

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

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

The Senate Committee on Finance was called to order by Chair Marilyn Dondero Loop at 8:07 a.m. on Monday, April 3, 2023, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412E 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 Marilyn Dondero Loop, Chair
Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Vice Chair
Senator Dallas Harris
Senator Dina Neal
Senator Pete Goicoechea
Senator Heidi Seevers Gansert
Senator Robin L. Titus

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen (Excused)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Wayne Thorley, Senate Fiscal Analyst
Cathy Crocket, Chief Principal Deputy Fiscal Analyst
Paul Breen, Committee Assistant
Joko Cailles, Committee Secretary
Dee Chekowitz-Dykes, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education
Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education

Senate Committee on Finance
April 3, 2023
Page 2

Mary Pierczynski, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Marie Neisess, President, Clark County Education Association
Sarah Adler, Washoe County School District Charter Schools; Healthy
Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey Counties
Alexis Salt, Battle Born Progress
Jamie Tadrzynski, Battle Born Progress
Vicki Kreidel, Battle Born Progress; President, National Education Association of
Southern Nevada
Karlana Kulseth, Battle Born Progress
Steve Horner, President, Nevada State Education Association, Retired
Paul Moradkhan, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Anna Binder
Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State
Education Association
Nicole Rourke, Director of Government and Public Affairs, City of Henderson
Shane Piccinini, Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Camila Rios, Community Organizer, Three Square
Amber Falgout, Northern Nevada Manager, Battle Born Progress
Trevor Parrish, Manager of Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Jim Brussman
Elyse Monroy-Marsala, Nevada Public Health Association
Barbara Monroy, Community Food Pantry
Eztli Amaya, Environmental Justice Organizer, Progressive Leadership Alliance of
Nevada
Andrew MacKay, Executive Director, Nevada Franchised Auto Dealers
Association

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will introduce four bill draft requests (BDR) including BDR 14-1092,
BDR 19-1076, BDR 40-1071 and BDR 43-1081. We have three bills to hear.

BILL DRAFT REQUEST 14-1092: Revises provisions governing the distribution
of proceeds of certain administrative assessments. (Later introduced as
Senate Bill 448.)

BILL DRAFT REQUEST 19-1076: Revises provisions related to the Division of
Enterprise Information Technology Services of the Department of
Administration. (Later introduced as Senate Bill 446.)

BILL DRAFT REQUEST 40-1071: Revises provisions governing emergency medical services. (Later introduced as Senate Bill 445.)

BILL DRAFT REQUEST 43-1081: Authorizes the use of testing devices to determine the presence of a controlled substance or prohibited substance in the oral fluid of a person in certain circumstances. (Later introduced as Senate Bill 447.)

SENATOR CANNIZZARO MOVED TO INTRODUCE BDR 14-1092, BDR 19-1076, BDR 40-1071 AND BDR 43-1081.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

* * * * *

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

I will present Senate Bill (S.B.) 98, sponsored by the Senate Committee on Finance on behalf of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education.

VICE CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

We will open the hearing on S.B. 98.

SENATE BILL 98: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-444)

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

I am presenting S.B. 98 which revises provisions concerning the Commission on School Funding and funding for students enrolled full time in distance education.

I served on the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education (JISCE) during the last Interim. Funding is a critical component of education. Over the Interim, JISCE spent considerable time contemplating topics related to education funding in Nevada. Chair Guy Hobbs of the Commission on School Funding presented various general and specific funding topics and recommendations.

During the meeting in July 2022, Chair Hobbs informed JISCE about the challenge in navigating the specific time period the Commission can meet. Discussion then focused on the potential benefits if JISCE were allowed to meet

outside of these dates in contributing to the funding conversation. The JISCE ultimately voted unanimously to recommend this flexibility.

Another recommendation provided by the Commission focused on funding of online district and charter schools. Online district schools are funded at the adjusted base, while charter schools are funded at the Statewide base. After reviewing data from both areas, JISCE recommended that both be funded at the Statewide base per-pupil amount to ensure equitable funding. At its Work Session in August 2022, JISCE unanimously voted in favor of this recommendation.

