

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-second Session  
April 3, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Roberta Lange at 1:02 p.m. on Monday, April 3, 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:**

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Senatorial District No. 8

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Robert Barsel  
Sheila Bray, University of Nevada, Reno  
Elyse Monroy-Marsala, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Nevada Chapter  
Trent Brenkus  
Ella King  
Ciera Bellavance, Hope Means Nevada

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Abbey Bernhardt, National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Trinh Dang, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Southern Nevada  
Michael Willoughby  
Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association  
Karlana Kulseth  
Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents  
Jamie Tadrzynski  
Alexis Salt  
Cyrus Hojjaty  
Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of  
Education  
Dylan Keith, Vegas Chamber  
Patricia Haddad, Clark County School District  
Gil Lopez, Charter School Association of Nevada  
Tricia Bookhart

CHAIR LANGE:  
We will begin the meeting with a work session.

JEN STURM-GAHNER (Policy Analyst):  
As a nonpartisan staff, I can neither support nor oppose any measure. There are three bills for the work session today. We will begin with Senate Bill (S.B) 9.

**SENATE BILL 9**: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-282)

Senate Bill 9 was presented by the Nevada Department of Education on February 8, 2023. The bill extends the deadline by which a school district or public school is required to create and post certain reports relating to educational expenditures, personnel employed and services provided. The bill also increases the limitation from 7.5 percent to 20 percent on the use of money for programs of career and technical education and expands the activities for which money may be used. Additionally, S.B. 9 eliminates end-of-course finals. Finally, S.B. 9 eliminates certain forms prescribed by the Nevada Department of Education that teachers in elementary schools use for reports concerning parental involvement and pupil compliance with certain policies. There are no proposed amendments at this time. I have submitted the work session document ([Exhibit C](#)).

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will now accept a motion to do pass.

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 9.

SENATOR NEAL SECONDED THE MOTION.

SENATOR TITUS:

Although I appreciate some of the merits of this bill, I will be voting no on this bill. I feel the end-of-course exams are critical to understanding the student's capacity and to measure gains over the following semester or class. There has to be some accountability, but none was offered in this bill.

THE MOTION CARRIED. (SENATORS TITUS AND BUCK VOTED NO.)

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will now close the work session on S.B. 9 and open the work session for S.B. 214.

**SENATE BILL 214**: Revises provisions relating to governmental administration.  
(BDR 18-898)

Ms. STURM-GAHNER:

Senate Bill 214 was presented by Senator Spearman on March 20, 2023. The bill eliminates the Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The bill also eliminates the Commission on Educational Technology and instead requires the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to establish a plan for the use of education technology. Additionally, S.B. 214 eliminates the requirement for NDE to establish the Competency-Based Education Network and eliminates the authority of the Nevada System of Higher Education to establish the Committee on Anatomical Dissection. The bill eliminates the authority of the Advisory Council on the State Program for Wellness and the Prevention of Chronic Disease to appoint an advisory group to study the delivery of health care through patient-centered medical homes. Finally, S.B. 214 eliminates the Advisory Committee to the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission. There are no amendments at this time. I have submitted the work session document ([Exhibit D](#)).

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will now accept a motion to do pass.

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 214.

SENATOR DOÑATE SECONDED THE MOTION.

SENATOR TITUS:

This is a bill I can get behind; it eliminates some commissions.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will now close the work session on S.B. 214 and open the work session for S.B. 273.

**SENATE BILL 273**: Changes the name of the Nevada State College to the Nevada State University. (BDR 34-968)

Ms. STURM-GAHNER:

Senate Bill 273 was presented by Senator Lange on March 20, 2023. The bill changes the name of the Nevada State College to the Nevada State University (NSU) and directs the Board of Regents to take the necessary steps to implement the name change. The bill further designates NSU as a state college. There are no amendments at this time. I have submitted the work session document ([Exhibit E](#)).

CHAIR LANGE:

I will now accept a motion to do pass S.B. 273.

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 273.

SENATOR TITUS SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR LANGE:

I will now close the work session on S.B. 273.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I will now open the hearing on S.B. 313.

**SENATE BILL 313**: Revises provisions relating to mental health education.  
(BDR 34-58)

SENATOR ROBERTA LANGE (Senatorial District No. 7):

I am pleased to present S.B. 313, which speaks to mental health content standards in health courses and mental health education training for teachers. I would also like to introduce Robert Barsel who is presenting S.B. 313 with me. I want to say how incredibly impressed I am with Mr. Barsel's knowledge and research on this topic, his dedication to helping others experiencing grief and mental health challenges and his drive to see this much needed legislation through.

I would like to go over some background. Robert and I co-presented last May to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education concerning mental health and support systems in Nevada's kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) schools. After reviewing local and national mental health information, Robert advocated for the implementation of a mental health wellness curriculum. During the work session in the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education, they voted unanimously to support the proposed curriculum, including coursework that teaches healthy coping skills, recognizes unhealthy ones, and destigmatizes mental health issues.

I think I speak for everyone here in saying we are proud that the Legislature continues to see bipartisan support in measures that strengthen mental health education and supports Nevadans, particularly our youngest.

ROBERT BARSEL:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present this bill as it is very personal to me. Especially, thanks to Senator Lange for carrying the bill and everything you have taught me along the way. I am presenting S.B. 313 with a proposed amendment ([Exhibit F](#)).

There are two questions I want to ask and answer today: Why do we need this legislation? And how do we accomplish it?

First, the why. In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a rare public health advisory addressing youth mental health, which he called an emerging crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. In his 53-page report, he called to action a whole society's effort to recognize that mental health is an essential part of overall health. To give context, this was the first warning of its kind since the AIDS crisis.

In 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 44 percent of high school students reported that they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year. This number is even higher for girls at 57 percent and at 69 percent for members of the LGBTQ+ community. When left undertreated, coping with mental illness can contribute to self-harm, including thoughts of suicide, which is now the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 34. It is important to note that research indicates that the onset and progression of mental illness can be avoided when detected and treated early.

Sadly, Nevada is even worse for wear. The 2022 America's School Mental Health Report Card ranks Nevada fifty-first in the Nation for youth mental health. I should mention that Nevada has ranked fifty-first every year since the survey began in 2015. Of Nevada's 539,000 K-12 students, 42,000 have had a major depressive episode and 28,000 of them did not receive any treatment. Since the pandemic, prevalence of anxiety in children and adolescents has increased by 9 percent and depression has increased by 12 percent.

The youth mental health crisis not only impacts success in the classroom, but also contributes to the incredibly important issue of teachers feeling unsafe in the workplace. One recent study found that 40 percent of teachers feel less safe in the classroom than they did five years ago. This rings especially true in Nevada where Governor Joe Lombardo, during his State of the State address, opened by mentioning the two teachers in the audience who were recently assaulted by students.

