

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**Eighty-Third Session
March 3, 2025**

The Committee on Ways and Means was called to order by Chair Daniele Monroe-Moreno at 8:10 a.m. on Monday, March 3, 2025, in Room 3137 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 2 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. Link to [Executive Budget](#).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Assemblymember Shea M. Backus, Vice Chair
Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson
Assemblymember Tracy Brown-May
Assemblymember Jill Dickman
Assemblymember Gregory T. Hafen II
Assemblymember Brian Hibbetts
Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui
Assemblymember Gregory S. Koenig
Assemblymember Erica Mosca
Assemblymember PK O'Neill
Assemblymember Selena Torres-Fossett
Assemblymember Howard Watts
Assemblymember Steve Yeager

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None



STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sarah Coffman, Assembly Fiscal Analyst
Brody Leiser, Assembly Chief Principal Deputy Fiscal Analyst
Joi Guthrie, Committee Manager
Natalia Jordan, Committee Manager
Sherry Quick, Committee Secretary
Lisa McAlister, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brad Keating, Assistant Superintendent, Community Partnerships and Government Relations, Clark County School District
Nathaniel Waugh, Government Relations Director, Clark County School District
Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Dawn Etcheverry, President, Nevada State Education Association
Zach Conine, State Treasurer, Office of the State Treasurer
Erik Jimenez, Chief Policy Deputy, Office of the State Treasurer
Carissa Pearce, Government Affairs Manager, Children's Advocacy Alliance
Wendy Colborne, representing Building and Construction Trades Council of Northern Nevada
Caroline Mello Roberson, representing Planned Parenthood Votes Nevada
Jimmy Lau, representing Dignity Health – St. Rose Dominican; and Western Resource Advocates
Samantha Barnes, representing Nevada Bankers Association
Ashley Dodson, representing National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Las Vegas Chapter 1111
Paul Catha, Political Director, Culinary Workers Union Local 226
Manuel Santamaria, representing Battle Born Progress
Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Families for Freedom
Joshua Skaggs, Legislative Affairs Director, Nevada Republican Party
Eric Jeng, Executive Director, One APIA Nevada
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League
Tom Clark, representing Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition; and Nevada Association of School Boards
Tailar Purciel, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Walker Basin Conservancy
Sean Hill, CEO, Sierra Nevada Journeys
Cedar Gobbs-Hill, Private Citizen
Jafeth Sanchez, representing Sierra Nevada Journeys; and Private Citizen
Shelbie Swartz, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress
Leann McAllister, Executive Director, Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Elizabeth (Beth) Smith, President, Board of Trustees District D, Washoe County School District
Shane Piccinini, Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada

Alexander Marks, Deputy Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association
Alexis Esparza, Chief Steward, SEIU Local 1107
Cheyenne Kyle, Food Program Coordinator, Obodo Collective
Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada
Brianna Cowan, representing Douglas County Republican Central Committee; and Nevada Federation of Republican Women
Jim DeGraffenreid, Nevada National Committeeman, Nevada Republican Party
Janine Hansen, State Chairman, Independent American Party
James Gansinger, representing Nevada Republican Party
Cyrus Hojjaty, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Yolanda Knaak, Private Citizen, Incline Village, Nevada
Bob Russo, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada
Al Rojas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were discussed.] Good morning and welcome to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. We have four bill hearings, but before we get to the bills, we have two bill draft request (BDR) introductions. Members, I will remind you that your vote today on the BDRs is just to have the BDRs introduced. It is not saying that you agree to them or how you will vote when we have the hearing. Our first is BDR 31-936.

BDR 31-936—Revises provisions relating to State Financial Administration. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 347](#).)

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I will entertain a motion to introduce Bill Draft Request 31-936.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER BACKUS MOVED FOR COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION OF BILL DRAFT REQUEST 31-936.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Our second introduction is Bill Draft Request 17-931.

BDR 17-931—Revises provisions relating to the Legislature. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 348](#).)

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I will entertain a motion to introduce Bill Draft Request 17-931.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER BACKUS MOVED FOR COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION OF BILL DRAFT REQUEST 17-931.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The next item on our agenda is the bill hearing for [Assembly Bill 47](#). We will invite the presenters to the table.

**[Assembly Bill 47](#): Revises provisions relating to the Education Stabilization Account.
(BDR 34-461)**

Brad Keating, Assistant Superintendent, Community Partnerships and Government Relations, Clark County School District:

I am here to present [Assembly Bill 47](#), a crucial piece of legislation aimed at strengthening Nevada's education system through targeted investments in teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development [[Exhibit C](#)]. Education is the backbone of our state's future, yet school districts across Nevada continue to face significant challenges in attracting and keeping high quality teachers and educational personnel. Recognizing this, [A.B. 47](#) seeks to direct surplus funds from the Education Stabilization Account to provide school districts with the necessary resources to support their workforce.

Nathaniel Waugh, Government Relations Director, Clark County School District:

Under existing law, the Education Stabilization Account holds excess revenues to help address financial shortfalls. However, when the balance of this account surpasses 20 percent of the total appropriations from the State Education Fund, those excess funds currently revert to the State Education Fund without a specific targeted use. [Assembly Bill 47](#) proposes a more strategic and impactful allocation of these funds by redistributing the surplus to school districts across Nevada proportionally based on student enrollment, requiring school districts to submit a spending plan to ensure accountability and transparency, directing the funds specifically toward teacher recruitment and retention programs, professional development, and training initiatives.

Additionally, school district superintendents will be required to submit an annual report detailing how these funds were spent and evaluating the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention efforts. As the largest school district in Nevada, the Clark County School District

serves nearly 300,000 students and employs more than 18,000 teachers. We continue to experience relatively high turnover rates, and the ability to invest in competitive salaries, mentorship programs, and ongoing training will be instrumental in reducing teacher shortages.

Our human resources team is working hard and has seen success in moving the needle on teacher vacancies, but we also recognize there is work to do as with all districts across Nevada. Assembly Bill 47 would supplement current efforts by Nevada districts in continuing to recruit and retain high quality, licensed educators. By equipping our educators with the tools they need, A.B. 47 ensures that students receive a high-quality education, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes and a stronger workforce for Nevada's future.

Brad Keating:

In closing, it is important to note that A.B. 47 does not impose any new taxes. It does not create any budgetary burdens. Instead, it leverages existing funds in a way that directly benefits schools, teachers, and students. Moreover, strict reporting requirements will hold districts accountable for how these funds are used. It is important to note the provisions of this bill only trigger when the Education Stabilization Account balance reaches 20 percent of total appropriations and authorizations from the State Education Fund. The balance is currently at 14 percent; once it hits 20 percent, A.B. 47 would trigger. Assembly Bill 47 represents a practical, strategic, and necessary step towards improving Nevada's education system by investing in the professionals who shape the minds of our future generations.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We have members with questions. We are going to start with Assemblymember Watts.

Assemblymember Watts:

I do have a little bit of concern around this. When we revised the funding formula, one of the things we wanted to do was move away from categorical spending. I heard in your presentation you discussed that currently this money would flow into the State Education Fund and it is not targeted, but part of the point was that we are reinvesting and focusing on increasing per-pupil spending. I remember this was one of the things that we talked about; the benefit is that hopefully we would get to a point with the Education Stabilization Account where it would flow back into State Education Fund and per-pupil spending that benefits the students directly in the state.

That is a little bit more of a statement—I see in the bill it references recruitment and retention of teachers as well as training and professional development. In terms of retention and recruitment, is this intended primarily for bonuses, pay increases, and other financial incentives, or is it more open ended and flexible than that?

Nathaniel Waugh:

That would be part of the spending plan that would be submitted to the Department of Education (NDE) by the districts. It would be whatever the districts want to propose to use the funding for, and that would go through NDE for their review and approval before disbursement.

Assemblymember Watts:

I am reading in section 1, subsection 3, you have to submit that plan to the state superintendent and they have to determine that the district would use the money allocated pursuant to this section for the purposes set forth and will comply with subsection 8, which is reporting. It seems like as long as it fits into that category, the district would be determining what, within this area, they would want to focus on, and as long as it fits into either retention, recruitment efforts, or training and professional development, the Department would approve the plan. Is that correct?

Nathaniel Waugh:

Yes, recognizing that each district has different priorities in determining what they need in their recruitment, retention efforts, or professional development, and their plans would align with one of these buckets, depending on what their individual needs are.

Assemblymember O'Neill:

When you make your application to NDE for this money, how specific will you require the request to be? In all honesty, Clark County has abused money, taking trips for recruitment to Miami Beach and Hawaii, which I think was frivolous and excessive. Therefore, giving a blank check without that specificity of what can and cannot be done with it bothers me. Can you put on the record how specific the request will be for how the money is going to be used?

Nathaniel Waugh:

A portion of this is going to involve the Department having some rule making and regulation in order for them to fulfill their purpose with this. That is a conversation that would happen with the Department of Education. I know with the situation you referenced, NDE was involved, there were lessons learned, and there is an opportunity for all the districts in the state to create that framework of what NDE would approve for use of these funds.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Are there any other questions? [There were none.]

Right now, in economic history, we are at some concerning times. Do you feel this would be the best interest at this time? When this bill was submitted, no one anticipated we would be where we are today. We have an Education Stabilization Account that we know could only stabilize the education system—the funding that we do for our students, for a short amount of time. Nevada has limited resources; we are spread thin. That pie can only be cut so many ways, and we often get criticized for not putting enough money into the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan as it is.

Do you feel that at this time, knowing there are going to be some cutbacks coming down the road, that this is the time we should make this adjustment or would it be better to raise the cap and make sure the money is there for everyone to use, to make sure our students are getting the education they need and the tools they need in their classroom? I understand retention and that hiring is hard, but at the core of everything is making sure we have the funding we need for those students.

Brad Keating:

The reason Assembly Bill 47 exists is because the Clark County School Board of Trustees thought it imperative to bring a bill forward that talks about recruitment and retention of our staff. We are fully aware of what the current state of the state is.

We look forward to continuing conversations with you, this Committee, and this entire body to look for dollars in education because every dollar put into education helps us recruit and retain our staff. If there are better options and better solutions out there, we are certainly open to listening to them and being supportive of them moving forward.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Are there any other questions? [There were none.] I will ask you to step back and we will invite to the table those who would like to testify in support of Assembly Bill 47. You can fill in the chairs here in Carson City and in Las Vegas.

Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

On behalf of the superintendents, we support A.B. 47.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Is there anyone else who would like to testify in support of A.B. 47? [There was no one.] We will move to opposition. If there is anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas who would like to testify in opposition, I invite you to the table.

Dawn Etcheverry, President, Nevada State Education Association:

While the Nevada State Education Association has not taken an official position on this bill, I must come to the table and question why our education support professionals were not included as we also need to recruit, retain, and train the people who make our schools work and run every day.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Is there anyone else who would like to testify in opposition to A.B. 47? [There was no one.] We will close the comments for opposition and move to neutral. Is there anyone who would like to testify in neutral on A.B. 47? [There was no one.] We will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 47, and we will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 67.

Assembly Bill 67: Establishes the Nevada Baby Bonds Program. (BDR 18-477)

Zach Conine, State Treasurer, Office of the State Treasurer:

Assembly Bill 67 represents the largest proposed investment in helping to combat generational poverty in our state's history. By establishing a Nevada Baby Bonds Program similar to what is being done in other states like Connecticut, California, and Washington—it is currently being proposed in 17 other states around the country—we can start to change the way we think about investing in programs that are designed to promote economic mobility.