Finally, in October 2022, JISCE heard additional recommendations from the Commission concerning possible areas of study related to school funding in Nevada. The Commission first discussed the struggles smaller school districts can face to acquire funding on pace with their capital and facility needs. Chair Hobbs reviewed challenges these smaller districts face, such as certain counties already meeting the property tax cap, leaving them struggling to improve capital. Next, JISCE discussed the new funding sources applying to education and recommended developing a performance metric to assess how these sources are being applied and what results they are having.

The Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education noted the high number of vacancies in education positions. Chair Hobbs indicated the discrepancy between the number of new teachers produced in Nevada and the number of teachers needed to fill these vacancies and explained the need to further study whether Nevada is competitive enough to attract teachers from out-of-state.

Chair Hobbs discussed the need to modernize Nevada's sales and property tax systems and noted the possibility of exempting the school operating rate of the overall combined property tax rate from abatements to allow it to generate additional revenue. The Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education voted to propose legislation requiring the Commission to study those topics.

Section 1 of S.B. 98 requires certain funds be provided for each pupil enrolled full time in a distance education program using the Statewide base per-pupil rate rather than the adjusted base per-pupil rate. Additionally, S.B. 98 authorizes the Commission on School Funding to meet during any regular or special session of the Legislature, if requested, rather than being authorized to meet only between July 1 of an odd year and September 30 of the subsequent even year.

Section 7 requires the Commission to study school funding topics including matters relating to the funding of building improvement and modernization projects by small school districts; performance metrics to assess the impact of increased investments in K-12 public education and accountability measures to ensure the effective use of such investments; the number of professional educators graduating from Nevada's higher education institutions; the classification and compensation of professional educators and support personnel at public schools; and changes to the laws governing sales and use tax and property tax to fully fund public schools in Nevada at an optimal level.

Section 6 appropriates \$320,000 for purposes relating to these studies.

Several proposed bills address the Commission on School Funding, its ability to meet, and the assignments suggested where the Commission should conduct further research. In addition, the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Committee on Finance have done work on online distance and charter schools. As these bills and the budget proceed through the Legislature, S.B. 98 could stand ready to serve as a vehicle to finalize the decisions on these and other matters that should be addressed in education.

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

We are pleased this body took the recommendations of the Commission on School Funding and added them to S.B. 98. There are many moving parts with various bills related to the Commission on School Funding and funding of education in general. We will continue to track where we are headed to make sure we move forward in the best interest of our children.

SENATOR TITUS:

In section 1, subsection 2, paragraph (c), subparagraph (1), of S.B. 98, the Statewide base per-pupil funding amount for each student estimated to be enrolled full time in a program of distance education provided by the school district, the distance learning students are included. Then, in section 2, subsection 2, paragraph (a), subparagraph (1), we are not going to count those students when we are counting pupils enrolled in kindergarten and Grades 1 through 12. We are going to fund them, but why would we not count them?

MS. EBERT:

Page 3, line 20 of S.B. 98 talks about the adjusted base per-pupil funding and line 23 adds language to identify the other pupils. The distance education students would receive the base but not the adjusted funding on page 6. Lines 8 and 9 of S.B. 98 address the students enrolled in full time distance education being removed from the adjusted portion of the formula.

SENATOR TITUS:

In Section 2, page 5, line 38 of S.B. 98, on or before October 1, the head count of student average daily enrollment in kindergarten through Grade 12 is taken, inclusive of all public education and districts, excluding distance learning students. It seems counterintuitive because we will not have an accurate count of what we are spending.

MEGAN PETERSON (Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education):

In order to perform the calculation as identified in the earlier section, in the current statute all pupils are included in the average daily enrollment count. The pupils are removed to complete the calculation in that section. On page 7 of S.B. 98, they are added back for a separate calculation.

SENATOR TITUS:

You remove them from the calculation, then add them back. What does that gain if we are paying them the same?

MS. PETERSON:

The gain is related to the differentiation of how the calculations are performed. The distance learning students are being identified only to receive the Statewide base. We separate them out to calculate the Statewide base, plus the adjusted base. Only students not enrolled in an online school or charter school would receive the Statewide base.

SENATOR TITUS:

Are those students not entitled to anything like a special education base, cost of living adjustment or any adjustments at all? Will they always just get the base?

MS. PETERSON:

According to the statute, special education students would be entitled, but are funded through a different count not reflected in this section of S.B. 98.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

Special education, at risk English learner or gifted and talented, and none of the online learning students would receive that money. Will they only receive the basic amount under this change in the calculation?