I would like to mention that I do not offer this information to disparage the many Nevada school employees who give so much to support our children. Instead, I offer this information to show just how pressing an issue this is in the Silver State.

It is important to make the distinction between mental health and mental illness. Mental health is the way a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors affect their life. Mental health is a spectrum. In the same way that every individual experiences physical health as a continuum from "well" to "ill," every individual has a mental health experience. As with physical health, mental health changes at different points in an individual's life based on both biological and environmental factors.

Mental illness is a condition that impacts a person's thinking, emotions and moods such that it interferes with their daily functioning. My presentation ([Exhibit G](#)) shows 20 percent of youth ages 13 to 18 experience serious mental illness. The most prevalent mental illnesses include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and global development delay. Half of mental illnesses emerge by age 14 and three-quarters emerge before age 25. Fifty percent of youth do not receive the treatment necessary for their mental health needs due to limited or no knowledge of the need, barriers to care or stigma. For those who receive help, the average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is eight to ten years.

How does this impact our classrooms? Page 6, [Exhibit G](#), shows how mental health impacts youth. According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA), youth with untreated mental health issues often have difficulty controlling attention during learning tasks, have lower end-of-course grades, frequent absences from school, trouble making or maintaining friends and difficulty following school routines and norms. Those behaviors often lead to suspension and expulsion.

Historically, educators have been accustomed to thinking about a variety of factors known to affect young people's school-related outcomes, such as whether they come from historically underserved groups, are learning English as a second language or are experiencing poverty. One important contributor to school outcomes that school leaders may not regularly consider is the mental health of their students.

Pursuant to the 2011 National Children's Mental Health Report Card, children with mental health issues show more than double the rate of problematic and dangerous behavior. For example, 20 percent of students with mental health issues have been suspended compared to 9 percent of all children; 13 percent had school attendance problems compared to 6 percent of all children;

11 percent have engaged in drug abuse compared to 3 percent of all children; and 6 percent have made a suicide attempt compared to 1 percent of all children. More percentages are on page 7 of [Exhibit G](#).

How do we help our students on this front? I believe that the solution needs to start in the classroom from K-12. Studies have shown that addressing mental health issues earlier can prevent them from worsening and becoming mental illness. Fostering positive mental health in students has also been shown to enhance academic growth. One study in 2011 looked at school-based social and emotional learning programs involving more than 270,000 students in K-12. It revealed that students who participated in these programs improved their grades and standardized test scores by 11 percentile points compared to control groups.

To accomplish this, I propose we take a more proactive approach by educating youth, as opposed to the many expensive reactive approaches currently offered. For example, some have suggested hiring more social workers and guidance counselors to meet federal recommendations on the counselor-to-pupil ratio; although it is a good idea, it has a major issue. A *Washington Post* article in December 2022 stated that there are not enough social workers in the Country to fill the need, not to mention the millions of dollars it would cost to do so. Even for the fortunate minority of students who have access to mental health care, the average wait to get in to see a professional makes it an ineffective option.

Before I go more in depth about the bill, I would like to tell you a little bit more about my background and why this legislation means so much to me. When I was five, my dad died due to a heart attack. Because of that, I was thrown into a new and scary world where anxiety prevented me from entering classrooms. I was stuck in my head most days. I had to cope with the sudden change. Thankfully, my mom took me to an outside organization called Adam's Place, where they taught me about mental health. There was a support group there to help me work through it. It was there that I learned the basic skills to approach my mental health. Many of those same skills I continue to use to this day.

After being a participant for about seven years, the organization was kind enough to train me to become a peer support facilitator so that I could help other kids in the same way that facilitators had helped me. I participated in an

eight-hour training per the best practices dictated by the National Alliance for Grieving Children, followed by a yearlong shadowing of another facilitator. I was 12 at the time. I mention my age to highlight that the lessons I was taught between the ages of 5 and 11 and then learned how to teach at 12 are not difficult, nor do they require specialized degrees.

In 2019, I realized that the skills I learned could be useful to all kids, so I wrote my own non-grief-specific curriculum. I have been using that curriculum in peer support groups alongside a recreational therapist for the past five years at multiple locations, including my school and at Nevada Youth Network. Nevada Youth Network is a local nonprofit, supporting youth in an underserved community of color on the historic west side of Las Vegas. I have learned from volunteering at these different places that, although people have vastly different backgrounds and life experiences, everyone benefits from learning about their mental health.

Unfortunately, when the pandemic hit, my ties to the kids were severed. I decided to write a free 65-page workbook, as you can see on page 9 of [Exhibit G](#). This workbook synthesizes all of my curriculum in a free, easy-to-use resource. It provides a foundation for learning about mental health. It has been read and approved by a licensed professional counselor. After five years of working with kids and support groups, I witnessed how they were using the lessons I taught to support their mental health. I realized that lessons like this could be and, more importantly, should be taught in schools. So I approached Senator Lange about an idea for a bill.

Together, we spoke to the NDE Superintendent Jhone Ebert to determine the best approach for implementing these lessons in Nevada schools. Superintendent Ebert and her staff agree that the best way would be to employ a scaffolding approach and introduce lessons from a young age and build on them, much like I do in my support groups. That method would ingrain the material early on and make difficult concepts much easier in later years.

I have been slightly vague about what these lessons are like. Before going forward, I would like to give you an example of one of my many lessons. In this activity, we have students take a paper plate and attach strings to it to create a mask. Then, on one side, kids are asked to draw what they show on the outside. The mask shows that often the kid puts up a very happy facade. On the backside of the mask, we ask them to show how they truly feel on the

inside. The face looks sad. In this example, the kid might feel more sad than he or she lets on. Afterwards, we have kids talk to each other about their feelings using techniques I taught them to help each other with their mental health. This activity also reinforces approaching all people with empathy and understanding because we do not always know what is going on.

I can personally speak to how much these lessons have impacted the over 100 kids I have worked with in the past year. The first part of the bill focuses on including more specific guidelines relating to mental health education throughout K-12, which the NDE will develop. I hope the curriculum will include similar lessons. The National Health Education Standards only limitedly address mental health and must be expanded so schools and districts have a clear directive to develop and incorporate mental health lessons throughout the K-12 curriculum. I have researched various state standards and found California and New York to have the most comprehensive and relevant curriculum. Pages 11 through 15 of [Exhibit G](#) are examples of how, in my perfect world, the current standards should be enhanced to provide the skills necessary to address all the issues laid out here. For the sake of time, I will not go through those topics, but they are available online in [Exhibit G](#).