Nevada currently ranks 23rd in the nation for the worst rates of childhood poverty. We also currently have over 328,000 children covered by Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP. It is important to note that while vital programs like Medicaid, Unemployment Insurance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants & Children and others help to provide a social safety net for people when they need help, these programs also have massive upfront and ongoing costs to our state budget. These costs only continue to increase as children move from childhood to adult, unable to escape the cycle of generational poverty.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Kaiser Family Foundation, the State of Nevada spends over \$777 million on Medicaid services for children each year, which amounts to about \$2,108 per child, per year. If these children remain on Medicaid as they reach adulthood, that number increases significantly to \$4,097 per person, per year. For each person who is unable to move out of the Medicaid program in their lifetime, we can expect to pay \$192,559 on health care costs alone per person until they reach the age of 65.

We see similar investments through food assistance that is provided to low-income households through SNAP. In fiscal year 2024, over 505,000 Nevadans received SNAP benefits, with 62 percent of those families having children. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, while they are immensely helpful to families, cost the state of Nevada about \$45 million a month, or \$540 million each year. To put it simply, it costs too much money to deal with the prolonged effects of generational poverty within our state. That is why finding ways to address it is not just the right thing to do, it is the fiscally responsible thing to do.

Moreover, it is the only way we can continue to keep our taxes low while preserving the integrity of the state budget going forward. In a 2018 study, researchers from the University of Washington quantified the cost of childhood poverty in the United States at \$970 billion annually, or about 5.4 percent of GDP [Gross Domestic Product] through increased health care costs, reduced economic productivity, increased costs to address homelessness, and increased rates of crime. These researchers also found that for every dollar that is spent on reducing generational poverty we can save nearly \$7 with respect to the overall economic cost of poverty. That is what this bill does. A baby bond is a modest investment in low-income children from communities across our state who need a boost to get themselves on the path to higher education, homeownership, and entrepreneurship. From the time a baby

bond is created, that modest investment can grow, providing new adults with access to the financial tools they need to grow and thrive. I recognize that 18-year-olds sometimes do not make the best financial decisions. That is why we have worked to make sure that there are adequate guardrails in place to ensure that the dollars go to the right people and that funds can only be used for things we know move the needle on reducing generational poverty.

As I mentioned before, I think this is a pretty big idea, and that is why I am happy to be in front of the Committee talking about it. I think we have structured it in a way that helps the greatest number of people with the lowest fiscal impact to Nevada taxpayers. Over the remaining days of the session, I am hopeful we can work together to find ways to save our state money and lift as many people out of poverty as we can. With that, Madam Chair, I can briefly walk you through the fiscal-related sections of the bill if you would like or pause for questions.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

If you can walk us through the bill, that would be great.

Treasurer Conine:

Section 8 of the bill establishes the Nevada Baby Bonds Program and houses it within the State Treasury. To be eligible to receive a baby bond, a child must be born in Nevada on or after January 1, 2026, and their birth must be covered by Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. In section 9, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) must notify the Treasurer's Office upon the birth of the designated beneficiary. Once DHHS notifies our Office, we will then invest \$3,200 in the trust fund on behalf of the child; these funds will be invested over the life of the child until they reach age 18. Using a conservative investment benchmark of about 6.9 percent, which is what the state of Connecticut is using for their program, those assets will grow to about \$10,635 over 18 years. However, if we peg the investment benchmark—what we have seen in the Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System—we could see interest earnings of around 8.5 percent. That would bring the assets in the child's baby bond to around \$13,895.

Pursuant to section 9, an eligible designated beneficiary, who has a baby bond established in their name, may submit a claim to the treasury once that individual turns 18, and they have up until age 30 to claim those funds. Additionally, the individual will have to show they have been a resident of the state of Nevada for the preceding 12 months. Once an individual makes a claim to the state, they would be eligible to utilize those funds for the following purposes: postsecondary education, including vocational education and apprenticeship readiness programs; for the purchase of a home; to start a business; to purchase a business; or to invest in financial assets or personal capital that helps the individual build wealth. To ensure that these dollars go to the right place, all funds within a baby bond would be distributed to the relevant third party for the intended purpose, and the individual would not be sent a check from the state. Additionally, in order to receive any funds available through a baby bond, an individual would be required to have successfully completed a course in financial literacy that has a focus on consumer protection.

In the treasury, we have prepared historical and projection models to understand the cost of this program by looking at the annual number of births in state and the number of births covered by Medicaid. Roughly 42 percent of all births in Nevada are covered by Medicaid today, which would account for roughly 13,200 children we estimate would be eligible for the program each year. If we are to fund every single eligible child, that would cost the state upwards of \$40 million a year, which would be a major financial commitment for the state, and that does not really seem right for the budget at this time. That is why in section 16, you can see a proposed appropriation of \$5 million from the State General Fund to establish the cost of establishing baby bonds for children born over the next two years. We recognize this is a big idea; we will need to start slowly if we are going to launch a program like this. That is why we are committed to finding ways to start this program in order to cover roughly 1,500 children over the next biennium.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

There was a baby bonds bill that was presented during the last legislative session. Can you tell us what the significant differences are between that bill and the one that we are seeing today?

Erik Jimenez, Chief Policy Deputy, Office of the State Treasurer:

This bill is very similar to the bill that you all heard in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee after dark, near the end of the last legislative session. This is an identical bill to what was passed out of the Assembly and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee last session with the reduced appropriation.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

How many other states have a baby bonds program or something similar to this?

Erik Jimenez:

Three states currently have established baby bonds programs, and we are learning a lot from those states. Seventeen other states currently have them under consideration.

Assemblymember Torres-Fossett:

I have a question in regard to section 10, subsection 2, on page 5 of the bill. I noticed that it stated they can request contact information from any designated beneficiary; how does this address the concerns of private information being shared between inter agencies, and whether or not a person would like that information to be shared? They may not want to; will they be notified first that this information will be shared, or how does that look? Is there already some type of disclosure they sign when they are interacting with those agencies that allows for the sharing of information between interstate agencies?

Erik Jimenez:

There are provisions of this bill that require the information of designated beneficiaries and their families to remain confidential. Obviously, there will need to be some data sharing between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Treasurer's Office to make sure we identify the right folks. I think the section that you were referring to in section 10,

subsection 2, is really just once someone has a baby bond established in their name, we do think it is important for that child to know that the baby bond exists for them. That family would receive an annual communication that would say how much was deposited on their behalf and what the balance has grown to. I think that is really important, and we see this in our college savings work that we do with a variety of different programs. Once a child knows there are dollars set aside for them, we have empirical data to suggest that the child is more likely to do something and get out of a bad situation. We think it is really important that they can see those assets grow. Just like when students know they have the Millennium Scholarship or other things being saved for them, they can make different choices.

Assemblymember Backus:

I really like this program; I can see where it is fortuitous looking forward to getting future residents out of generational poverty. I do not know if there is going to be a fiscal note—but one thing I was thinking that could be creative, because I saw—and I do like this aspect of the bill—where you are sending annual reports to the family; I think it is a conversation families can have around financial literacy and savings and watching that growth. I do not know if that is going to create or require additional assistance in the Treasurer's Office. I know this would not go into effect until January 1, 2026, which still falls within the biennium that we are going to be addressing, and I did not know if there was a fiscal note on that aspect or what the needs of the Treasurer's Office would be to accomplish all those tasks.

Erik Jimenez:

We do have a small fiscal note that is on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS). It is de minimis. Additionally, the bill caps administrative costs because we are hopeful this will be a program that could continue and live on with this Treasurer's Office and another Treasurer in the future. It does cap those administrative costs to five percent of the total assets that are appropriated within the fund. I think it is important that we do have dollars to do those communications, but I also think it is equally important that we put the vast majority of the corpus of these dollars directly to be invested in kids who need help.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

It should be on NELIS. It looks like in fiscal year (FY) 2026 it would be about \$64,000, and in FY 2027 it is \$42,000; then over the future biennium is \$84,000.

Assemblymember Yeager:

The question I have is about the notification of the annual statement that is going to go out. I noticed at the end of section 10, it talks about the Treasurer requesting contact information from any state agency, but I imagine you are going to have a situation where a lot of folks leave the state; they are born here but they do not stay here. Do you envision trying to notify folks who still live here or trying to give those statements to folks who are out of state?

The way I read the bill, even if they are out of state, as long as they come back and establish residency for 12 months, before they turn 30, they could still tap into that money. I am not sure if someone left the state but then knew if they came back and lived here, they would

have access to that money; maybe that would be an incentive for them to come back. I am curious about how you are going to try to get those statements out to folks who leave Nevada.

Erik Jimenez:

We have wrestled with this bill on how to be thoughtful and flexible; people have different life circumstances. Obviously, we want to be supporting Nevada residents; we know people move; we have a pretty transient state. You are correct in that we have structured this so that if someone comes back for a period of 12 months, they could claim the baby bond.

I think that is a conversation we will need to have, and there is some regulatory authority in this bill, as well, on what those statements look like. I think we, as an office, would love to make sure we are notifying as many families as possible, but I think when people start moving out of state, that becomes a little bit more challenging. We are willing to work with you on how we could make that happen, but I think that is something we are going to have to deal with in the regulations.

Assemblymember Yeager:

I certainly do not want to add anything to the bill, but if it were to pass, I wonder if, through the regulatory process, in addition to sending a statement, there could be an online portal where somebody could log in. I would think if someone has an email address, even if it is the parents, it is easier to notify them over email that the statement is available. I do not know what that would look like in terms of back-end infrastructure and cost, but just something to consider moving forward. I think the paper statement is good, but if there was a way someone could log in online, I think that would be helpful.

Treasurer Conine:

We already do that a little bit with College Kickstart and all of our 529 Plans. I think that would be an easy thing to add to the execution. Thanks for the idea.

Assemblymember O'Neill:

Hypothetically speaking, a child is part of the fund and either the parents or the child strike it rich—they hit the lottery for a couple million or they develop a new Tesla type of vehicle—are they still eligible to collect during that time period?

Erik Jimenez:

I try not to deal with a lot of hypothetical situations, but under the provisions of this bill, if a child is born under Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program, they are eligible and would have a baby bond established in their name throughout the life cycle. They could then claim that when they turn 18, up to age 30. I think the statistical likelihood of someone living in poverty is very unlikely to win the lottery, but if for some reason they did, there would be a baby bond established in their name.

Assemblymember O'Neill:

I do not agree that they should still get the money, but I appreciate the answer.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

In reference to Assemblymember O'Neill's question, if someone did strike it rich, they may not choose to take the money that was in the Baby Bonds Program, but if they did choose to take it and gift it to someone else who had not hit the lottery and hit it big, could they do that?

Erik Jiminez:

I think that would be something we would be willing to explore. We hesitate to put income caps on these types of things. We are happy to have any conversation on eligibility because if there is a better idea we are happy to do it. We could clarify this through the regulatory process; if someone wanted to gift theirs to another child in need, let us allow them to do that. Additionally, if someone is in a position where they do not need to claim these dollars because they did strike it rich, the dollars could stay within the trust fund and then could continue to be invested for future generations of kids.

Assemblymember Dickman:

I am wondering when they claim this money, would it be subject to income tax?

Erik Jiminez:

The one thing I could say with certainty is that there is a provision of this bill that directs when a child claims these dollars, they do not have control until they are 18 through age 30; those dollars do not affect their eligibility for Medicaid, student loan programs, and things like that.

