

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

**Eighty-Second Session
April 4, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 12:35 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel



Nick Christie, Committee Manager
Funmi Sheddy, Committee Secretary
Ashley Torres, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Sondra Cosgrove, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Trevor Parrish, Manager, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education
Jennifer Fox, Executive Director, Family to Family Connection
R. Raminyah Ingram, Director, Operations and Community Relations; and Donna Street Community Center and Taking Back the Block Foundation
Aariel Williams, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Andrew LePeilbet, Nevada Chairman, United Veterans Legislative Council
Ross D. Bryant, Executive Director, Military and Veterans Services Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Jose Quiroga, Research Analyst, Nevada System of Higher Education
Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association
Lynn Chapman, representing American Legion Auxiliary, DUBY REID Unit 30, Sparks, Nevada
Michael Flores, Vice President, Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Reno
Constance J. Brooks, Vice President, Office of Government and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Francisco Morales, representing Latin Chamber of Commerce; and Clark County Education Association
Anthony Ruiz, representing Nevada State College
Mike Kelly, State Director, Veterans and Military Families Caucus, Democratic National Committee
Michelee Cruz-Crawford, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Shelbie Swartz, representing Battle Born Progress
Nick Schneider, Policy Analyst, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Kenneth J. Varner, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Kirsten Searer, President, Public Education Foundation
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Steven Horner, President, Nevada State Education Association Retired Teachers and Support Professionals
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association
Keibi Mejia, representing Nevada Association of School Boards
Malena DiMaggio, Program Manager, Immigrant Rights, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Deanna Hua Tran, Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Immigrant Coalition

Fernando Romero, President, Hispanics in Politics
Rudy Zamora, Director of Public Affairs, Teach for America
Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was taken.] Welcome to everyone who is here in Carson City and the folks who are in Las Vegas and anyone viewing online or through our YouTube channel. [Committee rules were explained.] We are going to hear three bills. We will take the bills in order of the agenda, which is Assembly Bill 372, Assembly Bill 279, and finally Assembly Bill 323. I will be presenting A.B. 372, so I will turn over the gavel to Vice Chair Taylor.

[Assemblywoman Taylor assumed the Chair.]

Vice Chair Taylor:

I am now going to open the hearing on Assembly Bill 372. This measure revises provisions relating to higher education. To present this measure, we have our Chair, Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod. She will be joined by Dr. Sondra Cosgrove. Please, Madam Chair, begin whenever you are ready.

Assembly Bill 372: Revises provisions relating to higher education. (BDR 34-704)

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

Thank you, Madam Vice Chair and the most excellent Assembly Committee on Education. I will be presenting with my amazing friend and an amazing all-around person, Dr. Sondra Cosgrove. She will speak to the need for this bill.

I will tell you how this bill came to be. Dr. Cosgrove, in her infinite wisdom, is always bringing groups of stakeholders together to talk about how we can do better, both in our advocacy and in setting kids up for success. For the last 11 years, I have had the extreme pleasure of serving as board president for a nonprofit called Family to Family Connection. In 1998 Family to Family Connection was the brainchild of then-First Lady Sandy Miller. She was ahead of her time in so many things dealing with early childhood. She was talking about the importance of early childhood and parents or whomever—it does not have to be a parent; families look different—being a child's first teacher.

Getting a child ready for school does not mean getting her a backpack and getting all her school clothes together. Getting a child ready for school starts the day you bring that child home or, if you have your child at home, into the other room. Family to Family Connection started with chapters throughout the whole state. Unfortunately, during the recession in 2008 it lost its funding.

One lone Family to Family Connection chapter still survives, due to the board and our executive director starting fundraising years ago with an event called Touch-a-Truck. It has managed to keep our doors open. We operate on a shoestring budget. We hold free family engagement classes out of Cambridge, the recreation center right by the University of

Nevada, Las Vegas. We offer free classes to ages 0 to 5. Not only do parents not feel alone when they have their babies, but we have educators there, whom you will speak to later, who show parents how to engage with their kids.

I am going to keep using the term "parents." I apologize, but "parents" could mean a lot of people. It could mean *abuela*; it could be the person who watches your child after school until you get home, while you work. We know it looks very different in many different ways, but whoever that person is who is providing care to your child has to fill in that role as well.

This bill happened because, as I said, Dr. Sondra Cosgrove put this group together. We are a group of people who talked about where we could make sure our vision comes to reality, because so many times a bill is here in Committee, and a bill is in Revenue, and a bill is in Government Affairs, and this one goes forward but the other two do not. What you are trying to do here is not going to work because these two did not happen as well. A perfect example for this is—we started talking about a vessel that we thought was important—it is Assembly Bill 113. It is an early childhood system through the Governor's Office. Initially, we thought that would probably come to Education. Well, it did not; it went to Government Affairs. I will leave it at that. You can pull up A.B. 113. I know Dr. Cosgrove will do an amazing job telling you what that working group came up with and why you have the bill here today. I will turn it over to you, Dr. Cosgrove.

Sondra Cosgrove, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a history professor at the College of Southern Nevada and executive director of Vote Nevada. Today, I am speaking on my own behalf, not my employers'. I support Assembly Bill 372. For the record, it is April in Las Vegas, and I am freezing too, but we are going to keep going on.

As Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod said, there has been a bunch of us who have been trying to get together to talk mainly about what is happening to the pandemic cohort that is coming out of our school systems and over to our community colleges and universities; the problems we are having with school violence, and some of the issues that I know you all are very aware of.

I want to explain to you where we think there is a connection between the university system, Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), and the folks who are doing good work when it comes to early childhood learning. I work in the space that connects the mission of Nevada's higher education institutions with nonprofit policy development. In this space, you often see me advocating for things like a better behavioral health system because my students not only need access to affordable higher education and training, but also to a high-quality social service system that keeps them healthy and supported. My students learn about voting and civic engagement because we have a strong historical tradition in both areas, but also because students need to learn to advocate for themselves while promoting sound policy changes and choices.

Regarding this bill, while it may seem that there is no connection between a strong early learning policy and higher education, that is not the case. When students arrive at college, we expect that their brains have had access to enriching experiences that facilitate development in ways that make them ready to learn the skills that are needed to be successful citizens and productive workers. But what if that has not happened? Higher education is currently not funded to address developmental delays. Students are dropping out not because they are not a good fit for college, but because they need help acquiring the life skills they missed somewhere along the way as they were becoming young adults.

Where does this bill fit in? This bill addresses a root cause of this problem. Nevada needs a robust early learning ecosystem that empowers parents to focus on brain development at the beginning of a child's life with an array of resources and support from higher education. Having this process in the bill highlights the need for more partnerships to help children, and it informs faculty that we can use our community service requirements and the research requirements that we have in our contracts to contribute to building an early-learning system that will send us students who are already ready for college from day one.

I see this bill as being a way to say there needs to be a web out there, and we need to make sure parents can connect to that web and they can find not only somebody who is probably a specialist in early learning, but also connect to our higher education system that has all kinds of resources that can help that nonprofit group and can help those parents. I am here in support of A.B. 372, and I thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Dr. Cosgrove. Now I will give you an overview of the bill.

First, it authorizes the Board of Regents to enter into an agreement with a nonprofit organization, community entity, or governmental agency to jointly provide families and caretakers with training workshops and resources designed to facilitate family involvement in early childhood education. The bill further outlines provisions relating to such agreements, including the standards that must be met by the organization, entity, or agency, and the allocation of any shared costs. With that, I am open to answering questions.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will begin. In an ideal world, Madam Chair, how does this look? How would this look in practicality?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am going to stick to something I know: Family to Family started doing this even though the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) sometimes has to catch up with things that have already been going on. My daughter was lucky enough to go to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) preschool. I do not know if any of you are familiar with the UNLV preschool, but it is literally one of the best preschools I have ever seen. They really do click all the boxes, but one thing they were missing was the family engagement aspect. They recently went to the Feds and received a grant to have more kids at UNLV preschool who were specifically the

children of students in the teaching cohort. One of the specifics of the grant is that they had to have this family engagement. Well, they came to Family to Family and said, This is not what we do. Now we are working with the students at UNLV to learn that aspect, so not only are the children going to preschool, but the parent or caregiver—whoever is in college—is actually coming and learning that real-time family engagement aspect. That is one option. Dr. Cosgrove, I know you have some other examples as well.

Sondra Cosgrove:

I can tell you, as a faculty member I get evaluated each year. Part of my evaluation for being a community college faculty member is community service. That is oftentimes why you see me out and about in the community because I really enjoy it, but it is actually a contractual obligation that I have.

Every faculty member has that. At the university they have research requirements too. When you are a faculty member and you are thinking about, Well, this is a contractual obligation that I have. What would I like to do that will meet this requirement, will get the most bang for the buck, that is really going to be enriching? This bill will help faculty understand that they can reach out to organizations like Family to Family or other groups and say, Can I help you? Can I volunteer? which might then lead to a contractual agreement, but if nothing else, let faculty know we can meet our contractual obligation for community service by helping organizations that are helping families.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Thank you to both. That seems to make a lot of sense. We do have a couple of other questions.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

The first line says the Board of Regents may enter into an agreement. Are they not able to enter into one now?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are just trying to codify this. As Dr. Cosgrove said, when you have it in NRS, it is very clear to the faculty. I keep using Family to Family Connection, but that is the one I am most familiar with. We have several lawyers on our board and they ask, Are you sure we are allowed to do this? Having it codified is a bit more helpful.

