MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Eighty-Third Session
March 4, 2025

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Venicia Considine at 8:03 a.m. on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 1 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [Exhibit A], the Attendance Roster [Exhibit B], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/83rd2025.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Venicia Considine, Chair
Assemblymember Duy Nguyen, Vice Chair
Assemblymember Max E. Carter II
Assemblymember Rich DeLong
Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva
Assemblymember Rebecca Edgeworth
Assemblymember Tanya P. Flanagan
Assemblymember Danielle Gallant
Assemblymember Heather Goulding
Assemblymember Bert K. Gurr
Assemblymember Linda F. Hunt
Assemblymember Jovan A. Jackson
Assemblymember Venise Karris
Assemblymember Heidi Kasama

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25
Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Assembly District No. 30

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Sarah Delap, Committee Counsel
Judi Bishop, Committee Manager
Holly Gilman, Committee Secretary
Mary Whalen, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kaylah Maese, Civil Rights Analyst, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada
Jim New, President, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Alexander Marks, Deputy Executive Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association
Justice Forest, Administrative Assistant and Government Affairs Coordinator, Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children
Ross Kinson, President, Northern Nevada Central Labor Council
Laura Ellis, representing Washoe Education Association
Jennifer Malaterre, Dean of Students, Traner Middle School, Reno, Nevada
Jennifer Coughlin, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Adrienne Conley, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association
Laura Coyne, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Darcie Thomas, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Alexander Gauvain, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Julie Cleghorn, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada
Leticia Lopez, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada
Nick Schneider, Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., Director, Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Michael Piccinelli, Attorney, American Federation of Teachers
Rotua Lumbantobing, Vice President, American Association of University Professors
Evelyn Airam, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Clay Renshaw, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Patricia Orellana, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ted Johnson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Reina Benefiel, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Staci Walters, Collective Bargaining Chair, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Pete Martini, President, Nevada State University Chapter, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Amy M. Pason, Chair, Government Relations Committee, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Doug Unger, Acting President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Chapter, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Mia Swain, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Keely Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Amy Cavanaugh, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada

Sara Perez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Krista Diamond, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Terri Laird, Executive Director, Retired Public Employees of Nevada
Joshua Williams, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Molly Appel, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada
Pierre Lescure, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Erin Rook, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Susie Martinez, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Nevada State AFL-CIO
Thomas Hintze, Political Director, Region 6, United Auto Workers
Helen Kidane, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Valerie Conner, Faculty Senate Chair, College of Southern Nevada; and Chair, Nevada System of Higher Education Council of Faculty Senate Chairs
Alejandro Rodriguez, Director of Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education

Chair Considine:
[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were stated.] Welcome to the audience here in Carson City, those joining by videoconference in Las Vegas, and those listening over the Internet.

We are going to hear two bills. First, we will hear Assembly Bill 155, which revises provisions relating to public employees. Then we will hear Assembly Bill 191, which revises provisions relating to collective bargaining. To ensure we get through everyone fairly and in a timely manner, we will set a 20-minute time limit for each period of support, opposition, and neutral testimony. Each speaker will have two minutes to ensure we allow as many people as possible to testify. Please feel free to say ditto if someone has already covered your testimony. I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 155. To present this measure, we have Assemblymember La Rue Hatch. Please go ahead when you are ready.

Assembly Bill 155: Revises provisions relating to public employees. (BDR 23-612)

Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25:
I am Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, and I represent District 25, which is in northwest Reno. I also am a teacher of world history at North Valleys High School, which is very pertinent for this bill because this bill is all about addressing class size and caseload.

To give you a little bit of background, we have some of the largest class sizes in the nation. Our class sizes on average are 30 percent over the national average. To give you some real-world stats, my classes, of which I teach six, are usually about 30 to 35 students. Think about 35, 15-year-olds all in a room together, and that is what I get six times a day. I have actually had classes with up to 45 students, which is a huge number of kids to have in the room. I see from some educators nodding their heads it is not an unusual number. Our counselor stats are even worse. The recommended ratio is 1 counselor for 250 students. Our average in Nevada is 1 to 700. This is far away and above what we should be experiencing.

When we talk about school psychologists, social workers, and our mental health practitioners, it is much worse.

This is a significant issue because class size impacts behavior. When we hear about behavior issues in our schools, a lot of it directly comes from large class sizes. Class size impacts the individual attention I can give to students to help those who are struggling; and more importantly, to help those who are hiding, as they are very well-behaved and act like they understand what is happening but may not be fully grasping the material. It helps with mental health. I have had a number of students come to me in crisis. We have referred them to help, and the earliest they can be seen is six months or more. That is not what our kids need. Moreover, it impacts retention. A teacher can only teach classes of 40 students for so long before they are burned out and they leave the profession. It impacts our pipeline. If you are a student in a class of 40, are you going to want to be a teacher? I doubt it, because you have seen what it is like.

My bill aims to address this with one small step. I know we are not going to fix this whole issue in one bill or one session, but I want us to engage in a dialogue of how to fix it. I am going to go through the bill right now in case you have it in front of you. My bill simply adds two topics to mandatory collective bargaining. It adds "the ratio of pupils per licensed teacher for each classroom" and "the ratio of pupils per each type of specialized instructional support personnel." Those are two topics I want to be discussed in mandatory bargaining. I am not saying what you have to do with it, I am not saying what the solutions need to be, and I am not saying you have to do anything, but I want the districts to discuss this with their unions every time they bargain. The reason for that is, currently, districts can and do refuse to discuss class size and caseloads. We have state-mandated ratios. They are recommended, not required. Districts apply for a waiver for those ratios and—I looked it up—not one waiver has ever been denied in the history of those ratios. It is just a rubber stamp. When we allocate money to the districts, we can encourage them to reduce class sizes, but we are not tying that money to class sizes. We, as a State Legislature, are not mandating it. When individuals from the public come in to talk about it, the districts can also, once again, refuse to act.

This is meant to be a conversation starter. Again, I am not forcing anything, but I think we need to have conversations. Those conversations could be about hiring more teachers, mandating ratios; it could also be a discussion about bonuses for teachers who have students over a certain number. It could be about setting aside money for future school buildings. It is open, but it allows for a more creative distribution of funds. I know the pie is not growing, but teachers could come in and say, Instead of a 10 percent raise, we will take a 2 percent if you do X, Y, and Z on class size. It allows for more creative budgetary conversations.

Some may come up in opposition to this bill because they are worried it has mandates, and I know we are not the fiscal committee, but there are fiscal notes. I wanted to touch on those as they are a misinterpretation of the bill. Some of the districts interpreted this as mandating the state ratios that we have as recommendations. That is not what this bill does. Again, if the district does not agree during negotiations, that is not the ratio they would have.

To close, I want to say, as a teacher, I think the most important thing we can do in this building is make sure the money we spend actually gets to the classroom and to the students; not to upper-level administrators, not to fancy new district offices, not to computers in a fancy new digital curriculum, but to students and classrooms. I think this bill achieves that purpose. With that, I will stand for questions.

Chair Considine:
We do have some questions. We will start with Assemblymember Kasama.

Assemblymember Kasama:
Thank you, Assemblymember La Rue Hatch, for your passionate plea to make sure the money gets to the classrooms and the students. I wholeheartedly agree with that, and I certainly echo your sentiments. You did say it would not be mandatory, but as far as the classroom sizes, my concern is that we want classroom sizes that are manageable. If it is 25 kids, and you said at times you are teaching up to 40, my concern is not even the money. As you know, we have had so many vacancies in our school districts that we have trouble hiring enough teachers for the classroom. What would happen if you included this? If it is mandatory to have 25 kids per classroom and you say you have 40, where do the other 15 kids go when we do not have the teachers? How is that going to work? You said it is not mandatory, but when you put it in the language, I am really concerned there is no carve-out here that it is a discussion or a goal.

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:
I appreciate this question because we hear it a lot when we talk about class size, because we do not have enough teachers. Again, I think we do not have the teachers because our class sizes are so enormous; because teachers are quitting; because we are not recruiting new teachers. When I say it is mandatory collective bargaining, that means this is a topic that must be discussed when we bargain. It does not mean the outcome of that discussion is mandated.

The outcome of that discussion is based on the district and union bargaining and recognizing the budget and the staffing. If they do not have enough teachers, they are probably not going to put into the contract a 1 to 25 student ratio, right? They might put into the contract, We will give you $5 for every student over 25 students, to recognize the extra work and hopefully retain teachers. Or maybe they will put into the contract, We will give you a 1 percent raise, but we will hire five more teachers to try to spread the load. It is going to be district by district and contract by contract specific. I highly doubt any district or union is going to put into the contract something they cannot accomplish.

I will also say, we put things into the contract sometimes, especially cost-of-living adjustments or benefits, then when we have a recession or a downturn, there are triggers in the contract that we have to come back to the table and renegotiate. I envision, if they put something in the contract that is not achievable because of some change in not being able to hire staff or not having enough money, that provision would trigger having to come back and renegotiate.

Assemblymember Flanagan:
Are you finding in your research that this is across the board; elementary, middle, and high school? Is there a greater concentration of concern with the student to teacher ratio in one of those three categories?

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:
We currently have a lot more focus on lowering class size in grades 1 through 3. I find it is not as big of an issue because of the intense focus on those three grades; however, that does not mean it is not an issue in those other grades. It is across the board and is largely due to historic lack of funding, teacher shortages, and other challenges the districts face. This is an across-the-state, across-the-board issue. I know a lot of high school teachers; it is very common to have over 35 students in our classrooms. I know elementary teachers, and it is very common to have over 20 students in a classroom. It might not sound like a lot but 20, 7-year-olds in a room is a lot. I hear from teachers, and I am sure you will hear from them today in their support testimony. It is an across-the-board issue.

