

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-second Session
May 8, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Roberta Lange at 1:01 p.m. on Monday, May 8, 2023, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair
Senator Edgar Flores, Vice Chair
Senator Dina Neal
Senator Fabian Doñate
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Carrie A. Buck
Senator Robin L. Titus

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Assembly District No. 34
Assemblyman Toby Yurek, Assembly District No. 19

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Counsel
Kirsten Oleson, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marie Neisess, President, Clark County Education Association
Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson
Dylan Keith, Vegas Chamber
Elizabeth MacMenamin, Retail Association of Nevada
Maureen Schafer, Council for Better Nevada

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Daniel Stewart, Clark County Education Association
Al Rojas
Jim Frazee
Dan Price
Christopher Apollo, Clark County Education Association
Elizabeth Adler
Irene Bustamante Adams, Clark County School District Board of Trustees,
District F
Deborah Earl, Power2Parent
Matthew Tramp
Nicole Bengochea, Nevada Association of School Boards
Patricia Haddad, Clark County School District
Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association
Anna Binder
Lynn Chapman, Independent American Party of Nevada
Erica Nungaray, Nevada State Education Association
Bruce Parks
Alexander Marks, Nevada State Education Association

CHAIR LANGE:

We will begin with a work session. The first bill is Assembly Bill (A.B.) 43.

ASSEMBLY BILL 43: Revises provisions relating to school emergency operations plans. (BDR 34-238)

JEN STURM-GAHNER (Policy Analyst):

As nonpartisan staff, I can neither oppose nor support any measure. Assembly Bill 43 was sponsored by the Assembly Committee on Education on behalf of the Division of Emergency Management of the Nevada Office of the Military. There are no amendments. I have submitted a work session document outlining the bill ([Exhibit C](#)).

CHAIR LANGE:

I will accept a motion to do pass A.B. 43.

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 43.

SENATOR DOÑATE SECONDED THE MOTION.

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THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR LANGE:

The next bill on work session is A.B. 185.

ASSEMBLY BILL 185 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions governing the education of pupils who are children of military personnel. (BDR 34-524)

Ms. STURM-GAHNER:

Assembly Bill 185 was sponsored by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca and heard on May 5, 2023. There were a couple amendments. I have submitted the work session document ([Exhibit D](#)) outlining the bill and the amendments.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will accept a motion to amend and do pass as amended A.B. 185.

SENATOR BUCK MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
A.B. 185.

SENATOR HAMMOND SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR LANGE:

The next bill on work session is A.B. 212.

ASSEMBLY BILL 212: Establishes provisions governing student transcripts. (BDR 34-523)

Ms. STURM-GAHNER:

Assembly Bill 212 was sponsored by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca and heard on April 26, 2023. There are no amendments. I have submitted a work session document outlining the bill ([Exhibit E](#)).

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will accept a motion to do pass A.B. 212.

SENATOR DOÑATE MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 212.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

CHAIR LANGE:

Is there any discussion?

SENATOR DOÑATE:

I want to thank the Assemblywoman for bringing this measure forward. I had a lot of friends in school that could not get their transcripts because of outdated parking tickets or something similar. When they tried transferring to other universities or colleges, they were not able to because of the holds. It is important for students to have access to the transcripts. I will be supporting this measure.

CHAIR LANGE:

Hearing no more discussion, I will take a vote.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will open the hearing on A.B. 175.

ASSEMBLY BILL 175 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions governing boards of trustees of school districts. (BDR 34-692)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHANNON BILBRAY-AXELROD (Assembly District No. 34):

I would like to begin with some background information that explains what led to this recommendation and, ultimately, what brought the bill before you today.

There is ongoing debate on how to best structure school boards to support their work and student outcomes. This issue was one of the many studied by the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education this past Interim. To briefly review school board governance structure, school boards generally fall into

one of three structures: trustees or members who are elected; those who are appointed, or a hybrid of both.

Additionally, some states currently allow appointed boards in specific districts. During this previous year, the Interim Standing Committee on Education held two meetings dedicated to studying the composition and selection of the boards of trustees of county school districts. In these meetings, the Committee heard many recommendations from multiple stakeholders, including members of the community, regarding school board action. These meetings were day-long meetings. We encouraged discussion in a collaborative roundtable style. We were trying to get ideas and make sure we were listening to stakeholders, members of the public and municipalities.

Given these conversations, it was necessary that we further explore what form the school board might take and examine how other board structures might provide benefits, such as improved student achievement and increased professionalism, among many other things. The intent of A.B. 175 is to recommend a new Board structure for the Clark County School District (CCSD).

The bill applies to counties with more than 75,000 pupils. Currently, CCSD is the only school district with that many students. The bill also states that the Board of Trustees shall be composed of 11 members, including 7 elected members and 4 nonvoting appointed members. One appointed, nonvoting member must be appointed by the "board of county commissioners of the county in which the school district is located." The remaining three members must be appointed from each of the three most populated unincorporated cities in the county by the governing bodies of the cities. Currently, the most populated cities are North Las Vegas, City of Las Vegas and City of Henderson.

The bill also specifies conditions relating to the timeline of such appointments, including terms of office, office vacancy, and certain rights and responsibilities of the appointed members. These include having the same rights and responsibilities as voting members, including without limitation being involved in any briefings, interviews, evaluations, closed-door sessions, policies and operational discussions; as well as having voting rights for elections of officers and having the authority to serve as an officer on the Board.

ASSEMBLYMAN TOBY YUREK (Assembly District No. 19):

I do not know if I would recommend any freshman try to undertake a bill such as this. It has been a challenging piece of legislation, but it is something that I hope I have been up to the task to do. It has been interesting to work through this legislative process.

Most of us can likely agree that there are some strong elements to Nevada's educational system. Specifically, I can think of all of our hardworking teachers and staff. They are incredible. However, I think we can also likely agree that there are areas where we can and must improve. The sad truth is that, depending on what study you look at, Nevada continues to rank at the bottom of nearly every list that measures student outcomes. Parents and teachers are frustrated, and too many of our students continue to underperform.

I will never suggest or presume that A.B. 175 as presented to you today is the be-all-and-end-all solution to our educational challenges in Nevada. It is an attempt at addressing some of the dysfunction that we see occurring at the highest levels—specifically with the CCSD Board of Trustees.

For over a decade, I sat on two boards of trustees. One was at a private university in southern California and the other was at a private K-12 school in Henderson. A benefit of serving on a private school board was the ability to recruit and appoint board members. While I acknowledge that my experiences in those contexts certainly differs from the context of the boards that we are addressing in this bill, I want to speak generally about how we are able to leverage that ability to recruit and appoint members to maximize our capacity to function as a board.

In our experience, the makeup of existing Board members leaves us lacking particular areas of expertise. Because we can seek out individuals with expertise who add their valuable perspectives to our discussions, we are able to address issues in meaningful ways. The goal of A.B. 175 is to provide our school boards with similar capabilities so they can add voices to the board that may broaden the perspectives and expertise of the board as a whole.

As originally drafted, A.B. 175 altered the balance between elected and appointed board members by adding appointed positions to school boards. However, the most vocal concern raised regarding the suggested structure was that the proposed bifurcation would dilute the voice of democracy.