Assemblyman Koenig:

In section 1, subsection 2, paragraph (a) where it talks about standards that must be met, who sets those standards? Do we have any idea what those standards would be? To me, the word "standards" could be a bit vague.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am going to phone a friend because I do not think we laid that out, if that is okay, Vice Chair.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

As the bill is written, since this is an agreement between the Board of Regents and the other entity, those standards would be set as part of the agreement. They would be mutually decided upon between the regents and the entity that is carrying out the program.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

My question is very similar. In the agreement, will there ever be an expectation for the reporting of how funds were utilized and/or how the costs are allocated? I think, based upon counsel's answer, that would be part of the agreement, but I just want to make sure that in fact is accurate.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would think that would stand up to what our counsel said, but then I also would bring up the UNLV preschool example where that was a federal grant, so there is a lot of information that is requested back. I guess it really matters on the scope. We have had UNLV students and Touro [University] students come and help us do intake forms and things because we want to see that too. One thing we have talked about a lot over—I have actually been on the board for 14 years, president for 11—the last 14 years is really watching and coming back and seeing those students who came through Family to Family when they were one, two, and three years old and are still coming back, and they are thriving. You have those anecdotal things, but it is so wonderful to actually see those real metrics. I am all over that, and I would say it would definitely be encouraged, especially if you want to keep those partnerships going.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

That is a great answer because I agree with you, it is all about the metrics. Would there also be an expectation of a disclosure if somebody actually has a family member, or they are also involved in something that is bringing up an agreement? Let us say your board decided to enter into an agreement with somebody who is with UNLV in some way. Would there be an expectation to be able to disclose that during the discussions? Am I making sense with what I am asking?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I did not really understand.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Let us say that you enter into an agreement and your husband owns the company that the agreement is with. Would that private board be expected to do a disclosure? That sort of idea.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

This is all nonprofit work. Everything would be a nonprofit. There would not be an opportunity to enter into agreements with a for-profit company. That is not the intent of the bill at all. Just the people who are out there doing good work and being able to level that up.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Are there any other questions, Committee members? [There were none.] Next, we do want to hear testimony on Assembly Bill 372, and we are going to start with support. We will have 20 minutes of support, 20 minutes of opposition, and 20 minutes of neutral, if necessary. We will start here in Carson City and then we will jump to Las Vegas. Please go ahead.

Trevor Parrish, Manager, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:

The Vegas Chamber is in support of A.B. 372. Studies have shown that early education is a vital component to youth development, and the quality of that education will have implications throughout their childhood and well into the rest of their lives. Giving parents every opportunity to learn the information they need to ensure their children are being effectively educated is crucially important. Because of these reasons, we urge your support of A.B. 372. Thank you for your time.

Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:

Nevada System of Higher Education would like to go on the record in support of A.B. 372.

Vice Chair Taylor:

We will go to Las Vegas.

Jennifer Fox, Executive Director, Family to Family Connection:

I am here in support of Assembly Bill 372 which focuses on early childhood education. As Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod indicated, we do currently have plans with UNLV to work together to provide family engagement programming to their families who are receiving preschool subsidies. Within my work every day, I see the effects of this early childhood education and development on children. I do urge you all to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

R. Raminyah Ingram, Director, Operations and Community Relations; and Donna Street Community Center and Taking Back the Block Foundation:

Peace, blessings, and good afternoon. I am here to express our support for Assembly Bill 372. Our organization strongly believes in the importance of early childhood learning, and we have seen firsthand the positive impact it can have on a child's future. As part of our commitment to early childhood education, we have developed a hip-hop entrepreneurship program that targets high school students, providing them with the necessary skills and tools to succeed in the future. Through this program, students learn about entrepreneurship, leadership, and financial literacy, which are all essential skills for success in the 21st century. However, we believe that this type of education should not start in high school.

Nevada Assembly Bill 372 seeks to establish a comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated system of early childhood care and education in Nevada, aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of these services for families with young children. This bill recognizes that early childhood is a critical period for learning and development and seeks to provide

a foundation for children to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. This includes provisions for workforce development, parent and family engagement, and data collection and evaluation to continuously improve the early childhood system in the state.

What this means to everyday, law-abiding citizens is Assembly Bill 372 wants to make sure that all children in Nevada have a chance to go to school and learn when they are very young, even before they start kindergarten. It wants to help families who may not have a lot of money or who live far away from good schools so that every child can have a good start in life. By investing in early childhood education, we can provide our children with a strong foundation for their future success.

Programs like the hip-hop entrepreneurship program can be adapted for younger children, teaching them important life skills at an early age. Currently, California has the Early Learning and Care for All Kids Act which seeks to provide universal preschool for all 4-year-olds in the state. Oregon currently has the Early Learning Equity Act [Early Childhood Equity Fund], which aims to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education for all children with a focus on those who have been historically underserved. Massachusetts has the Early Education and Care Workforce Council Act which establishes a council to support and develop the early childhood education workforce in the state. We urge you to support A.B. 372 and prioritize early childhood education in our state. By doing so, we can ensure that our children have the tools they need to thrive in today's rapidly changing world. Peace, blessings, and thank you.

Vice Chair Taylor:

Is there anyone else in Las Vegas who would like to testify in support? Seeing no one, is there anyone on the phone line who would like to testify in support of Assembly Bill 372?

Aariel Williams, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am testifying today in my personal capacity, calling to testify in support of A.B. 372 and to thank Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod and Dr. Cosgrove for bringing this bill.

Vice Chair Taylor:

There are no more callers choosing to provide support testimony at this time. Now we will go to any opposition testimony. [There was none.] Now we will go to neutral testimony. [There was none.] We will go to you for any closing remarks.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much, most excellent Committee, for hearing this. There has been a lot of talk about early childhood and universal preschool, and that is fantastic. Family to Family came about in 1998 and was a little ahead of the times. We did not even have mandatory all-day kindergarten at that time; that did not happen until mid-2011. Thank you for considering this. Families look a lot of different ways, but the bottom line is we need to give every child out there the best opportunity to be successful in their lives, and when they are successful in their lives, we all can take a sigh of relief because we know that Nevada is going to be that much better for us and them.

Vice Chair Taylor:

I will now close the hearing on Assembly Bill 372. I will turn the gavel back over to the Chair of the most excellent Committee on Education, and we will go to our next bill hearing.

[Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 279. This measure revises provisions governing a waiver of tuition and registration and certain fees for students who are children of certain veterans. To present this measure, we have Assemblyman D'Silva, who has two copresenters he will introduce. Go ahead when you are ready.

Assembly Bill 279: Revises provisions governing the waiver of tuition and registration and certain fees for students who are children of certain veterans. (BDR 34-531)

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

I actually have a three copresenters; I also have Ross Bryant who is in Las Vegas. I am presenting Assembly Bill 279, which seeks to create a tuition waiver for the children of Purple Heart recipients.

What is the Purple Heart? The Purple Heart is America's oldest military decoration. It stems from the Badge of Military Merit, which was announced by General George Washington in April 1782, more than 240 years ago. The Purple Heart is bestowed for the following reason: being wounded or killed in any action against any enemy of the United States or as a result of an act of any such enemy or opposing armed forces. That right there is a direct quote from the Department of Defense. Simply put, this bill seeks to create a tuition waiver for the children of veterans who have sacrificed considerably for this country. To me personally, that should be enough, but there are more reasons why we need to create this kind of a benefit. I will touch on three, then my copresenters will dig even deeper into the reasons why we are specifically looking at extending, at this time in our history, veterans benefits to the family members of veterans.

One of the reasons why we want to extend the sort of benefit to the children of Purple Heart recipients, combat veterans, is because of the stresses that have been placed on these families. One, you can imagine taking care of a disabled veteran parent and the stresses that might be from that. Two, post-traumatic stress syndrome, the traumatic stress that is oftentimes associated with folks who have been through a combat situation. Mind you, the recipients of this medal have either been wounded in action or have been killed.

Another important thing to consider here is the actual number and the percentages now of Americans who are serving in uniform. This is very important to consider, and this is something that the veteran community, not just here in this state but in this country at large, is really taking into consideration now, vis à vis the garnering of benefits not just for the veterans, but for the veterans' families. During World War II, 11 percent of Americans served in uniform. During Vietnam, that number dropped to 8 percent. This is significant,

and we know this is largely due to the draft. We had a draft in place at the time, and, whether you liked it or not, if your number came up, as our distinguished colleague, Assemblyman McArthur, and also Mr. LePeilbet, may remember from those days, you had to go serve.

There were a larger number of people serving in uniform at that time. This has changed dramatically in the modern era. As an example, during the years of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars—GWOT is what it is called, the global war on terrorism—1 percent of America's population has been serving and participating in this war. One percent has been fighting one hundred percent of all the conflicts that we have been involved with. This is significant because we are seeing a tremendous amount of stress being placed on these families. You are all familiar with the story of a mother or a father having to leave their child and go off to war, not just for one deployment or two deployments, but for three, four, sometimes even five. This is something that is also very prevalent in our National Guard units and reserve units as well.

