

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-third Session
May 2, 2025**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Angela D. Taylor at 11:04 a.m. on Friday, May 2, 2025, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the attendance roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Angela D. Taylor, Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Senator Fabian Doñate
Senator Michelee Cruz-Crawford
Senator Carrie Ann Buck
Senator Robin L. Titus

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Lori Rogich (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem, Assembly District No. 34
Assemblymember Selena Torres-Fossett, Assembly District No. 3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Committee Policy Analyst
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel
Virginia Weitzel, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Alfred Danielian, Director of Sports Cardiology and Echocardiography, Las Vegas
Heart Associates

Senate Committee on Education
May 2, 2025
Page 2

Lea Cartwright, American Heart Association
Nathaniel Waugh, Clark County School District
Tom Clark, Nevada Association of School Boards
Misti Duplex
Enttroda Hughes
Ruina Perez
Jimmy Lau, Imagine Schools
Holly Neal
Andrea Morency
Trevor Parrish, Vegas Chamber
Sarah Adler, Coalition of Independent Public Charter Schools of Northern Nevada
Anthony Curry, Director of Public Policy, Opportunity 180
Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada
Nicole Shaffer, Imagine Schools
Janelle Veith
Ben Salkowe
Robert Munson, Nevada State Education Association

CHAIR TAYLOR:

I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill (A.B.) 454.

ASSEMBLY BILL 454 (1st Reprint): Enacts a Smart Heart Law for public and private schools. (BDR 34-1029)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER HANADI NADEEM (Assembly District No. 34):

Presenting with me today in Las Vegas is Dr. Alfred Danielian, the Las Vegas Heart Associates', Director of Sports Cardiology and Echocardiography. I also have Lea Cartwright with me to go over the conceptual amendment. I would like to begin with some background information. Sudden cardiac arrest is an abrupt and unexpected loss of heart function leading to the cessation of breathing and consciousness. This critical condition arises from disturbances in the heart's electrical system causing it to stop beating effectively. Immediate intervention is vital as survival rates decrease by approximately 10 percent for each minute without defibrillation.

Sudden cardiac arrest can tragically affect seemingly healthy individuals, including high-school-age athletes. Training school personnel and coaches on how to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is critical for an effective

emergency response. The training, coupled with a well-practiced emergency action plan, significantly improves survival outcomes for individuals experiencing sudden cardiac arrest, according to *The National High School Journal of Science*. Assembly Bill 454, known as the Smart Heart Law, bolsters the safety protocol of Nevada high school athletics activities by ensuring that lifesaving skills are ingrained in daily practices of both public and private schools.

Section 1 expands current laws requiring public school districts to develop and implement comprehensive CPR training plans. Specifically, the bill adds the requirement that every coach, manager or person involved in school athletic activity obtain and maintain current certification in the administration of CPR in accordance with the established district plan. This expansion from physical education teachers to all athletic activity personnel aims to significantly improve emergency response capabilities, thereby increasing the survival rate of student athletes in the event of a cardiac emergency.

Section 5 further expands these requirements to private high schools ensuring uniformity across the educational landscape. Under this section, the governing bodies of private schools must establish a tailored plan for CPR training and certification for every coach, manager and individual involved in school athletic activities. By aligning the certification standard with those applied in public schools, the bill ensures that all school students, regardless of the type of school they attend, benefit from the same level of preparedness in facing potential cardiac emergencies.

A conceptual amendment ([Exhibit C](#)) was proposed during the Assembly Education Committee work session. It was stated on the record that the term "managers" within sections 1 and 1.5 may potentially include students. The proposed amendment excludes students to clarify the intent.

ALFRED DANIELIAN (Director of Sports Cardiology and Echocardiography, Las Vegas Heart Associates):

I bring a unique perspective as the team cardiologist for all the major sports teams in Las Vegas, including the Raiders, the Golden Knights, the Silver Knights, the Aces, the Aviators and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas athletics. I also sit on the American College of Cardiology (ACC), Sports and Exercise Leadership Council, and I am currently the governor-elect for the ACC Nevada Chapter.