Recognizing and acknowledging that as a valid concern, we decided to amend A.B. 175 to make the additional appointed board members nonvoting positions. A mixed school board composed of both voting-elected and nonvoting-appointed members values community input and representation. It encourages involvement, as well as the perspectives of local government bodies who, through their appointments, can bring needed areas of expertise to the conversations to assist in making the best possible educational decisions.

Admittedly, school board success is largely demanded and measured by its interest in and commitment to excellence. It is our intention and hope that the addition of nonvoting board members will enhance the depth and quality of discussions, without compromising the voice of democracy. We believe that A.B. 175 as amended addresses some of the legitimate concerns related to our school boards. It does not alter the landscape of a conventional board nor inhibit the democratic process that is essential to representation. It adds another layer of insight, expertise and experience that can contribute to the discussions and help solve the issues that our school boards must address to improve student outcomes.

SENATOR TITUS:

I am looking at the amended version of the bill. I have a question regarding the statement that you made about the board composition not interfering with the voting members; these are nonvoting positions. I believe your statement is not accurate. Section 1.5, subsection 8, paragraph (a) states appointed-nonvoting members have the same rights as the voting members and actually have voting rights for the election of officers. They can serve as officers.

Having said that, if four of them decide to vote for any particular person, they can hold the office and control the narrative of the school board. Would you explain to me how that does not interfere with the elected positions?

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

The issues the board would vote on are issues that govern student or school policies. We want to keep the appointed-nonvoting board members as relevant as possible. We want them to be able to engage in dialogue and discussion and able to participate in the internal functions and workings of the board. To operate at an executive officer level, we thought it was relevant to have them be able to participate in that internal process. The voting piece we pulled from

those positions is voting on external matters that will impact and drive the schools.

I think your other concern was that they would be able to elect themselves and serve in executive positions. That was a concern that had come up in prior discussions with stakeholders. We thought, with seven voting members and four nonvoting members, that if the board as a whole wanted to appoint a nonvoting member to the position, why would we want to disrupt the opportunity? If members identified a high-quality person they wanted in that higher level position, why not let them do that? That is why the bill is drafted the way it is.

SENATOR TITUS:

I do not agree. I believe the four appointed members could control the agenda, if one of them gets elected to an executive position.

If there are 4 extra board members, it would bring the number of board members to 11 in Clark County. There is currently a bill to decrease the size of the Board of Regents. I am concerned about the expansion of the board. With the expansion, the board would be the second largest school board in the Nation. Can you explain the need for so many members?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

I was asking my colleague if he could recall how large the districts are. Clark County School District is the fifth largest school district in the Nation. The members' districts are heavily populated. In my opinion, I do not think the board members are very representative of the population because the districts are so diverse.

We had this question in the Assembly. I do not have that information with me. I understand there are bills, such as the bill involving the Regents, that would reduce the size of boards. The district this bill addresses is such a large district and county.

SENATOR TITUS:

I have all the numbers of the large school districts in front of me, so I know what the number of board members are. There are boards that have 9 members or 7 members; only 1 board has 11 members.

SENATOR NEAL:

I am going to ask questions in the same section, section 1.5, subsection 8, paragraph (a). The section gives the same rights and responsibilities as voting members without limitation. I want to talk about power. You are giving almost equal power, minus the voting aspect, to an appointed member which you claim will operate as a check.

My problem with saying this bill maintains democracy is that I am not sure it does. The appointed member would have the same rights and responsibilities, which includes evaluating board members and sitting behind closed doors, typically where contracts or other operational discussions take place. My question is, who is on the hook if something goes wrong? Is it the elected official or the appointed official?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

It would depend on what the issue was. I think the appointed member could be removed from the Board as well. Ultimately, it is the voters' choice to vote people out or keep people in.

When asking about the closed-door sessions, were you specifically asking about contract negotiations?

SENATOR NEAL:

Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

That is an interesting point that I had not thought of. I will continue to have conversations about that because that is an important aspect of this bill that I had not thought through.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

That does pose an interesting question that we need to discuss a bit further. In large part, we are trying to facilitate higher level discussions. We would like to include nonvoting Board members, to the extent possible, to work through the challenges, identify solutions and propose solutions that, ultimately, the voting members would vote on. The underlying goal would be to include them as much as possible. Certainly, there may need to be limitations, and we would have to be willing to consider that.

SENATOR NEAL:

It is my understanding that this amendment was supposed to remedy the issue of power being taken away from constituencies. When I look at the powers, rights and responsibilities you are giving the nonvoting members, I am trying to understand or reconcile what voters have the power to decide on; how are we statutorily giving power to members who were not voted on; and saying a city or a council can appoint those people? How do we make sure whoever the city or county appoints is effective? You have no criteria in this bill. We have been trying to avoid politics and dysfunction. How can a county and a city, without criteria, provide an effective member without the constituencies that they serve selecting that member?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

We talked about criteria quite a bit. One of the reasons we did not include specific criteria is because we thought that each municipality should have the option of appointing someone with qualities that are relevant to members of its community. If they think the Board is missing someone with a financial background, they could appoint someone. It could be argued that CCSD has a chief financial officer (CFO), but we know where that CFO gets his or her check signed. We hoped by not having specific criteria, it would be nimble.

Some people have brought up there might not be people interested in filling the member positions because of how little they get paid—they get paid less than we do. I have actually been contacted by several people who are interested. We know that everyone feels like a subject-matter expert because everyone has been to school. When you actually meet subject-matter experts, they are chomping at the bit to share their expertise. As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Education, I have found there are many people in Nevada who have a deep love for children in Nevada. They are happy to share that information.

We kept the criteria vague, but we also expect that there will be a public meeting and these people will be extremely vetted not only through the municipalities, but also by the public. There is a fine line with legislation. If legislation is too specific, then it ends up pigeonholing. For this bill, we decided to give flexibility.

SENATOR NEAL:

I understand what you are saying. Let me explain what I am thinking about. Last summer, a couple of cities joined together to break up the school district. This bill would give those cities the power to select representatives. That is my first pause for concern.

The second pause for concern is the power that appointed members will yield without constituencies being a part of the process. Also, there is no conversation about racial demographics. When we talk about North Las Vegas, which is largely filled with a minority population, we talk about the fact that there is no African American on the Board.

When thinking about the representation that should be part of the Board, I think about race and including teachers from at-risk schools. Those teachers should have more of a say as to what should happen at the district level. They can provide expertise that I do not think is currently talked about on the Board. They can talk about how to teach and move policy that is actually going to change the narrative for children. If the teacher has five to ten years of experience at an at-risk school, they would be valuable on the Board. They are not only walking in the door with information and knowledge to drive the policy in a different way, but they are going to be able to hone in and tell Board members if they are going in the wrong direction.

I am struggling with section 1.5, subsection 8 for multiple reasons. I do not think it is fair. I do not think it allows for an appropriate assessment of what a constituency might want. You are assuming that somehow city officials are connected to their own people. You are assuming officials have conversations and know what their people want—which is not true.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Chair Lange has left momentarily and I will take over the gavel. I appreciate the bipartisan work on this bill. It is abundantly clear that it is not one-sided. There is a common theme this Session. It is not unique to this Session, but it is obvious given the legislation that has come up. People are concerned about the composition of the Board, the level of expertise and who is on the Board. There are also concerns about whether Board members are allowed to be around kids—there was a unique challenge where some people were not allowed to be around kids.