Imagine coming home to your family and then all of a sudden being ordered to go back to the combat zone multiple times. This is a reality for the families who participated in the global war on terrorism. Remember, this is an all-voluntary fighting force; this is not a draft-related combat recruitment effort. These are people who sign up as volunteers, 1 percent of America's population fighting 100 percent of our wars.

Lastly, there is significant evidence to show that a bill like this can actually boost recruitment and can bring federal dollars into a university system. There is a provision within the GI Bill where you are allowed to give that benefit, if you do not utilize it, to your children. If we are able to add this ancillary state benefit, there is a lot of evidence out there to show that we could actually attract federal dollars following the children of these veterans to Nevada. This is one tuition waiver that will actually bring more money into our state. There is a strong argument made for that.

I want to quickly review some of the specificities of this bill and then hand it over to my distinguished copresenters. Number one, this bill will waive tuition at all state-sponsored Nevada colleges and universities for the children of veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart medal. Number two, there is an amendment [[Exhibit C](#)], I believe in front of you. This amendment does enshrine an age cap. The age cap will be 28 years old or 10 years after the child begins utilizing the benefit. That is the premise of this bill. At this time, I will introduce my copresenters and then turn it over to one of them.

Here, I have Mr. Andrew LePeilbet. It is an honor to have Andy here; Andy is the most decorated veteran in Nevada. He has several Purple Hearts. He also has two Silver Stars and is a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, which is the second-highest medal that we have in our nation aside from the Medal of Honor being the only medal that has ascendancy on this man's decorations. Here, we have Mr. Jose Quiroga, who is from the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), and we also have in Las Vegas, Mr. Ross Bryant, who is the director of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Military and Veteran Services Center. We will start with Mr. LePeilbet.

Andrew LePeilbet, Nevada Chairman, United Veterans Legislative Council:

I am the chairman of United Veterans Legislative Council (UVLC) for the state, representing the 279,000 veterans in our state. I was asked to make some comments related to our children and the Purple Heart for this bill. First of all, before I state that, I want to add that UVLC is highly in support of this bill.

My story is a story I have never told in public. Ever. Even Assemblyman D'Silva, whom I have known for years, I have not told this story to either. I am going to give you an example of the impact to our children. I was wounded in Vietnam and paralyzed from the waist down. Paralyzed, not knowing what was going to happen. You will notice, I walked in here today. I have a cane in my car. I try never to use it. But for 50 years, my children witnessed, every now and then after the war, an ambulance would come and get their dad out of the house because of muscle spasms in my back and pain. That did not happen a lot of times. But my children lived through that. My children watched the days—now I am doing actually much better at 77 than I was doing for decades—I would be bent over like an old, old, man with two canes moving around the house. In order to go to work all those decades, I would roll out of my bed on the floor and pull myself up the dresser, and somehow get through getting dressed. Sometimes I could not even put my socks on. The people I worked with generally did not know it, did not have a clue. I had some times I could not reject—I had to take the cane to work. My children watched all this and suffered through watching their dad. I have not had an ambulance take me out of the house in ten years now, but my youngest daughter was there the last time, and she was paralyzed with fear.

I am pretty strong. I wear the same size clothes I wore at 18. I fit in my 1967 dress blues, which is very annoying to my wife. My point is our children are suffering through all these veterans. The global war on terror veterans who are Purple Heart recipients are really the ones who are the direct beneficiaries of this bill. There are very few Purple Heart recipients from the global war on terror in this state. I worked with Major General Ondra Berry and before him, Brigadier General Michael Hanifan, and we say, Call us, because I am the state chairman of the Purple Heart, we will come and present those medals with you. There were so few that we did not get around to doing that. That does not lessen the fact that every single one of these children of these veterans is suffering with their parents. They just do not talk about it. Ever. That is reason alone why we should support this bill and help these children get going. It is a big weight on their shoulders. A big weight.

Ross D. Bryant, Executive Director, Military and Veterans Services Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:

I am a Cold War veteran, a Desert Storm veteran, 24 years active duty, and I was the ROTC commander at UNLV when the planes hit the building. We commissioned 77 officers who are now majors and colonels in the Army, and I am in support of this bill. I would also like to give a little bit of background.

I have been blessed to run the Military and Veteran Services Center at UNLV since 2012. Over the last 10 years, we have served over 8,000 military-affiliated—mainly veterans from the global war on terror—with their benefits, with over 60,000 certifications of federal dollars to UNLV and to NSHE.

I would also like to add to all the discussion about these kids: I saw an article that said the average time in combat in World War II was about two and one-half years for most combat vets; in Vietnam it was on average about eighteen months for draftees. That did not mean they were not career folks who had multiple tours like our distinguished guest. During this war, there have been over 4, 5, or 6 years in combat for Marines and Army folks who are now going to school across NSHE schools. We have over 10,000 military-affiliated students attending, and they bring in quite a bit of money. In my office, last count was \$25 million to UNLV from these various VA [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs] benefits.

When you talk about Chapter 35, we have had more 100 percent disabled vets of this generation, due to legislation to help veterans get their benefits, than probably since World War II because of the volume of World War II. Every one of those folks who is 100 percent disabled has limited capacity of making future money for their family. That is why the federal government has Chapter 35, which is a stipend for the children of disabled vets, including Purple Heart recipients, to come to UNLV and they get \$1,448 in a stipend to pay for everything, so it is not full funding. I know that asking for a grant waiver was too expensive with the current budget and with NSHE and everything else, and I totally understand that, but supporting this Purple Heart bill would be a step in the right direction.

Other states have full grant waivers: California, Florida, Virginia, and Texas, so a lot of these families are going to go to those states. I hope they come to this state because we have great services to help them. These families are very resilient families after multiple deployments, so when you talk about retention rates, and you talk about someone who is going to graduate and go the distance, about 60 percent of these family members make it to graduation and go on to employment either in our state or throughout the nation. I highly support this. I am proud of Assemblyman D'Silva, who is also a Purple Heart recipient, for his tenacity to serve as an Assemblyman and present this bill.

Jose Quiroga, Research Analyst, Nevada System of Higher Education:

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Committee, for considering A.B. 279. My copresenters have already articulated well the need for this bill and whom it would serve. I will limit myself to a brief background on this bill.

Assembly Bill 279 builds on the current Purple Heart fee waiver which, because it is limited to only Purple Heart recipients, has only served between 1 to 2 students per year since inception in 2019. Although we do not yet know how many students it may attract into the system or who of current students in NSHE it will benefit, we expect that A.B. 279 will increase the population that will receive these fee waivers because it will expand the benefit to the children of Purple Heart recipients.

I also want to commend the language in the amendment introduced today because it begins to introduce consistency for dependent fee waiver recipients. That is one area we know, as fee waivers have been introduced over the years, where there has not been that consistency. This would help introduce similar language as is currently in statute for prisoners of war and service members who are missing in action. Beneficiaries would be treated the same way in this Purple Heart bill. With that, thank you again to the Chair, members of the Committee, and to Assemblyman D'Silva for working collaboratively on A.B. 279.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

With that, Madam Chair and Committee, I will stand for questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for bringing folks out here to share your stories. We really appreciate it. It is not lost on me that only 1 percent of the population serves us, so thank you very, very much. I mean that from the bottom of my heart. I see some questions.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

Sirs, thank you for your years of service—four Purple Hearts—all of you. Thank you for bringing this bill. There is not enough that we can do to show appreciation for the Purple Hearts and their families. I appreciate the amendment as well. There are time limits in there for spouses or for children. Should we pass this and the Governor signs it, is there a retroactive piece to this for the child of a Purple Heart recipient who did not have the opportunity, but may run up against that ten-year limit? Have you thought about that?

Assemblyman D'Silva:

No, the way this bill is written, it would not. This is a conversation that has come up, but we just could not get there. It would be a considerable extension of a benefit. We believed, as a cohort, this would be the appropriate and right step at this moment. Unfortunately, it is not retroactive to those veterans who fought in Vietnam or World War II. The language as written is capped at the age of 28; it would mostly benefit veterans who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, and potentially some during the Gulf War.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you, Assemblyman D'Silva, for bringing this forward. Thank you, sir, for your service. I know we say that a lot and it sounds kind of hollow, but I hope you understand that it is not hollow coming from me. It really is Thank you. I will preface with my service. I am also retired United States Air Force. Dad, who also served our country during Vietnam, like you, can still get in his uniform. It is just one of those things you guys do.

In case anyone out there is asking about Gold Star families, why does this bill not address them? For the record, could you explain why Gold Star family members were not included in this bill?

Assemblyman D'Silva:

We already have language in place in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* that does cover the Gold Star families. We have the Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship, which is a benefit now for the children of Gold Star families. Gold Star family members are affected by a service member who was killed in the line of duty. We do have that in place. We also have federal dollars in place to help those children as well. This language is particularly looking at the gap there. As I mentioned in the presentation, the Purple Heart is bestowed to not just wounded vets, but also veterans who are killed in combat. We do have benefit packages in place for those children of service members who are killed in combat. This bill is looking at extending that to those who are wounded, who did not receive the Gold Star benefits.