Chair Considine:
Any other questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you for your presentation. We will now move to testimony. We will begin with testimony in support of A.B. 155 in Carson City.

Kaylah Maese, Civil Rights Analyst, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada:
I am a civil rights analyst at the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] of Nevada. We support this bill and thank the bill sponsor for bringing it forward.

Jim New, President, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
We appreciate that Assemblymember La Rue Hatch brought this forward, and we are in full support of this bill.

Alexander Marks, Deputy Executive Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association:
I want you all to close your eyes for a moment and picture this. You are sitting in your chair trying to focus, trying to learn. Now imagine pushing your chair back to stand up and immediately bumping into another student—every single day. Nevada continues to struggle with the largest class sizes in the nation. The most recent data from the NEA [National Education Association] indicates it is not even close. During the 2022-2023 school year, Nevada had 25.4 students enrolled per teacher. Arizona came in a close second with 22.8, a difference of more than 2.5 students per teacher. Of course, these numbers include teachers not in classrooms. Most Nevada classrooms have 30 to 35 or 40 or more students, as the Assemblymember said. Caseloads for student counselors, social workers, and other licensed professionals are equally concerning. The number of students in our classes makes a real difference for students and teachers alike.

Nevada's large class sizes and caseloads are directly related to chronic underfunding of Nevada education. The most effective action this body can take to lower class size should be

to pass the plan offered by the Commission on School Funding, Department of Education, to reach optimal education funding in the next ten years. However, the mechanisms used to address class size are also important. We believe class size should be a mandatory subject of bargaining regardless of funding levels. Collective bargaining, a mutual exchange of positions followed by an agreement, enables employees to negotiate a binding, written contract with an employer. It gives the workers a voice on the issues that impact them in the workplace. Class size is not just one of the most impactful workplace issues for educators, it is also one of the most important things facing our school districts.

Passing A.B. 155 means the issue of class size will be discussed during bargaining where there will be tradeoffs with salary benefits and other economic considerations. Assembly Bill 155 will not increase costs on districts. Contracts are agreed to at the table or awarded through binding arbitration. This is already the case, and adding class size as a mandatory subject of bargaining does not change the financial parameters.

Justice Forest, Administrative Assistant and Government Affairs Coordinator, Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children:
We are in strong support of this bill. It is crucial, especially at the K-3 level, that classroom sizes are able to be negotiated. When you are working with small children and you have 30 to 40 kids in a classroom, it is incredibly difficult to give them the one-on-one education and care they need. Frankly, as someone who lives and works in Reno, and California has these bargaining rights, why would you choose to be a teacher in Nevada where, as previously mentioned, we have the highest classroom sizes in the country? You could drive less than an hour across the border and teach in California where you have these rights. We do not want to lose our teachers; they are valuable and critical. When they suffer these classroom sizes and are not able to negotiate that in their contracts, they consider moving and leaving. We do not want that kind of brain drain of qualified teachers in our state.

Ross Kinson, President, Northern Nevada Central Labor Council:
I did have a lot of things I was going to say about collective bargaining and all of that, but the previous gentleman who came up here and spoke said it very succinctly. I will just give a quick ditto, and we will move on.

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone else in Carson City who wishes to testify in support of A.B. 155? Please step forward to the table.

Laura Ellis, representing Washoe Education Association:
Parents, think about raising a teenager. Think about one 13-year-old, then maybe picture a group of their friends. Then try to picture a whole room of them, except now, imagine them all being from a low socioeconomic school zone. I am an experienced geologist and a veteran middle school science teacher. I represent the WEA [Washoe Education Association], and I appreciate the chance to speak today. I am passionate about students learning science through hands-on experiences.

Try to imagine 36, Title 1, 13-year-olds handling Bunsen burners, microscopes, or dissection tools. Then imagine six kids on an IEP [individualized education plan], four kids on a 504 plan, and at least a third of the class classified as ELL [English Language Learner]. Then please tell me how safe and effective you think I can be running a lab. I am a highly qualified classroom teacher with almost ten years of classroom experience, and I cannot tell you the last time I felt safe managing a proper science lab in a Title 1 public school setting.

I recently spent a semester teaching at a private school where my class sizes were no more than 18. Of course, we were able to dissect multiple species to study comparative anatomy. We could use microscopes to compare plant and animal cells, but that is why families are paying over $20,000 per year. One reason that position did not sit well with me is that our public school children are not able to have even a fraction of that educational experience. Widening the achievement gap because families have money went against what I stand for as a teacher, trying to encourage and educate the greater population.

Part of our goal as a public school system is to lift up the students who have not been born into privilege so they can become educated, productive members of our society. There is no way we should be allowing more than 25 kids in a science classroom. I additionally advocate for multiple adults in the room to support our special populations if materials are going to be managed safely and effectively. I am only one person, again, highly qualified, with excellent class management skills. The current class sizes, especially mixed with special populations, do not allow me to do my job. I urge you to drastically reduce class sizes so all students can have the equitable education they deserve.

Jennifer Malaterre, Dean of Students, Traner Middle School, Reno, Nevada:
I am also a Washoe Education Association member. Prior to being a dean, I was a middle school math teacher for 14 years, also in Washoe County at a Title 1 school. I have had two children who graduated from Washoe County School District public schools and two currently in them, both in special education. I am pleading with you as a mom, teacher, and administrator to vote yes on Assembly Bill 155. While I was a highly effective math teacher, I will tell you this struggle is real, having 35 students in the classroom. I did have some co-taught classes for special education students as well as general education. My co-teacher and I were seamless in our instruction in adhering to the needs of every student, regardless of the emotional and physical impact it had on us. When I came home, I was too exhausted to engage in extracurricular activities with my children after having 170 students in five classes. It simply was not fair. Although I had to keep moving forward and be the best mom I could be, what mountains I could have moved with my voice if I was not so exhausted from maintaining classroom expectations of rigor and engagement to an unrealistic class size multiple times a day, five days a week.

In my current position as the dean, most of the behaviors I am called to classes for is simply because there is an unimaginable number of students in the room to be able to conduct, restore at the doors, and reengage students in their important learning. I have a tremendous number of talented and exceptional colleagues whom I am honored to work side by side with, but they are unable to fully excel in their craft with the staff to student ratios.

Assembly Bill 155 is not a magic wand that is going to fix our education system. However, it is a chance to include educators and our association in negotiations to inspire collaboration in making the changes necessary to impact the lives of all our students. Educators make approximately 1,500 decisions per day. With the information that is given, it only seems just that they have the voice to make one more—one more chance to give our next generation a fighting chance. This is a feasible bill to discuss collective bargaining with a focus on class sizes, which I know weighs on all of your hearts.

Jennifer Coughlin, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
This is my twenty-third year in the district. I have been a special education teacher and aid, and right now, I am a special education Pre-K teacher. I have 18 students in my morning class; 18 students under the age of 4, which is a lot. I have seen numerous colleagues and friends leave the district because they get so frustrated with the lack of support and the huge class sizes.

Adrienne Conley, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a kindergarten teacher here in Reno, Nevada, and I have been an educator and a proud WEA member for 22 years. I hold a master's degree in education, and I am a nationally board-certified teacher.

Despite kindergarten being a pivotal introduction to school, it has always surprised me that class sizes have only recently been capped at 25 students. That means I am responsible for 25, 5-year-olds. Think about 5-year-olds; now put them all in one room, most of whom have never been in a classroom before. In the first nine weeks alone, I teach them essential skills: how to hold a pencil, sit in a chair, line up, and even use scissors safely cutting paper—not their clothes, not their hair, not their friends' hair, and not their friend's clothes. At the same time, I am introducing them to academics, writing their names, counting, recognizing letters, rhyming words, and understanding how words and pictures work together in a book—in the first nine weeks of school. Beyond this, I support students with special needs and an increasing number of children with severe speech impediments, making communication and early intervention more challenging.

Smaller class sizes would allow me to give each student the attention they need, ensuring they meet the rigorous and educational standards set by the district and the State. That is why I urge support for A.B. 155, which ensures WEA has a seat at the table when discussing staffing and class size ratios. Educators must be included in decisions that directly impact our students. Lowering class sizes, especially in kindergarten, is not just about making our jobs easier. It is an investment in our children's future. Let us make sure they get the strong foundation they need to succeed.

Chair Considine:
Out of our 20 minutes, we have done 12 minutes in Carson City, so I will move to Las Vegas, then the phones, and then I will come back to Carson City if time allows. Anyone who is testifying, please submit your testimony to the Committee. If someone has said something you agree with, you can always say ditto. Now, I would like to move to

Las Vegas. If you are testifying in support of A.B. 155, please step up to the table. [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone lines who would like to testify in support of A.B. 155? [There was no one.] We will come back to Carson City. Please go ahead, state your name, and spell it for the record.

Calen Evans, President, Washoe Education Association:
I am not going to go into the specifics of the impact of class size or learning conditions but working conditions. We have some folks here who can speak to that, but I want to be very clear about what this bill is and that when opponents of this come up, negotiation does not equal obligation. There is no obligation to the district to set any sort of class size requirements. If there is anyone coming up here and saying that, it is an extremely misleading statement. This is just about providing the opportunity for conversation. And beyond conversation, it is about collaboration. That is what associations do in all workforces. They are working in collaboration with management to solve problems. Why would we not want another opportunity for further collaboration on an issue as impactful as class size?