I preface my comments by saying that I believe there are many people in this building who feel we need to try something different. I am trying to get at how the relationship works. Is the focus to help the Board or to challenge it? Let me explain. Correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is the Board members, if they want to, could set up subcommittees and citizen advisory committees. If I was on a board and believed the Board needed specific support from business or an industry, I could set up some type of advisory role. The relationship works in unison because if members do not have the expertise, they could ask someone who does. Can the Board do that now?

Are we damaging that relationship when we go about it in this manner rather than the Board setting up an advisory committee to support the board? We are now forcing those four individuals into the Board. Will that create a situation? The answer might be yes, and that dynamic might be a good thing. I am not suggesting it is wrong. I want to hear your thought process on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

I want to acknowledge this is not a partisan issue. Throughout my campaign, various people from different parties and beliefs told me there are challenges with education. I was honored to be able to work with my copresenter as a cosponsor, because it should not be a partisan issue. We all want the same thing, right? We all want to improve education for our students in Nevada.

With respect to your question, it is my understanding—I am not an expert either—that current boards are able to set up subcommittees and bring individuals in to participate and contribute to discussions. My pushback is that some form of this bill has been proposed since 2013. Each session, we continue to kick the can down the road. Nothing has changed.

We have not seen, or I am not aware of, boards recognizing internal deficiencies and calling in experts to facilitate a higher level of discussion. The fact that has not happened indicates there is reluctance or lack of desire to change the status quo. It is human nature to maintain status quo. Change is hard. We recognize that this change is tough, and it is an emotional issue—as I am sure you are going to hear shortly.

There is a difference between appointing a member and bringing in experts. For example, you can tolerate a guest at your house for the weekend. You can deal with whatever for a short period of time. If that person moves in and has a

permanent seat at your kitchen table, it is different. The dialogue and discussion is different.

We believe the Board has not brought other people in and the level of dysfunction has continued. By adding seats to the table, those members will become a broader part of the dialogue and discussion. We are hopeful that, through a period of change and reluctance, everyone will get used to it.

At some point, people will recognize and appreciate the higher level voices. There will be more voices contributing strategically toward specific areas. We are hopeful that in the long run, the change would be accepted, and the boards would get better dialogue.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I know the appointed members are nonvoting but what do you foresee happening during a controversial vote? Do you foresee the nonvoting members voicing an opinion? Perhaps they say the idea is horrible or great and that is followed by silence before the voting members vote. Do you see them participating in that process right before a vote and voicing their opinion up until the moment before the vote?

Secondly, where else in the Country does this model exist? Has it been successful? Has there been productive feedback on that?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

Absolutely, because we have open meeting laws, all the discussion would have to take place at that time. To your question about where we have seen this model, we had extensive presentations and roundtables. I believe it was the National Conference of State Legislatures that talked about different fully appointed, fully elected and hybrid models—granted that was over a year ago. I do not remember exactly where that was, but there are those three models nationwide.

To my colleague's point, I think we are frustrated and sick of being fiftieth in the Nation, knowing we cannot keep doing what we are doing. Part of the reason we discussed this so much in the Interim is because we wanted to come up with some sort of a solution.

Is this perfect? Probably not. Few bills that come through this building could be called perfect. At least we are moving the needle. I know you all have the same frustrations I do. It is frustrating to be Chair of the Assembly Committee on Education where it sometimes feels like you are beating your head against the wall because nothing is changing.

To your question, yes, I believe the nonvoting members will be speaking, steering the conversation and the votes. I do not think there is a problem with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

There is a good local example of this happening within the State Board of Education. In 2011, S.B. No. 197 of the 76th Session came through this Legislative Body. It added nonvoting members to the State Board of Education. I was not as engaged as I am now, but as I understand it, through a period of transition, the Board appears to have stabilized and is having higher-level discussions on issues. That is a great local example of when adding nonvoting members works.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

That was more of a comment and meant as a freebie to remind people that the appointed members will be participating in the process all the way up until the vote. I was initially concerned, as I was thinking about what is the point of including nonvoting members if people are not listening to them. I have heard some people say that we are not listening to people, but if nonvoting members are put on the Board, who is to say the Board will listen to them. I think there is value in someone challenging the members up until the final vote. There may be some benefits to that.

SENATOR BUCK:

I have worked on several boards with appointed members. You mentioned the State Board of Education; there is also the State Public Charter School Association Board. The bill boils down to addressing human behavior. There is a desperation to try to fix what is happening in our major populated areas and districts such as CCSD. What is happening in that District is kind of like an episode of "Desperate Housewives." Like Senator Neal said, people who were causing the drama have transitioned out over the past elections.

I do not want to take the public's voice away from the election process, but their voice is represented with the nonvoting members from North Las Vegas, Henderson and the Las Vegas as well as the with the County Commissioners being able to appoint someone. How do jurisdictions decide who to choose? Please explain the process. Is there expertise that is required to serve, such as someone in finance, legal, human resources, a teacher, principal, educator, someone in technology or a management supervisor? With charter schools, there is an application process. You work for minimal or no pay, but there is an application. Is certain expertise required for the position?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

Municipalities and counties appoint all sorts of people to all sorts of boards. I had the pleasure of serving on the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Board. I turned in a cover letter and filled out an application. I highlighted what I thought I would bring to the board.

Going back to why we did not set up exact parameters, one of the reasons why you are hearing about the possibility of breaking up the CCSD is because there is a lot of dysfunction on the Board. Adding the four positions might help with that. If it were up to me, I would want to have some cooler heads on the Board. We do have some on there right now, but having more people mannered that way would help with decorum. All the traits you mentioned would be helpful on the Board. The municipalities would take the appointment process seriously—especially since only one member is representing them. I think the position would be competitive and the prospective member would need to make the case as to why he or she should be chosen.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

As my colleagues suggested, it is up to each entity to come up with a process for making appointments. I also want to touch on something else you said. I should have commented earlier on the concern about diluting the voice of democracy and how the appointees will be appointed by elected officials. For example, if the City of Henderson continues to have challenges in education and the City appointed an individual who was not contributing, it would not bode well for the next election. There is a real element of continued democracy even through appointments.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I am with you because I have been here for many years watching things unfold in front of us. Making changes in education is paramount—I am talking about making actual improvements, not just changes. I applaud you for what you are trying to do. It is a heavy lift.

One thing I want to bring attention to and put on the record is, I believe the way the bill is written, a quorum would be 6 of the 11 members. Of those six members, the four nonvoting members could be part of the quorum. We might have a problem with that because in that scenario where four members are nonvoting and only two members are voting, they would be passing a requirement, regulation or a policy with only two members voting. Have you thought about that? Could you address that?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

That is not the intent. The intent of the quorum is the meeting could happen, but no votes would take place. A policy could not pass with only two voting members.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

Would there need to be at least four voting members at the meeting to be able to pass something?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

I appreciated those questions when you brought them up to me prior to this hearing. If we need to tighten or insert some language in the bill to ensure that intent is carried out, that would be a friendly amendment.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in support of A.B. 175?