Andrew LePeilbet:

Assemblywoman Thomas, the fact is that most Gold Star families are actually families of Purple Heart recipients. That fallen soldier, airman, marine, or sailor—they are, as a result of being killed in action and service, making that family a Gold Star family. There is a Purple Heart awarded to nearly all of them, so they are covered under the Purple Heart.

Assemblyman Koenig:

My father served in Vietnam. He never received a physical wound, but it stayed with him the rest of his life. I think anything we can do with these families is great. I do not want to diminish anyone at all with this question, but I am a numbers guy. Can you tell me how many Purple Heart members there are in this state? Just for my own curiosity, I do not even have a concept of how many people we are talking about.

Andrew LePeilbet:

We have been working on that question for the last 12 years. The best estimate, having worked with the Department of Veterans Services, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and all the records that we pulled, is there are 5,000, maybe 5,800, in the state, of whom about 85 to 90 percent are of my era. In fact, Vietnam vets. The vast majority of them are a bunch of old guys and gals from Vietnam. It is generally 5,000 to 5,800—the best estimate we have been able to come up with. A lot of that is connected to the records that exist because it is not a reportable thing. There is no master list somewhere, but we have almost 1,800 Purple Heart license plates through the DMV and several other recordkeeping elements in the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

That is very true. As Mr. LePeilbet mentioned, we believe the number to be around 5,000 to 6,000. When I asked for the data from the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, they could find only about 1,000 in the state, most of them being in Clark County. There are around 660 identified Purple Heart recipients in Clark County, but we know that does not match with the actual records. We see DMV is telling a different story. If you look at the overarching statistics in this state, Nevada is one of the states that has the highest veteran-to-civilian ratio, anywhere from 8 to 10 percent, and ranks seventh in the country in

terms of the veterans population. So, we believe there are a larger number of Purple Heart recipients than the 1,000 number that is provided by the Nevada Department of Veterans Services.

Also, this idea of an era is important in this conversation, especially with the amendment now defining an age cap. To put things into perspective: During World War II, the U.S. government awarded around one million Purple Hearts—a little more than one million killed or wounded in action. During Vietnam, the number is roughly about 350,000; in the Korean War we are looking at about 118,000 to 120,000; in the Gulf War about 1,000; and in the global war on terrorism, the number has actually gone up since the Gulf War to 50,000. The number is rising because many of these Purple Heart petitions are still being adjudicated, and we are not even incorporating into this award those with traumatic brain injuries, which also qualifies them for the benefit. We believe that number is going to increase as these petitions are being heard and people apply for their combat-wounded benefits. That is a number that is in flux, and I am glad you asked that question to clarify the numbers, Assemblyman Koenig.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I want to echo my peers who have thanked you all for your service. My question has to do with the amendment, but more importantly also with the other language, in particular on page 3, line 31, and again on page 4, line 17, where it very specifically says children; yet the amendment is also including spouses. Is there a reason why the spouses were not included in the other language?

Assemblyman D'Silva:

The amendment you are referring to is actually not the right amendment. That was an amendment from NSHE, but we now have the proper amendment in front of you [[Exhibit C](#)].

That is a good question. We should consider extending the benefits to the spouses as well. That hopefully is a conversation we can have with NSHE; that could actually be done with the Board of Regents, I believe. I know there have been several other extensions of veterans-based benefits in other states where the board has actually added the benefit to spouses of veterans. There is a bill currently going through the Assembly that is also dealing with a similar sort of issue. We should definitely look into extending the benefits to spouses as well.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for being open to allowing the spouses to also be considered. As we continue to change the look of our armed forces, it is important for everybody to be included.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

As a spouse, I appreciate the question from Assemblywoman Anderson. I am trying to understand what the cap is for. Is it because we want to make sure we are hitting a certain generation, or is it so that the benefits are not being extended so much?

Jose Quiroga:

The cap goes to two points. One being that it would be up to the sponsor of the bill to try to define the population you are trying to serve as being recent dependents of service members who received a Purple Heart. But it also is in order to introduce that consistency. We are looking to introduce consistency into how dependent beneficiaries of fee waivers are treated across fee waivers. We proposed this wording—in the paper you have in front of you today [\[Exhibit C\]](#), it would be beginning with, "A child may use the fee waiver granted pursuant to this section . . ."—that would be the exact wording describing how dependents of prisoners of war and service members missing in action are currently treated.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

To add to that, we are still working with NSHE in regard to what the final language will be in the amendment. There is something important to consider here too, even with this newer generation of the global war on terrorism. The heaviest fighting we saw during this time frame was between the years 2004 to 2008-09. The surge was a part of this, the first and second battles of Fallujah, which was the heaviest fighting we had seen since the Vietnam era. If you had a child who was eight or nine years old waiting for you back home and you were serving in combat during this time, that child is either aged out or is going to be aged out soon. So a conversation we do want to continue having with NSHE is to see if we can maybe put a sunset clause on the age and then remain consistent from there on out. We are definitely looking at some of the data we have, and I want to try to benefit as many families as possible through the passage of this bill.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I forgot to say that I would like to appear on this. You have other veterans on the bill, and you forgot me. I would appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I thought we had you here. Assemblywoman Thomas, you are on there.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

The amendment [\[Exhibit C\]](#) is being passed out. Members, are we good? [There were no more questions.] You can sit back, and we will open it up to testimony in support.

Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association:

We represent the certified professionals in the Washoe County School District. I am here to speak in strong support of Assembly Bill 279. On a personal level, my stepbrother was a wounded vet who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. My grandfather also served in the Air Force, and my great-grandfather was a Marine. Military service is very strong in my family. Any opportunities to better support the veterans in our state are something we need to champion.

Lynn Chapman, representing American Legion Auxiliary, Doby Reid Unit 30, Sparks, Nevada:

I am a 48-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. My dad was a World War II vet, and I started thinking about it, and I even have a great-great-grandfather who was in the Civil War. I am a 10 times past president of the American Legion Auxiliary as well, so I have known quite a few military families and their kids, and I have come in contact with them over many years. The families I know had a difficult time trying to afford a college education for their kids. Our military families have sacrificed so much. This bill would hopefully encourage the children of Purple Heart recipients to achieve their goals in life. We should support the military families and pass A.B. 279.

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

On behalf of our Office of Veterans Services, I am here in strong support of A.B. 279. I want to thank the sponsor, Assemblyman D'Silva, not only for his service but for bringing this bill forward. I have known Mr. D'Silva since the fourth grade, and he has been a friend ever since. To see his service, not just for our country but for our community, is truly inspiring. I am proud to support this bill.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone in Carson City who wants to come up?

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

We thank Assemblyman D'Silva for his collaborative efforts in including the UNLV Military and Veteran Services Center and our executive director, Ross Bryant. We thank him also for his inclusion and for being a leader and champion for veterans throughout the state, not just for our campus but throughout the state and throughout the system. We are in strong support of this legislation. We are proud to report that last month, UNLV was named one of the nation's top 10 veteran-friendly campuses; we are quite proud of the services and the support that we provide our students. We appreciate this legislation to help augment what we can do for them.

Francisco Morales, representing Latin Chamber of Commerce:

We are also in very strong support of this bill. I have not known Assemblyman D'Silva since fourth grade, but we have been friends for a long time. I went to high school with his brother, we played soccer together, and I am so thankful for his service and the service of every one of you who are here, and Assemblywoman Thomas. To help support these families who gave so much for our country is what this bill is intended to do, and the Latin Chamber is in strong support of that. We urge your support.

Anthony Ruiz, representing Nevada State College:

We, too, are in strong support of this bill. We were happy to support the initial waiver for Purple Heart recipients last time. We know there are broader conversations around some of the costs of these waivers and we know those are ongoing, but we see no reason not to support the extension of this waiver to the children of Purple Heart recipients. We will be in strong support and urge your support as well.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you. Is there anyone else in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide support? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone lines?

Mike Kelly, State Director, Veterans and Military Families Caucus, Democratic National Committee:

I am chairman of the Democratic Veterans and Military Families Caucus. I am testifying in support of this legislation, echoing everything everyone has said. I applaud Assemblyman D'Silva, who is a member of the caucus, for putting this bill forth, and we look forward to seeing it implemented in the future.

[[Exhibit D](#) was submitted in support of [A.B. 279](#).]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone else on the line? [There was no one.] We will open it up to opposition testimony to [Assembly Bill 279](#). [There was none.] Lastly, we will open it up to neutral testimony. [There was none.] I invite the presenters back up to the table for closing remarks.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the most awesome, most excellent, most amazing Education Committee, for hearing us out and hearing our bill presentation. I want to thank my copresenters, Mr. Jose Quiroga from NSHE, Mr. Andrew LePeilbet from the Military Order of the Purple Heart—again, I want to say thank you for your service and sacrifice for this country; it is a true honor having you here in our presence—and also Mr. Ross Bryant, director of the UNLV Veterans Services Center. I urge quick passage from this Committee and thank you for your support.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much. With that, we will close the hearing on [Assembly Bill 279](#), and we will open the hearing on [Assembly Bill 323](#). This measure revises provisions relating to education. To present this measure, we have Assemblywoman Torres, who has a copresenter in Las Vegas whom she will introduce. Please begin when you are ready.

[Assembly Bill 323](#): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-114)

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Assembly District No. 3:

Good afternoon, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair Taylor, and members of the Assembly Committee on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present [Assembly Bill 323](#) today,

which at its core aims to build the next generation of Nevada educators and ensure all young Nevadans are afforded a right to high-quality education.