We have spent a lot of time through our health care student loan repayment program—that we worked on with Assemblymember Koenig and Assemblymember Hafen—on federal income tax eligibility and exemptions. I would have to get a more certain answer for you, but they may be subject to federal income tax on this.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I am not seeing any other questions. I will invite anyone who is here to testify in support of Assembly Bill 67 to go ahead and fill in the chairs both here in Carson City and in Las Vegas. We will start in Carson City and then we will go down to Las Vegas.

Carissa Pearce, Government Affairs Manager, Children's Advocacy Alliance:

The Children's Advocacy Alliance is an independent voice for Nevada's children, advancing systematic change in the areas of early childhood education, child welfare, and children's health to ensure that every child in Nevada thrives. I am here to express our strong support of A.B. 67 to establish the Nevada Baby Bonds Program. This program is an innovative prevention-oriented approach to break the cycle of poverty for tens of thousands of children in Nevada.

According to Race for Results, a data tool used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that reports on the likelihood of children moving from poverty to middle class standing, children in Nevada have among the smallest chances of transitioning when compared to other states. This means that Nevada's children who are born into poverty will likely live their entire lives and die, not making much more than their parents.

Currently, over 40 percent of births in Nevada are funded by Medicaid, meaning that these children are being born into families with extremely low incomes. These children will likely never have money set aside for them by their parents, grandparents, caregivers, or other family members in the way that many children receive income.

This bill gives children born into poverty the opportunity and support they need to launch and establish successful futures by creating a financial foundation that can be used to support the youth in pursuing higher education opportunities, purchasing a home, starting a business, or investing in other personal capital, all of which may never be considered by the individual or be considered possible otherwise. I would ask you to consider these children not as numbers that create Medicaid statistics, but as the kids you see playing together at school, working on science projects, and pursuing their passions for sports and musical theater; kids who grow into young adults shackled by a system built to keep them in poverty. Our hope is that these children will be the last in their family to need the baby bond as they are given the tools and opportunities to thrive.

Wendy Colborne, representing Building and Construction Trades Council of Northern Nevada:

We represent over 6,000 skilled trade workers in Northern Nevada and over 900 apprentices. These include electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, iron workers, laborers, and more essential members of our construction workforce. We strongly appreciate that Treasurer Conine has included apprenticeships and preapprenticeships in this bill, and we support it.

We do not charge tuition for those programs, but there are a lot of ancillary costs included that can be an obstacle to entry, including boots, tools, book fees, and so on. Many people coming into our program are coming out of poverty, and these careers are truly transformative for them. These programs can lift an entire family of three or four out of poverty in six months. This bill helps create a long-term pipeline for workers in the skilled trades, reducing impact on state welfare programs as they give those Nevadans a hand up. We strongly support this bill, and we encourage you to do likewise.

Caroline Mello Roberson, representing Planned Parenthood Votes Nevada:

This is my fifth session lobbying, and honestly, there are too few of bills like this that actually invest in Nevada families. I really applaud the attempt of the Treasurer to do this for the second time. I know the fiscal reality of our state, but that said, Nevada families absolutely will benefit from this program. We believe in reproductive freedom, and reproductive freedom includes the ability to have children and to be supported to do that. We would be proud and urge this body to support this.

Jimmy Lau, representing Dignity Health – St. Rose Dominican:

St. Rose Dominican is a hospital system down in Las Vegas with seven acute care facilities, and it is a mission-driven system. Part of that mission is advocating for policies that support social determinants of health and better outcomes for all Nevadans. We are happy to be here in support today.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I do not see anyone else here in Carson City. We will go to Las Vegas.

Samantha Barnes, representing Nevada Bankers Association:

I am here in support of Assembly Bill 67. Nevada has shown a commitment to financial literacy education for grade school and high school students by passing legislation requiring grade-appropriate coursework in Nevada schools, informing the Nevada Advisory Council for Financial Literacy. The Nevada Bankers Association has been an advocate for these efforts and continues to support efforts to create sustainable financial stability for Nevadans. The Baby Bonds Program would infuse financial resources at a critical junction in a young adult's life. These funds would offer a new adult the ability to capitalize on what they have learned about financial stability, and responsibility, a way to use what they know about setting goals, and working in a meaningful direction to secure a better future that could include pursuing a higher level of education, buying a home, opening a business, or making an investment that could have a positive financial impact.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I do not see anyone else in Las Vegas. Do we have anyone else who would like to testify in support of A.B. 67?

Ashley Dodson, representing National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Las Vegas Chapter 1111:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Las Vegas Chapter 1111 would like to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 67, which seeks to establish the Nevada Baby Bonds Program. This initiative is a transformative policy tool aimed at addressing the racial wealth gap and fostering economic equity for Nevada's most underserved children. By investing in the financial future of low-income newborns, A.B. 67 presents a critical opportunity to break cycles of generational poverty and create long-term economic stability for historically marginalized communities. As an advocate for racial and economic justice, the NAACP recognizes the urgent need for policies that dismantle systemic barriers to wealth accumulation. The racial wealth gap in America has been perpetuated by centuries of inequitable access to resources, home ownership, education, and entrepreneurship. The Nevada Baby Bonds Program directly tackles these disparities by providing eligible children with a \$3,200 initial investment which can be accessed in young adulthood to pursue higher education, ownership, business ventures, and other wealth-building opportunities. This bill is not just a policy, it is an investment in Nevada's future. Studies from states that have implemented similar programs demonstrate the powerful impact in reducing initiatives that align with our mission to advance equity, economic justice, and opportunity for all.

On a personal note, I can attest to the power of baby bonds. As a child growing up in California, I was fortunate to receive a similar investment from close family members and my godmother as a symbol of financial blessing and stability through my future. This early investment, though modest, became a foundation to my financial security and literacy. We urge the legislators to pass A.B. 67; ensure its full funding and implementation. We also encourage all community leaders and stakeholders to rally behind this initiative [[Exhibit D](#)].

Paul Catha, Political Director, Culinary Workers Union Local 226:

I would like to echo the comments of the other supporters of the bill and urge the Committee to support and pass A.B. 67.

Manuel Santamaria, representing Battle Born Progress:

I am here today in support of A.B. 67. I am also here as a father of three who, like all parents, wants the very best for my children. Everybody born in Nevada deserves a fair shot at a bright future no matter their family's financial situation. For too many, the obstacles of poverty begin at birth, limiting opportunities before they can even take the first step.

This bill is about giving our most vulnerable children a fighting chance. By setting aside \$3,200 for each eligible child, we are planting a seed for their future; one that can grow into education, stable housing, or the chance to build something of their own. More than just money, it is hope, security, and the promise that no child will be left behind simply because of their circumstances at birth.

As parents, we teach our children to dream big, but let us ensure they have the tools to turn those dreams into reality. I urge you to support this bill and invest in the future where every Nevada child has a chance to thrive. Personally speaking, I am a veteran—I mentioned I have three children; I make enough to support my family and live okay, but going forward, I do not have enough to save for them to have something in the future of their own. A bill like this would be very beneficial to someone like myself [[Exhibit E](#)].

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We will move to opposition. If there is anyone here who would like to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 67, I invite you to the tables here in Carson City and in Las Vegas.

Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Families for Freedom:

Watch out, looks like the government is going after our wallets again. Everybody wants to help out with low-income families. We believe that taxpayers already do just that. We provide millions of dollars for the needs of families in the way of money, programs, food, shelter, medical help, donations, and much more. While A.B. 67 is a nice idea, Nevada families all around the state are trying to keep up with the higher prices for our family's daily needs, while trying to save money for our own children's college careers. We as a state should be trying to encourage self-sufficiency, not dependency. We should be giving a hand up, not a handout. Giving more of the taxpayer's money for entitlements is not good for anyone's family. We should be focusing on job creation, adult education, not more free

money, because we all know nothing is free; someone has to pay, and it usually means the taxpayer. The solution would be to have the program funded with donations and grants, et cetera because we, the taxpayers, say no. Vote no on A.B. 67.

Joshua Skaggs, Legislative Affairs Director, Nevada Republican Party:

I am here today in opposition to A.B. 67. Nevada State Treasurer Zach Conine wants to start a trust fund using a \$3,200 bond for babies who are covered by Medicaid when they are born. The State Treasurer expects the bond to grow to between \$10,000 to \$13,000 by the time the baby turns 18. Treasurer Conine said these funds could be used for starting a business or buying a home. In America and Nevada, we love all the babies born no matter the circumstances in which they were born into; however, redistributing the wealth using taxpayer money to end generational poverty is not a viable solution, given Nevada's budget is already strained trying to fix a broken education system. Instead, we should foster an environment of upward mobility through education and a strong economy with an unlimited supply of opportunities to allow every baby born to achieve the American dream. Assembly Bill 67 is simply another cash grab government handout at the working family's expense to make liberal policymakers feel like they are helping those in need. They are only helping themselves by creating yet another system that could be contaminated with waste, fraud, and abuse. For these reasons, the Nevada GOP opposes A.B. 67 [[Exhibit F](#)].

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Is there anyone else who would like to testify in opposition to A.B. 67? [There was no one.] We will move to neutral. Is there anyone who would like to testify in the position of neutral on A.B. 67?

Eric Jeng, Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

I would like to see if I can be categorized as a support instead neutral.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Go ahead. We will move this testimony to the support position.

Eric Jeng:

We want to thank Treasurer Conine's proposal for baby bonds as a much needed and equitable way to address the generational poverty and wealth gap of Nevada babies enrolled in Medicaid at the time of birth. Asian and Pacific Islander have a disproportionately low number reported, hovering around 4 to 5 percent. We believe it is due to community members being uninsured or underinsured and thus under the true scale of under resourced families of human infants. We believe that we have the widest income disparity gap among any ethnic and racial group nationally. With additional burdens such as language barriers, it is critical to set up working families for success, and investment programs such as baby bonds is a great step in ensuring our state prioritizes reaching equity and sustainability, while providing parents access to financial resources. Financial education will be a huge win for our working families and for the community. Let the most powerful force in the universe—compound interest—do its work. Thank you and I urge your support for A.B. 67.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Going back to the neutral position. Is there anyone who would like to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Does the Treasurer or staff want to come back to make any closing remarks?

Treasurer Conine:

I wanted to say thank you both to you and the Committee for hearing the bill and for the insightful questions, and to all the folks who came into the room or testified in support. Also, I wanted to say thank you to the testimony in opposition for making our point. This program is about giving people a hand up, not a handout. This program is about taking what is a commitment that we have all made to pay for individuals who are less fortunate to get through life and giving them an opportunity to be a taxpaying member of the solution. This is a program that literally solves the thing that I feel some folks are constantly railing against. I am just deeply grateful to the opposition for proving us correct.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 67, and we will move to the next bill on our agenda, which will be Assembly Bill 108.

Assembly Bill 108: Makes an appropriation to the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program Account. (BDR S-875)

Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui, Assembly District No. 41:

I am here to present Assembly Bill 108. The Nevada Outdoor Recreation Education program, established in 2019, has been instrumental in offering our youth meaningful experiences in nature. I want to thank Speaker Yeager for introducing Assembly Bill 331 of the 80th Session in 2019 that created the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program to give our underserved Nevada students the opportunity to experience Nevada's great outdoors, while promoting education and health.

This program aims to enhance academic achievement and personal wellness while instilling a deep appreciation for our public lands. Research consistently shows that outdoor learning environments contribute significantly to students' mental health; engaging with nature has been linked to increased prosocial behavior, reduced hyperactivity, and decreased mental health struggles. Outdoor education fosters improved self-esteem and confidence, providing students with the tools to navigate life's challenges more effectively. In Nevada, programs have received grants to support outdoor education initiatives ranging from urban beekeeping to camping experiences. These programs aim to foster a connection to Nevada's natural landscapes. By funding the Nevada Outdoor Recreation Education Program through A.B. 108, we are investing in the development of our students.