I will end with this: our folks on the ground, those in the trenches, have so many solutions to a lot of the problems that we face in our schools, but we just need our district leadership to collaborate and listen to those. That is what this bill is about. It is about collaboration and empowering voices to have a seat at the table.

Laura Coyne, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I have been an educator for 28 years, 20 years in Washoe County, and a proud union member of the WEA since I arrived here in Washoe County. I am here for A.B. 155 and its importance to have open communication between school districts and unions. Having a seat at the table allows you to be part of the conversation. I am sure you have heard a lot about class size today, but how does it really impact learning? Having less students in your class allows you the opportunity to read with each child every day, work one-on-one at math, and small group instruction is really small group. But academics is not all that is impacted by less students in your room. You can have meaningful conversations with your students every day. You can hear about what troubles them every day. You can learn that they go hungry at night. You can see they wear the same clothes all week. You can see they are dirty and smell like urine and feces, every day. When too many students are in the classroom, you are less connected, and students get lost in the system.

I value my work as an educator. I know I am lucky this year to only have 15 students in my classroom. I had two students move away and no one has replaced my friends. So, I am lucky. My colleagues have 18 to 20 students. Please consider the benefits of A.B. 155 and its ability to allow collaboration between Nevada school districts and all the associations that protect their members and the true value of class size.

Darcie Thomas Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a social resource teacher in the special education department at a local elementary school. I serve up to 18 students on my caseload. My caseload is mostly kids who are on the spectrum. I teach them social skills and most of them have major behavioral issues.

In the classroom, we face the challenging environment where we cannot afford to deeply dive into content learning. There is a constant need to move into the next topic, even if the students have not fully grasped the material. This approach often leads to gaps in understanding and does not support meaningful learning for these students. I am here to support those general education students that I co-teach and support. Additionally, behaviors are becoming a growing concern impacting the overall classroom environment. These behaviors are affecting not only the students who are trying to get engaged, but also those who are trying to complete the content learning. Despite these challenges, grading stays the same, content stays the same, and struggling to get data collection stays the same.

One critical aspect we need to address is the increasing need for all of the data collection, especially for those students who are on the special education needs. However, even if this data has not been collected, it is always adjusted effectively to teach each one of those students and their individual needs. Students' abilities to support reoccurrences [*sic*] is diverse and makes this incredibly difficult to meet everyone's needs. The number of students in the classroom, combined with the behavior disruptions, creates an environment where individual attention is challenging to provide for each of them. These dynamics need to be acknowledged and addressed, and we should be truly supportive of these learners in a way that can help them all become successful learners.

Alexander Gauvain, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a fourth-grade teacher at Stead Elementary School. I am also one of the school's WEA building representatives. I have been teaching for 13 years in Washoe County. I hold a master's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in English language learning. I am speaking to you today because the current student-to-teacher ratio maximums are too high. In fourth grade, my grade, the maximum student to teacher ratio is 33.5 to 1 before an allocation can be triggered. Assembly Bill 155 will give the WEA a bargaining opportunity with Washoe County School District so that the discussion of reducing class sizes could at least be had. Class size is one of the biggest challenges to teachers.

In my personal experience, large classes of 26 or more present an unneeded number of challenges for many reasons, and I will touch on a few here. I am unable to consistently meet the needs of every student. My students typically range from first grade level to on-grade level, which makes it very challenging to teach all of them with large numbers. Intervention groups become too high and too large, preventing me from meeting my groups daily. The classroom is loud and students with anxiety and other learning disabilities have a much harder time processing information. Regardless of classroom management styles, larger classes give more opportunities for disruptions and a greater audience for students exhibiting improper, defiant behavior.

I urge the Committee to vote in favor of A.B. 155. Lowering class sizes is not impossible. Assembly Bill 155 does not automatically increase the cost to the district, rather it provides an opportunity to collaborate and have dialogue. Not having dialogue with the teachers about this is illogical. Collaboration between the district and the teachers is what is best for the students.

Julie Cleghorn, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada:
I am going to say ditto to Mr. Gauvain. I teach fourth grade as well, and despite the 33.5 ratio students to teachers, I have 35 students that I do the same exact thing that he was talking about every day. Just a discussion, having somebody in my corner, the WEA to speak on my behalf, would be essential, in my opinion.

Leticia Lopez, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada:
I am going to say ditto to Ms. Cleghorn. I work with her. We each have 35 students in our classroom, and we are burned out, and we need help. I am glad we are speaking about A.B. 155.

[Exhibit C includes a collection of letters in support.]

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone in Carson City who wishes to testify in opposition to A.B. 155? Please come up to the table and begin when you are ready.

Nick Schneider, Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:
We are here in opposition to A.B. 155 and do appreciate the intention of this bill. We have been longtime advocates for improving educational outcomes and supporting educators within the state. However, we do have some concerns with the mechanism of requiring these discussions at this time. This could incur significant increases in infrastructure costs, as well as other expenses, for the school districts. We have not had sufficient time with some of the legislation we passed last session to augment our talent pool through a better teacher pipeline to have effect and increase that talent pool.

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone else in Carson City wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 155? Seeing no one else, we will move to Las Vegas. Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 155? Seeing no one approach, is there anyone on the phone line? [There was no one.] We will now move to neutral testimony. Is there anyone here in Carson City who would like to testify in neutral on A.B. 155? Please go ahead when you are ready.

Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:
At this time, we are neutral on A.B. 155. Assemblymember La Rue Hatch has provided us valuable information to take back to our members.

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone else in Carson City who would like to testify in neutral? Not seeing anyone approach, we will move to neutral testimony in Las Vegas. Not seeing anyone approach in Las Vegas, is there anyone in neutral on A.B. 155 on the phone? [There was no one.] I would like to bring the sponsor forward, should you like to make any final remarks.

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:
Thank you for the stories from the teachers on the ground. I think they are the most important piece here. Just to give you a visual, I was doing some counting. There are about 85 people in this room; that represents a little over two of my classes and less than half of the number of students I teach each year.

[Exhibit D was submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Chair Considine:
I will now close the hearing on A.B. 155 and open the hearing on Assembly Bill 191, which revises provisions relating to collective bargaining. To present this measure we have Assemblymember Anderson, and she will introduce her fellow presenters.

Assembly Bill 191: Revises provisions relating to collective bargaining. (BDR 23-889)

Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Assembly District No. 30:
I would just like to thank you for having this hearing. I know there are many bills being assigned to—I cannot necessarily say the hardest-working Committee, but I know there are many who would like me to say that, so I will acknowledge it.

As a proud third-generation union member and union leader, it is my pleasure to propose Assembly Bill 191. The bill would authorize collective bargaining to certain professional employees of the Nevada System of Higher Education, or NSHE. Currently, many public employees have the ability to collectively bargain, as you just heard, but our faculty and graduate assistants are the largest groups of Nevada public employees who do not have that right currently. Instead, these policies are found in the Nevada System of Higher Education professional staff collective bargaining policies, which are governed by the Board of Regents, which means they must be agendized in a meeting to be discussed.

I am actually going to turn the topic a little bit and am going to use the year 1990. I am going to give away my age, but that is okay. In 1990, I entered the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) as a freshman. That fall, I had my eyes opened to what my life could be. I had dreams of becoming a journalist, and I know there is someone on this Committee who is, which I am very jealous of. I also had ideas of becoming a geologist, believe it or not. Do not worry, it only lasted for one semester. I went through so many different majors, but 1990 is when I was a brand-new freshman.

The 1990s is also when many of the items that deal with collective bargaining were actually defined; the last time they were defined in this binder. When I took a look, there was a small study of Chapter 4, the Professional Staff Collective Bargaining Regulations. The grievances were actually updated in 2006, but some other items, such as the recognition of which areas or which employees can actually bargain, were in 1990. Annual evaluations were updated in 2016. However, the request to update who can bargain has been made numerous times, and it has not been considered for whatever reason. Our graduate assistants were once able to bargain. In 1975—I do have that document as well—it clearly showed them listed.

But between 1975, when I was 3, and 1990, when I was 18, there was a change. Why? We do not know why, but what this body can do is rectify that situation. What we can do is try to show that every individual has the right to bargain.

Assembly Bill 191 clarifies bargaining units must have a majority of approval of the employees and clarifies there must be different bargaining units between a supervisor and other personnel. Assembly Bill 191 clearly defines Weingarten-like rights and the required parts of collective bargaining agreements. Assembly Bill 191 does not change Nevada statutes as a right-to-work state. It does not impact the provisions of *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) Chapter 288, which is utilized for other local government employees or state classified employees.

This is where the amendment [Exhibit E] comes in, which was hand delivered to all of you yesterday and was also uploaded. The conceptual amendment has a small typo on it. If you take a look at section 58, 1(b), mediation was crossed off and arbitration should also be crossed off [page 1, Exhibit E]. That typo was my fault. Allowing for the procedures for arbitration is defined in other sections that would not impact any other part of NRS Chapter 288.

Finally, A.B. 191 does not require any Nevada System of Higher Education employee to be a member of a professional organization or pay member dues. It is the choice of an employee to do so. Assembly Bill 191 gives NSHE professional employees the same rights and responsibilities for collective bargaining as other public employees in Nevada. By marrying the existing provisions for collective bargaining found in NRS Chapter 288, we would be able to create an almost balance or equilibrium with other employees by covering it in state law instead of hoping it is going to be agendized in a meeting. With the Chair's permission, I would like to introduce Kent Ervin of the Nevada Faculty Alliance, who will describe the bill in more detail.

Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., Director, Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
Thank you, Assemblymember Anderson, Chair Considine, and Committee members for the opportunity to present A.B. 191, a bill to improve our higher education system through collaboration between NSHE professionals and administrators. The Nevada Faculty Alliance (NFA) is the independent association of faculty and professional staff of NSHE colleges and universities. We are working on A.B. 191 along with the Nevada Graduate Student Workers-United Auto Workers (NGSW-UAW).

Nevada Faculty Alliance is the bargaining agent for faculty collective bargaining at three of our community colleges. However, collective bargaining at NSHE is allowed only through the policy handbook, which is outdated and does not provide the protections and responsibilities other public employees in Nevada have under NRS Chapter 288. Assembly Bill 191 will apply to professional employees at NSHE and will not affect collective bargaining statutes for local government employees or state classified employees. Professional employees covered by A.B. 191 include academic faculty, non-managerial

administrative faculty, part-time instructors, and graduate assistants, if they in the future choose to form a bargaining unit and ask to be recognized.

The bill closely follows the collective bargaining provisions already in NRS Chapter 288 for state classified employees with some clarifications for higher education under a governing board like the Board of Regents. Assembly Bill 191 allows professional employees and NSHE to access the state Government Employee-Management Relations Board (EMRB), Department of Business and Industry, for resolution of negotiation and contract issues which would save time and litigation, a clear benefit to both sides. Only the Legislature can authorize NSHE and its employees to use the EMRB. Under its internal collective bargaining policies, NSHE is both bargaining and interpreting the rules of engagement, a clear conflict of interest. Assembly Bill 191 will level the playing field by allowing access to third-party mediation and arbitration, the same as in NRS Chapter 288 for state classified employees. Assembly Bill 191 preserves the full authority of the Legislature and Governor over budgets and legislation. [Written testimony was also submitted, Exhibit F.]

Assemblymember Anderson:
With the Chair's permission, I believe we have someone on Zoom.

Kent Irvin:
Michael Piccinelli, of the American Federation of Teachers, and Rotua Lumbantobing, of the American Association of University Professors.

Michael Piccinelli, Attorney, American Federation of Teachers:
The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is the national affiliate of the Nevada Faculty Alliance and the American Association of University Professors. The AFT has long championed collective bargaining rights for public employees and has worked with faculty across the country to improve their wages, hours, and working conditions. We are testifying here in support of A.B. 191 and hope Nevada will join the 26 other states that statutorily require collective bargaining with all public higher education faculty. The Committee should have my written testimony [Exhibit G], which compares the proposed legislation with the National Labor Relations Act. That is the law that governs the private sector labor relations in the country and other public employee collective bargaining laws in the United States. My written testimony compares the bill in five key areas: the right to organize; the individual right for an employee to have a union representative at meetings with the employer; how a bargaining unit is determined; the collective bargaining process; and how individual disputes are settled under a collective bargaining agreement.

In short, there is nothing in this bill that is outside the mainstream as it relates to other state collective bargaining laws and the private sector. This bill would align the battle with those states. For example, as I said earlier, 26 other states protect faculty collective bargaining rights. Most AFT affiliates are organizing bargaining units under a community of interest standard, the same as this bill. At least nine states that ban public employee strikes require arbitration as a last step for settling a bargaining impasse between the employer and the union. Again, those are states that do not allow public employees to strike, just like Nevada.

Finally, in fact, it has been a long time since I have seen a union contract that does not provide for arbitration as the last step to settle a grievance in a grievance procedure. This bill would provide important rights to faculty to improve not only their own working conditions, but the learning conditions of higher education students in the state. Collective bargaining provides transparency and accountability for public higher education and will help ensure universities remain a place where students are educated to creatively and constructively understand their world.

With that, I am happy to answer any questions to the best of my ability about AFT's experience in higher education, collective bargaining in other states, and any other questions or details in my written testimony that I have already submitted to the Committee.

Rotua Lumbantobing, Vice President, American Association of University Professors:
I am a faculty member at Western Connecticut State University and the National Vice President of the American Association of University Professors, which is a union of college and university teachers, researchers, librarians, and other academic workers. We support Assembly Bill 191 for three reasons. First, faculty collective bargaining strengthens instructional quality and contributes to student success. Fair contracts provide stable jobs with fair wages and benefits, reducing reliance on short-term gig labor. Students deserve instructors who can focus on teaching and supporting them. Collective bargaining contributes to high-quality working conditions which in turn elevates students' learning conditions.

Second, collective bargaining upholds shared governance by ensuring faculty experts play a central role in decisions about curricula and pedagogy while fostering collaborative mutual agreements on matters of shared concerns. Third, collective bargaining serves the common good. Colleges and universities are being attacked in ways that will restrict access to higher education and limit what can be said, studied, and debated on campus. Collective bargaining helps protect professionalism and ethical integrity, preserving a free and open society for all Nevada residents. We urge you to support A.B. 191. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions. [Written testimony was also submitted, Exhibit H.]

Evelyn Airam, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am a graduate assistant in the School of Integrated Health Sciences at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). I teach anatomy and physiology labs. As part of the NGSW–UAW, I am proud to support A.B. 191 so graduate assistants (GAs) have a fair bargaining process with NSHE enshrined in Nevada law. I graduated summa cum laude from UNLV with a bachelor's degree. When the time came to go to graduate school, I chose to only apply to UNLV. I chose to stay because I believe in the institution; I believe in its potential to provide an exceptional education and to do cutting-edge research. But despite me and my colleagues' valuable contribution strategy, we lack a real voice to address challenges we face.

In a recent survey, one in four graduate assistants said they have experienced or witnessed harassment discrimination in the workplace. One in four graduate assistants experienced or witnessed retaliation for raising workplace issues, and 79 percent of GAs stated they do not feel their pay covers their living expenses. I personally have been forced to skip meals, sell

my blood plasma on a weekly basis, and worry if gas in my car was enough to make it to work and classes. In order to maintain UNLV and University of Nevada, Reno's Research 1 Carnegie status, we must attract and retain top scholars. But how can we do that when wages do not cover rent, when there is no independent recourse for mistreatment, and when GAs' positions are constantly insecure? If you join this room and if in Las Vegas and you have ever faced unfair treatment from a supervisor or struggle to afford basic expenses, please stand. [Several people in the rooms in Carson City and Las Vegas stood.] Assembly Bill 191 is a critical step toward fairness, stability, and respect. I urge you to stand with us and support this bill.

Clay Renshaw, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
Thank you for hearing our bill today. [Read from Exhibit I.] I am a graduate assistant, or GA, in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Nevada, Reno. I am proud to support A.B. 191 to enshrine the right for GAs to collectively bargain into Nevada law. In my role as a GA, I teach chemistry labs and conduct research on infectious bacteria that can cause fatal diseases in humans. Graduate assistants do a significant portion of the teaching and research at UNR, UNLV, and the Desert Research Institute (DRI). We are proud of the work we do, but we face many challenges in our working conditions and lack a seat at the table with our employer to address these challenges.

I have lived in Nevada my whole life. I grew up in poverty, in a broken home, and was only able to go to college by taking out student loans and working multiple jobs. Still, I graduated from UNLV at the top of my class. I say these things because I and many of my fellow GAs know what it means to overcome adversity and forge a path forward. That said, no matter how hard we work, many talented GAs are not able to fully contribute to our state because of unsustainable working conditions. Too many of my colleagues have been pushed out of labs by abusive supervisors, have had their positions suddenly taken away, and have struggled to afford groceries and rent despite doing research that brings in tens of millions of dollars in grants and contracts.

That is why a supermajority of GAs across Nevada, over 1,500 of us, have signed union authorization cards to form our union, Nevada Graduate Student Workers-UAW or NGSW-UAW. Despite a clear decision to unionize, Nevada GAs lack a fair bargaining process to begin negotiations with NSHE. Passing A.B. 191 will ensure GAs will have a seat at the table. We ask that the Committee support this important bill.

Assemblymember Anderson:
Sometimes when we look at the language, it is language. But, when we get a chance to hear from others and the impact that language has, it becomes a reality. Dr. Ervin and Nevada Faculty Alliance have submitted a written, section-by-section, description of the bill [Exhibit J]. Chair Considine, we can walk through that if you like, or whatever you prefer.

Chair Considine:
It is up to you, whatever you prefer. Just looking at the time, consider the timing.

Assemblymember Anderson:
Dr. Ervin, I will give you one minute. Go.

Kent M. Ervin:
I had a 3-minute version and a 2-minute version. The covered employers are in section 5 [page 1, Exhibit J]. It is limited to boards and commissions, like the Board of Regents—that eliminates other state agencies. It is limited to those boards and commissions that have over 400 professional employees, which is currently NSHE. Professional employees in section 13 basically makes the bill apply to anyone who is not a state classified employee. Then there is a list of exceptions that are mainly there for clarity.

Sections 25 to 31 outline the formation of new bargaining units using the community of interest standard [page 3]. That process is overseen by the Government Employee-Management Relations Board, which again, only the Legislature can authorize to interact with NSHE. The negotiation topics in section 32, like you heard in the last bill, is a list of topics where the issues you have just heard about can be addressed. If a collective bargaining agreement between professionals and NSHE results in a provision that requires either legislative action or funding, those do not take effect until the Legislature and Governor enact those changes or pass that budget. And that is a good place to stop.