MARIE NEISESS (President, Clark County Education Association):

I am speaking today in support of A.B. 175. We would like to thank the bill sponsors for bringing this bill forward. This morning, CCSD sent the clearest message to this Legislature. I am appalled to share that, ahead of this hearing, CCSD sent an email to CCSD staff urging them to oppose this bill saying that it

would be an assault on democracy. It is unacceptable for CCSD, as the employer, to use District resources to promote lobbying employees while they are at work. It is yet another example of the District running from accountability.

Why not welcome Clark County municipalities to provide input on educating our students and get some skin in the game? Why not invite more subject-matter experts to the Board who have a real understanding of financial management, education or human resources? The answer is more input on the Board means more accountability for the District.

This Legislative Body has spent the entire Session trying to gain some control and accountability from the largest District in the State. Assembly Bill 175 is your opportunity to do that. The Trustees' focus should be on making sound student- and staff-focused decisions. The Board's longstanding dysfunction has negatively impacted both CCSD students and staff. There is an opportunity to make the governing body of the District more robust and student-focused like it should be. We urge your support.

SENATOR NEAL:

I understand what you are saying about the lobbying and the dysfunctional nature. Can you give me any evidence under the current reorganization law where cities and counties can have presentations? I want to have some kind of conversation around the reorganization law we passed in 2015. Where has there been successful engagement? I saw the Clark County presentation; it was just a presentation. How are we going to get more efficiency and less politicizing when there is no criteria that focuses on students or staff? There is nothing in the bill that says the appointed member will meet that criteria or have that focus.

NICOLE ROURKE (City of Henderson):

We work with the District on those presentations. Frankly, we have had real difficulty getting the kind of data and accountability that we have requested in those presentations. We have gone to the District on numerous occasions. We have asked for different data points and gotten a lot of pushback. We were basically told, "You will get the information we are willing to give you."

SENATOR NEAL:

Have you seen the opposition letter from the Nevada Association of School Superintendents ([Exhibit F](#))? It mentions Prince George's County, Maryland, which implemented a hybrid board of appointed members and there is conflict, drama, ethical issues and power struggles. Now the City of Henderson will have an appointed member on the Board who will have the power to push certain topics or policies. How will this be more effective or efficient? Will it be more political drama and theater?

MS. ROURKE:

Our plan is to find someone highly qualified for that position. They will add some expertise to that Board and decrease the drama. Our City Council is generally in agreement on most things that pass through our Council. We are looking forward to having a voice on the Board that adds expertise and does not add to the drama.

The State Board of Education is a good example of how this type of membership can work well. The transition was fairly smooth. That board has 11 members; 4 members are elected from 4 congressional districts; 7 members are appointed. There are three appointed members who vote and four nonvoting appointed members. Good work has come out of that Board. You have been in the Legislature for awhile, and I am sure you can recall the dysfunction of the State Board of Education that happened prior to 2011 when the Board was changed. There has not been the same level of dysfunction in the following 12 years. We believe that a similar structure could work well at the local school board level.

DYLAN KEITH (Vegas Chamber):

It was my pleasure to oversee the Southern Nevada Forum, made up of 350 active stakeholders and cochaired by a bipartisan delegation of 17 Legislators. Assembly Bill 175 came from the Southern Nevada Forum's Education Committee, which is cochaired by four southern Nevada Legislators and brings a bipartisan representation from each legislative partisan caucus. The Education Committee represents over 175 individuals from a diverse representation of professional and regional backgrounds.

The Chamber would like to thank both Assemblyman Yurek and Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod for bringing this legislation forward and their

continued work on legislation that would shake up a system that has let Nevada students down for too long.

The current structure of governance has a repeated history of not being effective to improve student achievement. There has been an erosion of trust in CCSD for the better part of two decades. Nevada's K-12 education system has ranked at or near the bottom of states nationally. Nevada is not competing nationally, and our students deserve better. It does not make sense to continue on the same path and hope for better results.

The Chamber is in support of the Clark County Commission and the cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas and Henderson to each appoint one professional to the CCSD Board of Trustees. These cities represent the diverse communities that deserve to have a voice. This bill does not affect any other school district but our own. This bill, sponsored by Southern Nevada Forum, is a step forward to creating a change to better focus education policy on student achievement in southern Nevada.

It is our belief these reforms need to happen now for the sake of over 300,000 students enrolled in CCSD. These students are the entrepreneurs and leaders who will work to make Nevada better in the near future.

The business community has a vested interest in contributing large sums, as taxpayers, toward education. These appointed school board members from our local jurisdictions will bring expertise in financial management, land use, construction, building maintenance, food services, purchasing, leadership development, partnerships, collaboration and communication. That is why we believe that this bill is vital to our community and moves our education system forward for the sake of our students today and for future generations.

Ms. ROURKE:

We are here in support of A.B. 175. Appointing Board members can provide greater accountability to parents in the community. The City Council receives numerous constituent concerns regarding our education system with no direct means to address them. By appointing a Board member, municipalities can ensure that leaders of the District have the experience necessary to guide such a large organization and be responsive to parents and families.

There are many school boards across the Country that have authorized some or all members to be appointed. According to the Education Commission of the States, these states include Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. Several large school districts have appointed or mixed boards including Boston public schools and New York City, whose 13 board members are entirely appointed, with 8 members selected by the Mayor and the remaining 5 seats filled by each borough president. New Jersey also provides for mayoral appointment of school board members. Additionally, five out of ten school districts with the largest per pupil spending have appointed school board members. That is according to a 2020 research paper on the topic by a student from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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

We look forward to the opportunity to appoint a member to the CCSD Board of Trustees who will raise the level of accountability, professionalism and collaboration. They will also bring the expertise required to make crucial decisions for an organization with a \$2.4-billion operating budget and over \$4 billion in capital funding.

ELIZABETH MACMENAMIN (Retail Association of Nevada):

We represent many mom-and-pop stores and businesses that are looking forward to an educated workforce. Clark County School District represents a considerable line-item investment in our State's budget year after year. The return on investment does not measure up to the investment that the State has put in. Most importantly, the children are the ones that are seeing these poor and different results.

Assembly Bill 175 will inject additional viewpoints and perspectives into the nation's fifth largest school district. This could only have positive effects on the

Nevada youth of today. By allowing voters additional oversight of their local representatives by appointing school trustees, the public's voice is strengthened as new expertise is added along with an additional layer of accountability. We hope we can do better as a State to educate our future workforce. We appreciate your time and we ask your support on this measure.

MAUREEN SCHAFER (Council for Better Nevada):

We are pleased to support A.B. 175, which appoints nonvoting members by local governing bodies to the elected Clark County Board of School Trustees. Following the 2021 Legislative Session, we were pleased to be part of a larger community working group that deliberated many ideas over a year and a half with education policy experts. They provided recommendations to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education to impact and improve the governance of our K-12 school boards. We were pleased to submit that thoughtful work to the Interim Committee for discussion. The idea of adding appointed members selected from our local jurisdictions, which have been expressing a desire for more engagement and accountability in the public education process, was noteworthy.

It is not an uncommon process to have a hybrid appointed model and local selection process. We understand this model expands the Board rather than replacing elected positions with appointed positions. While our Board's historical approach to governance and governing bodies has been that smaller boards govern with more effectiveness, we believe adding additional accountable minds to the public education governance model outweighs the Board size issue at this time. It will encourage more consistency, inclusivity, accountability, stability and decision-making and provides more decorum in meetings. It is in the best interest of students, families and Nevada's economy.