Another vital aspect of the bill is not only having the guidelines in place to implement an effective curriculum, but also ensuring teachers are prepared to teach the curriculum and have the skill set to deal with their own mental health. Educators in K-12 arguably hold one of the most important professions in our society, yet they are underpaid, undervalued and under-supported. Studies show that teachers have one of the most stressful professions, even when compared to doctors. A 2017 educator work-life study surveyed teachers across the U.S. and found that 61 percent reported that they were always or often dealing with high stress over a 30-day period, and that was before the pandemic. Between growing economic disparity, declining student mental health and dwindling classroom resources, teachers are stressed. Many teachers work in environments that lack strong leadership and healthy school cultures; they have increasing job demands and are not equipped with the necessary teaching or support to effectively manage the growing stressors in their profession.

The next part of the bill deals with ways to support teachers in their efforts. The course developed by the Commission on Professional Standards in Education will ensure that teachers have a firm understanding of the new

mental health concepts that will be implemented and how to teach them so that students will have a better understanding of their own mental health.

I want to clarify that this bill is not meant to train teachers to become counselors. It is to give them the information they need to educate their students on basic mental health topics and to provide toolkits to manage difficult emotions in the classroom, necessitated by the lack of counselors. As stated during a presentation to the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services in July 2022, our school psychologist ratio is 1 counselor to 1,866 students, whereas the recommended ratio is 1 to 500. Likewise, our school social worker-to-student ratio is an astounding 1 school social worker to 8,730 students, which is 35 times the recommended ratio.

The issue of teacher and student safety directly correlates with the mental health of the student body. With a shortage of school counselors, teachers are more frequently required to promote mental health and well-being and identify and respond to emerging mental illness in their students.

Section 2 of the bill requires teachers to complete an approved course on mental health prior to renewing their license for the first time on or after July 1, 2025. Currently, 27 states require some mental health training for teachers to get or renew their licenses according to the Education Commission of the States.

There has been much discussion about the 2,500 vacancies in our schools. In a presentation titled "Overview of School Conditions & Recommendations to Improve Outcomes" given to this Committee in February 2023, the main reasons teachers cited for leaving the profession beyond salary were

One, there are not enough social workers, counselors, school psychologists, etc.; two, schools aren't safe; and three, too many schools have bad school climates.

These reasons all relate to a lack of mental health education and support, which this bill begins to address by providing a sound education in mental health to teachers and students.

Before I close, I would like to mention that homelessness, crime, and a kid's inability to learn have all been tied to a higher incidence of mental health issues.

As of October 2014, according to the American Psychological Association, mental illness among inmates is pervasive with 64 percent of jail inmates, 54 percent of state prisoners and 45 percent of federal prisoners reporting mental health concerns. According to SAMHSA, 20 percent to 25 percent of the U.S. population suffers from some form of severe mental illness.

Additionally, disadvantaged kids, especially those of color, are disproportionately less likely to receive mental health services. Racial, ethnic, gender and sexual minorities often suffer from poor mental health outcomes due to the inaccessibility of high-quality mental health care services, the stigma surrounding mental health care and discrimination. Offering a robust mental health curriculum in schools reduces the stigma surrounding mental health issues and provides community-based resources, which helps to reduce the barriers to care for those underserved communities.

The cost of not teaching young people about mental health cannot be overstated when mental illness goes untreated. A cascade of negative outcomes can occur. These can include: reduced prospects for recovery; the development of negative coping behaviors, including substance abuse; the increased chance of legal trouble and consequent criminal records; compromised academic performance and lower graduation rates. The most troubling is the increase of mental health emergencies, such as suicide and self-injury.

Unfortunately, mental health subjects are fraught with negative connotations misunderstanding, fear and stigma. Consequently, most of us are uncomfortable with these issues and it is understandable that teachers may harbor attitudes that create barriers to talking about mental health with students. This bill gives the clear directive that these subjects must be taught.

The passage of S.B. 313 will represent a profound legislative achievement, ensuring all Nevada students and teachers will be better prepared for life. As you consider the need for this legislation, I will leave you with this final page, page 18, [Exhibit G](#). This page recaps all the areas that the bill addresses. I would like you to think about all the benefits mentioned on that page and also about your own everyday life. How often are you using some of the topics taught in school? How often would you use an education on topics like relationships, self-compassion, coping skills and many more? When you look at this bill, please ask yourself how offering this type of education, throughout 13 years of schooling would serve our students and our teachers.

I would also like to briefly mention that we have a revised proposed amendment ([Exhibit H](#)). We are still working on it. We are still talking to NDE and are in the process of fine-tuning the details. I have also submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit I](#)) and a flyer in support ([Exhibit J](#)).

SENATOR NEAL:

Is there a change to section 1?

MR. BARSEL:

There will be changes to section 1.

SENATOR NEAL:

I have a question regarding section 1, subsection 4, because it ties into existing law. Let me preface this question. In existing law, there is a council that deals with cultural competency; they consult with representatives of racial and ethnic groups. In statute, we did not include people who have actual knowledge. When I looked at your language about corresponding the standards and working with mental health resources, I think it is important that the resources are also culturally sensitive to the communities with whom they may interact. All children are not equal, races are not monolithic and there are cultural behaviors that are passed down to children. For example, in my house telling your business in the street was frowned upon. Crying was frowned upon. If you fell off a roof, you would run home, then cry. You would not cry openly because it was seen as a weakness. That was the environment and culture I grew up in. I do not think that environment is too different for children today. Your parents teach you and there is a certain environment in school. I want to know how you will address that in section 1.

MR. BARSEL:

As we continue to work with the NDE on this conceptual amendment, I would like to include more language specifically about resources and how those resources can be tailored to individual school districts so that they are more inclusive of the specific districts and their needs.

SENATOR NEAL:

Thank you for that. I think that is super important because in your presentation you talked about trusted adults being a centerpiece. Suppose you never had a trusted adult, nor do you trust your teacher. In that case, you are not going to divulge information that would open you up to bullying or conversations with a

teacher who might disrespect the information you provide to them. When I say disrespect, I mean saying something in confidence to teachers hoping they might provide some valuable insight, but they did not. At that point, trust is diminished. The student will likely not go to a second person. The training aspect of the bill is good, but I wonder how the cultural differences will be accommodated. Are you anticipating being involved? If this passes, will you be involved as a peer-to-peer coach?

MR. BARSEL:

If this bill is passed and it comes to the actual rollout of the bill and development training, I would love to be at the table to give a student's perspective on how to best put together the training. I would also like to mention that SAMHSA recently put together a report with a list of different types of training that are already available from national organizations. Some of those trainings specifically relate to sensitivity training and cultural stigmas.