MS. PETERSON:

The counts used for the weighted categories are received through the validation count in October not through the average daily enrollment counts. Consequently, those would remain unaffected.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

All the online students would only be included in the base because they are not included in the other count, just the average daily count. They would receive whatever the base is. Again, at risk English learner, gifted and online learning students are not counted, and special education students are in a separate category. I am still not understanding this calculation.

MS. PETERSON:

Those schools are still entitled to weighted count fundings. This is just identifying the set of students who receive Statewide base funding only.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

I understand the weighted funding is a totally different calculation.

SENATOR NEAL:

In Section 7 on page 15 of S.B. 98, there were not any changes to what the Commission on School Funding will study. There are things we need to consider in addition to the money. I read language in the bill about how the investment is working, but I did not see the language tied to the academics.

MS. EBERT:

You are correct. These items are listed without limitation. The sponsors wanted to make sure these items were addressed. There are other bills proposed this Session containing a lengthy list of academics that could be considered.

MARY PIERCZYNSKI (Nevada Association of School Superintendents):

The Nevada Association of School Superintendents supports S.B. 98 as recommended by the Commission on School Funding.

Senate Committee on Finance
April 3, 2023
Page 8

VICE CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 98 and open the hearing on S.B. 339.

SENATE BILL 339: Authorizes the reimbursement of teachers for certain out-of-pocket expenses. (BDR 34-85)

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Senate Bill 339 authorizes the reimbursement of teachers and specialized instructional support personnel for certain out-of-pocket expenses. My intent for the bill was to model it after the program in the former Governor's budget in the Eighty-first Session. I have a proposed conceptual amendment ([Exhibit C](#)) that deletes the original bill and replaces it with what I had intended to put before you for consideration.

Our teachers and support personnel are hardworking, dedicated people who strive for their students' success. Helping their students achieve success can often come with a cost to our teachers. The National Education Association reported in 2022, "Well over 90 percent of teachers spend their own money on school supplies and other items their students need." Supplies can include paper, notebooks, pencils, classroom books, and more, that can be necessary for students to complete the work required of them and remain focused in the classroom.

These contributions can cost, on average, around \$500 of a teacher's own money. This spending, especially when coupled with the often low pay teachers and specialized instructional support personnel experience, can contribute to them feeling disrespected. As such, it is necessary to address this practice of teachers and specialized instructional personnel using their own money to help create an environment in which students can succeed. The intent of S.B. 339 is to address the issue of teachers' funding of classroom supplies as an out-of-pocket expense.

In the past, the Nevada Legislature provided legislation addressing this issue; however, the process was cumbersome. Last Session, the Legislature authorized going through a third party, which worked more efficiently, and teachers loved it.

I will now summarize the conceptual amendment, [Exhibit C](#). Senate Bill 339 seeks to support teachers in providing classroom supplies through making an

appropriation to Nevada Department of Education (NDE) in the amount of \$10 million; providing for an authorization to grant the appropriated money to one or more organizations for the purpose of providing necessary classroom materials and supplies identified by teachers and specialized instructional personnel for their classrooms; providing for a requirement for NDE to enter into an agreement to determine how the granted money will be used and outlining the provisions of such an agreement; and providing that individual awards would be set at \$500 per teacher or specialized instructional personnel per year.

I urge your support of S.B. 339. Our teachers and staff members have been put in the difficult position of needing to spend their own hard-earned money to support their classrooms. They deserve reimbursement and support for such costs.

As a teacher, I bought numerous supplies for the classroom, supplies to teach science or items to enhance field trip experiences. I do not know a teacher who does not have snacks in the classroom to help kids get through the day or as rewards. Many years ago, I once spent as much as \$700 on supplies. We will use everything we can in a classroom to help these kids succeed. I hope you will consider passing S.B. 339.

VICE CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

I understand this bill is the conceptual amendment [Exhibit C](#) replacing what the mechanism was in S.B. 339 to mimic what we have seen with former Governor Sisolak's budget in the Eighty-first Session in 2021.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

That is correct.

VICE CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

Do you envision this would be with DonorsChoose or setting it up with a similar partnership?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

The DonorsChoose tax-deductible program will be considered. Teachers loved the clear succinctness of DonorsChoose. It was easy for them to access, and it was sent directly to their classrooms.