As all of us in this room are acutely aware, our state faces a critical shortage of educators for our children. Even more dire is the lack of teachers who look and share the same lived experiences as the students they serve. Assembly Bill 323 works to meet this challenge head-on by coordinating existing state resources and making regulatory changes to make the teaching profession more accessible while preserving high-quality professional standards. This bill has three key components. First, it eliminates the barriers to licensing for educators; second, it gives permissive language for schools to pay student teachers; and lastly, it requires the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) to develop a plan to expand awareness and eliminate barriers to eligible applicants for the Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching grant program. At this time, I will hand it over to Dr. Michele Cruz-Crawford, a principal in southern Nevada, and a regent, before I walk you through the amendment [[Exhibit E](#)].

Michelee Cruz-Crawford, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Thank you so much, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair Taylor, and the wonderful Committee on Education. I am here today to talk about some components of the bill. This bill is about eight years in the works, and I think this is the first and only time I can say I am actually a subject-matter expert. I obtained my doctorate last month with a dissertation titled "Increasing Teacher Diversity Through Pathways." I delved into all the most current research for that. Basically, over the past eight years I have been trying to close that gap on diversity teacher pathways within the state of Nevada by identifying barriers and closing them. I actually do a similar thing. I am an officer with the Nevada National Guard, and we close gaps within all levels to make sure that our state demographics meet our enlisted and officer demographics.

I am going to share some antecedent evidence and some stories for the first part of the bill; I also have some research. Section 1, subsection 8, talks about developing a strategic plan for the recruitment of teachers by specifically looking at the translation of academic transcripts in languages other than English. We actually have something similar in place of that, but I wanted to share a story. About eight years ago when I first came to my school in east Las Vegas as the administrator, we had a paraprofessional in the pre-K program. About three years into leading her as administrator, I was working on a paraprofessional pathways and she came to me and said, I have my teaching degree in Colombia, and I said, What? You have your teaching degree in Colombia? She said, Yes, I do, but I cannot teach here because they will not accept the student teaching I did in Colombia. I quickly sat down and looked at her transcripts with her. I called the Nevada Department of Education and worked with an analyst to identify that her student teaching did translate to student teaching, meeting the department's needs. My biggest takeaway from this is there is a lot of subjectivity in looking at transcripts and a lot of our future teachers from other countries do not have an understanding of the complicated regulations within the Nevada Department of Education in looking at transcripts. I do not know whether our analysts do either, so I think this strategic

plan is going to help. If I had not been able to sit down with her to look at that, she would never have become a licensed teacher because she could not afford to retake those 12 credits or take time off of work.

The next section I want to talk about is really the meat of the work I have been doing. Over the last five years, I conducted a study within the state to identify paraprofessional licensure barriers for diverse staff and first-generation college students. Section 3 talks about when our future teachers could not pass the PRAXIS, they would be able to take a course equivalency and get a B or better. Basically, it is a pathway of either PRAXIS, or if they cannot pass that, they would take a course equivalency. In June of 2018, this was already a regulation within the Nevada Department of Education. The language removed on July 26, 2018, was, after not passing the test described in section 3, subsection 1, an applicant with a grade B or better in a course of study—I think I am missing some of the pieces, but basically the language we are reinstating is language we have already had.

What has happened between 2018 and now? Now it is only PRAXIS passing that can get our teachers licensed. That is really stopping a lot of our diversity from moving forward. Right now, only 38 percent of Black candidates and 57 percent of Hispanic candidates ever pass the practice exam, compared to 75 percent of candidates. That comes from the National Council on Teacher Quality. The National Council on Teacher Quality estimates that about 8,600 candidates of color are unable to enter the classroom because of the license barrier. The teaching profession is about 80 percent white right now nationally, and the majority of the student population is not close to that.

As I have been doing this research, one of the biggest concerns is, are we lowering the bar? We have found that students perform better on their proficiency exams when they have a teacher of color. What we are creating is basically a dangerous cycle by creating barriers to teachers of color and having teachers who do not represent their ethnicity. If we want to raise the bar, we really need to make sure we are diversifying our teacher pipeline.

I am going to add one last thing because I want to make this brief. Looking at states that surround Nevada, there are currently 20 states that do not require the basic skills test that we do in Nevada; four of those states are ranked in the top 10 nationally; four of the states that do not require the PRAXIS border Nevada—Utah, Idaho, Oregon, and California. California offers alternative courses in lieu of PRAXIS, and Nevada is really on an island with its requirements. Thank you for your time, and I will be here for any questions.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Thank you, Dr. Cruz-Crawford, for making sure we understand the need for this piece of legislation. I am now going to review the specifics of the bill as amended. As a reminder to the Committee, although you all have seen how I do my amendments, the left side is the amendment, and the explanation includes the language as amended as well as the other language in that section; it is a quick summary and reference for you all [[Exhibit E](#)].

Section 1 requires NDE to create a plan for decreasing the processing time for education licensure and renewal. This is a complaint I have heard time and time again from educators. This requires the department to create a plan to decrease that processing time. It additionally requires NDE to post a transcript translation process on their website. From conversations with the Nevada Department of Education, my understanding is the plan process already exists. That being said, before session started, I met with all of the principals in my district. One of the concerns they had specifically was the fact they had staff members who had difficulty getting their transcripts translated who would otherwise be able to work as teachers on their campuses, but instead had other education roles, sometimes working as custodians on their campus because of the difficulty getting their transcript translated.

Section 2. This section will be removed as it is unnecessary. The Nevada Department of Education is currently providing the regulations for the family engagement class.

Section 3. I am going to go through what it says, and then I will talk about the amendment. It requires NDE to create an alternative to the PRAXIS I exam, which is a requirement that covers the core. It is going to be your English language arts, writing, math; there might be one more part. The PRAXIS I is the general competency exam, and that aligns with the working group's recommendations. During the interim, there was a working group for the Nevada Department of Education, and they looked into the PRAXIS I, and this is one of the recommendations they had as well as to create alternatives, which is what many other states are already doing. Additionally, it requires the Commission on Professional Standards in Education (the Commission) to study the importance of the PRAXIS II and pedagogy test.

For those of you who are not educators, I am going to explain the amount of testing we have to do to become teachers. The PRAXIS I is a basic knowledge test. Unfortunately, when you look at this basic knowledge test, there are significant barriers. Many teachers take this over and over and over again. The important thing to know about this test is it is not aligned with the standards that we are teaching. You can be a pre-K teacher, and if you struggle to pass the math or the writing—my sister is dyslexic and had a hard time. I do not know that she appreciates that to be on the record, but my sister is dyslexic, and she had a difficult time passing the writing practice. She had to take it multiple times in order to pass. That has nothing to do with her job or her ability to teach science. She is a phenomenal science educator. I think that was an unnecessary barrier for her.

Then there is also the PRAXIS II. The PRAXIS II is looking specifically at the subject area. For example, I am an English teacher, so I took the English subject test, the PRAXIS II; I can tell you without a doubt that PRAXIS does not demonstrate that I am a quality English teacher. The reason I say that is because what that PRAXIS does is it gives you a passage and it tells you, Name the author. Now let me tell you, there is not one single time I have ever done that in an English class with my students. That would not be good teaching, and it does not align to the common core standards that we teach. That is the PRAXIS II.

Lastly is the pedagogy test. Quite honestly, the pedagogy test similarly gives you a concept, and it tells you to name the education theorist behind it. The behavior is this; what is the name of the theory? It does have some lesson planning components at the end. This all being said, I do think as regards the PRAXIS I, we have enough evidence here in the state of Nevada—and the working group has already looked at creating alternatives to the PRAXIS I. I understand, regarding PRAXIS II and pedagogy test, we have not had those conversations. I would like those conversations to take place during the interim.

The amendment requires that the Department of Education study the PRAXIS II and the pedagogy test, grant authority to the Commission to make changes or regulations upon the termination of the study as appropriate, and by the end of February 2025, the Commission must present the recommendations to legislative committees or for presentation to the Education Committee so we can have those recommendations and really take a look at that, because I do think we are going to have a similar conversation in two years.

Section 4. Currently, students who are waiting for degrees to confer cannot receive their education license. How this works is also very technical: I graduated from a university in a different state. I am waiting for my degree to confer which can take about two to three months depending on the institution. I have already graduated; my university will tell you I have fulfilled my requirements for graduation, but the degree does not say conferred; now, I cannot yet start teaching in the state because I cannot prove that the degree has conferred. There are exceptions here in the state of Nevada for NSHE because NSHE automatically talks to NDE—there is communication between those two systems—so NSHE grads can immediately start teaching here in the state of Nevada, but students from other states are meeting barriers. My understanding is there are some regulations that have been helpful in making sure those graduates are able to immediately start teaching, but it really is discretionary, so we want to put into statute that those teachers would have access to a provisional license which would require them to still get in those transcripts that demonstrate their degree has conferred. This requires NDE to create that process. I am not saying how they have to do it, but this allows for NDE to create that process.