Madam Chair, I would like to turn it over to my copresenter, Speaker Steve Yeager, and then to Christi Cabrera with the Nevada Conservation League for more remarks.

Assemblymember Steve Yeager, Assembly District No. 9:

It is an honor to make some brief remarks in support of Assembly Bill 108. This morning, I want to thank the Majority Leader for inviting me to sign on to this piece of legislation. This weekend we were out on a hike at Red Rock, at the White Rock Loop, and I will tell you, it did wonders for my mental health, which is always good after a long week at the Legislature. I thought it was very fitting that we were presenting this bill today.

As the Majority Leader mentioned, in 2019 I was honored to sponsor A.B. 331 of the 80th Session to create what I called, the no child left inside grant program, and then formally became known as the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program. I liked the original name better, but I understand that that is not how it was codified. Unfortunately, we were not able to appropriate any money to the program when it was created in 2019; then COVID-19 hit and times were obviously very tough financially for the state. I was able to raise a little over \$2,000 for the program through a fundraiser, but that really was not enough to get the ball rolling. Then came Assembly Bill 128 of the 82nd Session, sponsored by our Majority Leader, that allocated \$250,000 to the program in each fiscal year. That bill was nearly unanimous; only former Assemblymember Claire Thomas inexplicably voted no on that appropriation. That appropriated \$500,000 to the program over the biennium.

You are going to hear there were \$1.4 million in asks in the first round of appropriations alone. As you will hear a little bit later, and see on the exhibits loaded in Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) [[Exhibit G](#), [Exhibit H](#), and [Exhibit I](#)], the program is working and getting kids all across the Silver State outside to enjoy the great outdoors. The bill from 2019, creating the program, did not have a single no vote, and as I said, the bill funding it last session was nearly unanimous; we just had one dissenter.

Outdoor recreation truly does transcend political affiliation, and for good reason; there are real health benefits to getting outside, especially for our youth who are so often tethered to devices, phones, and tablets. I am proud to be back here this morning asking for more funding so that more kids can get outside and enjoy all Nevada has to offer. Please support Assembly Bill 108.

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League:

I want to thank the Committee for their time today. I also want to thank Speaker Yeager and Majority Leader Jauregui for being consistent advocates for getting kids outside. As you have heard, the Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant program, housed under the Division of Outdoor Recreation, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, provides underserved youth with high quality outdoor education and recreation opportunities. During the 2023 Legislative Session, Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation (NOER) received state funding for the very first time in this program's history, investing \$500,000 over a two-year period.

While advocating for funding last legislative session, the Division of Outdoor Recreation predicted the level of funding would be able to fund approximately 13 grantees and around 2,400 youth each year. They have far exceeded those expectations, reaching nearly

11,000 kids with 26,000 hours spent outside in 2024 alone. Over the biennium, NOER will have funded 44 projects in every single county in the state. You can find the full list of projects for both 2024 and 2025 on NELIS, as well as the full 2024 impact report. I know we are all looking forward to seeing what they do in 2025.

The Nevada Conservation League has reached out to many of the newer awardees to hear how this funding has impacted their work. We heard stories about a program supporting underserved girls and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) who are able to take part in an outdoor education camp for science and outdoor learning. Another awardee took students from Title 1 schools in Clark County on field trips to Red Rock Canyon; 1,400 students were estimated to experience Red Rock Canyon, many for the very first time. Another program provided equine therapy to children in foster care and kids with disabilities. Several others created opportunities for cultural revitalization and stewardship events for indigenous youth. We heard from teachers about students learning to leave no trace and returning from a trip outdoors rejuvenated, happy, and ready to learn.

Every story, while unique, had an underlying message—these programs positively changed the lives for every child they touched and would not have happened without the funding from NOER. We are grateful to have played a role in securing funding for the very first time and are excited to be here today to advocate for continued funding. Assembly Bill 108 will make a much needed \$1 million appropriation to this program for the biennium. Additionally, I would like to point to a letter on NELIS from 33 organizations, businesses, and local governments from all across the state, supporting this bill [[Exhibit J](#)]. I urge you all to think about the first time you saw the glistening waters of Lake Tahoe, the stunning shades of red in Valley of Fire, or the majestic peaks of the Ruby Mountains. These moments have brought an irreplaceable sense of joy to me and so many other Nevadans and have instilled in us a reason to care about the natural areas around us; our students deserve the same opportunity. We urge the members of the Committee to support A.B. 108.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

I did want to highlight some of the programs in counties that have benefited from this program. There is an exhibit on NELIS, but I wanted to make sure to put these on the record because this is a program that has benefited Nevada students statewide. Nevada outdoor school created outdoor programs that benefited Pershing County, Humboldt County, Lander County, Elko County, Eureka County, and White Pine County. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association took students backpacking on a camping trip that benefited Washoe County, Carson City, and Douglas County. The River Wranglers took students on a Carson watershed field days for students that benefited Douglas County, Storey County, Lyon County, Carson City, and Churchill County. St. Jude's Ranch for children took kids and their siblings in foster care on a camping trip that benefited Clark County. Sierra Nevada Journeys took girls in STEM on a camping event—girls in Title 1 programs that benefited students statewide. This is really a program that benefits every single student throughout our state. Thank you, Madam Chair, and we are ready for questions.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We have some amazing outdoor venues in our state; it is a beautiful state. You can go from the desert to the mountains, from skiing, to hiking. I hope we have the funding at the end of the session to apply to this bill. Do members have any questions?

Assemblymember Watts:

I want to ask about some of the initiatives that this funding went to support. I appreciate some of those being outlined and I know there are some incredible programs going on. I am a big fan of Great Basin National Park; I know their foundation has also gotten support and is helping bring students both from the Washoe County area as well as the Clark County area out to see our state's only national park.

As someone who got out to go skiing, I can attest to the positive influence that getting outdoors makes, and I think the more opportunities we have to get students out there, the better. I remember going on a field trip to Red Rock in fourth grade, and it made a huge difference. The more we can do to support this the better.

Assemblymember Anderson:

It is such a wonderful bill. I am not sure if this is something that can be answered or not, but of the money that is appropriated, does it all go towards helping with these activities? Is any of it used for advertising so that other people are aware of it, or is that done more through the agency?

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson:

I believe 100 percent goes to funding the program and the Division of Outdoor Recreation takes over some of the administrative costs.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Are there any other questions? [There were none.] We will invite to the table in Carson City and in Las Vegas, anyone who came to testify in support of Assembly Bill 108.

Tom Clark, representing Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition:

The Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition is very much in support of this appropriation. These programs have gone bonkers throughout the state. Answering Assemblymember Anderson's question; advertising really is not a problem. As you could tell the programs are very, very popular. We wish we had more and more resources to make these programs happen. I will not beleaguer you with all of the things that were previously stated; they are right on spot, and we need to continue these programs.

Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

I will say ditto to Tom's comments.

Dawn Etcheverry, President, Nevada State Education Association:

We are standing in support of A.B. 108. The Nevada State Education Association also supported Assembly Bill 385 of the 79th Session in 2017, giving all fifth graders access to state parks and then supported A.B. 331 of the 80th Session in 2019, creating this grant program. The grant program has been very successful with our students and getting them out.

Jimmy Lau, representing Western Resource Advocates:

Western Resource Advocates is in strong support of A.B. 108. During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program received \$500,000 in funding. However, as has been stated, there were over \$2.5 million in requests. Clearly, this program is in high demand, and we know that the outcomes that are related to it are significant. Studies show that children who have more outdoor experiences have better educational outcomes and experience less stress and anxiety. This bill is an investment in the wellbeing and success of Nevada's children. We would like to thank the Majority Leader and the Speaker for leading this important investment. A full letter of support has been submitted to NELIS and we would urge the Committee to support this appropriation.

Tailor Purciel, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Walker Basin Conservancy:

I am honored to speak in support of continued funding for the Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation program under the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation. I wanted to give a little background—on our first outing we brought 42 local students out to the Walker River State Recreation Area, which is just outside of Yerington. Despite the close proximity to Yerington and the recreation area being open for just under five years, only 25 percent had attended the park and less than 10 percent knew what watershed they lived in.

In our first year of NOER funding, we reached 508 youth across the Walker Basin, which includes the communities of Hawthorne, Schurz, Yerington, and Smith Valley. With this support, we developed a locally-focused, relevant curriculum in collaboration with expert contractors, ensuring our program is both engaging and tailored to Nevada, and specifically the Walker Basin.

The initial \$25,000 allocation from NOER has since been leveraged to grow our program into a sustainable year-round initiative with an annual budget now exceeding \$100,000. This growth has been made possible through individual contributions, nonprofit partnerships, and private foundation funding, allowing us to expand staffing and reach more students than ever before. Beyond the 508 youth engaged directly through NOER funding programming, we have provided outdoor and environmental education to a total of 1,024 Nevada youth in 2024. This includes 607 students who participated in an outdoor setting, including 8 field trips and 7 in-class presentations. Many of these opportunities were made possible by the original foundational allocation from the NOER grant. This program is working; rural Nevada teachers want it for their classroom, and students want it. They are able to learn through hands-on exploration and discovery. With your continued support we can further expand these critical outdoor learning experiences, and we can inspire the next generation of stewards and foster a deeper sense of pride in Nevada's landscapes and communities [[Exhibit K](#)].

Sean Hill, CEO, Sierra Nevada Journeys:

I just want to thank you upfront for indulging us; my son has a prepared statement and if it is ok with you all, I think this is going to be a really high-quality lesson in civics today, worthy of him missing a day of school.

I am going to go first. I am the CEO of Sierra Nevada Journeys, a nonprofit dedicated to outdoor science-based education for youth across northern Nevada and California. I also serve as commissioner on the Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission. I am here in strong support of A.B. 108, which will break down financial and logistical barriers preventing underserved youth from accessing outdoor education.

Each year we serve thousands of students with a focus on Title 1 schools and communities historically excluded from outdoor experiences. For many, our programs are their first opportunity to explore nature, engage in hands-on science learning, and develop critical life skills like teamwork, resilience, and leadership.

This is not just about education; it is also about Nevada's economic future. Nevada is growing rapidly in clean energy, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing industries that need a strong STEM workforce. Early hands-on STEM engagement builds curiosity, confidence, and essential life skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration, all of which employers seek. Our Girls in STEM program, for example, gives young women the confidence to pursue STEM careers and connect with female role models in science and engineering. Without these opportunities, too many students, especially from underserved backgrounds and underrepresented backgrounds, will be left behind in the industries shaping Nevada's future.

I just wanted to share some pre- and post-survey findings that we found. My co-author on a chapter on the Girls in STEM program—those participants' attitudes and confidence towards STEM education and careers before and after the program—there was increased awareness of STEM careers, greater comfort in teamwork, and improved confidence in STEM learning. We have strong data around this. Outdoor STEM education leads to higher academic performance, better mental health, and stronger social emotional skills, and prepares students for high-paying, high-demand jobs in Nevada's technology-driven economy [[Exhibit L](#)]. With that, I am going to kick it over to Cedar Gobbs-Hill, who has a prepared statement.

Cedar Gobbs-Hill, Private Citizen:

Hi guys; thank you for letting Sierra Nevada Journeys speak today. I decided to go to the Legislature because my teacher spoke last week and I wanted to support my dad's work of increasing outdoor education because when you are outdoors, you get to experience learning instead of sitting in a classroom, doing computer work or working in a math book. That is not very interesting.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Before we go to the next speaker—Cedar, how old are you?