MS. EBERT:

Every single educator across Nevada knows what is needed for their individual classroom. DonorsChoose met and went beyond our needs, providing ease of use and additional support for our educators. Supplies requested for projects were received within five days. Teachers did not have to leave their classrooms to purchase materials as in prior programs.

SENATOR TITUS:

Will the donor network continue to exist? Will we be able to donate to a certain classroom?

MS. EBERT:

Yes.

SENATOR TITUS:

Where did the \$10 million come from?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

With this amount, we are hoping to reach more teachers than we did before and cover some of the cost of inflation.

SENATOR TITUS:

If it is not spent, does it roll over? Does the money accrue interest?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I will need to clarify the rollover piece of that. I can tell you personally, I cannot imagine there being any rollover. I know our teachers.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

Right now, we use DonorsChoose and the percentage of fees charged was significant. Initially, there was discussion about whether this would be reevaluated or renegotiated. What are the fees with the current program funded with American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 dollars?

MS. EBERT:

We asked for a reduction in the DonorsChoose partnership cost. There are still taxes, the flat fee per project and processing fees. Those pieces would continue to be in place with the new contract. Initially, the State brought the fee down to 10 percent, but with this next funding DonorsChoose asked for 15 percent.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

The teachers are excited about this program, and it was very successful.

I know we have an issue where the Nevada National Guard people had to pay taxes, and there was a refund amount due to them. Is it correct that money given to a school system should not be taxed? Is there a way for us to tweak this to make sure we get a refund on taxes paid because, in fact, we are paying for items that go into the classrooms? Maybe the Office of the Governor, Office of Finance can work on the tax issue.

Will you be doing a Request for Proposal to include other companies, or will you amend the contract with DonorsChoose?

MS. EBERT:

I will need to check on which process we need to follow.

MARIE NEISESS (President, Clark County Education Association):

I support S.B. 339 and would like to thank Senator Dondero Loop and the sponsors of the bill.

My first year of teaching, I received keys to my classroom, a class list and some basic school supplies. I am approaching my thirtieth year in the Clark County School District. Through the years, I had spent thousands of dollars out-of-pocket to ensure I have everything I needed to provide effective instruction.

While some of my students' families would provide basic school supplies, I have only worked at Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 schools where many families are working to provide for their families. I made sure my students had everything they needed. They had pencils, paper and basic supplies that were provided to me from the school. We were only given a budget of \$100 which would not last the entire school year. I provided everything else. I wanted to make sure my students had supplies for literacy stations. I had to provide items for my small group instruction. When my students ran out of pencils or items necessary to do their homework, I provided the supplies.

Fast forward 30 years later and not much has changed. Our first-year teachers are out spending money on classroom items before receiving their first

paychecks. We want to make sure they have all the supplies needed to provide effective instruction. I urge you to vote yes on S.B. 339. Teachers will thank you.

SARAH ADLER (Washoe County School District Charter Schools):

I am speaking for myself and for the Washoe County District sponsored charter schools I represent. When I began as a teacher, I cut up shower board to create individual whiteboards for my students and incurred many costs. I think this will be helpful to teachers. We liked S.B. 339, and we really like the amended version because it goes directly to teachers who will not have to go through the district to access these funds to support education in their classrooms.

ALEXIS SALT (Battle Born Progress):

I am a teacher in Las Vegas having worked for the Clark County School District for 16 years. Now I work in a charter school. I am speaking in support of S.B. 339. Teaching is expensive, especially if you want to do it well. Our kids need incentives, and those things are not free. Sadly, kids are hard on materials too. I am a reading teacher. My books last me two years, if I am lucky.

We liked using DonorsChoose. It was a great vehicle because supplies were delivered; we did not have to go anywhere. I support the bill. It would be great if we can include paraprofessionals. There are many people running classrooms who are not licensed educators. It is the reality of the situation we are in. In my school, the science, technology, engineering and math teacher is a long-term substitute. She needs more money than all of us because her class is entirely hands on. Please support S.B. 339.

JAMIE TADRZYNSKI (Battle Born Progress):

I am a teacher in the Clark County School District. I teach geography and political science. In addition to my classroom duties, I advise the Key Club, the Model United Nations and the Junior Class Student Council. All of that requires money which is not directly provided to me. I put in long days. From the moment I show up to when I leave at the end of the day, students constantly surround me. I can only deduct \$250 on my taxes for classroom materials. If you have ever been in a public school classroom, there is a clear contrast from what the district provides to us versus what teachers provide. I strive to make my classroom warm, welcoming and inclusive. My classroom is colorful, hopeful and a place where kids want to be. All of that is currently self-funded.