Most often, the old answers no longer fit the new questions when it comes to adapting to inevitable change in schools today. That is certainly the case; education is forever. Change is hard, even when we know we need it. We appreciate the acceptance of the working group's report and the measured innovation and compromising in A.B. 175.

DANIEL STEWART (Clark County Education Association):

I offer our strong support for this measure. In general, I will say ditto to almost everything that was said by the other supporters. I want to emphasize that not only was this bill bipartisan, the intent behind it was bipartisan as well. I doubt

anyone in Las Vegas would say the status quo is sustainable or working. It may be working better in some counties. In Clark County, we need radical fixes to the status quo. This bill is an attempt to get to those problems.

We may disagree on what is causing the problems, how much funding is spent or what policies and procedures are allowed within the classroom, but I do not think anyone would disagree that the system is broken.

I want to emphasize the power of appointment to diversify. It is a shame that there is no African-American member serving on the Clark County Board of Trustees. More discouraging is that in the State's history, there have only been two people of color ever to serve on the Nevada Supreme Court. Both of those were initially appointed, Justice Michael Douglas and Justice Patricia Lee. Appointment often breaks down barriers in ways that elections do not. The cities would appoint members that represent their communities. I ask for your strong support.

AL ROJAS:

I am here to address an issue that is important in the State and in education. Kids are not receiving enough counseling both in charter schools and noncharter schools. I have been informed on this through research, and confirmed it with educators who are on the front lines in the classrooms, teaching students. We cannot continue to have teachers be the parent, counselor and the psychologist. This measure will bring input to the Trustees.

We are going to be getting the appropriate counseling for these kids to keep them in school and out of jails. If a kid stays in school past the ninth grade, the odds of being a criminal go down to less than 5 percent. Crime is too high in schools, that is the problem. These kids need counseling. These kids could have problems at home. This has to be addressed. I support this bill if it is going to bring counseling to the kids.

JIM FRAZEE:

I am a classroom educator in Clark County. I have the honor of being Vice President of the Clark County Education Association. Having witnessed our school board up close and personal over the last ten years, I have come to a few realizations I would like to share with you. I believe every school board trustee that I met started with the best intentions. They believe in kids, public

education and want to contribute. But then, they run into the governance model that we currently have, and they get lost in the dysfunction.

An elected Trustee, who might not have experience running a billion-dollar organization with 40,000 employees and over 300,000 kids, can only get facts and perspectives from people who have an interest in steering his or her vote. Our system is broken. That is what we have. In Clark County, we have an inept superintendent, and his staff spoon-feed Trustees his version of reality. The consequences have been disastrous for our students, staff and our beloved State.

Trustees have to hear from independent experts to make informed decisions instead of self-serving bureaucrats whose paycheck depends on an altered reality. There is no model of governance in the private sector that would tolerate our current system. It should not be allowed to take place using tax dollars. You cannot, in good conscience, make the investment in CCSD that you are about to make and not address the current broken and outdated governance model. That is why I urge you to support A.B. 175.

DAN PRICE:

I am a career and technical education teacher at Sunrise Mountain High School and proud member of the Clark County Education Association. I am here today to speak in support of A.B. 175. For the past several years, we have had to tolerate the unprofessional behavior of our School Board of Trustees in Clark County. We have seen in-fighting, name calling and other outrageous actions. They have had to spend thousands of dollars to hire people to teach them how to behave and get along.

This bill puts some accountability back in our Board. Adding nonvoting members from the community with the expertise to help and guide them is good for students and staff. I urge you to pass A.B. 175 and put some guidance and accountability back in our schools. I have also submitted written testimony ([Exhibit G](#)).

CHRISTOPHER APOLLO (Clark County Education Association):

I am staff for Clark County Education Association and testifying on behalf of educator Jessica Jones. Jessica Jones has submitted her testimony ([Exhibit H](#)). I am a veteran kindergarten teacher at a Title I school on the east side of Las Vegas and am proud executive board member of the Clark County

Education Association. I am in support of A.B. 175 with emphasis on section 1.5, which adds 4 nonvoting experts to the Board of Trustees in school districts with more than 75,000 enrolled students. School boards consist of locally elected officials that are entrusted by the public to govern our public schools. Clark County oversees a budget of just under \$3 billion. Their decisions directly impact children attending Clark County schools.

In recent years, the Board of Trustees in Clark County have spent more time in the weeds with one another than making sure administrative functions and educational outcomes for our students are met. Our current Board model in Clark County leaves them beholden to the superintendent and the staff for all information. As such, the superintendent sets the narrative for our Trustees. There has also been a seemingly endless four-three split, which has made it difficult for the board to function as intended.

Allowing for the appointment of nonvoting experts from our community will help support our elected trustees and decrease their reliance on information from the superintendent they are charged with overseeing. Appointed members will provide expertise in areas that elected Trustees may not be familiar with. They will help prevent passing policies which adversely affect student performance. I ask for your support of A.B. 175. Adopting a different Board model will help our Board focus more on their governing duties while supporting our students with policies that will improve their academic success.

ELIZABETH ADLER:

I am a veteran Spanish and English language learner teacher at Sunrise Mountain High School and a board member of the Clark County Education Association. I am here today to speak in support of A.B. 175. I have been in CCSD long enough to have experienced several Boards over my 25 years as an educator in Nevada. These elected officials should run for this position with the intent of overseeing their school district and making decisions that advance the progress of the children in the schools they represent. I do not know when this changed, but so many of us watch our Board meetings with horror. Not only does business not get done, but we observe adults behaving in public in a manner that we would all be ashamed of.

Our Board of Trustees would benefit from appointed professionals who have particular skills that would assist them in the operations of the Board and

provide the needed resources that our current Board lacks. I urge you to pass A.B. 175 and put some needed guidance on our Board.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in opposition?

IRENE BUSTAMANTE ADAMS (Clark County School District Board of Trustees, District F):

Due to previously scheduled work commitments, School Board President Garcia Morales and Vice President Lola Brooks send their regrets. Our president has given me the authority to speak on behalf of our team. I want to thank you all for your service to our State. We appreciate the Legislators and the many sacrifices you are making to serve.

It has been approximately 120 days since my swearing-in ceremony. I come before you not having all the answers to fix the challenges in education. Nor do I profess that I am the be-all and end-all to the solution. What I can say, and I say it with confidence, is that I have witnessed movement in the right direction, especially in the priority areas you want to see growth in. I have spoken with Legislators and other community leaders to understand the things that need to evolve.

There are five areas you want the Trustees to focus on: student outcomes; transparent relationships, especially because you may be approving a huge amount of education funds and do not want to be sent to look at our website for answers; professionalism among the Trustees; accountability for the performance of our employees; and Trustees to rethink community engagement to include more interaction with parents, students, the business community, local municipalities and especially Legislators. We can be on the same page about addressing concerns.

There are more challenges, but I will focus on those to start. There are eight ways that we are making improvements. On April 17, our Board president approved a coach facilitator at CCSD to help the Trustees with upcoming goal setting.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Your two-minute time is up. We do have some questions.

SENATOR NEAL:

I think you were getting ready to say you are hiring a coach to set goals. I know that happened before you were elected—probably six months prior to your election. They had a coach that came in and talked to the Board about how to prioritize and what is good governance. The coach told members exactly what the public was telling them.