Cedar Gobbs-Hill:

I am ten years old.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Thank you so much for joining us today.

Jafeth Sanchez, representing Sierra Nevada Journeys; and Private Citizen:

I am here speaking on my personal behalf as a citizen and also in partnership and on behalf of our work with Sierra Nevada Journeys. We have had many partnerships including that chapter that he mentioned on supporting and evaluating the work of Sierra Nevada Journeys, such as the Girls in STEM program.

I have been an educator for over 20 years in various landscapes—K-12 and higher education—and I support A.B. 108. Scholars have long identified that out-of-school time STEM programs, such as the work that A.B. 108 is supporting, have long shown to better support those from underrepresented groups and to increase areas in STEM and persistence in careers that are long term, specifically in STEM, as I mentioned. These are especially essential with children in particular because they spend 80 percent of their time outside of K-12 classrooms. By the time students reach sixth grade, students from middle-income families have actually been exposed to over 6,000 hours more than those from less-privileged family backgrounds. That is essentially up to 5 years of educational schooling in that difference of exposure. Over the last 2 decades, I have collaborated with leaders like CEO Sean Hill of Sierra Nevada Journeys to better support these opportunities. Outdoor programming helps to uniquely position students to get the mentoring, the outdoor experiences, and the educational support needed to amplify those experiences. Assembly Bill 108 aligns with the work, and I strongly ask for your support.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I am not seeing anyone at the table in Las Vegas. Do we have anyone else who would like to testify in support of Assembly Bill 108?

Eric Jeng, Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

I am here advocating for the fast growing Asian and Pacific Islander Nevadans. We have signed the support letter. I wanted to say ditto and thank you.

Shelbie Swartz, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress:

I am here to strongly support Assembly Bill 108. Outdoor education is more than just play. It builds confidence, resilience, and a deep appreciation for nature. I am going to stop there and say ditto to everything else the other supporters of the bill have said [[Exhibit M](#)].

Leann McAllister, Executive Director, Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

As you have heard today, there is significant scientific evidence that playing outside improves health, and children love it. Outdoor play is linked to health, lower stress, and greater mental well-being among children, for the rest of their lives. The return on our

investment is very high. Pediatricians are the most extensively educated providers of pediatric care. My role is to connect physician leaders at the Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to you, to ensure that you are aware of the most recent evidence-based pediatric care thinking available as you make critical funding decisions for our state.

[[Exhibit N](#) and [Exhibit O](#) were submitted but not discussed and will be part of the record of this hearing.]

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We will move to opposition. Is there anyone who would like to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 108? [There was no one.] Is there anyone who would like to provide testimony in the neutral position on Assembly Bill 108? [There was no one.] With that, I will invite the sponsors of the bill back to the table with any closing remarks.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

I encourage you to support Assembly Bill 108. We have learned that getting outdoors supports mental health and it supports academic success. If you have not had the opportunity to see the exhibits—please—the pictures of the kids outdoors is great and reading the quotes for what it means. Not only does it promote mental health and academic success, but it also allows them to learn how to work with each other. One of the sixth-grade students said: I learned that if you talk to others, you get to learn about them and become friends.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 108, and we will move to our last bill on today's agenda, which is Assembly Bill 268.

Assembly Bill 268: Makes an appropriation to the State Department of Agriculture for universal free breakfast and lunch for Nevada pupils. (BDR S-340)

Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui, Assembly District No. 41:

I am proud to be here today to present Assembly Bill 268. This is the first hearing Assembly Bill 268 is getting; therefore, I want to go into some in-depth remarks, Madam Chair, if that is okay. Assembly Bill 268 seeks to provide universal free breakfast and lunch to every student in Nevada's public schools. This initiative is not merely about feeding our children, it is about nurturing their potential, ensuring their well-being, and setting them up for success, both academically and personally. Our current system leaves kids hungry. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) current free or reduced-price meal program qualifications do not meet the needs of struggling families. Under the current regulations, a single parent with two children making \$43,000 annually makes too much money to qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch, meaning not only do they not qualify for a free lunch, they also do not qualify for a reduced-price lunch.

With food prices soaring and the cost of living on the rise, families are struggling to make ends meet. The rising cost of living and food prices have placed significant financial burdens on many families. By allowing families to allocate resources to other essential needs, this support is especially crucial for households that may not qualify for existing assistance programs but still struggle to make ends meet.

I want to talk about the importance of nutrition and academic success. Numerous studies have demonstrated the profound impact of nutrition on a child's ability to learn and thrive in school. Educators have observed that hunger negatively affects concentration, academic performance, and behavior. Specifically, 80 percent of teachers have reported that hunger impairs a student's concentration; 76 percent have noted a decline in academic performance; and 62 percent have seen an increase in behavioral issues among hungry students. By ensuring that every child starts their day with a nutritious meal, we equip them with the tools they need to focus, engage, and excel in their studies. This foundational support is essential for closing achievement gaps and promoting equity within our educational system. Access to healthy meals is not only crucial for academic performance, but also for overall health and the long-term well-being of our children.

School lunches play a vital role in reducing food insecurity, obesity rates, and poor health outcomes. Research indicates that participation in free or reduced-price school lunch programs is associated with lower rates of food insecurity and improved health among children. By providing universal free meals, we ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, receive the nutrition they need to grow into healthy adults. This proactive approach can lead to reduced health care costs and a healthier population in the long run. I would like to turn it over to my colleague, Assemblymember Backus, for remarks.

Assemblymember Shea Backus, Assembly District No. 37:

Not only do we know the research consistently shows that well-nourished students are able to focus better, have fewer behavioral issues, and perform better academically, but we know that Nevadans continue to struggle with the price of groceries. Although nine school districts are now Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) designated and free school meals are available to all students, the remaining school districts do not provide universal free meals to students or require completed applications for a student to qualify.

Not all schools in the Carson City School District, for example, are CEP designated, thus parents have to fill out an application for their child to qualify for free and reduced school meals. In the *Nevada Appeal* last year, the Director of Nutrition Services was quoted, "These last four years have been a dream—that was during the COVID-19 period—come true for anyone in my position because all we want to do is feed kids. But unfortunately, we have not come to a place yet where that is going to continue indefinitely." Assembly Bill 268 would enable directors of nutrition services to continue their dream of feeding all students and not deal with parents calling them freaking out because they make 50 cents over the income guidelines to get assistance to get their kids food.

According to the latest Feeding America map, the meal gap, 14.4 percent of Nevadans are food insecure, meaning that each person misses about 188 meals per year or 6.2 meals per week. The amount of food insecure persons has increased from the last study where Nevadans were 13 percent food insecure. The current study has 47 percent of those that are food insecure individuals above the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). That is a 4 percent increase from the last study.

We all know, when chatting with Nevadans, finances are a real struggle. The current poverty thresholds used for federal meal programming do not account for families' complex socioeconomic realities, which often include debt burdens, medical costs, high rents, and associated increasing costs of living. In addition to what Majority Leader Jauregui highlighted, for those that would qualify for reduced meals, imagine that a single parent with one child earning \$12.78 an hour would not qualify for free meal programs.

One constant I hear from educators is, if we can get students in their seat, they can be educated. Providing universal school meals is likely to help in the reduction of chronic school absenteeism. Most importantly, this is one thing as a state we can do to provide that additional financial assistance to families to ensure that all Nevada's students receive nourishment during their school day. This program is not about providing for families who qualify for the program. It is about providing for all families in Nevada. Despite a family's wealth, we have continuously heard complaints over the ever-growing price of groceries and cost of living. Passing A.B. 268 is something we can do to ease Nevadans' financial struggles. I will turn the presentation back to Majority Leader Jauregui to walk the Committee through the bill and the amendment.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

I want to let the Committee know I submitted an amendment this morning [[Exhibit P](#)]. After conversations with Clark County School District (CCSD), we identified a duplication of efforts. Since Clark County School District is currently providing universal school lunch to every student in CCSD public schools, we decided to omit them from the appropriation. The amendment before you removes CCSD from the appropriation and reduces the amount from \$43 million per fiscal year to \$16.5 million per fiscal year.

I thought it was still important to bring the bill. My district, District 41, and my colleague's district, District 37, are both located within Clark County School District, but we decided to continue to bring this bill because it is our responsibility to make sure all of the children in Nevada have a full belly at school so they can maximize their ability to learn. Our districts are going to be ok whether this bill passes or not; we who are a part of Clark County School District are going to be fine because our students are going to be fed. But that is not ok; it is not enough. It is not acceptable that students in Washoe County or other rural school districts will have students who will go to school hungry. It is our duty to care for all students in Nevada, which is why we continue to bring the bill forward.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Thank you for bringing this bill back. As a mom, a grandma, and a volunteer at our schools, I have seen firsthand the importance of having a full belly in a classroom. You can learn so much easier when you are not worried about where your next meal is going to come from, or if your stomach is making noises because you are so hungry. Taking this off the mind of our children is very important, and then helping those families out that are just a few cents above what that cut off is, because so many families are living on the bubble. You know, I say our job sometimes is taking care of the least of these in our communities, and I think this is what this bill does. Members, do you have any questions?

Assemblymember Torres-Fossett:

I work in a classroom setting and you know, I cannot think of any child that deserves to not have lunch. Every student in the lunchroom deserves to have access to lunch, whether they forgot their lunch money or whether their parents are struggling to afford it, they deserve that access. One of the things that I am hoping you all can address, and perhaps Dr. Keating would be best to help address this, but how do schools mitigate against food waste? We have been getting hundreds of emails that have been addressing this abundance of food. My school does provide lunch to every student, and I have never seen any food waste except for sometimes the salads, which they are not the biggest fans of, but they eat the fruit, they eat the little chickpeas, they eat every single other part of it. If you could address that, please.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

I am going to hand it over to Dr. Keating to help answer questions, but I do want to let the Committee know that actually, this is something that has been addressed by the USDA on a federal level because they provide universal free lunches to those who qualify. They have a robust list of services and recommendations that our very own CCSD has considered, like OVS—which is offer versus serve—the food sharing tables; I did want to let the Committee know this is something that is being addressed on the national level. Now I would like to turn it over to Dr. Keating.

Brad Keating, Assistant Superintendent, Community Partnerships and Government Relations, Clark County School District:

The Clark County School District has worked extremely hard over the last few years, not only taking the USDA's recommendations, but working closely with our principals, our staff, our cafeteria managers at every one of our sites, to make sure we are: A) not over ordering, but B) we have an opportunity to—if a student does not want an apple out of their meal, although we recommend that they eat their apple—we can put it somewhere and we can make sure a student can bring it home that evening. That way none of the food is getting wasted. Also from a historical context, our team does a very good job at looking at every single meal that is eaten, every single item that comes off the plates, making sure that we are ordering just enough, with a very small overage to account for our students to be able to get what they need.

To give you a quick idea, in the Clark County School District—I think this is important, we will use last Thursday for example—we provided 85,236 breakfasts, 165,331 lunches, 1,723 snacks, and 8,872 suppers. We are tracking that every single day; we go even deeper at each item that is included in those meals to make sure there is no waste. We are ensuring every student who wants a meal can have one, but we are not going over and wasting any dollars or food.

Assemblymember Torres-Fossett:

I want to emphasize something that you said. This offer versus serve model—my understanding is that the food is made available to the student and then they can grab the parts of it they would like. If a student has an aversion to pizza that day, they do not have to get the pizza, they can choose the other items that they like, and that is how we are able to mitigate against some of the food waste, which also reduces the cost of these lunches as well. Is that correct?