I support S.B. 339. I believe increasing the amount teachers can comfortably spend is extremely beneficial. Including paraprofessionals and long-term substitute teachers who are ineligible to receive reimbursements is important. This, along with our Time for 20 initiative, will go to prove that teachers, support staff, long-term substitutes and every adult invested in our children in the Silver State are protected and respected.

VICKI KREIDEL (Battle Born Progress; President, National Education Association of Southern Nevada):

I am a teacher in the Clark County School District and I am on the Nevada State Education Association Board. I was a recipient of DonorsChoose money last year. During that tough time, it was a glimmer of hope that there are people who care about the educators in the State. I, too, came to Clark County from California in 2013 and was handed a classroom with nothing in it. Only desks and chairs, but no supplies and no books were in my classroom. Every book put in my classroom was self-funded until last year when I used my DonorsChoose money to bring in the first chapter books my second graders have ever read. I wish you could have heard the glee, excitement and squeals when we opened the boxes and put those books on the shelf.

This is important because public education is a tough place to be right now. Educators are buying everything to make their classrooms inclusive and warm, and this money enables us to do that without reaching into our pockets. As you know, things are tough for everyone right now, and this bill would enable our teachers to receive supplies not otherwise provided.

KARLANA KULSETH (Battle Born Progress):

I am an individual educator in the Clark County School District, and product of the Clark County School District. Funding and budgeting for teachers has been abysmal for decades. I remember being in an elementary classroom, Grades 4 and 5, and being provided minimal supplies, materials or manipulatives to do assignments.

I teach Grades 9 through 12. I am a freshman class advisor. I teach journalism and Grade 9 English. Every single part of my job, whether I choose to do it off-contract or on-contract, requires materials. I use reading and writing materials, I use papers to create foldables and tangible things for students to interact with. Anything students interact with costs money.

This year between providing supplies needed to continue to engage my students and public behavior incentives, I have spent about \$2,000, and there are still two months left in the school year. I am buying prizes as incentives because I do not believe in candy or food as a reward. Those are not cheap. Instead, I provide vinyl stickers for their binders and water bottles. I provide fidget toys and cute little pens. I will need to purchase more of the incentives because that is what gets them going, and I am showing interest in what they like. It is hard for a teacher, a long-term substitute, paraprofessional or educational support professional to engage students without something tangible for them to build that relationship.

I support S.B. 339 and ask you to vote yes.

STEVE HORNER (President, Nevada State Education Association, Retired):

I am a proud resident of Assembly District 8 and Senatorial District No.11. I am president of the Nevada State Education Association - Retired Teachers and Support Professionals. I cannot be any more eloquent than my previous speaker, so I will say, me too.

PAUL MORADKHAN (Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber):

The Vegas Chamber has been supporting previous allocations, and we support S.B. 339.

ANNA BINDER:

I support S.B. 339. As of this year, we have upwards of 22 teachers, not including specialists, among my 4 children in the Clark County School District. We do our best to support them at their various campuses and donate as much as we can through various DonorsChoose projects throughout the community. We love the two-time match. Our teachers really should not have to rely on that. I like this and am glad it has as much support as it does. I know many of our wonderful teachers are in the classroom teaching this morning. As a supportive parent, I wanted to call in for them and say yes to S.B. 339.

GIL LOPEZ (Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada):

I represent the second largest kindergarten through Grade 12 education system. We support S.B. 339. Anything we can do to support our teachers, we fully support.

CHRIS DALY (Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association):

Nevada State Education Association is the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years. We have been supportive of the school supply reimbursement account in previous years and support its reinstatement. We ask the bill be expanded to all classroom educators who used their own funds to purchase supplies as stated in the conceptual amendment ([Exhibit D](#)). We appreciate the inclusion of licensed education professionals in the conceptual amendment and would ask to also include paraprofessionals.

In 2019, Nevada State Education Association supported A.B. No. 237 of the 80th Session to expand the education personnel eligible to access the school supplies reimbursement account. This account was eliminated with the implementation of the new funding formula. At that time, federal funds were used to implement the DonorsChoose model.