SENATOR NEAL:

I have a question about section 2. The bill mentions licensed teachers. Substitute teachers should have their training scaled down to identify things they may encounter. A substitute, especially long-term substitute teachers, may be in a classroom for six weeks to nine months. Although substitutes might not have the same requirements as a teacher, they need to have an introduction to mental health topics because they might encounter them. Typically, seasoned teachers are able to identify and respond to various behaviors. This training would be helpful for a substitute teacher. At the very least, the substitute teacher would be able to identify an issue and perhaps talk to a seasoned teacher about how to handle the situation.

SENATOR TITUS:

First, I want to compliment you. Your presentation was excellent and was prepared better than many we see. I have some concerns and questions relating to the proposed amendment ([Exhibit K](#)) by the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA). The amendment proposed is related to teachers training and access to it. Did you address their concerns?

SENATOR LANGE:

I received that amendment right before the presentation. I have not had a chance to have a conversation about it. Early on, when I had a meeting with NSEA, they had mentioned something about it, but not the concern that came

up in this amendment. It is my understanding that legal might have some additional information.

ASHER KILLIAN (Counsel):

We have not had any conversations with NSEA directly about this, but in terms of the structure of the amendment, the change made in section 2 is a one-time requirement to complete training. In section 3, teachers who are licensed in the future from July 1, 2025, going forward would complete this training as part of their regular teacher training. Section 2 is kind of the catch-up provision for teachers who are currently licensed who would have to complete similar training one time by their first renewal on or after July 1, 2025. While NSEA's amendment speaks to more professional development and ongoing continuing education requirements, it is a one-time requirement to receive this additional training.

SENATOR TITUS:

Section 3, subsection 3, states: "Must require an applicant for a license to teach in this State to complete a course in mental health education pursuant to section 2 of this act before the issuance of such a license." Can you explain the process? I know the intent is good, but we are so short on teachers I have concerns that it might delay getting new teachers. I wonder if teachers could get a temporary license that would give them time to fulfill the requirements.

SENATOR LANGE:

We worked with higher education to make sure that we are going to be able to make this fit within their curriculum. It is also why we set the bill to go into effect in 2025. When you look at neighboring states that are already doing this, they have this type of curricula already involved in their teacher training. Teachers from other states might already have similar training. It is not meant to be a roadblock; it is meant to be a pathway.

SENATOR TITUS:

There is no real clarification in this bill that you will accept training from other school districts. If somebody is from 1 of the 27 states that require training, you did not clarify whether there will be reciprocity for this training or whether they will have to repeat the training. I am looking for that clarification.

SENATOR LANGE:

We would be happy to work with NDE on that. When teachers come into the State with their license, NDE looks at it to make sure it meets the criteria. We will work with them to ensure the same process takes place.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in support?

SHEILA BRAY (University of Nevada, Reno):

We would like to voice our support for S.B. 313.

ELYSE MONROY-MARSALA (National Alliance on Mental Illness, Nevada Chapter):

I would like to commend the bill presenter for his amazing presentation. I am floored by the level of work that he did. The National Alliance on Mental Illness supports giving children the mental health coping skills through this program as well as incorporating these skills into education standards which will promote youth resilience in our community.

TRENT BRENKUS:

I would like to thank Robert Barsel for his testimony. This issue is not talked about enough. This bill will be a tremendous help to Nevada and those struggling. Let us make schools a place where self-love, creative thinking and leadership is the forefront of teaching.

ELLA KING:

I am a junior at Coronado High School and a team committee co-chair for Hope Means Nevada. I am here today to express my strong support for S.B. 313, which would ensure that Nevada students receive crucial mental health education. I attended Henderson International School until third grade, Wolf Elementary School for fourth and fifth grade, Del E Webb Middle School for sixth through eighth grade and Coronado High School from ninth grade to present. I do not think I received any in-school mental health education.

In the fall of 2020, during online school in quarantine, Coronado had wellness checks once a week, but they were typically very brief and not educational. I had some education on healthy coping skills in dealing with stress during my eighth-grade health class, but it was cut short by the coronavirus pandemic.

Additionally, about once a year at Del Webb, my school counselor would meet with each class and discuss various mindsets, particularly the growth vs. fixed mindset. Thinking all the way back to elementary school, I do not know what kind of mental health education I received. Besides the basics of emotions and respecting other people's emotions, I cannot recall any other mental health education at that stage. At all of my schools, I have had access to a school counselor, but I am unaware of any other mental health professionals at those schools. None of my friends or peers that I have spoken to feel adequately prepared by our in-school mental health education because it is not often discussed by our schools or teachers. For this reason, I give my fullest support to S.B. 313 and have provided written testimony ([Exhibit L](#)).

CIERA BELLAVANCE (Hope Means Nevada):

Hope Means Nevada is a community-based nonprofit focused on mental wellness and eliminating teen suicide in the State. We are pleased to show our support for S.B. 313. There is an urgent need for more mental health curricula in Nevada schools. It is our mission to raise awareness on Nevada's high rates of mental health challenges and suicide, as well as connect youth with desperately needed services. Now, more than ever, it is critical to provide access to mental health workers and suicide awareness and prevention information in Nevada schools.

As stated in the presentation, in today's world filled with ongoing chaotic events, it is no surprise that many teens are experiencing heightened levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Health education needs to extend far beyond physical health conversations and should include mental health. We are also here to spread the message to youth that it is okay to not be okay and that mental health resources are available. Senate Bill 313 would not only provide more mental health curricula and resources, but would also prepare teachers on how to handle these important conversations. This bill is fundamental in advancing Hope Means Nevada's mission of ending teen suicide in Nevada by providing access to mental health resources and a community of hope.

ABBEY BERNHARDT (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

At three years old, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I experienced manic episodes and rapid cycling. I had so much anxiety, sadness and anger all at once. I had a favorite cartoon character; I felt similar to him. School was a challenge because no one really understood how to help me. My doctor only knew of two children as young as me diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I had

trouble sitting still because I would have massive surges of energy that I could not control. I was instantly outcast—even a five-year-old knows when they are not wanted. I had so much anxiety before school, I would get nauseous and throw up on the bus, which would cause them to send me home. Even though I am very intelligent, I fell behind fast. Simple resources would have helped me so much. I could have stood or bounced on a ball instead of sitting. I would have loved online learning or homeschooling.

Educators always seem to think I was seeking attention when I just needed help. By middle school, my mania turned to depression. I was bullied by other students, which led to binge eating. I went to multiple schools that promised resources and support, but those never materialized. At one school, the principal called me in every day to tell me I was hopeless, helpless and never going to amount to anything. If you are emotionally abused every day, you start to believe what you hear is true. He broke my spirit. At ten years old, I attempted suicide. It was a nightmare. Finally, after years of struggling, I was placed in online learning. This is something I needed for years.