Section 5 gives permissive language for student teachers to be paid. As an educator who has had many student teachers, unfortunately student teachers are not able to be paid during their experience. This is an unpaid internship. Unfortunately, many colleges of education continue to tell their students that they cannot have a job and student teach. That is actually why I did an alternative route to licensure. I was told if I did the teaching program—and I would have been one semester away from a bachelor's in education—I would not be able to work and go to school. That just is not the reality for many students today. It is not the reality for first-generation students. It is not the reality for largely the community of color and future educators. Many of us work and go to school. That is just the reality.

Additionally, there is room for us to create incentive programs. This permissive language is not requiring districts to pay their student teachers, but it is saying this might be an option. This could be a recruitment strategy. I have spoken with some schools that are very

interested in this option. Nonetheless, there continue to be barriers, so this would be very helpful. As written, the bill applies to teachers, counselors, and administrators. The amendment would expand this to include student social workers working in the school.

Section 6 requires school districts to provide teachers with the family engagement course at no cost to the teacher. Currently, educators are required to take this course for licensure and are usually required to pay for the course themselves. Although there is some permissive language in the regs, I am saying it has to be available at no cost to the teacher.

When I first started teaching, there was an elderly teacher who taught in and had retired from New York public schools. He had taught for over 30 years in New York public schools. Unfortunately, when he came to Nevada he had to pay for this college class on family engagement. Additionally, it does a better service to our teachers to have those family engagement courses within their community. Many of the teachers I know who took this course took them from other institutions like Southern Utah University. What ends up happening is they do not understand family engagement—we are not providing them the education in family engagement in the community that they are serving. The intent of the original legislation is to make sure educators understand the community they are working within, the community that they are serving, and I do believe that providing this at no cost to the teacher, one, ensures teachers have access to that training and that it is not an additional barrier to licensure, and two, ensures teachers better understand the communities they serve.

Section 7 and section 8 are conforming changes. Section 9 and section 10 will be removed; I understand there is a bill in the Senate that deals with this topic, so I am not trying to compete on the work that this other working group has done. I am removing sections 9 and 10 [[Exhibit E](#)].

I am adding a new section that requires NDE and NSHE to develop a plan to expand awareness and eliminate barriers for the Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching scholarship programs and require that the department present to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education in 2024. This legislative body has made phenomenal advancements to ensure that our future teachers have access to scholarships and grants that will make sure they get through these education programs. That being said, I have had multiple student teachers since the last legislative cycle, and none of them knew about any of the programs that we had, and that was very disappointing. We have to do something. The fact that I am the one telling them—it should not have to come directly from a legislator for our students to know—I think there is a lot of work that we can do to make sure more of our students have access. Unfortunately, there were unused funds last cycle. This will hopefully help make sure there is a plan and that we are developing a strategy toward expanding that.

There is no change to section 11, but essentially it implements the bill upon passage of regulation and by July 1, 2024, for all other purposes. At this time, I am ready for any questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much, Assemblywoman Torres. We do have a few questions.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I have a couple of questions. The first is, you spoke about the family engagement course. Is that course offered by the districts?

Assemblywoman Torres:

My understanding is that current regulations allow the districts to provide that course. Unfortunately, there are many districts that are not currently providing it. This would require that it be made available at no cost.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

Using the example that you gave, if that district was in Clark County and did not provide that training, then that teacher from New York would have had to find some other place to get that training and then pay for the course, where a district itself could offer that training, or for the smaller districts, a district could partner.

Assemblywoman Torres:

One hundred percent. In my conversations with educators, I have heard of no one who received this training who did not have to pay for it themselves. Every educator I know has had to pay for this training himself. This would require that the training be made available to them at no cost. Additionally, in my conversation with the Nevada Department of Education, they did state they would be able to partner. We wanted to make sure there is permissive language for the districts to partner with the Northwest Regional Professional Development Program, which is our professional development provider.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

My second question. Congratulations to your copresenter on getting your doctorate; great job. Your copresenter mentioned a very similar passage that removed the requirement for the PRAXIS I and allowed instead for there to be a test that was removed in 2018. It got me thinking. Can you give us a little bit more history on teacher licensure in our state? I did not know that was in there and taken out. That is curious.

Assemblywoman Torres:

There used to be alternatives to the PRAXIS. Unfortunately, it went through regulation. To be abundantly honest, it was probably something that was not noticed by the board at the time; they did not see a reason for us to have an alternative for the PRAXIS. Maybe it was not being used frequently, or there was not a large group of people coming out to say this is something that we need. I do not know whether there is a very strong lobby for educators pushing for removing teacher licensure—that is not really a client anybody would have, but building off of that, it is important for us to look at the history of teacher licensure exams.

With the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), segregation in the classroom was overturned. Unfortunately, there was never a requirement for us to integrate teaching forces. Therefore, across the nation many Black educators were immediately fired in order to undermine the integration efforts while white school boards, superintendents, and legislators designed new barriers to prevent Black educators from being placed in the newly desegregated schools. Unfortunately, teacher licensure exams were a part of that. Tests like the PRAXIS—these examinations under the guise of testing the competency of Black educators—were an intentional tool to retain an exclusivity to the teaching profession. This is a legacy we still live with. It is a legacy that we hope to correct with this bill. Unfortunately, with the passing and implementation of teaching licensure exams, the exams did exactly what they were then intended to do, which was to prevent Black and Brown educators from becoming teachers.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I appreciate that bit of history. Thank you so much.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are going to go to our committee counsel who is going to go over that regulation.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

The regulation that was referenced is R048-17. It was a regulation of the Commission on Professional Standards in Education. It was ultimately approved by the Legislative Commission on June 26, 2018. It amended *Nevada Administrative Code* 391.036 which contained those testing requirements. Before the regulation, either the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PRAXIS I) administered by Educational Testing Service or the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) prepared by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing was required. Alternatively, an applicant could show evidence that he had received a masters or more advanced degree which required passage of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). It also allowed alternatives for having received an undergraduate degree with at least a 3.0 GPA and certain minimum scores on the GRE, or not passing the PRAXIS I and receiving at least a grade of B or better in the relevant coursework. What the regulation did was eliminate the options to receive an undergraduate degree and receive a satisfactory score on the GRE, or to complete coursework, receiving a grade of B or better as well as eliminating the ability to take and pass the CBEST.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for that. Next question.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I appreciate this bill greatly. I am not an educator, but I certainly am aware of the pipeline issue that we have, and I appreciate your efforts, Assemblywoman Torres, to try to help solve that issue. My question is for Ms. Cruz-Crawford, and congratulations. I think it was you who said that four of the top ten states in the nation do not require the PRAXIS exam. Could you tell us what states those are?

Michelee Cruz-Crawford:

Assemblywoman Hansen, I will probably need about five minutes. If not, I will send it to Assemblywoman Torres to share with the Committee.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

That is fine; if you could, that would be nice to get on the record. My other question is not coming to mind, so maybe I will do a follow-up later.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Ms. Cruz-Crawford, we will give you time to find that if you can.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for bringing forward this bill. Today is Maya Angelou's birthday, and I feel like this is a phenomenal bill, because in the words of Maya Angelou: You may not control all the events that happened to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them. Thank you for not allowing our profession to be reduced by them, by bringing forward some of this language. It is wonderful.

I do have two questions that are very specific to language that is being proposed. The first set is on page 8; the language of "may" is still present, but the information on your chart—" . . . may compensate a student teacher assigned . . . ," including the social worker on line 26. It still says "may." I do not know whether you are speaking in that way of having that be "shall." Then also on that same page, lines 36 and 42, which has to do with the training, again, that says "may," but in your conceptual amendment, you wanted those to be "shall." I just want to make sure I was understanding that correctly.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Can you clarify that part two of the question? I do not know what page number you are referencing.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

No problem. It is page 8, section 5.

Assemblywoman Torres:

That is the first part. Can you do that second part?

Assemblywoman Anderson:

The second part is also on page 8, at section 6, lines 36 and 42.

Assemblywoman Torres:

The "may" on page 8 is definitely intentional because it is permissive language for the districts to pay the student teachers. For example, some public charter schools have actually asked to be able to pay student teachers as an incentive to keep their teachers there. That is

something we could be doing as larger districts as well, especially given that some of our larger districts have hundreds of vacancies every single year. Unfortunately, that is not something that is being done, so this is permissive language for us to do that.

This could allow advocates and supporters to push for us to expand paid student teaching. This is really an opportunity for them to do so. I also think there were missed opportunities when we were receiving federal funds. We could have been investing in those programs. On Friday, during the hearings for Washoe County and Clark County, we talked about some of the ways the districts were using ARPA [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021] and ESSER [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief] funds by putting them into teacher programs. You could have more appropriately put them into paid student teaching options within your districts. That could have been very helpful in helping get teachers across the finish line, but then hopefully recruiting them and retaining them. That really is a missed strategy for us as a state.

Then section 6 of the bill has to do with family engagement. The amendment does address that. It requires the school districts to provide teachers with a family engagement course at no cost. It is eliminating the permissive language and requiring the school districts to do so.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you so much for that clarification.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Torres, for bringing this bill forward. This is an excellent bill. I want to commend you on this. I was meeting with teachers this past weekend, and they brought up every single one of these issues. This is an omnibus bill that covers so much of what we need to cover moving into this next school year.