Brad Keating:

Correct. My son, who is a kindergartener, has the option today of either a crispy chicken filet sandwich or grilled cheese sandwich for lunch. Then as part of the vegetables, green beans and carrots or baby carrots. I asked him this morning what he planned to eat, and he told me he wanted the green beans and carrots because it gave both, as opposed to just the baby carrots. I can tell you these students are very in tune with their meals and know what they are going to choose, and we track every bit of it to make sure we have enough for the kids every day.

Assemblymember Watts:

I want to reemphasize the point that was brought up by my colleague; if this were to pass and we were able to guarantee that every student in this state had access to a meal if they wanted one, that does not mean we are going to pay to put out food every day that we know students are not going to take. Essentially, you use the data to plan for what you are going to need, with a little bit of overage, because you never know day to day. It does not mean we are going to be purchasing meals that are just going to sit there, that we are going to buy 100 percent of the food for 100 percent of the children, correct?

Assemblymember Jauregui:

Correct. I will hand it over to Dr. Keating if there is anything he wants to add. You touched on the overage, Assemblymember Watts—I want to remind the Committee that those overages, because of these share tables that are made available at the recommendation of the USDA, mean if kids want to take stuff home to eat later, those overages are made available for students to take home for supper. There is very little waste.

Brad Keating:

The only thing I will add is the answer was perfectly correct. I know a number of you had the opportunity over the interim to come to our CCSD food service—which we appreciate you coming out—having some cinnamon rolls, having some chicken teriyaki. We have our

students fill out surveys constantly, and we also bring a group in once a month to do blind taste tests of our food to make sure—obviously that they are up to nutritional standards—but we want to make sure the kids like them, and they are eating them every day.

Assemblymember Backus:

I had read an article in the *Nevada Independent* from May 10, 2024, where the Washoe County School District had done a study before the pandemic, and the amount of waste they found before the pandemic and then after the pandemic when school meals were provided for free, that there was no change in the amount of waste going from a limited amount of children receiving free meals and reduced lunches to COVID-19-provided free meals to all students.

Assemblymember Watts:

I want to make sure I have these numbers correct. We do know that for example, CCSD is stepping up and is providing meals for all students. We know that there are some schools in other districts as well that provide 100 percent free meals. But outside of those counties or schools, it seems to me that for a single parent making more than \$26,572 per year, they would have to pay something; they did not qualify for free lunches. For a family of four, I believe that is \$40,560; they would fall into the reduced price, but we still have to pay for their children to have lunch. Then if a single parent makes more than \$37,814 per year or a family of four makes more than \$57,720 per year, then they have to cover all of the cost to provide meals for their students. Is that correct?

Assemblymember Jauregui:

Correct. I did the math and a family of four, in order to qualify for FRL [free- and reduced-price lunch], would be making about \$700 a week.

Assemblymember Watts:

I have heard concerns about wealthier families being able to get these meals and those numbers do not exactly strike me as wealthy. I would just say as a comment that I think those numbers show there are many families who are struggling to make ends meet in this state that would benefit from not having to worry about whether they can provide meals for their children when they go to school.

Honestly, I think it is overdue for us to ensure that—just like all of the other things we provide when students walk through the door into the classroom—that meals, lunch, and breakfast, if they want it, should be part of what is available to them. Then if a parent wants to pack and send lunch with that student, then they are still free to do so. It sounds like that is all factored into how districts do their meal planning.

Assemblymember Anderson:

This is incredibly important for our students and for our teachers, but more importantly for our community. As an educator, cannot do Bloom's Taxonomy if my students do not feel safe in Maslov; that is a different story. I just want to make sure that I have this correct—the two districts that you represent will not be helped; however, you are looking at the entire state's

children and how they can be helped. You are still bringing it forward, recognizing that every single child matters in our state. I want to verify that information and make sure that is emphasized.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

Correct. This bill is omitting Clark County School District, which represents the schools in the districts that my colleague and I live in because they provide universal school meals to their public students already. We thought it was important that every student in Nevada be able to access, whether it is Washoe County or any of our rural school districts. We wanted to make sure that every student is taken care of. I did want to make a note that, although the amendment does exclude Clark County School District, I am actively working on that amendment to make sure that we perhaps set the money aside in an IFC [Interim Finance Committee] Contingency Account that would then revert back to the General Fund if Clark County School District does not use it, in case there are federal cuts to the national CEP program.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

That was going to be my question. Are there any other questions?

Assemblymember Hibbitts:

During your presentation, you mentioned that there are nine districts that fall under the CEP, with Clark County being one of them. What are the other eight districts?

Assemblymember Jauregui:

All school districts qualify for CEP. For example, White Pine County School District has five schools on CEP, but it is not the entire county. Washoe County School District has 59 schools on CEP, Storey County School District has 1 school on CEP, Pershing County has 1 school. It is not the entire county, but every county in our state has schools that qualify for CEP, but not the entire county. Clark County School District is one of the counties that is entirely on CEP; also Churchill County is completely on. I have not reached out to speak to the other counties who are 100 percent on, but if we were to include them, it would be another savings of \$343,000; Clark County being the big one of almost \$27 million.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

We will invite those who would like to testify in support of Assembly Bill 268 to the table.

Elizabeth (Beth) Smith, President, Board of Trustees District D, Washoe County School District:

I want to say, Mr. Cedar did a wonderful job and I am more than happy to write him a note for his day off of school.

I am here today proudly in support of Assembly Bill 268; my fellow trustees and I endorsed a legislative platform that calls on your leadership to support our community in the efforts to create space for all students to thrive. This includes providing necessary services, attracting key talent, and yes, providing meals for kids. It is critical to recognize that the role school

plays in children's lives has changed dramatically since you and I went to school. Today's schools are a key source of stability, and for many of our students, unfortunately, the only source of stability in their lives. Our role as a school district is to give kids what they need to succeed no matter what their lives may be like outside of our walls.

Feeding kids is a critical part of this equation regardless of their background or income level. From 2020 to 2024, thanks to an infusion of federal funds, no Washoe students were asked to pay for meals, and their families could send their children to school knowing they would be fed. In spring of 2024, as federal programs were expiring, we began the process of transitioning away from universal meals for the current school year. We have done everything we can to soften the impact of this change to our families. For example, we are looking at ways to forgive lunch debts this year, and we have launched a campaign for families to submit paperwork and income verification for free and reduced lunch programs. Bureaucracy creates barriers and our kids pay the price; families who barely get by or are facing any number of economic struggles do not qualify because free and reduced lunch income limits are so low. Sadly, even with all of our efforts, program participation has plummeted, and because of this, for the end of the last semester that just concluded in December, WCSD [Washoe County School District] has accrued approximately \$50,000 in debt for children whose families, for whatever the reason, have not paid for lunch.

Not feeding these kids is simply not an option, even if federal rules say it is. Our district is looking at ways to handle the debt, but that cannot continue forever. This is not an inexpensive change, I understand. However, we must have the courage to realize that the social supports that existed when you and I were kids are simply not here now. They have been eroded by changes to our culture, cuts to our budgets, and the unforgiving ravages of inflation. For all these reasons and more, we urge your passage of this important measure.

Shane Piccinini, Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada:

I would like to, at this moment, say thank you to President Smith and to the Washoe County School District for the hard work they have put into—we have a great relationship with the school district, and I can tell you firsthand they have agonized over every single decision they have made to ensure that every single child in Washoe County gets a meal.

The Food Bank of Northern Nevada is currently serving pretty close to 160,000 families or individuals a month. Our service area is the 13 counties, excluding the very southern part of Nevada. We know firsthand the need that is in the state, and I still believe to this day that the biggest beneficiaries of universal free meals are going to be the rural counties that do not have the resources to be able to take full advantage of CEP. I urge support of this bill, and I thank everybody who has put the effort into bringing this back.

Alexander Marks, Deputy Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association:

The Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) supports A.B. 268, which makes an appropriation for universal free meals for Nevada's kids. We supported Assembly Bill 319 of the 82nd Session and we were incredibly disappointed with the Governor's veto. In his veto

message, Governor Lombardo referenced the bill's cost, pointing out school districts had sufficient resources to address the issues. In making the point, he referenced Senate Bill 231 of the 82nd Session funds, even though those dollars were specified for educator raises. Also, a day later, he signed Senate Bill 1 of the 35th Special Session, awarding \$380 million in public money to a California billionaire for a stadium.

Now with the proposed cuts to school districts in the Governor's \$2 education budget, the provision of free nutritious meals for all students should be a no-brainer. Assemblymember Backus referenced the Director of Nutrition Services here in Carson City; her name is Elizabeth Martinez, and she is a member of NSEA and NSNA [Nevada School Nutrition Association]. She said these school meal programs for the last three academic years had been transformative for the entire school community. In a piece for *NEA Today* magazine, she wrote, quote, "The income limits to qualify for free and reduced-price meals is unrealistic and we need leaders who understand that." She is right, and here is why: school meals support learning, promote healthy eating habits, improve health outcomes, and providing school meals improves efficiency. Providing school meals also keeps a focus on nutrition and students. Free meals for students means food service workers can focus exclusively on preparing and serving healthy and nutritious meals for our students without having to worry about unpaid meal debt collection or burdensome paperwork. We know these programs exist; we know these programs work; we hear a lot about the proper use of tax dollars. We are going to hear it again today, but keeping kids fed is an incredibly good use of these tax dollars, and we would urge your support of A.B. 268 [[Exhibit Q](#)].

Carissa Pearce, Government Affairs Manager, Children's Advocacy Alliance:

I am here to express Children's Advocacy Alliance's (CAA) strong support for A.B. 268 to fund universal free school breakfasts and lunches for students in Nevada. In Nevada, an estimated 130,000 children do not have a reliable source of food. That means that these children are hungry. Universal school meals, as we have heard, are not just about providing food, they are about ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed academically and develop healthily.

Over the interim in 2024, CAA partnered with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law Poverty Law and Policy Clinic to research and report how various states are approaching universal school meals and nutrition. This research showed us that universal school meals reduce childhood hunger, eliminate stigma associated with poverty, and support academic success. As we have also heard, hungry children cannot learn; when children have guaranteed access to meals throughout the day, they are able to spend their time in school, focusing on learning and on their social and emotional health, which is particularly impactful for students who do not have regular access to meals throughout the week.

Universal school meals promote health by ensuring that children consume more whole grains, milk, fruit, and vegetables, which lead to better diet quality, more nutrition, and less hunger. Students who participate in school meal programs have improved cognitive function due to this added nutrition. Currently, eight states have implemented some form of universal

school meal policies and by making universal school meals a permanent policy, we can ensure that all Nevada children have access to nutritious meals, free from the worry of meal debt and the ability to learn in school. Our children's health, well-being, and academic success depend on it.

Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

We echo all the comments that have been said. On behalf of district superintendents, we support A.B. 268.

Tom Clark, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:

It has been a very busy morning for education-related policy and appropriations. From the Association of School Board's perspective, this is a priority for us to bring this program back. Many of our rural schools are doing their best to provide these meals for these kids. This appropriation is appropriate; we very much support it [[Exhibit R](#)].

Alexis Esparza, Chief Steward, SEIU Local 1107:

We represent over 19,000 workers in Nevada. I am also here as a mother of two CCSD students and know firsthand just how much of a difference free school meals can make for our kids. I am here today testifying in strong support of A.B. 268.