TRINH DANG (National Alliance on Mental Illness, Southern Nevada):  
We support S.B. 313. I have submitted my testimony for the record ([Exhibit M](#)).

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY:  
I am calling today on behalf of El Faro Consulting. We are here in support of S.B. 313. We are proud to stand with our students and our teachers who are fighting for better access to mental health resources. We share the same concerns that Senator Neal mentioned earlier. Additionally, we have some concerns around individual educators, children, the financial burden for the training in sections 2 and 3, but we do support the bill as it stands.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:  
Is there anyone wishing to speak in opposition?

CHRIS DALY (Nevada State Education Association):  
The Nevada State Education Association appreciates the importance of mental health education and the intent of S.B. 313. However, we are seeking amendments, [Exhibit K](#), and clarifications to build language related to requirements for teacher licensure and licensure renewal. Teachers are currently required to complete 15 hours of professional development per year. Senate Bill 313 requires the completion of at least two credits from a course in

mental health for licensure renewal, which is similar to the old professional development regime. We would ask that language in S.B. 313 be amended to harmonize with the existing professional development requirements.

The Nevada State Education Association is also concerned about access to the course envisioned in S.B. 313. Similar requirements in previous years have resulted in uneven access to professional development courses across the State. We would ask that any professional development required in S.B. 313 be uniformly available to teachers across the State.

As a side note, I had a conversation with Kelly Knight. She seemed to understand these concerns. We look forward to working with the sponsors and NDE.

KARLANA KULSETH:

I am speaking as an individual and an educator from the Clark County School District. What I hear is our schools are not building relationships with students. The reason for that is there is a huge push for student performance and showing a successful boost in academics. We cannot focus on both relationships and performance. We are consistently pushed towards mandated assessments that only look at academics and student performance.

Last month, my school did a survey asking the students if they were comfortable talking to at least one adult on campus. Out of 2,450 students, 23 percent of the students said they were only comfortable speaking to one adult on campus. I love the intent of this bill and I really would love to see it come forward. I have been asking my own school district for these resources since June 2021, before returning to the school's normal learning status. My students are acting out; in fact, all of our students are acting out. They do not know how to properly communicate what is bothering them and what might be affecting their learning environment.

The quote that comes to mind is "Maslow before bloom." We need to address survival needs, acceptance needs and community needs before learning needs.

When it comes down to the intent of this bill, I am a little skeptical about a couple things. If training is to be pushed out in the manner that a lot of our trainings in Clark County School District are, we are not going to get the true intent of this bill nor the resources we really need in the classrooms. This is

similar to what happened with restorative justice. In the Clark County School District, there is a five-person team on each campus. I have 2,450 students on my campus. What will those five people do when we add other adults on campus to help? Please think about this as you work on S.B. 313.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in neutral?

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

We understand and appreciate Senator Lange for bringing forward a bill dealing with mental health education. Mental health education is very important. Our only concerns were brought forward by Senators Neal and Titus. Our concerns are with licensure and wanting to avoid any more barriers to teachers coming to Nevada. We understand there is work being done or will be done with NDE to help overcome any concerns in the licensure area. Right now, we are in the neutral position. We are happy to help in any way we can to resolve those concerns.

JAMIE TADRZYNSKI:

I am a teacher in the Clark County School District. I have been there for 8 years and have spent a total of 11 years as an educator. I respect Robert Barsel. It takes a lot of courage, especially as a high school student, to come here. He was more eloquently spoken than many adults I have encountered in my life. I appreciate that and the intent behind the bill.

I would love to fully stand behind the bill, but I am going to testify in neutral because I want to see more added to it. As a teacher, I love my students. This morning, I spoke to the Senate Committee on Finance about trying to make my room welcoming and a home away from home. Many students in North Las Vegas do not have that. For many kids, I am the foundation they can rely on. I also recognize that 80 percent of the teaching profession is white women and that does not reflect the community in which I live and work.

I support mental health, but I am concerned about another unfunded mandate passed down to educators. This will be another thing on our plates in the middle of a national teacher shortage. If this was reworded to provide adequate training for teachers, I would firmly support it. As it stands, this bill has great potential. I love the fact that our students are the ones propelling this bill forward. They see what is happening in our communities and that is important.

ALEXIS SALT:

I am speaking in the neutral position because I need to let you know that your teachers are drowning. It is not that we do not want to help; we do. Unfortunately, we already have so much on our plate, so we are making mistakes. I work in a charter school now. I was in Clark County for 16 years and I left. I worked on the historic west side of Las Vegas.

I listened to what was said, but I do not know if my students want me meddling in their mental health. I have a good relationship with my students, but there are certain things I struggle to connect with them on; they know that. This bill asks teachers to do something that counselors and social workers should do. Across the Country, there is a shortage of those professionals. We cannot handle this additional task. We are going to break, and people have been breaking for several years. Many people say this is because of the coronavirus, but it is not. When I worked at Jim Bridger Middle School, a teacher attempted suicide in the room next to mine. In this profession, teachers are not okay. It is a huge task to put the burden of being responsible and identifying behaviors on the teacher.

Some of my kids are reading several levels below grade level. If I am being honest, some of my kids cannot complete workbook activities on syllables. We need to be careful that we are not mandating something that students cannot complete and will suck up time.

CYRUS HOJJATY:

Correct me if I am wrong, but they want to add more psychologists to this bill. I am very concerned about that. I graduated from a high school where there was a psychologist. It did not seem like he was helping the students. It seemed like he added more fear and anxiety. Students need help, but the way this bill addresses it needs to be revised. Not to mention, there have been horror stories where school psychologists do not help the kids. They have their self-interests and agendas. I would be cautious adding more of these types of professionals because every student is different. Sometimes the people who are supposed to help do not.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

Do the presenters have any closing remarks?

SENATOR LANGE:

I asked Superintendent Ebert from NDE to talk to you about the licensure question you asked.

JHONE M. EBERT (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education):

The way the bill is written, NDE would do the analysis. We would still issue a license if the teacher was coming from another state and did not have the training. The teacher would need to have that coursework to be fully licensed, but we could issue a provisional license.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

There was a statement made during the neutral testimony that I would like you to address. I have spent the last 12 years in the Legislature trying to protect teachers: what they are doing in the classroom and not adding too much to their plates. When I saw this bill, I thought it was trying to help not only the instructor, but the student as well. The need to address and talk through mental health issues and create mental health awareness has become more prevalent.

How do you see this bill implemented, without adding to the teacher's plate? How do you accomplish this goal without taking more time from the teacher? I would like to hear the explanation because, as we heard during testimony, it is a relevant question.