My question was particularly focused on the compensation now for the student teachers. What do you imagine that to be? Would that be something like an hourly rate that some of the districts have already contractually expressed, or would it be a stipend? What do you visualize as the sort of payment we would have for student teachers?

Assemblywoman Torres:

I am a big supporter of paid internships because that is how you give people opportunities to programs and situations that they would not have otherwise. I cannot be the only educator who chose to take an alternative route to licensure, maybe chose not to become a teacher, because programs were saying you cannot be paid while student teaching. Yes, you have to work 40 hours a week and more because you have to lesson plan outside of that time and grade. I know I am not the only person who was in that circumstance. That being said, any payment would be better than what the current system is, which is we just do not pay our student teachers.

The reality is, for those of you not in the profession, student teachers are doing the bulk of the work. They might have a licensed teacher in there with them, although not necessarily all the time; they are running that classroom; they are working, doing the equivalent of the work of a long-term sub, but they are not compensated for that time at all, and they are not able to be compensated for that time at all. In my conversations with the colleges of education, I saw there is a change in the thinking of how we recruit individuals to the profession. We should not have to reduce ourselves or degrade the individuals in those programs. Maybe 50 years ago most teacher candidates were living at home with their parents and they could do this. Times have changed. Times were probably hard then too. I remember being six years old, and my mom was student teaching and how hard it was for her to have to navigate that with only one person working at home and having to figure out child care and all of those—I think this is going to make a significant difference for our future teachers.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other questions, Committee?

Michelee Cruz-Crawford:

I have the four states. I do want to let you know I am a principal of a school in east Las Vegas, and I have been working through these paraprofessional pathways, leading from my own seat. I have zero openings this year, and I have not had any openings for the past eight years by doing these pathways. The four states that are ranked the highest—they do go back and forth—the four states that are the highest that do not require the basic skills test or the PRAXIS test are Connecticut, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you. We will have you sit back and invite anyone up here who is in support. Begin when you are ready.

Shelbie Swartz, representing Battle Born Progress:

I am a graduate of the Clark County School District. I am here in support of A.B. 323 because our school systems are hemorrhaging teachers, and with them, hemorrhaging years of talent and experience that our children so badly need. For those teachers who do not leave, they are forced to grapple with a severe shortage of educators, making their workloads that much larger. Teachers are struggling. They are faced with a lack of resources, a lack of trust from their administration, and a lack of respect from the public. As of right now, not nearly enough is being done to keep our teachers in our schools and to assist new teachers in entering the field with confusing, costly, and prohibitive barriers to licensing. With A.B. 323, we can support our teachers by incentivizing new professionals to enter the field, alleviating the strain they are facing, and giving our educators the support they have been begging for. We can no longer leave these teachers out in the cold to shoulder the burden caused by restrictive licensing policies and a lack of incentives to join the profession. With this policy, we will attract much-needed diversity into our classrooms, and all of these things combined will help our kids learn. [Testifier submitted [Exhibit F](#) in support.]

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

Thank you to Assemblywoman Torres for bringing this legislation forward. Education has historically been one of our top priorities, and the current teacher shortage has been a contributing factor to the state of education in Nevada. The Vegas Chamber is in support of A.B. 323 as it takes a multipronged approach to addressing this shortage. We also appreciate the added degree of accountability in requiring the superintendent to produce a strategic plan for recruitment as well as streamlining the process to allow certain exemptions with defined qualifiers and certain proficiencies to open access to other qualified professionals. We urge your support of A.B. 323.

Kenneth J. Varner, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:

We are thrilled to speak in support of this great bill from Assemblywoman Torres. I also direct the Nevada Educator Preparation Institute and Collaborative, and at UNLV we are leading the way preparing paraprofessionals. Multiple hundreds of paraprofessionals in the last two years are going through our program, most of whom are first-generation students like me, breaking cycles. I often use the metaphor of Oz to talk about this. We tend to think of Dorothy going to Oz on a single pathway, and we never contemplate how the people of Oz got there, and it was not on the same pathway that Dorothy went. The way Dorothy gets to teaching looks a lot different than how most people enter teaching now. What is most important about this bill from our perspective, and why we at UNLV support it so strongly, is that on the various pathways, and pathways is important—it is plural, there are so many roadblocks to getting to the end. This bill addresses significant roadblocks around testing, around how licensure is obtained, and in combination with several other bills that are happening on the Senate side, we can enhance the quality of the preparation pathways along with reducing these barriers. For those reasons, we strongly support this bill.

Kirsten Searer, President, Public Education Foundation:

We are here in strong support of this bill. We are speaking up on several teacher recruitment bills this session. We do not typically speak out on policy, but we are that concerned about the teacher shortage crisis that our school districts are currently experiencing and the disproportionate impact on students in our most underserved communities. We are very pleased that this bill identifies many of the barriers that we and our colleagues have identified for all teaching prospects, especially potential teachers of color.

We sat on the committee that Assemblywoman Torres mentioned, so we were in strong support of the language around the PRAXIS. There was a 2019 study from the Educational Testing Service that found that only 38 percent of potential teachers who identify as Black ever passed the PRAXIS test; 57 percent of Hispanic candidates passed the PRAXIS test; and 75 percent of white candidates passed the PRAXIS test after multiple attempts; so, there is clearly a problem with the PRAXIS test and how it screens out potential teachers of color.

I also want to back up what Assemblywoman Torres said, that research overwhelmingly suggests students who have access to teachers of color see improvements in a wide variety of academic and behavioral measurements. We are very much in support of this bill reducing

barriers to people becoming teachers and also increasing collaboration between the Department of Education and NSHE on teacher pathways.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

The Association of School Superintendents is an organization that is composed of all 17 superintendents in the state. We talk over and over again. You hear us talking about the teacher shortage. This bill has several things in it that are going to help us bring more teachers online and still not stop the quality of teachers we have in the classroom. The PRAXIS test really does not show whether you are going to be a good classroom teacher and work well with students. I am happy to see that change and several others, so we support the bill and thank Assemblywoman Torres for bringing it forward.

Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association:

We represent the certified professionals in the Washoe County School District. We are here speaking in strong support of A.B. 323 and would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres for bringing this bill forth and the lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who are also sponsoring this bill. Staffing our schools is the most critical issue facing Nevada. It must be a top priority for state leaders. There are two sides of this equation. First and foremost is our ability to retain the quality professionals we currently have in our schools. We do that in part by making sure we are able to provide competitive wages and reduced class sizes and help support student behavior in the classroom and the mental well-being of our young people. The other side of this equation is our ability to attract new people into this amazing profession and remove the barriers.

As was previously stated, there are many good things in this bill, and it is obvious that there was a lot of forethought, intention, and collaboration in this comprehensive bill. This bill helps address some of the unnecessary barriers that are hindering our ability to further recruit new educators. The barriers being eliminated in this bill, though, do not lower the bar to becoming an educator, but rid us of much of the unnecessary red tape and barriers that get in the way of getting qualified educators in the classroom as quickly as possible. Again, we would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres and all of you who are responsible for bringing this bill forth and also the other educational organizations and advocates in the state that are making teacher recruitment a top priority.

Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:

The Nevada System of Higher Education is in strong support of A.B. 323. We appreciate the work that Assemblywoman Torres is doing on this very important issue. We would also like to thank Dr. Cruz-Crawford for the great presentation.

Steven Horner, President, Nevada State Education Association Retired Teachers and Support Professionals:

One of the issues in this bill is paying for student teaching. I also was told I could not work as I was student teaching. I did work, however, because I had a family at the time; I had to work. I was a graveyard-shift bartender. I worked Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

On those mornings that I had to substitute teach, I would go directly from the bar. It would have been so much easier if I had been able to have that pay. This is an important bill. It is an omnibus bill, I agree, but this is a very important bill. I just want to say, Me too.

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

We are the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years here in support of A.B. 323. First of all, thank goodness Steve Horner got his teaching license; what a treasure for the state of Nevada. Nevada State Education Association last session supported Senate Bill 352 of the 81st Session to allow paraprofessionals seeking teaching credentials to complete an accelerated program of student teaching. In this bill, we are particularly excited about the provision to allow student teachers to receive compensation for that work, and also to make sure that in section 6 of the amendment [[Exhibit E](#)], teachers have access to the professional development on family engagement at no cost to the teacher, which cost has been a barrier. While we focus most of our efforts and attention on retention, it is good that a strong bill like this is coming from Assemblywoman Torres. Thanks for your work on this.

Keibi Mejia, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:

Nevada Association of School Boards is in support of A.B. 323. We want to thank Assemblywoman Torres for bringing this bill forward, and we ditto the comments of all of our colleagues. It is very important we do everything we can to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, and A.B. 323 is a great step towards that. Thank you for hearing this bill, and we urge your support.

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

We would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres, who is a proud graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, and on behalf of the College of Education and Human Development, we are in strong support of this legislation.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go to Las Vegas; please begin.

Malena DiMaggio, Program Manager, Immigrant Rights, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada:

I am also a member of the Nevada Immigrant Coalition, and I am here in support of Assembly Bill 323. Nevada has long been facing an underfunded education system and consistent teacher shortages. Assembly Bill 323 will help strengthen our education system by deconstructing these barriers to teaching and providing community-based family engagement training at no cost.