This bill ensures that all Nevada students have access to the nutrition they need to stay engaged and succeed. We know that well-fed kids do better academically, have improved attendance, and are more focused in the classroom. When we provide universal free meals, we eliminate unnecessary stress for students, support their development, and create a better learning environment for everyone. Every child in Nevada deserves the chance to focus on their education, not whether they will eat or not during the day. I urge you to support A.B. 268 to ensure that all the students in Nevada have access to the meals they need to learn, grow, and succeed.

Eric Jeng, Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

I am advocating for the fast-growing Asian American community statewide. We want to thank Majority Leader Jauregui for sponsoring A.B. 268 and offer our strong support. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our organization has partnered with the local nonprofit Asian Community Development Council, ACDC, to address food insecurity. My entire staff has volunteered in food banks—both in Clark and Washoe County—in various capacities, fundraising, translation, sourcing intake, or literally delivering the groceries needed to assist our families in both southern and here in northern Nevada. That is also to say we have hands-on experience in witnessing and attempting to meet the growing need of our families when it comes to food insecurity. For A.B. 268, it removes barriers, and for our community, reduces stigma and ensures every student has nutrition they need to learn and thrive.

Leann McAllister, Executive Director, Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

I am in strong support of A.B. 268. In a recent survey, the members of the Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) overwhelmingly voted to make universal free school lunch one of our advocacy priorities for the 2025 state session. The majority of the 290 members of the Nevada AAP are board-certified pediatricians, generalists, and subspecialists. Members also include pediatric residents, medical students, and advanced practice providers, all of whom live and work in Nevada and have dedicated their professional lives to the health of all children.

Shelbie Swartz, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress:

I am here as a mother who understands the crushing weight of rising costs on Nevada families. No parent should have to worry about whether their child will have a nutritious meal at school. Assemblymember Jauregui and Assembly Democrats are recognizing this reality with Assembly Bill 268.

This bold, meaningful action provides real financial relief to working families, while ensuring every child in Nevada is fed and ready to learn. Providing permanent guaranteed school lunches for Nevada students is more than just an investment in our children's health and education, it is a lifeline for hardworking parents struggling to make ends meet. Packing a healthy lunch can cost over \$700 per child per school year. For families with multiple children, this burden grows even heavier. Free school meals dramatically reduce or eliminate this cost, allowing parents to redirect their hard-earned money towards rent, utilities, school supplies, and other necessities that support their children's growth and success.

Beyond financial savings, this bill ensures that no child in Nevada will have to sit in a classroom hungry or embarrassed because they could not afford a meal. Children with access to balanced nutritious food learn better, focus more, and thrive regardless of their family's income. Investing in school meal programs strengthens individual households and our entire community. Our schools, workforce, and economy all benefit when families have relief.

This bill is also a chance for the Governor to right a wrong from last session. Families are still struggling under the weight of past decisions that failed to put their needs first. Now is the time to change course, stand with parents, and ensure that every child in Nevada has the nourishment they need to succeed. Thank you so much to Assemblymember Jauregui for leading the way on this issue and showing that you are truly fighting for Nevada's families. I urge the Committee to please support Assembly Bill 268 and boldly invest in our children, our families, and our future [[Exhibit S](#)].

Ashley Dodson, representing National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Las Vegas Chapter 1111:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is in strong support of Assembly Bill 268. This bill would provide universal free breakfast and lunch for all Nevada pupils, ensuring that every child has access to the nutrition they need to thrive academically, physically, and mentally. As a mother of children in CCSD managing a tight

budget, I see firsthand how important these meals remain. With rising costs of living, families are prioritizing expenses carefully, and ensuring children have nutritious meals at school provides vital support. Many students rely on these meals not just for nutrition, but also for their cognitive development, emotional well-being, and overall success in the classroom. For some children, these school meals are the only consistent source of food they receive. This bill ensures that all students have access to the nutrition they need without financial barriers and also bringing the stigmatization. Proper nutrition enhances focus, academic performance, and mental health: key components of a child's development and success.

Assembly Bill 268 is an investment in our children's future, our education system, and the overall well-being of Nevada families. By ensuring all students receive free meals, we create a supportive learning environment where no child is left behind due to circumstances beyond their control. On behalf of the NAACP and many families who benefit from these programs, I urge this committee to pass A.B. 268. Ensuring that children have access to proper nutrition is a fundamental responsibility and this bill takes an important step towards achieving that goal [[Exhibit T](#)].

Cheyenne Kyle, Food Program Coordinator, Obodo Collective:

I am here today in support of Assembly Bill 268. As all the previous commenters have stated, we are seeing rising food costs, rising housing costs—the strain on families, the strain on parents. I also operate as an urban farmer, and one thing that I can say on the production side is that we need to be able to ensure food security for children. The way that we can do that right now is through this bill. This can ensure that children who only have access to food and nutrition at school are going to be able to take food home—be able to have a nutritious breakfast. Most of us as adults are not able to function properly without our morning coffee and I think that it is a lot to ask for tiny humans—people who are still learning their bodies and learning themselves—to commit to the mental fatigue and cognitive fatigue of a school day and what that does for them emotionally.

In my personal life, I am a bonus mom, and both of my kids have very dramatic responses to the drops in blood sugar from having them in safe key and them not having a snack because we did not know that we were going to be in meetings long. This is a very real circumstance; I think in a lot of ways we assume that it is on some part neglect on the parents or in some way not being able to properly plan for your children on that day. That is not always the circumstance or the case. We are doing our best as parents, we are doing our best as community members, and this is the reality of the situation—for us to be able to invest in these children and double down actually on the investment that we are doing within Clark County School District and other school districts as far as making sure that we are appropriately paying our teachers and investing in curriculum that involve them being outside. A lot of that goes further by ensuring that their bellies are full and they are able to concentrate. I highly, highly, highly suggest that you support A.B. 268 because it is imperative. We are in a very drastic food situation; food is scarce for our state in general, but we want to make sure that we are doing what we can to support our children.

Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada:

I am here in support of A.B. 268; the bill that gives a universal breakfast and lunch to our schools here in total support. We believe that having our students with a full stomach, both for breakfast and lunch, leads to better education outcomes and allows them to learn in school. For those reasons, we support our charter schools being part of the program and also the benefits that a nutritious meal gives to our students.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Is there anyone else who would like to testify in support of A.B. 268? [There was no one.] We will move to opposition. If there is anyone who would like to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 268?

Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Families for Freedom:

The Noah Webster Education Foundation did an evaluation of national school lunch programs, and this is what they found. The Heritage Foundation pointed out—according to the Office of Management and Budget, the National School Lunch Program lost nearly \$800 million owing to improper payments in fiscal year 2018, while the school breakfast program lost \$200 million. The Office of Management and Budget calls these programs high priority because of the misspending. According to the USDA's school nutrition and meal cost study—it found the reported cost of offering school meals generally exceeds the federal reimbursements allotted for those meals. It does not appear the country in general can afford to provide free school meals to all students regardless of their qualifying status. According to another study, the estimated \$1.2 billion worth of school food is wasted each year. Skeptics of free meals for all school children fear the waste will only continue to rise if free school meals are an option. A Cambridge University Press study appears to support those concerns—U.S. public schools, which serve 7.4 billion meals to more than 30 million children, represent a prime target for food waste reduction. Previous research suggests that food waste in U.S. public schools is substantial in magnitude and value. As school breakfast program participation continues to increase and free school meal programs expand, total food waste in such programs is expected to rise. Whether federal dollars or state dollars, it all comes from whom? The taxpayers; the program is not free. It is a bad idea for taxpayers because all the cost of living is going up for everyone and the taxpayers cannot afford to keep paying for everybody over and above what we are already doing.

Brianna Cowan, representing Douglas County Republican Central Committee; and Nevada Federation of Republican Women:

I thank the Chair and this Committee for conducting a hearing in such a public fashion for our engagement. As a former educator, I highly respect and commend the spirit in which this bill is brought forth. I do not think that spending money on children is ever a waste; I would like to say that outright. However, this excessive spending—\$16 million—would place an extreme burden upon taxpayers. Additionally, it would strain the very systems that those most in need would rely upon.

It seems to me that if we are concerned about the income level, we could address the income level of those individuals who might qualify for such programs, rather than writing a blanket statement allowing every child to receive these funds. Further, we have talked a lot about the responsibility of children; the responsibility for children relies on their parents and not to the school board or to government. Implementing such a plan would remove the responsibility of parents to their children and would be an unwelcome encroachment of government upon the family. I urge you to oppose this bill.

Jim DeGraffenreid, Nevada National Committeeman, Nevada Republican Party:

I am here in opposition to Assembly Bill 268, on behalf of the Nevada Republican Party. It is not the government's place to assume parents' responsibility to feed children with taxpayer funds, particularly since this is universal with no means testing; the state is spending money where there is no need to do so.

We appreciate the conversation earlier that it is not 100 percent of the students 100 percent of the time, but even at the reduced amount of this appropriation, taxpayer dollars are still being spent in areas where there is no need. This appropriation was vetoed as A.B. 319 of the 82nd Session in 2023 by Governor Lombardo. In his veto message, he stated very clearly that the problems with this appropriation included ensuring students have proper nutrition in order to facilitate learning is an important goal, so too is reducing the stigma sometimes associated with students who receive free or reduced-price lunches. However, subsidizing those who can afford to provide their children with lunch and addressing food waste in school cafeterias are also good policies. The Governor's veto message further noted that of the almost 490,000 students enrolled in Nevada schools in fiscal year 2023, more than 201,000 students were eligible to enroll in the free or reduced lunch program through USDA. Further, he stated the 660 schools statewide meet the USDA criteria for free meals for all students. It was stated earlier today that these schools exist in all 17 of our counties. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, free school meal programs were needs tested as appropriate; universal free lunch programs were developed during the pandemic and were always paid through federal funding sources. These funding sources are no longer available. District officials should build programs appropriate to their needs as Clark County has done. With COVID-19 behind us, it is time to return to the normalcy of prepandemic operations. We strongly urge this Committee to reject this non-means tested appropriation.

Janine Hansen, Chairman, Independent American Party:

One of the reasons families cannot afford to feed their own children breakfast and lunch is because of the cost of government. According to the Institute for Policy Innovation, in the United States the total U.S. tax burden, including federal, state, local, and hidden taxes, is equal to 56 percent of a personal consumption spending; 56 percent is more than a family spends on housing, food, health care, transportation, education, and recreation. How can people possibly take care of ourselves and our families when government takes 56 percent of our income? I think this is a significant issue because we see that food inflation is caused by the federal government by printing money and their profligate spending. It is very important to realize that much of this problem has been caused by government who purports to try to solve the problem by spending more money on this bill.

I think it is important to note that children will learn through this bill to depend on government rather than on their own families and themselves in the future. I think it is very important if we are raising independent children to be able to take care of themselves, that we do not teach them that the government provides everything they need. There have been additional problems with school lunches and breakfasts and that is sometimes low-quality food, and I would say possibilities of food allergies. I have 17 grandchildren and that can be an issue with many of them allergic to wheat, milk, eggs—that is another issue that it would have to address. Remember that it is important to teach our children to be independent, to depend on their families and themselves, and that government is the root of this problem causing food inflation by their profligate spending.

James Gansinger, representing Nevada Republican Party:

I am here in opposition to this bill. This is a bill that I think is presented with very good intentions and with very good intended consequences. However, I think it is a bill that will quickly demonstrate the law of unintended consequences. As we have heard here today, there are approximately 500,000 students in the Nevada school system, and we have heard here today that 130,000 of those students do not have access to regular meals. The bill we have here today is addressing that problem by providing free meals to 500,000 students to address the problem of 130,000 students. Other data would indicate that number may be bigger than the 20 percent that the 130,000 represents. It could be up to 40 percent, it might be 50 percent, it might be 60 percent; but I ask you is the best way to resolve problems for 50 percent of the students by giving free meals to 100 percent of the students? I understand the desire to avoid the stigmata that comes from a free meal program that is needs based. But I ask you, is this the best way to do that? Is the best way to avoid that stigmata to give free meals to children who do not need free meals and who probably do not want free meals?