MR. BARSEL:

Starting with the teacher training, I would like to assuage everyone's fears and state the training is not additional. It requires that when a teacher goes for their first instance of renewing their license, two credits are dedicated to mental health education. It is not an additional two credits, just a required allocation. It will not add any additional training for teachers.

As far as implementing these lessons, they would be under the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, which is already incorporated throughout every level of education. For example, if you need to fulfill your reading requirements, both the SEL and the reading requirements can be done together. If you read about a certain mental health topic, you are fulfilling multiple requirements at once. This can extend to different fields. If you are talking about a certain science, technology, engineering or mathematics requirement, you can talk about physical health and anatomy and mental health, or you can

talk about it from a historical perspective. These types of incorporations are already being done.

SENATOR NEAL:

Where are the parents in this bill? We have been listening to the teachers all Session, but there is a level of parent engagement that should occur. When we talk about coping skills or the lack thereof, the skills come from somewhere. When there is a behavioral display, I do not know if the teacher will have time to teach coping skills. There is another party, whether the parent, grandparent or person in charge of the child, who should also be in that conversation.

In the Clark County School District, there used to be an office where kids could go to talk to someone. Having parents or that office involved would help teach coping skills to the family without an intrusion of privacy. There has to be a conversation because you cannot always teach coping skills. Suddenly, a kid is coming home from school saying they have learned how to meditate. The parent says they do not understand and sends them to breathe in their room. That does not help the situation with the emotions the child is dealing with. We have all been angry when some kid made fun of us in school. Regardless of the grade we were in, we did not go around punching people. Managing emotions and determining what to do when encountering conflict is something that has to be engaged on the family side as well as in the school. Is that something you can consider? We are putting the responsibility on the school and the teacher, but there is also a home environment that is involved.

SENATOR LANGE:

I understand exactly where you are coming from. We also tell parents to help their kids with homework, but that does not always happen. It is always the goal to get the parents involved. We know that parental involvement always helps. Putting parental involvement into the law would be overreaching at this point. It could be mentioned in the teacher classes how to incorporate the parents.

MR. BARSEL:

In closing, promoting mental health and wellness leads to higher overall productivity, better educational outcomes, lower crime rates, stronger economies, lower health care costs, improved family life and, most importantly, improved overall quality of life.

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Having teachers receive more mental health education helps them meet students where they are. We know that mental health cannot be separated from their ability to learn and thrive. Giving our teachers more knowledge enables them to understand, relate and help their student outcomes. Giving our students more knowledge enables them to understand themselves and fellow students and regulate emotions in a healthier manner that promotes a more harmonious classroom and creates more time for learning.

The intent of this legislation is to support both teachers and students. I truly believe that educating both groups about mental health will have a lifelong and meaningful impact. I humbly request that you pass [S.B. 313](#).

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I would like to take a personal point of privilege to say thank you for presenting the bill. I also share the tone and sentiment of Senator Neal. I was not very comfortable with adults, and I was not raised in an accepting environment. I always looked for people who looked like me and I could not find them. I do agree that inviting kids to participate in a conversation is a huge step. Sometimes you have to open the door, and that is what the kid was waiting for. If we are not inviting kids to participate in those conversations, when are they ever exposed? I appreciate where you are coming from, and I really do hope that your bill will open the door for those kids.

I have also received letters of support ([Exhibit N](#)). We will now close the hearing on [S.B. 313](#).

CHAIR LANGE:

I will now open the hearing on [S.B. 340](#).

[SENATE BILL 340](#): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR S-10)

SENATOR MARILYN DONDERO LOOP (Senatorial District No. 8):

I am here to present [S.B. 340](#). The bill helps to address student learning loss by requiring school districts to provide summer school. As we continue to understand the full impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on our communities, we know that many of our students experienced a decline in academic, social and emotional progress. According to the Institute of Education Sciences, public school leaders estimate that 49 percent of students began the 2022-2023 school year behind grade level in at least one academic subject,

compared to 50 percent the year before. Prior to the pandemic, 36 percent of our students were, on average, behind grade level.

To make matters worse, the effects of learning loss are even greater on certain student populations such as those with over 75 percent minority students. For example, 61 percent of students began the 2022-2023 school year behind a grade level, compared to 64 percent the school year before and 50 percent prior to the pandemic. The Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University and Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project recently reported that, on average, public school students in the U.S. in Grades 3 to 8 lost the equivalent of half a year in learning math and a quarter of the year in reading. *The New York Times* had an article with research that indicated standardized math scores in 2022, compared with those in 2019, showed the largest drop ever recorded in three decades since the exam was first administered.

In addition to academic deficiencies, we continue to hear from our teachers and school district staff that student behavior has been a significant issue since the pandemic. According to the Institute of Education Sciences, more than 8 in 10 public schools reported seeing stunted behavioral and social-emotional development in their students because of the coronavirus pandemic. Minor offenses such as tardiness and classroom disruptions are the most frequently cited behaviors that have increased in part due to the coronavirus pandemic.

While life has returned to normal in some ways, many students across the Country are still struggling with the effects of the public health crisis. Addressing the reality of these academic and behavioral inadequacies is an ongoing challenge and one that will take time. Senate Bill 340 continues the work that the Legislature started last Session with S.B. No. 173 of the 81st Session.

Section 1 requires school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority to use available resources to provide summer school. It requires these entities to submit to the Superintendent of Public Instruction a plan to provide in-person or virtual summer school to K-12 pupils in 2023 and 2024 calendar years. School districts and charter school governing boards must also provide transportation and meal services to these students. Additionally, the bill outlines requirements relating to the hiring and payment of summer school personnel.

Section 2 requires school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority to submit a report relating to summer school, including pupil achievement measures, to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Superintendent is then required to submit a compilation of these reports to various governmental entities, including the Legislature.

I urge your support of S.B. 340 to enhance the academic recovery of Nevada students by requiring districts to provide summer school. I would like to draw your attention to *The New York Times* article, "Students Lost One-Third of a School Year to Pandemic, Study Finds." I have heard from multiple families how much their children really enjoyed the summer school experience. My own grandchildren were among those that enjoyed summer school. Teachers are not forced to teach and many teachers have second jobs and are happy to earn money in their own schools. Summer school allows students to experience teachers on a different level. Teachers can interact with the students, do science things and art projects and all kinds of different projects to enhance learning. The students are not just sitting at a desk with a piece of paper.

I call this bill the Eliana Bill because Eliana is my granddaughter in second grade. She calls weekly to ask me if we have done this bill.

SENATOR NEAL:

Thank you for this bill. The Clark County School District may have performed summer school in a different way than we wanted them to. I know in Clark County, there were summer school programs that were supposed to last five weeks but were reduced to three. I confirmed this with the superintendent and Dr. Barton. There was a question of additional duty pay teachers should receive to be on site.