It is well known that most teachers spend hundreds of dollars every year on supplies for their classrooms. According to a 2016 questionnaire from the National Center for Education Statistics, 94 percent of teachers spend their own money on classrooms, with an overall average of \$479 spent. Teachers in public schools spent more than teachers in charter or private schools. Teachers at schools with higher percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, spent the most out-of-pocket. Many educators who engaged with students also spend hundreds of dollars out of their pockets on expenses. This includes librarians, counselors and speech language pathologists, but it also includes paraprofessionals and long-term substitutes. We would ask they be included in this worthy program.

NICOLE ROURKE (Director of Government and Public Affairs, City of Henderson):
We hear the same things from our teachers in Henderson schools that you have heard today. They are laying out funds for different supplies to meet the needs of their students. I really appreciate the comments by Superintendent Ebert that each teacher knows the needs of their classrooms. This bill really steps up to meet those needs and we are here in support of S.B. 339.

MS. PIERCZYNSKI:

I am only here in the neutral position because I have yet to share the new amendment with the superintendents. We meet on Thursday. All the superintendents and schools are appreciative of the money shared with teachers

and paraprofessionals in the past; it is a great asset. We will be back with you on this.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I want to remind everyone, while we are supporting our teachers, we are supporting our children by enhancing their learning and making it the best for all our kids. I urge your support of S.B. 339.

VICE CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 339.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will now hear Senate Bill 341 sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro.

SENATE BILL 341: Makes appropriations to the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square for the purpose of purchasing food for persons who are served by such organizations. (BDR S-502)

SENATOR NICOLE J. CANNIZZARO (Senatorial District No. 6):

Senate Bill 341 makes needed appropriations to the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square, southern Nevada's only food bank.

We are now three years removed from the onset of the pandemic. One of the primary issues Nevadans experienced was increased food insecurity. The food banks in Nevada have been the backbone of fighting food insecurity and have been relied upon heavily during this time. With the removal of the emergency allotments for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients, food insecurity will worsen as individuals and families are set to experience significant reductions in their benefits.

I know this Committee is familiar with the coming expiration of those benefits and the impacts to our constituents. Now more than ever, is it important for us to provide financial assistance to our food banks so they can continue to serve Nevadans across the State. These allotments will help provide the necessary resources to our food banks so they may continue their life-changing operations to serve our State and address food insecurity.

Senate Bill 341 makes an appropriation to the Food Bank of Northern Nevada of \$1 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 and \$1 million for FY 2024-2025 for the purpose of purchasing food for distribution to people served by the Food Bank of Northern Nevada. The bill also makes an appropriation to Three Square of \$1 million in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for the purpose of purchasing food for distribution to people served by Three Square.

SHANE PICCININI (Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada):

I probably do not need to spend much time on this issue because you as a Legislative Body have been engaged on this issue.

I would like to enter a couple of things into the record. Food banks have been serving an unprecedented number of people. In 2018, the Food Bank of Northern Nevada was serving 91,000 people per month. Today, we are serving 130,000 people per month. There are a number of different reasons, such as the lack of affordable housing, the lack of childcare, inflationary pressures and supply chain issues which have put the same pressure on all of us. We have more people coming to us to just get by.

The loss of pandemic SNAP benefits of around \$200 per month will be reduced to 2019 levels, or \$28-\$30 per month. The pandemic benefits were only meant to be temporary. Most people who are enrolled today for SNAP benefits were not enrolled in 2019. The senior population will be the hardest hit by the reduction in benefits.

The appropriations we are asking for will help bridge the widening gap between the increased need and the reduction in food donations, and continued supply chain issues. The Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square need to be able to distribute healthy foods to our partner agencies.

CAMILA RIOS (Community Organizer, Three Square):

Three Square's mission is to provide wholesome food to hungry people while passionately pursuing a hunger-free community. Three Square is southern Nevada's only food bank and is the largest relief organization serving the counties of Clark, Lincoln, Esmeralda and Nye. In southern Nevada, more than 341,000 people or 15 percent of people in our community struggle with food insecurity. That includes more than 130,000 children.

Senate Committee on Finance
April 3, 2023
Page 18

The funds we hope to see appropriated to Three Square through S.B. 341 come at a time when southern Nevadans continue to cope with rising inflation, rising housing costs and the loss of \$40 million of pandemic SNAP benefits.