Assemblymember Anderson:
The time is now. We have attempted to do this through policies, and it is just not being heard. At this time, we are more than happy to attempt to answer any questions the Committee might have.

Chair Considine:
Thank you for the presentation. We do have some questions.

Assemblymember D'Silva:
I do not think the benefits of collective bargaining can be understated. It helps everyone who is involved, and this issue particularly, organizing at our universities. At both graduate schools I attended, this was a big topic. I think very recently both of us voted to form unions. My question is more focused on the structures of the bill. Will this bill require NSHE faculty to form collective bargaining units, and does the bill create new bargaining units if the bill is enacted?

Kent M. Ervin:
The answer is no, it does not create any new bargaining units. We have the three at the community colleges now. Our Nevada State University folks are asking the Board of Regents on Friday to authorize an election under the old, outdated rules that are problematic. We have heard from the graduate students. Beyond that, yes, other groups could come together with a community of interest and ask to be, but that is an organizing process that takes time. So as far as the bill creating any new bargaining units? No. And how many does it create? Zero.

Assemblymember Carter:
Again, I am back to the bones of what we are trying to achieve here. What are typically the key points in collective bargaining agreements when it comes to professional staff and graduate students? I imagine it is slightly different, but if you could elaborate, I would appreciate it.

Assemblymember Anderson:
There are differences. They are not collectively bargained together because there are different elements that are necessary. As an educator, we would not bargain with the administrators. There would have to be a separation between those two items.

Jim New, President, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
Let me clarify. I have been at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) for 27 years now; our bargaining contract was established in 1992. We have had ten contract negotiations. I have been at the table for six of those on both sides, both as an administrator and now as a faculty member. Our negotiations usually surround issues such as workload issues and issues of communicating with our students.

I will give you an example. Traditionally, college faculty are required to maintain five office hours a week, which means we are in our offices ready to meet and assist students. Of course, before the pandemic, that landscape was starting to shift as students became more attuned to online options. But the pandemic really threw that into overdrive. We are teaching more classes online, and those students who are online are not coming to the campus to meet with faculty members. We negotiated, in our last contract at TMCC, a new policy that oversaw the office hours, and we call them student support hours now because it meets the students where they are. It makes it more convenient. It was a way to make things work more efficiently and be responsive to our students' needs.

Other issues we have negotiated time and time again, in every negotiation I have been involved in, were to improve the process of resolving disputes. Our goal has always been to resolve those disputes at the lowest, most informal level possible. We negotiated language about four years ago at TMCC that sent grievances at the institution that used to average about seven per year down to one. Actually, three years in a row, we had zero grievances. We have had a couple this year, but it has been very effective in helping us communicate with administration and discuss better ways to get things done, above and beyond just talking about things like compensation.

Assemblymember DeLong:
I need some help understanding the scope of this bill. Does it just cover the ability for students to unionize, or does it also cover tenured faculty's ability to unionize?

Assemblymember Anderson:
It would cover both. The graduate students would be added in, but it would also allow for the other tenured individuals to be able to do so if they wish. It is not automatic. There has to be a campaign, there has to be a process, but it is simply giving permission to do so.

Assemblymember Goulding:
I want to particularly thank the graduate students for showing up today. I am impressed by the numbers that arrived today. Could you explain a little bit about whether the collective bargaining would conflict with or override the shared governance model with the faculty senate?

Assemblymember Anderson:
I am going to ask Professor Lumbantobing, if you could please answer that question.

Rotua Lumbantobing:
In short, and I can elaborate if you want, collective bargaining will strengthen shared governance because it allows this shared governance to be included in the collective bargaining agreement and to be delineated in the collective bargaining agreement. Also, it will actually include provisions about the function and role of the faculty or university senate in upholding the shared governance. Actually, it supports the role of the senate.

Assemblymember Gallant:
This brings me back to the days when I was a graduate research assistant, and I see in speaking and hearing some of your stories, the power imbalance is off. This may be a question or just a comment on something we can think about. I think I am uncomfortable with collective bargaining in terms of salary, because I got a reduced tuition, and I believe you do as well, because you are doing some sweat equity, so to speak. I am concerned about the conditions, and if there is a way we could include the working conditions in the collective bargaining and not necessarily the monetary aspect of it. I was a graduate research assistant, I had a job, and I was going to classes. It is part of the journey. Maybe that is something you guys would be interested in discussing.

Clay Renshaw:
Some of our programs actually do not allow us to work outside of our work as a graduate assistant or technical assistant. Even if we could, many of us do not have the time to do that. If we want to get our degree done in the allotted amount of time required, especially if we are doing laboratory work which takes many years, then it would not be possible as we are already working 40 to 60 hours a week. That would just not be possible. We would like GAs to be able to democratically decide on what is important for them to bargain over. Sometimes that would include salary since we do not get paid enough to keep up with the cost of living.

Assemblymember Anderson:
I appreciate what you are saying. I remember those time frames as well. When you do the salary negotiations, there can be a consideration of how many hours you are putting in as part of those negotiations and how that will be able to add to your pay for classes and other items. Looking at the schedule from how the salary has been done in the past for the faculty, there is different academic faculty that is related to academic rank. That can be negotiated between the two parties. If you are working this many hours as a grad assistant, you get both this pay as well as so much credit toward your degree. That can be part of the bargaining process.

This bill would allow the grad students and management to make the decision as to how to do it rather than through legislative language.

Assemblymember Gallant:
I am curious, you said a lot of the research assistants' positions say you are not allowed to work a side job. Maybe you could collectively bargain that out of the policy. I appreciate that 40 to 60 hours a week is hard. For someone whose husband and I have two businesses—and I am also here 80 hours a week—it is pretty normal in our household. I know it sucks, but sometimes you just have to grin and bear it; it builds character. I am curious if it is part of the policy that they cannot work as part of the position and if that could be something you could collectively bargain.

Evelyn Airam:
There are a few things we need to think about. One is, I am an international scholar, and the policy does not allow us to work more than 20 hours, which is another issue that we are facing. Many of us do work more than that, and we are not paid for it. When it comes to the government, the federal government does not allow international students to: (1) work more than 20 hours; and (2) work outside campus. Those are constraints we have, not just with the policy, but also with the federal law. It makes it very difficult not to address them at all in regard to surviving. I understand building character, and as someone who came from a different country, I have been here through all of those, and character has been built. It is more than just that; it is also being able to go to school and not have to think about survival and the basic needs. It would be about being able to collaborate and find the best solution to address those issues and do it in the best manner we can find.

Assemblymember Karris:
First, before I was a union electrician for 27 years, I was in research academia for 15 years. One of the biggest issues—actually two biggest issues—was that I saw the graduate students whom I worked beside facing a lack of income and tyrannical professors. You do not always get a nice one, more times than not. That being said, collective bargaining is the perfect solution. When I first heard about this, I was like, Yes, this is exactly what all of you need because it is not easy to be a graduate student. I am glad the other Assemblymember was able to have enough hours in the day to work another job.

In my experience, our grad students started at 6 in the morning and were in the lab till midnight or 1 a.m. You not only have the classes you teach, but you also have your own research you need to conduct. You have grading and student support hours. There were so many other things we had to do. We literally had spouses come into the lab just to have an hour of time with them while they watched their spouses do experimentation. It is a grueling time. You guys work extremely hard. So, to my question—and tell me if I have gotten this wrong—you are telling me the Board of Regents makes the handbook and they have the final say. You are not allowed to debate what is in the handbook, which is why you need collective bargaining? Let me know if I got that right.

Assemblymember Anderson:
Yes.

Assemblymember Karris:
You had to organize the way you did, or you will never get fairly treated for all the things you do. It astounds me the Board of Regents has had all this time to just tell you the way things are going to be. How did you come about being able to organize? Were you approached by the United Auto Workers (UAW), or did you approach any union that would take all of you in?

Clay Renshaw:
About a year ago, I guess back in 2020, grad students had already been talking about unionizing for a long time but did not know how to go about it. It was not as successful back then. But last year, some of our graduate assistants (GAs) went to a conference with UAW, who represents over 125,000 higher education workers already and have been very effective at forming GA unions. Starting in the summer, we kicked off our campaign here in Nevada. In October, late September/October, we started our card-signing campaign. In a matter of seven weeks, we got a supermajority of the graduate assistants across Nevada. Over 1,500 signed union authorization cards to form our union.

In November, we approached the university to ask for recognition of our union and got silence for a couple of months. We held press conferences on the campus. We have a majority of legislators in support of our unionization and urged Nevada System of Higher Education and the administration to recognize our union. We are also urging them to support our bill here today so we can enshrine rights into law and bargain with NSHE.

Assemblymember Anderson:
If I may add to that as well, I had the chance to work with Nevada Faculty Alliance (NFA) on this bill last session, which was brought forward. During the process of the campaign that was just discussed, we started talking about possibly adding some other language to make sure it was stronger. Because NFA has been in existence since 1983, it seemed to be a natural connection and partnership.

Assemblymember DeLong:
This is really a follow-up on my last question. Now that you have confirmed the professors would be included in this, if the professors at UNLV, DRI, or UNR decided to start a union and collectively bargain with NSHE, would NSHE be able to include whether a professor either gets or retains tenure?