Senator, I know you are trying to keep things simple with this bill, but can we make sure there is a certain standard in performing summer school? Research says that for summer school to be effective, it should be 2.5 hours. That way, the kids will get what they need to progress into the next grade.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I would be happy to have those discussions. In 2021, with S.B. No. 173 of the 81st Session, we tried to call attention to the need for summer school. This bill goes a step further. We felt like requiring three weeks was better than nothing. I would like to give flexibility to schools to expand to a five-week program if

needed. Some schools might only want to do a three- or four-week program; they would be able to do that. We understand there are different needs depending on the county or school district. We do not want a situation where kids sign up for summer school and do not go for a couple of weeks because they think they can show up whenever. We want the time to be meaningful and for teachers to get their summer respite. I am happy to have more conversations about this program.

SENATOR TITUS:

I appreciate what this bill is trying to accomplish, which is educating kids. Some schools do not have the personnel to teach during the regular session, let alone offer summertime hours. Are you looking at every school offering a summer program? You mentioned that this program would include K-12 in every school district. Are you mandating every school offer at least an online program or is the district responsible?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

No, summer school is not required in every single school. For example, Smith Valley might not have that option, but Minden or Gardnerville may. The district could make that decision. I recognize we do not have a lot of personnel, but we do have many teachers who work second jobs. In the two schools my grandchildren are in, the teachers are happy to work in the classroom instead of in retail or at a restaurant. They are happy to continue to work with their kids and some of them might be in their class the following year. Some of the decisions of how to run the summer school programs are made by the school districts.

SENATOR NEAL:

I really like this bill. I support bills that help ensure kids are not failing. There are a lot of teachers who say their plate is already full. We understand that. This particular Session in the finance and education policy committees, we are trying to change the narrative of what is happening in schools and gain control of schools in southern Nevada.

Some of the behavioral issues come from kids who are drowning. They are not learning, and they do not know how to articulate things. When I was at West Middle School, students articulated their thoughts by tearing up materials. The students were treated as if they were not good enough to learn. Of course, the reaction will be immature; they do not know what else to do. They are

stuck in the building all day for seven hours. Even my child, who was at Legacy High School, said, "I feel like I am sitting in a parking lot all day because I am not learning anything." Summer school would have been advantageous for him because he did not like what was happening and was not necessarily being taught content.

I am a fan of all the legislation that is moving forward that will change education.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Once again, no one is requiring that a teacher teach these classes. We have many people who are happy to have the second job. As I mentioned, this is something that will help jump start the next year. We have a lot of children in this State, specifically in southern Nevada, but also in northern Nevada who are home alone all day because their parents are working. I do not see summer school as a daycare option, but I want kids to be where they are wanted and are learning.

We have always offered summer school to high school kids for credit recovery. If they wanted to take P.E. during the summer, so they do not have to shower in P.E. during the school year, they have always been allowed to do that. Why not offer that to the rest of the kids? This allows kids to interact positively with other adults and children. I do not see this as anything more than a positive situation for all of our kids. This is what we need to be doing.

We need to stop worrying about what is wrong about every single bill. Let us find things in bills that are right and that work. If your child likes or wants to go to summer school, that is a parental decision. Nobody is demanding kids or teachers to participate in summer school. The summer school experience is positive because both the kids and adults want to be there.

CHAIR LANGE:

We will now hear from those wishing to speak in support of this bill.

DYLAN KEITH (Vegas Chamber):

We would like to thank the sponsor, Senator Dondero Loop, for bringing this bill forward. We would like to thank her for bringing a solution that is focused on data and student achievement. For that reason, we kindly ask for your support.

MR. DALY:

We are in support of S.B. 340, which relates to summer school. Nevada State Education Association supported S.B. No. 173 of the 81st Session to create summer school programs to address missed opportunities resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Senate Bill 340 focuses on education equity and is an important continuation of last Session's bill.

We also applaud the provision in this legislation for providing compensation for working in summer school based upon the contract rate. Lower summer school rates tend not to attract enough experienced educators.

We would ask school districts that run an extended year or extended studies to consider parity in the compensation for educators working in those other programs as well. I have also submitted a letter of support ([Exhibit O](#)).

CHAIR LANGE:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in opposition?

PATRICIA HADDAD (Clark County School District):

First, I want to affirm that we absolutely agree that the academic achievement of our students is of the utmost urgency. The Clark County School District (CCSD) has also prioritized ensuring each student has the opportunity to make academic gains through the summer. To that end, CCSD has extensive plans for a 2023 summer acceleration program for all students attending CCSD schools.

Although well intentioned, S.B. 340 creates some duplicative and, in some provisions, opaque targeting and reporting requirements for districts on top of the work that has already been planned, negotiated with collective bargaining units and ready for student registration. All K-12 students are eligible to attend summer acceleration free of charge. We also have the Nevada Learning Academy providing credit-retrieval courses through computer-based learning management programs as a virtual option. It is being paid for by the school district using operational and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds.

Agreements have been negotiated and settled with collective bargaining units for this upcoming program. Additionally, transportation and food services are already provided to all students. With regard to the targeting and reporting for specific populations identified in the bill, we see some challenges with the

proposed legislation lacking specific definitions for students without financial resources. We need some clarity on that. We would also need clarity on what is meant by deficiency in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) and a definition for chronically absent.

It is critical to recognize that all schools are different. Developing a district-wide plan, rather than a school-specific plan, is going to create challenges in meeting the needs of each unique school community.

MS. PIERCZYNSKI:

We appreciate the spirit of this bill. We also understand that our students are behind and need additional help due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are concerned with meeting the parameters that are outlined here including transportation, meals and getting enough certified teachers to teach. Those are issues that we would like to discuss with the sponsor of the bill.

We quickly surveyed schools, I cannot give you school-specific plans, but summer school programs are already planned for 2023. Two districts in Lincoln and Eureka Counties are planning a minimal summer school aimed towards special education students. Most of the summer schools are for K-12. The schools are already well into the process of planning summer school. We would like to work out some issues we have with the bill and some things that we think we could not comply with.

SENATOR NEAL:

When you stated that there is no definition of chronic absenteeism and what deficiency in STEAM means, I feel like they are self-explanatory. For STEAM, you can look at science, math and language arts scores—the language art scores are on the ESSER Dashboard. There is a deficiency.

MS. HADDAD:

There is still a question about the definition of deficient. Are we using a specific cut score? If this Committee would like to specify that as the definition, we can take that direction. We need clarity on deficiency. Would we look at the grades earned in addition to cut scores? Not every student is taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium test. There are many variables that could be taken into consideration. If this Committee is interested in “gaining control” over the Clark County School District, we would want more particulars, then we would be fine.

