more minority and diverse race and ethnicity have higher dropout rates, especially in our Black and Native American populations. I feel having these work-based experiences in those areas can help them develop relevant skills for future employment, help them make better career decisions, and network with potential employees.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We will return to Las Vegas for the two remaining testifiers.

**Michelle Valentine, President, Choice Business Group, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

We are a Web3 community technical company. I am here today in support of Assemblywoman Mosca and A.B. 256 to remove barriers for work-based learning opportunities. From my standpoint, I am a witness that work-based learning does work, especially for our youth and young adults who are not exposed to the opportunities that others have.

I have been fortunate enough to have developed a work-based internship program with my husband, Melvin Valentine, where basically our youth get paid to learn career readiness skills and start their own business. Our young adults who have gotten through the program are now making \$20 an hour and have started their own businesses.

I believe the barriers most students are faced with can be fixed by planning implementation that accommodates all students. What I mean by this is if you think about our medical system, there is a general frame that everyone experiences, but once you can take a deeper dive with each individual, you will find there are medical diagnoses that require a specialist. I am saying our education system should take the same approach in removing the barriers for work-based learning. I believe the approach of work-based learning should be focused on what could be, go right, and then begin working from that standpoint. It is important that we as educators and leaders take an active role in meeting our students where they are and giving them the support they need to be successful. I can confidently stand and sit before you in support of the idea of the bill because as the president of Choice Business Group, I have been fortunate enough to engage our young adults, meet them where they are, while understanding the importance of removing any barriers and not increasing them. This has allowed me to see and be a part of firsthand success stories. Thank you for your time. I stand in favor of the bill.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We have about five more minutes for support testimony. We have one more person in Las Vegas. Can you briefly give your testimony?

**Melvin Valentine, Jr., Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

Yes, I can. From a big picture standpoint, I want to highlight that in order for Nevada to stay competitive in a global economy, we need to rethink education and prepare our students for the future of work. We cannot do that if we do not have more students getting involved in work-based learning. The reality is, entry-level positions are getting more technical, and more sophisticated. McDonald's has robots now. Robots are everywhere. Automation is through the roof. Las Vegas is expected to have upwards of 65 percent of their jobs automated. In order for us to teach technical skills to students, we have to put them in a work environment. It is hard to teach technical skills without a work-based environment.

Last but not least, soft skills. It is hard to teach people time management skills, professional speech, professional dress, and task management in a traditional class setting. I strongly encourage that in the near future the 3,700 students we have in the state needs to drastically increase if we are going to stay competitive in a global economy.

**Jonathan Norman, Director, Statewide Advocacy, Outreach and Policy, Nevada Coalition of Legal Service Providers:**

I will make three quick points. The Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada has Cristo Rey interns. They are exposed and their horizons grow because they are around something they may not have been able to be around before. We often hear it takes one adult who cares to make a difference in a kid's life. We cannot get every kid a big brother or big sister, but if we expose them to other adults who can lean in, I think it has a lot of value.

I would like to point out that for a lot of people from upper economic regions, they could get an internship in the summer. Their parents have the ability to help them with that, whereas foster kids or even middle-income working class, are going to rely on the schools to create those opportunities. It creates a real equity issue to have this opportunity for those kids.

**Jack Giese, Government Affairs Administrator, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada:**

I want to thank the Assemblywoman for bringing this legislation and get on the record our support. We currently work with some of the southern Nevada higher education institutions and the Clark County Summer Business Institute Internship Program to recruit some interns. We would be thrilled to expand that opportunity and work with CCSD. This is an important part of the workforce development pipeline.

**Ricky Gourrier, representing Academica Nevada:**

We want to thank the Assemblywoman for bringing this forward to remove barriers to help kids get this critical experience in the workforce.

**A.J. Delap, representing Opportunity 180:**

We are in support of the measure.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We will return to those wishing to testify by phone. I believe we have two more callers.

**Cheryl Brewster, Senior Executive Dean, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Roseman University College of Medicine:**

I am here in support of A.B. 256. One of the things that resonated with me was the idea we recognize there is a shortage of health care workers in southern Nevada and the entire state of Nevada. As a medical school, we are here trying to encourage and engage with young people at an early stage to pique that interest. As one of the former speakers said, if she had known about nursing opportunities in high school, she might have participated in that journey a lot sooner. One of the things we have to keep in mind as we start to diversify our workforce is having these early opportunities is vital, particularly when we are talking about technical and higher educational attainment opportunities for people to come up into an environment where we are increasing generational wealth. We are taking people who might not have these opportunities presented to them because they do come from a low socioeconomic background and providing them with payment as well as experience to bolster those soft skills, but also to learn intricate details about what it takes to be a health professional. I do hope you are in support of this bill because we do need more doctors in Nevada. That is what I am here to do.

**Lauren Bui, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a junior at West Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas, Nevada. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify for A.B. 256. Personally, I have seen around me that student internships are from personal relationships or opportunities that are not readily available to all students, especially those in underserved areas. This bill will lower the threshold and reduce barriers to internships, which gives all students the opportunity to have more experience and exposure to the workforce they may join later. As a result, that will give us a more robust labor force in Nevada.

Furthermore, internships will give these students guidance and support for their desired career path as well as confirmation if this is what they want to do in the future. Thank you, Assemblywoman Mosca, for bringing this bill forward.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Those remaining in Carson City, if you could be brief, we will then close testimony in support.

**Constance J. Brooks, Interim Vice President, Office of Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

We are in support.