In regard to your opposition, why do you think this bill is not a solution? What real and effective change is happening at the Board level that we can hang our hats on?

MS. BUSTAMANTE ADAMS:

I agree with you. A coach was hired six months before I got there and, while there has been some added value resulting from that, it was not enough. I know with certainty that the coach being sought by the Council of Great City Schools, which is like the National Conference on State Legislators for Legislators, has a track record of helping school systems improve student outcomes, especially with career and college readiness.

Another outcome from that suggestion six months ago was the relaunch of our community engagement listening sessions. We held a series of six listening sessions, and we got student, parent and community stakeholders' participation. That speaks to the relationship that you want us to have. I think that was a main point that was coming from this bill.

We are also working with the demand side of the equation, which is what I hear the bill sponsors alluding to. Clark County School District will be at the table at the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance Talent Pipeline Council. They are pulling together the leaders of the education institutions together, which includes the K-12 system and our Board. We want to work collaboratively to align education, workforce and economic development. That Council will start this summer.

The beginning of the pipeline is K-12, so they have to be at the table. This bill does not speak to the collaborative effort that is already being done outside of this suggested piece of legislation. Our superintendent and Board president have met with the mayors of the local municipalities in our region. Their actions speak to building better relationships to address current needs. That is a start. The Council will meet on a quarterly basis to increase the communication, transparency and student outcomes for southern Nevada.

I agree with the suggested improvement of increased training. I also agree that if you are interested in getting on the Board and do not have an educational background—my background is in business—you should still run for the Board. This last election cycle, I saw entities such as the Associated Builders and Contractors PAC supporting candidates who had a business background. If there are more diverse backgrounds, possibly in finance where there is a lack of knowledgeable people, they should run for the Board. That is my recommendation.

SENATOR NEAL:

It is concerning to me that we are talking about the business side, but not talking about kids. We are not talking about academic achievement. We are not talking about how appointing additional members to the Board will change academic achievement. When people were creating a laundry list of why we should appoint members to the Board, children learning was not part of it. Finance and technology was mentioned.

The issue is the CCSD has not prioritized academic achievement for students because of the makeup of the Board. There has been personal drama, ridiculousness and hitting each other back on social media—which happened before you came on. I want to hear what your solution is outside of the business aspect. I know you are coming in with an MBA. I know your main focus has been on the business side, supply and demand, and trying to understand workforce relationships, but we have third graders who cannot read. The Board gives everyone problems. I want your version of this bill that focuses on children. What would that look like?

MS. BUSTAMANTE ADAMS:

My recommendation would be the coach facilitator from the Council of Great City Schools. Here is why: the No. 1 priority has to be, like you said, the mindset and being grounded in student outcomes—plain and simple. I know in the past that has not been the focus. If you are calling our baby ugly, you are correct. I can say with confidence that within the last 120 days, our professionalism and decorum would be something you would be proud of.

I do not want to be part of something embarrassing, so I am committed. I am committed to you and the Legislators in my area to work on student outcomes. You need a coach to set up that framework. The Council of Great City Schools has demonstrated a great track record with other school boards. That is what

I am going to put my energy into. I am not sure if this bill does that. If you want to use this bill, then I would say increase the training, set consequences for the behavior of the Board—including the ability to be removed—and use the bill to create a subcommittee—if you want a certain area like finance to be addressed, which I have heard people testify that they want.

I know the pain is there, that is why I am part of the Board—to see the pain from the inside. I have been serving for 120 days and I do not profess that it can be done within that time frame, but I am committed. We need to focus on student outcomes and the coach from the Council of Great City Schools. That is what I am placing my money on.

DEBORAH EARL (Power2Parent):

On behalf of the parents we represent, I am here to speak in opposition to A.B. 175. Parents are against this bill because it further disenfranchises them from important aspects of their children's education—primarily the ability to keep their elected officials accountable through the election process. Appointed trustees, whether they are given voting or nonvoting rights, are not accountable to parents. This bill adds a layer of bureaucracy to the meetings as well as policy and financial decisions that affect our children directly.

Any Trustee who has influence on policies and other critical matters related to education should be accountable to voters. It is not acceptable to CCSD parents that the amendment to this bill provides nonvoting members of the Board of Trustees the same rights and responsibilities as the voting members; voting rights for the election of officers; and the authority to serve as an officer of the Board of Trustees.

What motivation does an appointed Board member have to engage with or address the real concerns of parents? This bill distances parents, who are critical stakeholders, from what happens in this District. If this bill passes, parents will not have a meaningful voice in the partnership they should have with their elected Trustees to advocate for students. We encourage this Committee to vote no on this piece of legislation.

MATTHEW TRAMP:

I am a member of the CCSD Attendance Zone Advisory Commission. I do not speak for the rest of the Commission, but as an individual. One of my problems is that the city and the county want input into CCSD. They are part of the root

of some of the problems we deal with in my Advisory Commission. They want to interfere in the Board, but they approve housing when they know there are no schools available. They stick the costs on the District. If they are so concerned, why are they not producing the money? Why not reverse the roles? Clark County School District should have a representative on the planning commission to give their input on the effect housing has on the neighborhood schools.

One of my other concerns is when the cities and the counties are able to appoint somebody, what would stop them from appointing somebody who is a big donor to their campaigns? Someone could buy his or her way into this seat, or the donors could want their own particular person to influence.

You are so concerned about diversity. You should have increased the amount of elected Trustees when you had the chance during redistricting. You are doing that right now with one of the cities for that same purpose. I have lived here for 21 years. I can go through a list of all former elected officials who have been in jail, had to resign because of corruption, misused campaign funds or had sexual harassment charges. Not one of them was a Board Trustee. Last year, it was not two Board Trustees who got into a physical fight in a government building, it was members from the City of Las Vegas. You want to give them the power to influence the District?

NICOLE BENGOCHEA (Nevada Association of School Boards):

I am a Trustee in Humboldt County. I am sharing my opposition for A.B. 175, which erodes the democratic process. Voters elect Board members who they believe will make the best decisions on behalf of all the students. This bill will dilute the voice of the people. Placing a nonvoting member will remove the accountability. It will not fix the dysfunction; it will most likely cause more dysfunction.

This model is not grounded in any research or proven success. Two examples of this process failing include Prince George's County, Maryland, and the Virgin Valley Water District in Nevada. In Prince George's County, the hybrid model has been fraught with power struggles that resulted in lengthy legal challenges. There are current recommendations to remove the appointed board members from that board. By comparison, in Nevada, there was legislation in 2015 that removed appointments to the Virgin Valley Water District Board to regain functionality.

School boards across the State work as nonpartisan officials. Due to the appointment process outlined in A.B. 175, partisan commission members will gain influence on an otherwise nonpartisan body. As Board Trustees, we are subjected to training hours on board governance. I personally can attest that the single district most affected by this bill has worked diligently on board governance and training—as the rest of the trustees across the State of Nevada have. School Board members need the ability to address violations to good governance and Board conduct, which we do not currently have. There are no repercussions. I urge you to vote no on A.B. 175. I have also submitted two opposition letters ([Exhibit I](#)).