SENATOR NEAL:

You must understand that we are trying to gain control over the Clark County School District one way or another. Whether this bill is duplicative, or this is already happening, this bill attempts to ensure it is happening.

In terms of cut scores, I am not sure we are even using cut scores at this point. Our end-of-course exams and curriculum has been squirrely. It sounds like you are trying to overanalyze the fact that a child is not learning. It will be clear from grades or end-of-course exams whether a child is not performing. The parents will decide whether their child will go to summer school. I find it interesting for a district to come in opposition to summer school because the Legislature is telling you to do it.

To the representative from the Nevada Association of School Superintendents, you mentioned food being an obstacle to providing summer school. In the Senate Committee on Finance, I remember we talked about how the State has an overabundance of money associated with free and reduced-price lunch, which is still available for the majority of children to access. I also remember the Nevada Department of Agriculture talk about how much money there is in place to feed children. I want to understand the comment you made.

MS. PIERCZYNSKI:

In terms of providing food, my understanding is that there is a requirement to provide food. In talking with superintendents, the application processes for the food programs have since passed. It may not be a problem for all districts, but the way the bill reads, every district would have to provide food. Some districts might have a problem with that. I know this is not a money committee, so I will not mention the extra expense. Additionally, there are problems with transportation. Getting drivers to bring students to school is difficult for some districts.

SENATOR NEAL:

My larger issue is we want our children to learn. We are battling over small pieces of the legislation, but the top priority across the board should be academic excellence and achievement for all children in Nevada. Given the State's history with education, our No. 1 priority should be ensuring students have books, the ability to learn and some form of remediation. In 2013, we had no money in the remediation budget. The budget was zeroed out in both 2011 and 2013. I distinctly recall being a freshman Assemblywoman and having no

control over the low balance in the budget. Now, summer school is mandated, and I am hearing you are not sure you can take care of operating it.

I have been in this building for 12 years, and it is strange to hear people come in opposition to nickel and dime for, what I consider, a need for academic change for our kids. We heard that rural kids, not rural kids of color, but rural white children, are not learning.

MS. PIERCZYNSKI:

I appreciate that. That is why there are summer schools planned. I do not know if all the districts can meet the requirements in this bill. I am happy to survey districts and find out more about the programs. There are some obstacles. I cannot guarantee every district's ability to meet the requirements of this bill. We all appreciate summer school. It is great for the kids. We also understand Senator Dondero Loop's point that, for a lot of kids, it is a wonderful opportunity and they like to go to summer school. We did not want to support this bill and then not implement it in the way it is intended. That is a problem.

GIL LOPEZ (Charter School Association of Nevada):

We are in opposition to S.B. 340, specifically, section 1, subsection 2 that requires transportation to be covered for students going to summer school. As you are aware, public charges do not receive transportation funding from the State, which makes it very difficult to fulfill this requirement.

CHAIR LANGE:

Senator, do you have any closing remarks?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I would like to comment on a couple of things. I, too, am a little bit confused when people tell me they have planned summer acceleration programs, but are against this bill. I would like to know, if they have made a plan, how will they get the kids there and feed them. Those things have to happen when kids come to school. I am confused.

Section 1, subsection 1, paragraph (b) lists the services provided, but not every service will be met because not every student going to summer school meets the criteria. For example, not every student is in Grade 11 or 12, is an English learner or is a student with a disability. The services are put into the

plan for specific types of students. There is also an option to attend summer school in person or through virtual learning.

I am happy to have these conversations, but I only had one person stop by my office to tell me they have concerns prior to this meeting. I am confused about somebody needing additional information when nobody has asked about the bill.

I look forward to our children being put first and being the focus of what we are doing. We need to work out a way to make that happen for our children in this State who deserve to be the center of our attention. We should no longer find excuses for how things are not working. Instead, we should find reasons to make them work.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 340 and open the hearing for public comment.

MS. EBERT:

Mr. Barsel was amazing. When you think of him being a junior in high school, he has so much potential. The NDE continues to shift towards competency-based learning. Think of the competency that was demonstrated in this room this morning. I asked him to go to his teachers to see if they will give him credit for the work he has done. As an education system, we need to not only look at how much time a student spends in a seat, but what they can produce and how they can engage as a citizen.

I also wanted to let you all know that this is National Assistant Principals Week. If you know an assistant principal, send them a shout out. April is the month of the military child. We specifically celebrate on April 19. We have thousands of military families here in Nevada and the children are amazing. This month is also School Library Month and Autism Awareness Month. I wanted to make sure everyone knows that April is a big month to lift up those people. Thank you for everything you do every day.

CHAIR LANGE:

We are on the same page; I also asked Mr. Barsel's principal to give him credit.

TRICIA BOOKHART:

I am proud to be here in sisterhood, representing first, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Las Vegas Chapter, and second, my sororities, Zeta Phi

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Beta Sorority Inc., and specifically, the Theta Omicron Zeta Chapter. Most of these great organizations do acknowledge and celebrate Autism Awareness Month and its effects as well the specific effects it has on the many children of minority status.

I would like to start by giving a public thank you to school professionals who go above and beyond every day to assist and support this community and a particular classification of child. I would also like to request your support in every legislative bill that encourages continued knowledge, incorporation and support of these children. It is tremendous to see what they can do, their heart and their passion. I am very grateful to be an autistic parent and have a firsthand understanding of how incredible they are.

Please continue to support all things that extend an opportunity for those to become educated. Awareness and knowledge is power; we are not just looking to have knowledge, we are looking to have allies.

Remainder of page intentionally left blank; signature page to follow.

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CHAIR LANGE:  
The meeting is adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Kirsten Oleson,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Senator Roberta Lange, Chair

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

<b>EXHIBIT SUMMARY</b>				
<b>Bill</b>	<b>Exhibit Letter</b>	<b>Introduced on Minute Report Page No.</b>	<b>Witness / Entity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 9	C	2	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
S.B. 214	D	3	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
S.B. 273	E	4	Jen Sturm-Gahner	Work Session Document
S.B. 313	F	5	Robert Barsel	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 313	G	7	Robert Barsel	Presentation
S.B. 313	H	13	Robert Barsel	Revised Proposed Amendment
S.B. 313	I	13	Robert Barsel	Written Testimony
S.B. 313	J	13	Robert Barsel	Support Flyer
S.B. 313	K	14	Senator Robin Titus	Support with Amendments, Nevada State Education Association
S.B. 313	L	17	Ella King	Written Testimony
S.B. 313	M	18	Trinh Dang, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Southern Nevada	Support Letter
S.B. 313	N	24	Senator Edgar Flores	Support Letters
S.B. 340	O	29	Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association	Support Letter