Your support of this appropriation will help us distribute an additional three million meals each year for the next two years. This effectively ends hunger for nearly 36,000 Nevadans.

SENATOR NEAL:

How much does Three Square receive in corporate donations?

Ms. RIOS:

I do not have the exact dollar amount today.

SENATOR NEAL:

I know some of your partners last year were Barrick Gold Corporation, Boyd Gaming Corporation, Intermountain Health and one more. Do you not have their donation amounts for 2022?

Ms. RIOS:

I do not have that information.

SENATOR TITUS:

Thank you for telling us how many people were served in a month for 2019 compared to now. Do you have those numbers for southern Nevada?

Ms. RIOS:

I have the numbers for 2022. We are serving 300,000 southern Nevadans per year.

SENATOR TITUS:

For northern Nevada, are those numbers for one month?

MR. PICCININI:

Yes. The document ([Exhibit E](#)) provided includes monthly service numbers. We are currently serving 130,000 people a month in Northern Nevada throughout 14 counties.

SENATOR TITUS:

Three Square in southern Nevada has served 300,000 per year and Food Bank of Northern Nevada has served 130,000 people per month? I would like to compare what Three Square has done in 2019 compared to the meals served in 2023.

Ms. RIOS:

We are serving 104,000 meals per day to southern Nevadans.

SENATOR TITUS:

Do the 104,000 meals served a day include Esmeralda County, Nye County, Lincoln County and Clark County?

Ms. RIOS:

Yes.

SENATOR TITUS:

I have toured the food banks in my rural districts to look at their supplies. They serve some meals at the senior centers, but that is not their focus. They have food pantries. Do you know how many are served through pantries versus the meal programs?

Ms. RIOS:

We serve through Golden Groceries, our senior program, and through childhood nutrition programs. We have food pantries throughout southern Nevada.

The 104,000 meals per day calculation includes food pantries, child and senior nutrition programs. It is a calculation using the number of pounds of food served to arrive at the number of meals served.

SENATOR TITUS:

Do you include the Meals on Wheels program in your documentation or, is it a separate agency?

Ms. RIOS:

Yes, Meals on Wheels is included in those numbers.

MR. PICCININI:

Meals on Wheels is a separate entity, and those are not included in our numbers.

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

Clearly, there has been a huge change in the rural communities since the pandemic. Are you affiliated with Catholic Charities? Are your food products supplied to local rural churches? Do you have to be enrolled in SNAP to access your services?

MR. PICCININI:

Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada is a partner agency of ours. I can provide you the list of our 150 partner agencies throughout our 90,000-square-mile service area. We have partners in Elko, Winnemucca and Ely.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is an entirely separate program, and a person does not need to be enrolled in SNAP to access any of our direct services like Mobile Harvest or Produce on Wheels.

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

Will the \$200 SNAP benefit drop to \$30 if you are a senior? Please explain how that will work.

MR. PICCININI:

During the pandemic, an additional payment was authorized by Congress through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, bringing the total benefit to \$200 per SNAP recipient. The secondary payment was temporary and ended in March 2023. For seniors, their benefit went from \$200 down to \$28 or \$30 per month.

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

Is that only if the person was enrolled in SNAP?

MR. PICCININI:

Yes.

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

Will this appropriation go directly to Three Square and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, allowing you to continue working with your partner organizations outside of SNAP?

MR. PICCININI:

Yes, we will be able to supplement the available products that we can send out to the people we serve.

AMBER FALGOUT (Northern Nevada Manager, Battle Born Progress):

I am the Northern Nevada Manager with Battle Born Progress. I am here today to show our support for S.B. 341 as stated in my written testimony ([Exhibit F](#)). I am working towards my master's degree in social work. One of the civic engagement projects I chose was to raise money for the Food Bank of Northern Nevada. I chose this project because with the rising cost of food and the end of extra SNAP benefits, many in our community struggle to afford enough food for themselves and their families.

Funding to support the work of the Food Bank of Northern Nevada seemed like one of the ways I could be most impactful as our community faces rising food insecurity. Speaking as a mother who has been on SNAP benefits, I understand the need for services provided by the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square. Senate Bill 341 would provide more meals by allocating additional funding for these organizations to do the incredible work they do regularly. I urge the Committee to move this bill forward so we can continue providing the assistance to the community.