PATRICIA HADDAD (Clark County School District):

I am here to share our strong opposition. Assembly Bill 175 seeks to experiment on school-aged children in southern Nevada by imposing a nonevidence-based Board structure that puts adult issues and power struggles ahead of the needs of kids. As we review this legislation, I implore you to ask, does the Legislature not trust voters? Does the first female-majority Legislature in the Country not trust an all-female governing Board comprised mostly of women of color?

If this legislation moves forward, the basic democratic principle of one-person one-vote will be eroded. Surely, the voice of Clark County's rural communities will be eclipsed. There are no limitations, guardrails or standards for these appointments. Appointed members would have no term limits and, though touted as a way to bring expertise to the Board, no language exists in the bill articulating who should qualify and what experience is needed. Legislation we have brought forward, vetted and supported by Board members across the State sought to double the amount of training required by elected officials. This Body did not move that bill forward.

Compare A.B. 175 with the Assembly bill that seeks to reduce the size of the Board of Regents and the length of their terms, I believe it was A.B. 118.

ASSEMBLY BILL 118: Revises provisions relating to the Nevada System of Higher Education. (BDR 34-127)

Is this Legislature sending the message it wants more public accountability and participation or less? These bills together send conflicting messages about where this Body stands on voter voices and participation in determining voters' representatives.

Determining representatives is the foundation of our democratic society and a form of representative government. Yet A.B. 175 sends a loud and clear message that this Legislature, comprised of elected members, believes that the voters of southern Nevada should not select their Board representatives. Improving student outcomes is an urgent need. There is no time to waste. I have also submitted written testimony ([Exhibit J](#)).

SENATOR NEAL:

I do not disagree with 50 percent of what you said. The comment about the female-majority Legislature not trusting a minority-led Board was a little bit below the belt. It absolutely was. It has nothing to do with the racial composition of that current Board. They are missing some diversity there. Woman-to-woman, I think it is because we see an issue with children and how children are not the focus of this particular Board, although there are some newly elected members.

I had to say something about that comment because I felt like you were saying that we are judging—and yes, we do judge—but we are not judging them based on the fact that they are a diverse group—well, it is a Latino group with one white woman—and that is not the case.

To put that statement out, I do not know who wrote it, was probably the worst statement that could be made. You are challenging us and saying that somehow this female Legislature is throwing dirt on them. We are throwing dirt on that body for their actions, not for their racial composition or the fact that they are women. It is because that children are not performing.

You oppose this bill, which we understand why, because of the power structure. At the same time, the District is just as guilty for not pushing policy that we feel in this building would help save children. Be honest about your position, which is that this bill may not be the best vehicle to fix the problem. It may need a two-year sunset. It may need some subcommittees. It may need some criteria.

You have come to the table and opposed summer school. There is an inherent problem and issue we are dealing with which is the District taking accountability for what it does not do and what seems to be a refusal to do. The District needs to teach children and take accountability for the failure of students not walking across their third-grade graduation because they cannot read. You need

to adjust what you are saying. If that was a post on social media, there would be serious issues with that statement.

SENATOR DOÑATE:

We heard in earlier testimony that CCSD communicated to its employees asking them to voice their opposition to this bill. Can you confirm that action was taken by CCSD? Is that something that was delivered to the faculty?

MS. HADDAD:

A communication was sent out to a broad legislative update list. The opt-in list includes community members, legislators and, if employees opted in with their employee email, the employees would receive that.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

To support my colleague, but not to engage in the back and forth, there was a bill that was brought forth by CCSD specifically trying to demand additional training for the Board. I make that point to make it clear all of us are in agreement we want to do more. To defend my colleagues, those comments felt a little personal. We all collectively agree, and it is signified through the bill you brought forward, we want Board members who are better trained, have better resources and the right members are on the Board. We can all agree on that. I wanted to level the room with that. I appreciate you coming forward.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

Our biggest concern with the bill has already been mentioned by Senator Titus and Senator Neal. We are concerned about section 1.5, subsection 8 that states the appointed members can hold office and vote in the officer elections. We feel that is stifling our parents and voters. Here in America, we vote for our leaders; we would like to see that continue. That is why we are opposed to the bill.

CHRIS DALY (Nevada State Education Association):

We oppose A.B. 175. It will not do much to address the underlying issues in the CCSD. The most pressing issues facing Nevada schools, particularly in Clark County, include the severe educator shortage, chronic underfunding, violence—there was an incident today—and continuing inequities that are very clearly not the result of District governance models. Instead, they are the result of larger societal problems along with continuing bipartisan failure of this State to truly prioritize public education.

Board members are responsible for District governance, yet they are denied the resources necessary to be successful. You are familiar with us coming in and saying Nevada's ranked forty-eighth in the Nation for per pupil funding. That is certainly not the fault of individual Board members. They are sort of set up.

Most importantly, we should be open and honest about the politics driving the latest discussion of school district governance. While there have been numerous efforts over the years to raise this issue, it never got far until our colleague, Lisa Guzman, was elected to the CCSD Board. Even though Lisa Guzman is a good Board member, her work for the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) was such a threat to one particular entity, it filed a complaint against her, even before she took the oath of office. Last Session, former Speaker Jason Frierson mentioned he only introduced the hybrid school Board bill on behalf of that same organization; that is where A.B. 175 comes from.

It is not about professionalism or student achievement; it is about triangulation and political power. Take, for example, the contract of CCSD Superintendent Jesus Jara. The same organization that helped rally support to save the Superintendent, after four Trustees voted not to renew his contract in the fall of 2021, are now running a public campaign of no confidence. Let us be honest, 75 percent of Clark County teachers surveyed said they do not have confidence in the Superintendent. They would have given the exact same response 18 months ago. Likewise, if A.B. 175 does not satisfy this group's political needs, they will be back here in two years asking to grant voting rights to the newly appointed members. It is more political games.

On the other hand, NSEA has consistently advocated for the inclusion of educator voices in the decisions that impact them. That is why we are advocating for school board reforms like allowing active educators to participate on their school boards. We believe incorporating educators' voices onto these boards would go a long way to increase the professionalism, productivity and the standing of our school boards. It would actually improve student outcomes. It would signal a genuine appreciation for Nevada teachers. I have also submitted my opposition testimony ([Exhibit K](#)).

ANNA BINDER:

I appreciate the intensity of the conversation today. I am a mom. I will echo Mr. Daly's comments about consistency. Listening to those speaking in support, the Committee members pointed out people using words such as workforce and

technology. Those are great concepts, but they do not equate to student outcomes because those are adult problems. The people who come to the table looking for that want to tap into the multibillion-dollar budget. I have spoken out over the years about the way funds are spent. Thankfully, tons of constituents and other community leaders listened.

This bill cannot, nor can any that were proposed this Session, give us back the Board governance we had before the pandemic. Without having a vote, we can never undo that. As long as we have the 4-3 board split, we are never going to come out of this. When I hear the words infighting and quorum, I do not see anything wrong with our elected officials pushing back against things that are hurting our children. Some officials step out of line a few times, but elected officials are being demonized for wanting accountability, especially accountability from the Superintendent. We will not get that because of the 4-3 board split and the power that was given to the Superintendent. How do we get that back? How can we legislate that? Until we can get rid of Superintendent Jara, we cannot get our vote back.