Michael Piccinelli:
I think American Association of University Professors agrees tenure and collective bargaining is complimentary. If tenure is related to a working condition, then it could be included in a collective bargaining agreement. We generally see collective bargaining agreements cover collective rights. If that is the avenue teachers and administrators want to enshrine the tenure process into, that is fine, but if there is another process, that is fine as

well. The collective bargaining agreement usually focuses on broader rights all of the faculty enjoy and want to exercise.

Assemblymember Nguyen:
I think all of us need financial literacy in our lives. No hint to my other bills, but the challenge I see is with the partnership with UAW. The graduate assistants have already taken the steps to be able to do that with NSHE. Are you telling me you are not able to do this without this bill, that you need this bill so you are able to make them come to the table? I understood you did all the processes of having the election and having the vote counted, but now you need the bill. Can you reiterate the gap in that for us?

Clay Renshaw:
Absolutely. We did meet with the NSHE administration, some of the Board of Regents, and university administration last Friday. The meeting was pretty disappointing. But to answer your question, they said there is no current policy to recognize our union. The bill would have to be passed for that to happen.

Evelyn Airam:
We believe the bill also creates a stable solution for recognition and also the bargaining process between GAs and NSHE, and enshrining that into law would be the best course of action in this case. Both ways, NSHE and GAs can appeal to the labor board in case any disputes should arise. We have invited NSHE to join us in support of this bill and to start collaborating towards solving issues.

Assemblymember Nguyen:
I just want to be clear because I know some of my colleagues have said the word "students" before, and that is not what this is about. You are not coming to NSHE as students, you are coming to NSHE as an employee who happens to be a student. You are an employee wanting to come in and collectively bargain as an employee, not as a student.

Evelyn Airam:
Yes, that is correct. We are graduate assistants. We are students as well, but we are talking about workplace issues and improving workplace environment.

Chair Considine:
We will now move on to testimony. First, we will begin with testimony in support of A.B. 191. We will start in Las Vegas. We will go for seven minutes in Las Vegas, come back to Carson City for seven minutes, and then go through again as time allows. If you are ready in Las Vegas, please begin.

Patricia Orellana, **Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**
I have been a graduate assistant at UNLV since 2022 and am part of the Nevada Graduate Student Workers-UAW. [Read from Exhibit K.] I am here to highlight the urgent need to pass A.B. 191 to address systemic problems facing graduate assistants working at NSHE. During my time as a graduate assistant, I had a baby that was born via C-section. I was

forced to return to work just six weeks after having major surgery and before I was fully recovered because UNLV only offers six weeks of paid maternity leave for its graduate assistants. My family depended on my income, so I had no choice but to return to work. I have since learned that GAs at UNR have no guaranteed maternity leave at all, and I struggle to understand why that inequity exists.

My work environment became increasingly difficult after I returned to work. My new supervisor changed my schedule, took away my cubicle, and changed nearly all of my work duties. I was no longer doing the job I was hired to do. She treated my coworkers and me with continual disrespect, leading me to feel pressured to quit. I filed a grievance with the graduate college and a complaint with the Title IX office. The Title IX office dismissed my complaint, and I had to go a month without pay before finding a new job. The Nevada System of Higher Education has told graduate assistants the issues we face can be solved if we only learned how to access the resources available to us. This is simply not the case. Title IX is an important resource, but it did not prevent me from being stripped of my job duties without just cause after returning to work as a new mom.

Most GAs do not trust the process entirely controlled by the administration to lead to a fair outcome. I am a woman of faith. I have also put my beliefs into action by being involved in the formation of our GA union. Today I pray the voices of a supermajority of GAs will be heard and respected

Ted Johnson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am a graduate assistant at UNLV and part of our union, Nevada Graduate Student Workers-UAW [Read from Exhibit L.] I am here supporting Assembly Bill 191. Over the past year, I have spoken to hundreds of graduate assistants about their experiences working at UNLV, their reasons for wanting to form a union and secure a collective bargaining agreement. Today, I want to share a brief story on behalf of one of those people who could not be here. Marzieh Taheri, a graduate assistant working at UNLV, was coerced to work six to seven days a week in a lab with hazardous conditions. When she tried to remove herself from exposure to harmful chemicals and dust by working on data analysis outside of the lab, her supervisor threatened to end her job. He berated her and her coworkers for not working fast enough despite the long hours they were putting into the job. Eight months of working under extreme stress caused her to break out in a rash on her neck and body. This rash only went away once she was finally able to secure a new job at a different department—away from her former supervisor. For eight months, Marzieh was afraid to report the situation to Title IX or the ombudsman because she was terrified of losing her only source of income and having her career irreparably damaged. She had not heard positive outcomes from others who sought remedies to abuse through university-controlled processes.

Marzieh is just one of the many people I spoke with who suffered physical, emotional, and professional consequences of not having a trustworthy, independent process for addressing workplace issues such as those that exist for unionized graduate assistants at public universities in our neighboring states. This is just one of the reasons I joined with over 1,500 colleagues to form a union and address the imbalance of power at the root cause of

workplace bullying and harassment. I urge you to pass A.B. 191 to ensure NSHE respects its employees' choice to unionize and create a better university.

Reina Benefiel, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am a Ph.D. candidate, a graduate teaching assistant at UNLV, and a member of NGSW-UAW. I am here to voice my strong support for A.B. 191. I became a graduate assistant because I am driven by the passion for research and contributing to the education of Nevada's next generation of scientists. And because I know our teaching conditions are our students' learning conditions, I am passionate about forming a union to make improvements for everyone.

I have personally witnessed three incredibly gifted and passionate grad workers who have had to leave my program as a direct result of our working conditions. A major contributor to this has been bullying by senior scientists. Those who felt forced out, as well as others who continue to experience harassment, have told me they feel they cannot report due to ineffectual existing systems and fear of retaliation. The power imbalance between us as workers and the university puts us in an extremely vulnerable position. But GAs at institutions who have formed unions have helped reduce the instances of workplace abuse by creating independent processes for seeking resolution that people can trust, which is why we made a democratic choice to form a union.

Additionally, many of us struggle to meet our basic needs. We are contracted for 20 hours a week, but in my department, it is the general expectation that you spend about 50 hours a week on your lab work alone. This does not include teaching responsibilities, which are additional hours of work. My lab mates and I regularly work six days a week on average. Our compensation and our treatment as employees do not reflect the time and effort we dedicate to our university every single day. It is crucial we have a voice when it comes to our working conditions.

Staci Walters, Collective Bargaining Chair, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
I serve as faculty at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and as the Nevada Faculty Alliance (NFA) state bargaining chair where I have negotiated three contracts. I also served on the faculty senate at CSN for ten years. Faculty senates advise institution presidents, but collective bargaining ensures real accountability and governance. The distinction is critical. Faculty believe in fiscal responsibility and accountability over government spending. As stakeholders in higher education, we need a seat at the table to scrutinize spending, ensure funds serve students, and prevent unnecessary executive initiatives that divert resources. Through collective bargaining, faculty have exposed financial inefficiencies and pushed for transparency. The process strengthens shared governance, requiring faculty input, decision-making, and holding administrators accountable through third-party arbitration.

The Nevada System of Higher Education has refused to update its policies, creating inconsistencies that allow institutions to reinterpret bargaining agreements, undermining equity across the system. Assembly Bill 191 corrects this by granting employees access to the Employee-Management Relations Board, a third party that can resolve contract disputes

and personnel issues when faculty and administration cannot reach agreements. Disputes are resolved fairly without the need for costly litigation. At CSN, ongoing litigation could have been avoided had such a mechanism been in place. The Nevada System of Higher Education is a bureaucracy; every layer has waste. The bill establishes clear, uniform standards that protect employees while ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Pete Martini, President, Nevada State University Chapter, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
I am an assistant professor of psychology at Nevada State University where I also serve as the NFA president of that chapter. I want to speak in support of A.B. 191 today. You have heard a lot of comments about things that would benefit from collective bargaining. At my campus, the number one issue and the number one driver in our grassroots effort for collective bargaining is campus safety and student conduct. It is not salary. Regardless of the reasons we come to the table, one of the things I want to point out is that faculty and graduate students want to bargain in good faith.

Without A.B. 191, we are bargaining across the table from NSHE while they call balls and strikes. If we are in the room and we are trying to create a safe working environment made all the clearer by the events at UNLV two Decembers ago, we cannot get NSHE to listen to us, and there is no recourse in NSHE code. At some point in time, the Legislature needs to step up to help faculty and help graduate students. We are bargaining and negotiating for more than just pay. We are bargaining for safety, we are bargaining for security, and there needs to be a neutral party that helps NSHE and its workers come to a common agreement. Assembly Bill 191 does that.

Chair Considine:
Thank you, Las Vegas. That has been eight minutes. We will go to Carson City for seven minutes and then to the phone lines. In Carson City, please go ahead.

Amy M. Pason, Chair, Government Relations Committee, Nevada Faculty Alliance:
I am in support of A.B. 191 because faculty should have the same rights as other public sector employees and an option to collectively bargain if they so choose. I am a person who has been embedded in our shared governance systems. I was the faculty senate chair at UNR. I served as the chair of chairs for the NSHE system. I have worked with a variety of different administrators, three chancellors, two sets of presidents and provosts, a number of deans, and a number of vice provosts. The majority of my working relationships with them have been positive, but I know there is a limit to what our shared governance can do. We are advisory, and we make recommendations.