TREVOR PARRISH (Manager of Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber):

The Vegas Chamber supports this allocation to Three Square. Three Square is an important community partner and provides a crucial social safety net in southern Nevada. We urge your support.

SARAH ADLER (Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey Counties):

I am speaking as an individual who is and has for many years been on the Board of Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon County and Storey County. We are one of the partner agencies that Mr. Piccinini spoke of.

We have three food pantries in Lyon County that are essential to a wide range of citizens who live in Lyon County. We support these allocations because in

addition to the cost of food, we have the rising cost of rent and fuel. The food bank spends much money getting food to us. We, in turn, spend a lot of money in Homebound Delivery services to food insecure seniors.

I have worked on another bill with Three Square. They have discovered in census data, a high correlation between food and housing insecurity, and anxiety and depression. The impact on our children living in food insecure homes is devastating. These appropriations will be extremely helpful to our most vulnerable Nevadans.

JIM BRUSSMAN:

I live in Henderson and am a member of a church in a low-income neighborhood in Las Vegas. It has the second highest rate of food insecurity in Clark County.

For the last four years, we have operated a food pantry and could not have done this without the help of Three Square. They have provided the bulk of the food we distribute once a month. We serve food to between 110 to 240 families each month, or 500 to 700 people. We receive between three to five tons of food, once per month. That amount has gone down over the last couple of years due to a decline in food and donors. We are nervous about what will happen now that the pandemic SNAP benefits have been discontinued. We support S.B. 341. Three Square has been a terrific partner.

ELYSE MONROY-MARSALA (Nevada Public Health Association):

As it was noted today during the presentation, expanded SNAP benefits have ended, impacting thousands of Nevada families. Nevada food banks are a vital lifeline for these families who are struggling to make ends meet. In these times of soaring housing costs and rising inflation, the food budget is the first place households make cuts in order to get by. The next household budget to be cut is the medication budget. Both are harrowing decisions for families to make. Nevada Public Health Association supports this investment in our food banks and hopes the Committee will too.

BARBARA MONROY (Community Food Pantry):

The Community Food Pantry is in Sparks. We have been a partner with the Food Bank of Northern Nevada for many years and would not be able to serve the average of 375 people per week without that partnership. We support S.B. 341.

EZTLI AMAYA (Environmental Justice Organizer, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

I am the environmental justice organizer with the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada. We are in support of S.B. 341. Everyone should have access to fresh and healthy food. Food justice is bound to environmental justice. As the climate crisis worsens, fresh food will be less accessible. More Nevadans are requiring food bank services.

It is important to know the supplemental emergency SNAP benefits will stop for people in Nevada this month. For some Nevadans, this means a 90 percent reduction in needed benefits. Growing up in Nevada and living in underserved areas, our community and I have struggled with food insecurity. Access to fresh and more nutritious foods has been an obstacle leading to poor choices. To ensure access to food, our communities have relied on mutual aid initiatives. We need more support from food bank programs to provide basic needs and rights.

Senate Bill 341 would allow Nevadans to have more reliable access to food provided by the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square in Las Vegas. In order to have a healthy and thriving Nevada, we need healthy and thriving Nevadans. Please support this bill.

ANDREW MACKAY (Executive Director, Nevada Franchised Auto Dealers Association):

We want to put our support on the record for these allocations. We strongly support the yeoman's work both Three Square and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada do for our respective communities. We encourage the Committee's passage of this measure.

MS. BINDER:

I support S.B. 341. I feed a family of eight and spend time in the grocery store interacting with our elderly and other moms trying to make their budgets work. Hundreds of mothers are worried about losing the additional SNAP benefit. Many single moms are trying to pay exorbitant rent and childcare expenses, just trying to keep a roof over their kids' heads. The pandemic showed we are more food insecure than we were aware of. This is a national issue. This investment is helping to care for all our community.

Senate Committee on Finance
April 3, 2023
Page 24

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 341. Hearing no public comment, we are adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Dee Chekowitz-Dykes,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 339	C	8	Senator Dondero Loop	Conceptual Amendment
S.B. 339	D	15	Chris Daly / Nevada State Education Association	Testimony in Support
S.B. 339	E	18	Shane Piccinini, Food Bank of Northern Nevada	Legislative Handout Food Bank
S.B. 341	F	21	Amber Falgout / Battle Born Progress	Testimony in Support