LYNN CHAPMAN (Independent American Party of Nevada):

Our school boards are important to us citizens. It is the government that is closest to the people. School boards control the school policies and budget. They oversee the academic, legal and financial health of school districts. They hire and evaluate the district superintendent, resolve conflicts and allocate funds. They represent the public interest and serve the diverse values and needs of their community. The people need to see high academic standards, transparency and accountability from our CCSD Board. Making the decisions for our community is important to us, and using our right of citizens to be able to vote for people to work in our favor is of utmost importance to us.

I believe there are attorneys present for legal advice during the Board meetings. If any other expertise or professional experience is needed, the professionals could sit in the audience with the parents. After all, the parents are the experts: you call them up when you need to hear some expert opinion; they are not part of the committees or Legislature. We should consider that. We believe appointees are not needed. We are also concerned that this idea may end up in all the other counties, which is not something that we want. Please vote no on A.B. 175.

ERICA NUNGARAY (Nevada State Education Association):

We the people, for the people elect our school trustees, just as we elected you all to govern this Legislative Body. If A.B. 175 were to pass, you would undermine the people's vote. If you allow this to pass, what are the possibilities that your elected positions are also in jeopardy of having such a bill impact your elected positions?

This bill could also lead to nepotism. Would that be in the best interest of the students? Why are we not addressing the elephant in the room? We lack funding in education. Is the solution is to add more Trustee seats? It does not matter who you appoint if the funding is not there. We will continue to be last in education. Vote no on this bill.

BRUCE PARKS:

There is more to Nevada than just Clark County. This is an unnecessary expansion of our school boards. You cannot appoint enough expertise to the school boards to fix the problems we have. This bill changes the quorum requirements. There is no provision in this bill that says that four appointees and two members cannot vote on bills; they could with the way this bill is written. That is a problem. If you want to fix education problems in Nevada, it is not a lack of funding; it is the fact that funding is not associated or linked to academic requirements, as measured against a nationally standardized test. Why not look at what Utah is doing next to us? They seem to be succeeding with a lot less spending, but we do not ever ask them.

Additionally, if you go to the opinion page on this bill, there are 159 total opinions with 151 opposed. Who would think it is in the best interest to continue with this bill? I would argue that if you link funding with academic achievement, you will fix the problem with the schools. It is a simple solution.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod, do you have any closing remarks?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BILBRAY-AXELROD:

As you can see, this bill brings a lot of people and opinions out. That is one of the reasons we brought this bill forward. The reason my colleague and I reached across the aisle is because we want things to be better. We know that they can do better. We know that there are great teachers and people who care about

our kids. We cannot keep doing the same thing we are doing and expecting a different result.

ASSEMBLYMAN YUREK:

I am on Day 92 of my freshman Session. This bill has been a challenge, and the emotions have run high. I have personally been told I should die a slow long death along with this bill. Honestly, at this stage, I still I love the legislative process. I love that you can come up with an idea, push it out there, and it brings people to the table filled with emotion and ideas. I do not question anyone's motives, despite some of the personal attacks and things that have gone on. If people could put aside their emotions, we all want the same thing: to improve student achievement and student outcomes.

In asking for your support, I want to remind this Committee this goes back to a 2013 bipartisan Southern Nevada Forum where Legislators, educators and various stakeholders came up with this concept. It is not novel nor something that has never been tried before. Within our own State, we have the example of our State Board of Education where this model has worked.

For ten years, from 2013 to 2023, this bill has been brought forward in five different sessions. Each time it has been pushed back with the promise that something is going to change, things are going to get better, we will improve certain things. Yet here we are. Things have not improved.

I would ask you to consider this and give it a shot. We can always come back and fix things if it ends up not being the perfect solution. After ten years of not seeing the improvement that these stakeholders push for as an example of what we might be able to do and kicking the can down the road, I would hope that you would consider this option. I urge your support for A.B. 175.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I know you are going through a lot of very complicated conversations. We appreciate you taking on a very difficult combo and doing it in a bipartisan way. I have received five letters of support ([Exhibit L](#)) and two letters of opposition ([Exhibit M](#)). I will close the hearing on A.B. 175 and hand the gavel back to Chair Lange.

CHAIR LANGE:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in public comment?

MR. ROJAS:

There is \$3 billion coming into education from Governor Joe Lombardo. I am asking the education committees on both sides of the Legislature to pass a law to bring more counselors into the schools. Not only in charter schools, but also in public schools, there is a problem with kids not respecting their teachers and many of those kids need counseling. The kids could have attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or problems at home. For every 250 students, we need a counselor. We need a law that says if you are a counselor, you cannot be put in a teaching position, you have to be a counselor.

We need to keep these kids in school to give them the proper counseling to learn how to be receptive students and law-abiding citizens. If that happens, not only is education going to improve, but crime is also going to go down when these kids graduate from school. I am pleading with you all to somehow come up with that law. Put something in one of these bills. We need counselors. That is the solution which will make the most impact on charter and public schools.

ALEXANDER MARKS (Nevada State Education Association):

Today kicks off Teacher Appreciation Week. Teachers are champions for their students and work with parents and caregivers to make sure every student is reached each and every day within our classrooms and on our school sites. I have the honor, along with my colleagues behind me, to help elevate their voices within these walls.

This Teacher Appreciation Week we are asking educators to receive more, as well as saying it is Time for 20. The best way to appreciate our teachers is to respect the profession and listen to our educators. That is why NSEA has called for a 20 percent salary raise for all Nevada educators, a \$20 minimum wage in our schools and 20 students per class. For a year, this is what educators and NSEA has been calling for which would help address our historic vacancies and remain competitive with nearby states like California and New Mexico that have passed 20 percent to 30 percent raises for educators.

Last month, the National Educators Association released its annual Rankings of the States. As you heard my colleagues say, we continue to struggle with ranking No. 48 in the Nation and having the largest class sizes in the Country. This Session, we have heard about many new historic funding efforts. However,

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the Commission on School Funding has already testified that most of the additional proposed funding will go toward the increasing costs.

For this week and the next 29 days, let us join together and tell educators we are not only listening to them, but advocating for them. This means not putting \$2.4 billion into the reserve accounts. This means no public funding for California billionaires to build a stadium. That means it is Time for 20. Nevada State Education Association encourages Legislators to keep moving forward with optimal funding, not just running in place, so we can ensure a high-quality education for every Nevada student. That is how we can best appreciate our teachers.

CHAIR LANGE:

Hearing no further public comment, the meeting is adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Kirsten Oleson,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
A.B. 43	C	2	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
A.B. 185	D	3	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
A.B. 212	E	3	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
A.B. 175	F	18	Senator Dina Neal	Opposition Letter, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
A.B. 175	G	23	Dan Price / Clark County Education Association	Support Letter
A.B. 175	H	23	Christopher Apollo / Clark County Education Association	Support Testimony, Jessica Jones
A.B. 175	I	30	Nicole Bengochea / Nevada Association of School Boards	Two Opposition Letter
A.B. 175	J	31	Patricia Haddad / Clark County School District	Opposition Testimony
A.B. 175	K	33	Chris Daly / Nevada State Education	Opposition Testimony

			Association	
A.B. 175	L	36	Senator Edgar Flores	Five Support Letters
A.B. 175	M	36	Senator Edgar Flores	Two Opposition Letters