I currently serve as the chair of the graduate council, another shared governance body at our institution, and we have been trying to address some of these issues with graduate students. What we are doing with the graduate dean is to create a guideline of what supervisors of graduate students should do: let them have a day off if the university is closed, and they should have written contracts so there are clear work expectations. But in our role, it is advisory only; we can recommend and encourage faculty to follow it. We cannot require them to follow these best practices. A collective bargaining agreement can address these

issues. It can have clarity if someone has a grant that would allow them to pay graduate students more. They can actually do it instead of just going with the bare minimum. We need collective bargaining rights because there are some things our shared governance process cannot do. [Written testimony was also submitted Exhibit M.]

Doug Unger, Acting President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Chapter, Nevada Faculty Alliance:

Assembly Bill 191 promises stability for our campus communities. Speaking as a professor with 14 years in various roles and faculty governance, including as chair of the Council of Faculty Senate Chairs for NSHE, I am convinced collective bargaining can democratize a managerial system run by ever-shifting rosters of regents, chancellors, presidents, provosts, and deans with their ever-changing leadership plans and styles. Look at UNLV: seven presidents in 17 years—it does not feel very stable. Collective bargaining contracts provide a more predictable structure for how higher education operates. Skeptics keep pointing out that NSHE already has collective bargaining, but Title 4, Chapter 4 of the Board of Regents Handbook, is a policy, not a code or law. The Nevada System of Higher Education sets the terms and has resisted updating this antique policy for years. Even now, NSHE is using its obsolete wording to refuse to recognize the labor rights of graduate assistants. Most people think collective bargaining primarily addresses salaries and benefits.

Assembly Bill 191 will be even more useful to achieve just and balanced mediations of personnel issues, a needed correction to flawed grievance processes which are inadequate for graduate assistants and in which presidents have thumbs up or thumbs down power no matter the verdict of a grievance committee for faculty. Mediation and arbitration can save our colleges and universities from costly litigation. Assembly Bill 191 offers a sustainable vision for higher education, needed now more than ever to support our shared mission to educate students and help them succeed. [Written testimony was submitted Exhibit N.]

Mia Swain, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a sixth-year graduate assistant in the biochemistry department at UNR. [Read from Exhibit O.] I am here speaking in support of A.B. 191 as part of NGSW-UAW. As a graduate assistant, research progress is largely at the discretion of your supervisor, creating an inherent power imbalance that is easily exploited. Unfortunately, misuse of this power often goes unchecked by the university. In my fourth year, I was forced to switch labs due to my supervisor's unfair treatment. He set unattainable work expectations, consistently shifting the goal posts, so no matter how hard I worked, I could never meet his standards. He regularly belittled me and other graduate assistants, reaching the point of yelling on multiple occasions. He also used public humiliation as a point of control, threatening to fire workers in front of their peers. When I sought guidance from my department, my supervisor reprimanded me, leaving me feeling isolated and trapped without clear institutional recourse. Ultimately, I was fired without recourse, and switching labs meant forfeiting years of research progress and significantly delaying my career. The relentless stress also led to chronic health issues that I am still receiving ongoing treatment for.

I am not alone. My supervisor unjustly fired other workers as well. Many in the department are aware of his problematic treatment, yet the university has not taken meaningful action to address the issue. That is why I have joined my colleagues to form a union, to establish an enforceable process for addressing harassment, discrimination, and bullying. My experience reflects a broader pattern affecting many GAs. I urge the Committee to support A.B. 191 so the NSHE administration will negotiate for graduate workers to resolve these critical issues.

Keely Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a graduate assistant at UNR here in support of A.B. 191 as part of NGSW-UAW. [Read from Exhibit P.] I grew up learning the value of hard work and character building. I knew pursuing a Ph.D. would be hard, but it is also an honor to teach the students at UNR, performing the groundbreaking research that fuels our R1 institution.

Unfortunately, this journey of mine ended up being more difficult than I had expected. This is because while working at UNR, I have had to switch research labs twice due to unprofessional, manipulative, and sometimes dangerous working environments created by my supervisors. For example, in one lab, my supervisor fired me while I was suffering a major health issue. This supervisor is also a well-known bully and is known to profanely lash out at GAs and belittle people in the lab. In another lab, my supervisor was, more than once, intoxicated while driving and working with me and put my coworkers and I in dangerous situations. I have been told by a supervisor that taking time off to see my family was unheard of. I have witnessed so many colleagues being held captive after being denied graduation, even though they have completed all of the agreed upon requirements to do so. Other graduate assistants and I have approached the administration to discuss these experiences. They expressed sympathy with our concerns and ultimately told us that no one has the power to address these issues.

This is why I formed a union with my colleagues, so we can negotiate for an independent grievance process that will support our rights, safety, and security. Our work as graduate assistants is our livelihood and a necessary step to becoming the academics, educators, and scientists of tomorrow. Therefore, I humbly and respectfully request that this Committee support A.B. 191 and give us graduate workers agency over our path forward. I was also asked to mention that we did try to reach out to the UNR president, and we have not been able to get a meeting with him.

Chair Considine:
We are going to head to the phones and when we come back, we will go to Las Vegas and Carson City, time allowing. If you have testimony, please submit your testimony to the Committee within 24 hours of the Committee hearing and also feel free to say ditto if you want to get your name on the record and something you would like to say has already been said. We will go to the phone lines for testimony in support of A.B. 191.

Amy Cavanaugh, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a professor of biology at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) and secretary of the TMCC chapter of the Nevada Faculty Alliance. I wish to express support for Assembly Bill 191. While NSHE has allowed faculty collective bargaining since 1990, ensuring employee rights has not been an NSHE policy priority. We need state statute to give the foundation of what can and should be expected. Without collective bargaining rights in state law, the bargaining process is a half measure in which the management side controls the rules.

As an example, you have already heard several times NFA has been trying to get the Board of Regents to discuss revisions to the NSHE policies that govern collective bargaining. However, the Board of Regents refuses to engage in this discussion and insists the faculty senate has to request this agenda item. I have been a faculty senate chair, and you have heard what faculty senates control. They do not have anything to do with collective bargaining, and they are not in charge of collective bargaining. It does not make any sense for them to be the agencies to request changes to the policies that govern collective bargaining, which is why they have not done so. Without state statutes, there is no way to force management to engage with our duly elected unions. Without fair rules governing the collective bargaining process, we cannot ensure fair working conditions and compensation for our faculty.

Sara Perez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a teaching assistant for two master's level courses and also a research assistant in the School of Public Health at UNR. I am very sick today, so I was not able to come in person, but I want to lift up what my peers have already said. I also do not get a sick day, so do not worry, I will keep working. But thank you, and ditto.

Krista Diamond, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department, and in the interest of time, I just want to say a strong ditto; a strong ditto to everything the other graduate student workers have said today.

Terri Laird, Executive Director, Retired Public Employees of Nevada:
We have been around for almost 50 years, and we have always supported the pension and benefits protection through those years. I would just like to say ditto to all the remarks made today and urge this Committee to support Assembly Bill 191.

Joshua Williams, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am an associate professor of physics, and I would like to support A.B. 191. I would also like to say the graduate students do not receive, in my opinion, a living wage. I will say ditto to everything they have said.

Molly Appel, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:
I am an assistant professor at Nevada State University, and we need your support of A.B. 191 to protect our ability to choose to collectively bargain at our institutions. At Nevada State, as my colleague Dr. Martini mentioned, we are dedicated to our students and to the craft of

teaching. We know faculty working conditions are student learning conditions, and this is why we are seeking collective bargaining to more effectively address both of these aspects of our institution. I served as faculty senate chair last year, and I can assure you collective bargaining will enhance shared governance because it enshrines our voice and our rights beyond the whims of any particular administrator or regent. We do not know how long our upper administrative leadership will be here. Many of us have been at our institution dedicated to our students and our teaching for longer than our upper administrators or our serving members of the Board of Regents.

Chair Considine:
We are close to time. I would like to extend the time for about five more minutes, if we could, because people in Las Vegas and here have shown up. If we could go down to Las Vegas for about three minutes. If you want to put your name on the record and say ditto, and then we will come back and do the same in Carson City. Please go ahead, Las Vegas.

Pierre Lescure, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I am an international and nontraditional graduate student and graduate assistant at UNLV and part of NGSW-UAW. [Read from Exhibit Q.] I am here to voice my support for A.B. 191. I believe a union is a powerful tool to address the matters the graduate student community needs support for. Everyone faces hardships and insecurities. For example, international graduate assistants like me face the constant fear of our contract not being renewed. This could lead to financial hardship and force us to leave the country within three months once the semester ends. Many of our nontraditional graduate assistants are not just students, they have to feed their children and keep a roof over their heads. This financial stress can be overwhelming, especially when you cannot plan for your future because you do not know if your employment will be continued the following term.

Through collective bargaining, graduate assistants and NSHE could come up with creative, cost-effective solutions together so the talented researchers from all backgrounds can be recruited and retained, because we are stronger together. The collective bargaining process would give graduate assistants the ability to help create the best conditions for our students to learn and researchers to succeed.

Erin Rook, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:
I use he/him pronouns and live in Assembly District 3. I am a graduate research assistant in the School of Public Health at UNLV, where I support research related to LGBTQIA, aging, and brain health, and I am a member of the union. I want to highlight that while I have been fortunate to have a supportive faculty supervisor, a healthy workplace should not be a matter of chance. I think it is also important to note that because the terms of our employment are not up to faculty but rather up to NSHE, we do not really have opportunities to engage in meaningful negotiations. These decisions have collective impact and can, therefore, only be meaningfully addressed through collective bargaining.