This country and this state are facing a huge obesity problem. The numbers indicate that—the NIH [National Institutes of Health] tells us recently that it might be one third of the student population; other numbers indicate it is about 20 percent. That obesity problem is heavily weighted toward children from financially disadvantaged families. How do we address that issue with the food program and the meal program that is being addressed here by A.B. 268? When it was a \$43 million program dealing with 500,000 students, that came out to \$85 per year per student. Now that number has been reduced, but I think it is a reduction that is a pro rata deduction. So that even though now we are talking \$16 million a year for each of two years with a reduced number of students, you still come out with the same \$85 a year per student.

Unless you have a food program that provides healthy, nutritious food to students, you are doing a huge disservice to the very students who cannot afford to pay for their lunches and for their meals. That is the lower class of the financially disadvantaged students who are already heavily weighted toward obesity. Now, you are going to provide them \$85 a year in food. What do you get for \$85 a year? If you had just 85 school days a year, that is a \$1 a day per student. They are not having eggs for breakfast because eggs cost a dollar. I ask you,

what do you get from this program? You get actually a disservice to the people who need it the most because you are going to end up feeding them unhealthy, unnutritious food because you simply cannot afford to pay for anything better.

Cyrus Hojjaty, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I do not support this bill. First of all, I do not know about you, but I was not told on what type of legal status can people apply or be supported by the food programs. The other thing is that is this going to incentivize in terms of family structure regarding poor parenting. In terms of family planning, will this incentivize people who cannot financially support children in the long term? We have seen since the 1960s, an increase in a lack of two-parent households, a larger share of people who are on welfare. Will this encourage poor financial planning? In other words, will it encourage families not to put their priorities in terms of spending food for their children, and they will simply depend on the state to fund their child nutrition needs? These are the reasons why I do not support it; however, I do appreciate that this issue is very important, a lot of children are having significant concerns. However, I think a compromise should be done. Number one, I think the foods—I was not told that they are produced at a good standard. Will these foods be produced organic, non-GMO, pasture raised, grass fed, all these other standards? Not as far as I know of. The other thing is, who is going to be paying for this? From the film tax credit bill, I heard that Nevada has the lowest gaming taxes in the nation. Why do we not allow these casino elites to pay for these programs instead of putting it on the backs of the middle and working class? I think a compromise should definitely be done. Furthermore, while I think it is important that people have to be helped with the rising cost of food, but we have to know what got us here, and a lot of the surge in food prices was the result of COVID-19 supply chain issues. This is according to many articles, including one media personnel, John Oliver from Last Week Tonight.

Yolanda Knaak, Private Citizen, Incline Village, Nevada:

I am calling representing myself. I am opposed to this bill. I think people do not realize that our nation is on the verge of bankruptcy and increasing spending is a huge mistake. I am in support of low-income families getting free meals for their children, but not universal.

Bob Russo, Private Citizen, Gardnerville, Nevada:

I oppose A.B. 268 with its hefty \$86 million price tag. This costly bill will reach deep into the pockets of Nevada taxpayers, many of whom are already struggling to make ends meet. To put it mildly, school food programs do not have the best track record when it comes to effectiveness. For example, food waste is a huge problem with school food programs in the U.S. The 2018-2019 survey reported in a Penn State research article from January 18, 2021, found that food waste among students was problematic, with it revealing students in all grades waste vegetables and fruit the most, representing more than 50 percent of their plate waste. Of course, we all know that fruits and vegetables are the most nutritious part of that meal. When I was a kid, if I did not eat my fruits and vegetables, I did not leave the table; things have changed.

Costs again are an issue. According to a Heritage Foundation article from June 10, 2019, it goes on to state that in 2018, U.S. taxpayers spent \$17 billion on two federal school lunch programs combined. Yet for decades, these programs have been plagued by misspending and improper payments. As already has been brought to the table this morning, there are questions about food quality. You know, again, what is the source of the food? Are they GMO, organic, and so forth and so on—that is a concern. Again, this program is, in my opinion, fiscally irresponsible, especially when it is universal in nature when there are going to be people who are going to benefit from this program who can very well afford to feed their children. As Janine Hansen mentioned as well, this program is teaching young people that they can grow up to depend on the government, which is not a good thing. They need to grow up and be able to stand on their own two feet and carve out their place in the world and support their families. Given this, I oppose this bill, and I encourage you to do the same.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I have been informed there is a gentleman at the table in Las Vegas who would like to give testimony in opposition.

Al Rojas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I live in the Assembly District 12 and Senate District 21. I want to make a statement in opposition to this bill. The Governor has been very clear that the majority of the kids who are in need and financial need are getting the meals for free, that they need. I testified for the Interim Finance Committee; I see how hard our legislators are working to save every penny and raise as many funds as possible available for our growing state.

Honestly, people are thinking our legislators are not working hard, which is not the case, and we need more transparency; there are some transparency bills. I think it is just going to lack credibility to our hardworking state legislators on all levels on a bipartisan issue. I do not really think this money is necessary for these kids. I think that people who can pay are fine and I think that we should be spending our money more on how to get our kids to read, and channeling this money appropriately so that it is earmarked specifically for education, for reading, and for our teachers' salaries, which is what we definitely need. There actually should be a bill for getting the money to the teachers, not for the money for the food.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

That will end testimony in opposition; we will move to the neutral position. Is there anyone who would like to testify in neutral on Assembly Bill 268? [There was no one.] I will invite the sponsors of the bill back to the table for closing remarks.

Assemblymember Jauregui:

By passing Assembly Bill 268, we affirm our commitment to all children in Nevada, not just some. We recognize that investing in their nutrition is investing in their future. This is a very different bill with a very different price tag from last session. A lot of that is due to the good work of Clark County School District on providing free and reduced lunch to all of their public students. Let us come together and ensure every student has that opportunity to succeed in our state.

Assemblymember Backus:

I wanted to reiterate what Dr. Keating had indicated—a lot of legislators had the opportunity to go tour the CCSD facility where they produce all of the meals that are delivered to each and every public school in Clark County. I have a food allergy; I cannot eat gluten; I started asking lots of questions and they had a special area for each of the children who had food allergies that are being addressed. I think some of the complaints from the kids is, sometimes the food is not the tastiest food because it is healthy, and that is one of the key things you will see with these universal free meal programs is the key is nutrition that is put into these meals. This may sometimes be the only nutritious meals that a child may receive; that is key to answering those issues. By supporting A.B. 268, we will not only be investing in our children's nutrition, but we will also be investing in their future and the future of Nevada. Every child in Nevada deserves to start their day with the nourishment they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

[[Exhibit U](#) and [Exhibit V](#) were submitted but not discussed and will be part of the record of this hearing.]

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

With that, we will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 268. Members, you will be excited to know that while we were here, we got two more Bill Draft Requests (BDRs). We are going to have a little more work on our plate. I will remind the members that a vote in favor of the introduction of these BDRs does not imply your commitment to support the measure later on. All this action does is allow the BDR to become a bill and enter the legislative hearing process.

BDR 23-935—Revises provisions relating to collective bargaining agreements. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 356](#).)

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I will entertain a motion to introduce Bill Draft Request 23-935.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER BACKUS MADE A MOTION FOR COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION OF BILL DRAFT REQUEST 23-935.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Our next BDR introduction is Bill Draft Request 34-937.

BDR 34-937—Revises provisions relating to education. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 355](#).)

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

I will entertain a motion to introduce Bill Draft Request 34-937.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI MOVED FOR COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION OF BILL DRAFT REQUEST 34-937.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER WATTS SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

That brings us to the last item on our agenda for today, which is public comment. Is there anyone who would like to make public comment?

Al Rojas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I live in Assembly District 12 and Senate District 21. I want to address our legislators and hopefully we can come up with some kind of legislation which will earmark money specifically for our teachers and for our kids for reading and also hopefully do some external audits for our school district, especially here in Clark County. We definitely need that; I testified to the Interim Finance Committee, and I wanted to do a follow up, but I could not. I see how hard our legislators are working to track every penny. I heard how our legislators were concerned about the revenue from the cigarettes not being there, and people are questioning the credibility of our legislators, which are working so hard on both a bipartisan level and in both houses. The Interim Finance Committee, as you are all aware, is composed of a bipartisan group and both houses. If something is not put through, I am hoping that you all can get together because we definitely want to support our legislators. We definitely are a growing state. We want to use our money adequately and our kids are not our future, they are our only hope to get us to the place we want to be; a place that is safe, creates kids that stay in school, keeps them off the streets—it reduces crime, it is going to diversify our economy. They are our only hope. Getting these kids to read by the third grade—and I am not talking about a third-grade bill. I am talking about getting our kids reading by getting money to our teachers, to our kids, and to their books. Keeping our kids in school is our only hope to have a great place, that when you say home is Nevada, it is a place that you can be proud to bring your family members to.

Cyrus Hojjaty, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I will ditto the comments of the previous person. Really good comment. Please have more town halls.

Chair Monroe-Moreno:

Is there anyone else who would like to provide public comment? [There was no one.] That concludes our agenda for today. Tomorrow we have subcommittee hearings, so we will see you all bright and early tomorrow morning. The meeting was adjourned [at 10:48 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sherry Quick
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblymember Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 47	C	Brad Keating, Assistant Superintendent, Community Partnerships and Government Relations, Clark County School District	Power point presentation titled "Assembly Bill 47, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means"
A.B. 67	D	Ashley Dodson, representing National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Las Vegas Chapter 1111	Letter in support
A.B. 67	E	Manuel Santamaria, representing Battle Born Progress	Letter in support
A.B. 67	F	Joshua Skaggs, Legislative Affairs Director, Nevada Republican Party	Letter in opposition
A.B. 108	G	Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League	Document titled "2024 Impact Report"
A.B. 108	H	Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League	Document titled "2024 Nevada Outdoor Education & Recreation Grant Awards"
A.B. 108	I	Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League	Document titled "2025 Nevada Outdoor Education & Recreation Grant Awards"
A.B. 108	J	Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League	Letter in support submitted on behalf of 33 organizations, businesses, and local governments
A.B. 108	K	Brice Boland, on behalf of Tailar Purciel, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Walker Basin Conservancy	Walker River Basin photos
A.B. 108	L	Sean Hill, CEO, Sierra Nevada Journeys	Document titled "The Success of Sierra Nevada Journeys"
A.B. 108	M	Shelbie Swartz, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress	Letter in support
A.B. 108	N	Jermareon Williams, Government Affairs Manager, Western Resource Advocates	Letter in support
A.B. 108	O	Alexander Marks, Deputy Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association	Letter in support

A.B. 268	P	Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui, Assembly District No. 41	Proposed amendment
A.B. 268	Q	Alexander Marks, Deputy Director of Field and Communications, Nevada State Education Association	Letter in support
A.B. 268	R	Tom Clark, representing Nevada Association of School Boards	Letter in support
A.B. 268	S	Shelbie Swartz, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress	Letter in support
A.B. 268	T	Ashley Dodson, representing National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Las Vegas Chapter 1111	Letter in support
A.B. 268	U	Reva Crump, Private Citizen	Letter in opposition
A.B. 268	V	Ann Sweder, Private Citizen	Letter in opposition