In order to maintain quality education, teachers should be provided the resources they need to address difficulties students face throughout their schooling. Students across the state of Nevada depend on public education for success in their futures, which is why establishing a pipeline of diverse teachers who represent the various backgrounds of their students is so

critical. School integration practices like A.B. 323 will create more than just educational achievement among students. It is also going to contribute to the importance for children to connect their experiences, their backgrounds and values, and those who are providing them with these educational opportunities. The futures of our children deserve to see educators who represent them, especially those who are coming from immigrant backgrounds, as it leaves such a positive impression for their success. I strongly ask the Committee to support A.B. 323.

Deanna Hua Tran, Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Immigrant Coalition:

The Nevada Immigrant Coalition is in full support of A.B. 323. The Nevada Immigrant Coalition consists of diverse organizations from across the state that work together to fight for immigration reform and immigrant justice. Public education serves as one of the most effective interventions in reducing social immobility and mitigating poor economic and social outcomes. Success of our Nevada youth relies not only on the investment in our public school systems and teachers, but also in the utilization of tailored approaches to address the distinctive deficits that some of our children face due to economic instability, cultural marginalization, and systemic neglect.

It is important for our children to see their cultural identities and backgrounds represented in their teachers by broadening that pathway for educators who are able to increase cultural competencies in our classrooms. Our children and the next generations of learners to come deserve educators who promote representation, sensitivity, and a commitment to the unique needs of our immigrant children. We strongly ask the Committee to please support A.B. 323.

Fernando Romero, President, Hispanics in Politics:

I am the husband of a first-year teacher. I am here in support of A.B. 323. In all frankness, I am here with trepidation in my heart, concern for fear of retaliation against my teacher wife by an administration that does not accept constructive criticism very lightly. I emphasize this is my testimony, not hers.

After my wife graduated from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) as an elementary school teacher in August of 2022, she immediately applied for employment at Clark County School District (CCSD). It goes without saying that due to the school district's approximate 2,000 teacher shortage and due to the fact that she graduated summa cum laude, plus the fact that she served seven years as a specialist teacher and ultimately supervisor for the Jobs for Nevada's Graduates, or J4NG, a highly respected education program that is in a number of high schools here in Las Vegas and throughout the country, she received a number of offers from various elementary school principals. That was great. The fact that we live in the predominantly Latino-populated Sunrise Manor area, and the fact that she was set on teaching in a school with a predominance of children of color, was great as well.

The fact that she took unpaid leave from her job was not great. The fact that it took more than two months to be processed was shocking to me. Apparently, she already knew that it took a while. The fact that when she was with the J4NG program, she taught largely students of color at Centennial, Valley, and Rancho High Schools and supervised at nine other schools

also with a large enrollment of students of color was rewarding, for it gave her the opportunity to encourage students to pursue a college career in the field of education. It gave her the experience that she otherwise would not have had. It opened the door for the scholarship that she received from an innovative teacher program that UNLV made available. The fact that CCSD had so many hoops to jump through for employment was frustrating. Luckily, she persevered.

I am with those who say that teachers should be trained on family and community engagement practices in the school districts they teach in. Assembly Bill 323 instructs districts to provide this kind of training at no charge, saving educators hundreds of dollars in the licensure process. I am in full support of A.B. 323.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for being here. We have just a few more minutes left. Do we have callers in support? Please go ahead.

Rudy Zamora, Director of Public Affairs, Teach for America:

Teach for America supports A.B. 323 with the proposed amendment and would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres for her leadership. Assembly Bill 323 proposes various measures to tackle barriers to teachers in their classrooms, such as directing the licensing boards to assess coursework and work experience that meet Nevada's teacher licensing requirements. It also expedites licensing for eligible students, as transcripts may be held up for various reasons. By streamlining the teacher licensing process, the Nevada Department of Education can help overcome one of the significant obstacles that contribute to the teacher shortage in the state. Far too often we see promising teachers waiting on the sidelines as the first day of school starts, not because they are not ready to teach but because of the complex, lengthy process of licensing. This can discourage them from pursuing a career in teaching. The measure proposed in A.B. 323 can eliminate some of the barriers and make the licensing process more accessible and efficient for aspiring teachers. We urge you to support A.B. 323 which will benefit both Nevada students and teachers. Thank you for considering this critical legislation. [Testifier submitted [Exhibit G](#) in support.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We have no more callers, so we will go to Carson City.

Francisco Morales, representing Clark County Education Association:

We are in support of this bill. We thank Assemblywoman Torres for all the work she has put into this bill and for the thoughtful and practical steps that are contained in the bill to help ease the critical teacher shortage. We urge your expedient passage of this bill, and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

I am here because we are advocating for Nevadans, Asian and Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (API) working families. Studies after studies and meetings after meetings that we had with our community show there are three things that we can do to support our API

students and families in our education system. The first one is data disaggregation. The second one is supporting our students with English language learner backgrounds and also mental health, which Assemblywoman Torres addressed last session. Third, and not least, is recruit, retain, and support Asian-American teachers and also teachers with diverse backgrounds who would really help our students thrive and help in the understanding of our families and our cultures. This bill addresses many barriers to achieve that. Thank you very much, and we urge your support for this bill.

[\[Exhibit H\]](#), [\[Exhibit I\]](#), [\[Exhibit J\]](#), [\[Exhibit K\]](#), [\[Exhibit L\]](#), [\[Exhibit M\]](#), [\[Exhibit N\]](#), [\[Exhibit O\]](#), [\[Exhibit P\]](#), [\[Exhibit Q\]](#), [\[Exhibit R\]](#), and [\[Exhibit S\]](#) were submitted in support of [A.B. 323](#).]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that, we will close support and open it to opposition. Do we have anyone here in Carson City in opposition? Not seeing anyone, is there anyone in Las Vegas in opposition? I am not seeing anyone. Do we have anyone on the phone line in opposition? [There was no one.] With that, we will move to neutral. If you are in neutral on this bill, please come to the table in Carson City and in Las Vegas. I am not seeing anyone in neutral. Is there anyone on the phone line? [There was no one.] At this time, I will call the bill sponsor back up to make final remarks.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Thank you, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod and members of the amazing Committee on Education, for allowing me to present this piece of legislation today. Know that this piece of legislation is very personal to me. As many of you know, I am an educator, but what many of you probably do not know is I am an instructional coach now. I oversee a team of 20 English language arts teachers at my school, and I have the honor to support and mentor these teachers. One of them is my mom, and many of them are the next generation of educators. There are far too many phenomenal future educators who experience these barriers, whether it be the translation of a transcript, access to paid student teaching opportunities, or difficulty overcoming and passing the PRAXIS.

In this Committee throughout this legislative cycle, we have had conversation after conversation about what we can do to improve student achievement. What do we do to keep our campuses safer? Having more teachers on our campuses all the time is one of those solutions. My hope is that by beginning the work to eliminate these barriers to licensure for educators—from the PRAXIS to unpaid student teaching—we can collaboratively build a future where all students have a permanent full-time educator in the classroom, where educators of color are more commonplace, and we continue to improve educational outcomes for the betterment of our state.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much. With that, I will close the hearing on A.B. 323, which brings us to our final agenda item, public comment.

[Rules for public comment were reviewed.] Is there anyone here, in Las Vegas, or on the line wishing to make public comment? [There was no one.] [Meeting reminders were given.] We are adjourned [at 2:44 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Funmi Sheddy
Recording Secretary

Geigy Stringer
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 279](#), submitted by Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva, Assembly District No. 28.

[Exhibit D](#) is a bill summary of and recommendation on [Assembly Bill 279](#), submitted by Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 279](#).

[Exhibit E](#) is a conceptual amendment to [Assembly Bill 323](#), dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Assembly District No. 3.

[Exhibit F](#) is written testimony submitted by Shelbie Swartz, representing Battle Born Progress, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit G](#) is a letter dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Rudy Zamora, Director of Public Affairs, Teach For America, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit H](#) is a letter dated March 31, 2023, submitted by Senator Fabian Doñate, Senate District No. 10, and Chair, Nevada Latino Legislative Caucus, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit I](#) is a bill summary of and recommendation on [Assembly Bill 323](#), submitted by Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada.

[Exhibit J](#) is a letter dated April 3, 2023, submitted by Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit K](#) is a letter dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Amanda Morgan, Educate Nevada Now, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit L](#) is a letter dated April 5, 2023, submitted by Dr. Tracy Edwards, Vice President, Southern Nevada Black Educators Initiative, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit M](#) is written testimony from Sylvia Lazos, Private Citizen, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit N](#) is a letter dated April 3, 2023, submitted by Karen Villatoro Gonzalez, Private Citizen, in support of [Assembly Bill 323](#).

[Exhibit O](#) is written testimony dated April 3, 2023, submitted by Ajiah Daley, Private Citizen, in support of Assembly Bill 323.

[Exhibit P](#) is written testimony dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Jen Loescher, Private Citizen, in support of Assembly Bill 323.

[Exhibit Q](#) is written testimony dated April 3, 2023, submitted by Tamara Hudson, Private Citizen, in support of Assembly Bill 323.

[Exhibit R](#) is written testimony dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Dillon Booker, Private Citizen, in support of Assembly Bill 323.

[Exhibit S](#) is written testimony dated April 4, 2023, submitted by Deanne Moyle-Hicks, Private Citizen, in support of Assembly Bill 323.