One of these scenarios that is beyond the control of our faculty no matter how wonderful they might be is layoffs. Currently, all five of the graduate assistants on my team are preparing for

layoffs. That is because the positions are funded by federal grants, not the state. The current administration has decided not to honor its commitment to fund health research if it includes transgender people. When graduate assistants are hired, we do not know how our positions will be funded. As a result, some GAs are unknowingly vulnerable to job loss in ways that others are not. We have no protections against the potentially illegal revocation of the active grants that fund our roles. We do not even know if other GAs are facing this challenge.

We have the ability to have our union efforts recognized. We could better identify and advocate for the protections we need. These should not be controversial asks. Union representation simply provides workers with a mechanism to advocate for the needs of the collective. I urge you to support A.B. 191 so graduate student workers can have their voices heard in the workplace.

Chair Considine:
That will be the time for support in Las Vegas. Please submit your testimony to the Committee within 24 hours. We will now move for a few minutes to the folks on the table here in Carson City.

Susie Martinez, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Nevada State AFL-CIO:
We are in full support of Assembly Bill 191. I would like to thank the Nevada Faculty Alliance and UAW for all their amazing hard work and to all the GA students that are here, I applaud you for standing in solidarity.

Jim New:
I mentioned I have been negotiating since 1992 under the limitations of the Board of Regents Handbook at TMCC. Even under those archaic policies, each negotiation has clarified and improved processes to the benefit of both faculty and administration. This bill will still allow local negotiations on specific issues, but it will also level the playing field for all institutions where faculty choose to form a bargaining unit, because faculty working conditions are student learning conditions. Assembly Bill 191 will help us build the dynamic workforce that is central to nearly all the state's strategic goals. I urge your support.

Thomas Hintze, Political Director, Region 6, United Auto Workers:
The UAW represents over a million active and retired workers, and as some graduate assistants have said, over 125,000 workers in higher education. This bill has the full support of our international union. [Written testimony was submitted Exhibit R.]

Helen Kidane, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:
I am a first year Ph.D. student and graduate assistant at UNR. I am here in support of A.B. 191. [Read from Exhibit S.] I would quickly like to say my connection to UNR runs deep. I have earned my bachelor's and master's degrees at UNR and from a first-generation family. My three younger sisters and I also go to UNR or have graduated from UNR. We are proud to do so because we are from Nevada. I would like to say that as an older sister, I have always felt a deep responsibility to set an example for my younger siblings. Pursuing graduate education at UNR is not just about my own success, it is about paving the way for

other students and also about Nevada's future. Many of us want to contribute to our communities, but without fair treatment, graduate assistants who are integral to the university's quality and rigor will leave for better opportunities elsewhere. Investing in graduate workers means investing in long-term success for UNR, its research, and the state as a whole. I urge you to support this bill.

Chair Considine:
That is our time for support. What I would like to do for those folks in Las Vegas and for those folks in Carson City, if you are here in support, will you please stand? [Several people in Carson and Las Vegas stood.] Thank you very much for your time and thank you for coming to Carson City and Las Vegas.

[Exhibit T includes a collection of letters in support.].

We will now move to opposition. If anyone here in Carson City would like to testify in opposition to A.B. 191, please approach the table.

Nick Schneider, Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:
First, I wanted to thank the bill sponsor for meeting with the Chamber [Vegas Chamber] regarding our concerns with the provisions of A.B. 191 and always appreciate her willingness to discuss these issues. However, the Chamber is opposed to the premise of the bill as it would further expand the collective bargaining provision that was adopted by the State Legislature in 2019, and the impact it could have on state operations including budgetary components. We have concerns about the expansion of definitions found in sections 4 and 5 of the bill and components found beginning in section 12 as it relates to the Nevada System of Higher Education and managerial employees, along with other related sections throughout the bill that could impact and would have an impact on the academic experience at public universities and colleges in our state. A great example is, we have concerns about section 63, regarding graduate assistants being included in the collective bargaining process as well.

There is also the argument this could potentially harm the academic relationship between students and faculty while also causing disruption of the educational process found within an institution of higher education. There are concerns about a desire to bargain over curriculum, teaching assignments, and other academic matters that could be left to administrators and faculty and not be placed in collective bargaining agreements. At the federal level there has also been a lot of back and forth and course direction changes by the National Labor Relations Board regarding the topic over the last 20 years, if graduate students are primary students or university employees—and for these reasons, the Vegas Chamber is in opposition.

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone else in Carson City wishing to testify in opposition? Seeing no one approach, is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 191? Seeing no one approach, is there anyone on the phone lines in opposition of A.B. 191?

Valerie Conner, Faculty Senate Chair, College of Southern Nevada; and Chair, Nevada System of Higher Education Council of Faculty Senate Chairs:
Faculty senate is the only recommended body for faculty. We speak for roughly 10,000-plus faculties throughout the entire state. Faculty senate is the only official representation for faculty senate. Faculty senate is a [unintelligible] body between faculty administration, the Nevada System of Higher Education, and the Board of Regents. Faculty senate provides mechanisms for the entire faculty and staff to participate in the decision-making process for colleges and universities.

I am in opposition to A.B. 191, which promotes collective bargaining and is central to preserving shared governance and faculty representation through existing structures like the faculty senate. The NFA must work collaboratively with faculty senate chairs to ensure faculty voices are heard without the constraints and adversarial nature of collective bargaining agreements. Collective bargaining would undermine the flexibility needed for meaningful faculty administration dialogues and decision-making, replacing collective collaboration with rigorous constraints that may not reflect the diverse needs of faculty members, additionally, granting collective bargaining power to an entire entity, marginalizing non-union faculty, and limiting broad faculty participation in government. Instead, in adopting collective bargaining, faculty advocacy should focus on strengthening cooperation, engaging with administration to address employment concerns while maintaining institutional integrity and academic freedom.

Chair Considine:
We will now move to neutral testimony. Is there anyone here in Carson City who wishes to testify in neutral?

Alejandro Rodriguez, **Director of Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:**
On behalf of Interim Chancellor Patty Charlton, I will be testifying neutral for A.B. 191 until the Board of Regents takes a position at its board meeting this week. I would like to thank Assemblymember Anderson for including NSHE in conversations regarding A.B. 191. The Nevada System of Higher Education has provided for collective bargaining for professional employees for decades. Currently, NSHE has three collective bargaining agreements in place that cover approximately 930 professional employees. Under the proposed terms of A.B. 191, approximately 22,000 professional employees would have access to collective bargaining. With regards to graduate assistants, Interim Chancellor Patty Charlton, along with additional NSHE institution leadership, recently met with representatives to seek ways to address their concerns. We remain fully committed to finding solutions sooner than the legislative process would allow. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective.

Chair Considine:
Is there anyone else here in Carson City wishing to testify in neutral? Seeing no one, is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in neutral on A.B. 191? Seeing no one, is there anyone on the line wishing to testify in neutral? [There was no one.]

I would like to bring the sponsor forward for final remarks.

Assemblymember Anderson:
I again want to thank the Committee for not only the presentation and consideration of this bill, but also for listening to our faculty members and our grad students. I was not at all surprised by the two individuals who spoke up against A.B. 191, because I have met with them both. I think as we continue to go into this world of knowledge, no matter what area you make the decision to study, there is always going to be a need for academic freedom. There is always going to be a need to work in an environment where you feel safe, where you feel you can take academic risks, and where you also feel you are protected. Some of the stories that were told clearly show that is not the case. We have attempted to go the other way through the policies, and that is not working. Now it is time for us to come in as a Legislature and help the rights of the workers. I ask for your support.

Chair Considine:
One addition, I was told that standing up between Las Vegas and Carson City was about 100 people. I just wanted to put that out there.

[Exhibit U was submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

I will now close the hearing on A.B. 191.

We will move to the final piece on our agenda, public comment. Is there any public comment here in Carson City? Seeing no one approach, is there any public comment in Las Vegas? Seeing no one approach, is there anyone on the phone lines for public comment? [There was no one.]

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

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 8 a.m. in Room 4100. This concludes our meeting today. Our meeting is adjourned [at 10:11 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Holly Gilman
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblymember Venicia Considine, Chair

DATE:

EXHIBITS

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 155	C	Various Individuals	Letters in support
A.B. 155	D	Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25	Flyer titled "Class Size Reduction Act: A.B. 155"
A.B. 191	E	Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Assembly District No. 30	Conceptual amendment
A.B. 191	F	Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., Director of Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance	Written testimony
A.B. 191	G	Michael Piccinelli, Attorney, American Federation of Teachers	Written testimony
A.B. 191	H	Rotua Lumbantobing, Vice President, American Association of University Professors	Written testimony
A.B. 191	I	Clay Renshaw, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	J	Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., Nevada Faculty Alliance	Document titled "A.B. 191, authorizing collective bargaining for NSHE professional employees in statute"
A.B. 191	K	Patricia Orellana, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	L	Ted Johnson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	M	Amy M. Pason, Chair, Government Relations Committee, Nevada Faculty Alliance	Letter in support
A.B. 191	N	Doug Unger, Acting President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Chapter, Nevada Faculty Alliance	Written testimony
A.B. 191	O	Mia Swain, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	P	Keely Rodriguez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony

A.B. 191	Q	Pierre Lescure, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	R	Tom Hintze, Political Director, Region 6, United Auto Workers	Written testimony
A.B. 191	S	Helen Kidane, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Written testimony
A.B. 191	T	Various individuals	Collection of letters in support
A.B. 191	U	Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., Director of Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance	Document titled "Collective Bargaining for NSHE Professional Employees"