**Michael Flores, Vice President, Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Reno:**

Ditto.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

I am impressed we made it through that. We know Assemblywoman Mosca's bills always bring out the support. [Additional letters in support were submitted, [Exhibit N](#), [Exhibit O](#), and [Exhibit P](#).]

I will close support and move to testimony in opposition to [A.B. 256](#). Is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas who would like to provide opposition testimony? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone waiting to provide opposition testimony? [There was no one.] We will move to testimony in neutral. Is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide neutral testimony?

**Irene Bustamante Adams, Deputy Director and Chief Strategy Officer, Work Force Connections:**

I am here in the neutral position on behalf of Work Force Connections because we are a quasi-government entity, and we are allowed to provide information but not advocate on potential legislation. Therefore, we want you to know that in partnership with Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, Vegas Chamber, College of Southern Nevada, Nevada State College, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Clark County School District, and the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, we launched the regional sector partnerships for each of the southern Nevada emerging industries last year. Those emerging industries included health care, general and advanced manufacturing, information and communication technologies, transportation and logistics, clean technologies, business and financial services, and creative industries. Why is that important? Because these employers in these regional partnership convenings have communicated they are interested in developing a more robust strategy for their talent pipeline issues. Part of that strategy involves work-based learning opportunities for youth that are not complicated to set up. They want to share with the youth the career opportunities that are available among these industries. Many of those careers are ones youth have no idea exist.

We know in southern Nevada we have 46,000 youth who are disconnected from the workforce system. Most of them are recent high school graduates who are not employed and have not continued their education beyond high school. That is why we observe that removing barriers for work-based learning is critical to the success of these students.

**Lisa Levine, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation:**

We are testifying in neutral as a government agency. Here at the Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation, we recognize the value of work-based learning and increasing access for students into these exciting career pathways that aligned with all of our workforce and economic development efforts, strengthening student's social networks, as well as developing their soft skills, which is something we hear both from employers and educators in this space about a significant need that our students are struggling with.

**Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:**

We want to thank the Assemblywoman for bringing this bill forward. We are continuing to work with her to iron out some of our concerns.

**Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education:**

The Department of Education as an agency is testifying neutral on A.B. 256. Work-based learning is an educational strategy that offers students the opportunity to connect classroom learning to authentic business and industry experiences.

To Assemblywoman Taylor's earlier question, in the 2021-2022 school year, 3,788 students participated in one or more work-based learning activities, and 418 of those students earned credits specifically for their work-based learning experiences.

The Department would like to thank Assemblywoman Mosca for bringing this bill forward, collaborating with the Department and stakeholders around work-based learning, and looking to address potential barriers for student participation.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Seeing no one else in person waiting to testify, is there anyone waiting on the phone to provide neutral testimony on A.B. 256.

**Ayana Hernandez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I meant to testify in support earlier. I apologize. I want to say I am a graduate from Canyon Springs High School and now attend New York Institute of Technology. I am very passionate about A.B. 256. I majored in school counseling, and I plan on helping students pursue their dream careers in the future, so this is a very important topic for me.

This bill would have been very beneficial to me as a high school student. I know it will be very significant in the lives of future students. I have seen time and time again students who struggle with not knowing what career they want to pursue, or some who may have already begun a career path but end up realizing they do not necessarily follow that after having experience in the field. Future students will be able to have the feeling of relief when they are finally able to experience a career path of their choosing and have new opportunities because of these internships. These internships will set them up for success and will significantly impact students' futures for the better. I truly hope you vote in favor of A.B. 256.

**Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:**

We will make sure your testimony is classified as support. Are there any other callers in the neutral position? [There were none.] Are there any closing remarks? [There were none.] I will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 256. That brings us to the final agenda item, which is public comment. Is there anyone in Carson City, Las Vegas, or over the phone who would like to provide public comment? [There was no one.] That concludes our business for the day. Our next meeting will be Thursday, March 23, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

This meeting is adjourned [at 3:22 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Funmi Sheddy  
Recording Secretary

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Lori McCleary  
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



## EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is the Work Session document for [Assembly Bill 164](#), presented by Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit D](#) is the Work Session document for [Assembly Bill 54](#), presented by Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit E](#) is the Work Session document for [Assembly Bill 212](#), presented by Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit F](#) is written testimony dated March 21, 2023, presented by Arash Ghafoori, Chief Executive Officer, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, in support of [Assembly Bill 217](#).

[Exhibit G](#) is a document titled "AB217 – Strengthening Support for Students Experiencing Homelessness in Higher Education," submitted by Arash Ghafoori, Chief Executive Officer, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, regarding [Assembly Bill 217](#).

[Exhibit H](#) is written testimony dated March 21, 2023, presented by Theresa Butler, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 217](#).

[Exhibit I](#) is written testimony dated March 21, 2023, submitted by Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 217](#).

[Exhibit J](#) is written testimony submitted by Shaun Griffin, Private Citizen, Virginia City, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 217](#).

[Exhibit K](#) is a bill summary of [Assembly Bill 256](#), submitted by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14.

[Exhibit L](#) is a compilation of letters in support of [Assembly Bill 256](#).

[Exhibit M](#) is a letter from Charter School Association of Nevada, submitted by Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 256](#).

[Exhibit N](#) is a letter submitted by Peter Guzman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Latin Chamber of Commerce Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 256](#).

[Exhibit O](#) is a letter dated March 20, 2023, submitted by Virginia Valentine, President and Chief Executive Officer, Nevada Resort Association, in support of [Assembly Bill 256](#).

[Exhibit P](#) is a letter dated March 21, 2023, submitted by René Cantu, Jr., Executive Director, Jobs For Nevada's Graduates, in support of Assembly Bill 256.