What inspired me to push for this bill was the tragic loss of 16-year-old Ashari Hughes during a flag football game in Las Vegas. This, along with the heartbreaking deaths at other local student athletic events that coincided with the nationally televised sudden cardiac arrest of the NFL Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin. With this background, I have seen firsthand how critical it is to be prepared for emergencies on the field and sadly why this bill is so needed.

Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating normally because its natural electrical system stops working properly. When the heart can no longer pump blood effectively, the brain and other vital organs are immediately deprived of oxygen. Without CPR and the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), chances of survival drop 7 percent to 10 percent for every minute that passes. That means that after just five minutes, chances of survival are about 50 percent. After just ten minutes, chances of survival are almost zero. With CPR and immediate use of an AED, the chance of survival can triple. That's why every second counts. While the overall incidence of sudden cardiac arrest in young athletes is fairly rare—estimated to be around 1 in 60,000 young athletes per year—it is the leading cardiovascular cause of death in young athletes. Sudden cardiac arrest often strikes without any warning and can be the very first manifestation of a concealed genetic disease in a seemingly healthy young athlete who did not have any symptoms prior to the event.

While we know all the incredible benefits of long-term exercise, we also know that during exercise, there's a transient increase in the risk of sudden cardiac arrest in individuals with underlying genetic heart disease. While rare, when sudden cardiac arrest does occur, it is devastating, tragic, heartbreaking and can strike without warning. While we do our best to screen young athletes for these underlying genetic heart diseases, there's no perfect screening process. The unfortunate reality is that these events will occur. In fact, the most recent sudden cardiac arrest events that have been well publicized in the media occurred in athletes who had undergone screening for years without any detected abnormalities.

While our professional athletes receive world-class medical care in cases of sudden cardiac arrest, and professional and collegiate athletes gain widespread media attention, our high school student athletes deserve the same level of protection and face the same risks of sudden cardiac arrest. In fact, in the most recently published data on the incidents of sudden cardiac arrest in young athletes, high school athletes were actually at the highest risk, especially those

participating in basketball, football and track and field. Our primary focus for survival during sudden cardiac arrest is emergency preparedness and having well-rehearsed emergency action plans that enable immediate use of AEDs by trained individuals. This remains the most effective way to prevent fatal outcomes and to ensure survival in our student athletes.

The emergency action plan is critical, with a lifesaving tool that ensures rapid, organized and effective response to sudden cardiac arrest and other medical emergencies during athletic events. Simply put, an emergency action plan does not improve outcomes, it saves lives. While we hope to return in 2027 to include funding to ensure that all schools have AEDs, A.B. 454 lays the foundation for a safer future for our student athletes by ensuring that all schools have a cardiac emergency plan in place to respond to sudden cardiac arrest in students. Let's make sure that no family has to endure what Ashari Hughes family did, and that every student, at every level, has a fighting chance for survival.

LEA CARTWRIGHT (American Heart Association):

The conceptual amendment [Exhibit C](#), as the Assemblymember mentioned, was a verbal amendment to the bill during the work session to ensure that the requirements for training did not apply to the students who may be acting as managers. That was not the intent, although we would encourage all students to get CPR and AED training. It is pretty quick, and they are on the field so there should be training.

The intent here is not to mandate that student managers are required to have this training. Additionally, we are having some quick conversations with Clark County School District (CCSD). They have identified in section 1.5, subsection 7, paragraph (b) that we need to remove the word "club" on line 25 because the clubs are not sanctioned by CCSD. They're often used by community groups, parents, neighborhoods and this would make sure that CCSD is not liable for any of those community groups who are coming in. The other conceptual amendment ([Exhibit D](#)) is to make sure this only applies to folks who are not pupils.

SENATOR TITUS:

As a physician who's done literally hundreds of sports physical exams, you check everything out and then [if] you do not pick something up, there could be a tragic accident. We actually used to do echoes [echocardiogram] in all the

students, hoping to pick up some inherited problems and then decided not to do that because it just was not financially feasible for all student athletes to get echoes. I am curious under section 8.3, subsection 3, paragraph (f) it says a physician or other medical professional. We have expanded the definition of medical professional significantly over time. I do not see it being defined in your bill. What do you mean by medical professional? What is the current definition of a medical professional? We have added social workers; we have added other folks.

CAMERON NEWTON (Committee Counsel):

At present, I am unable to find a specific definition of medical professional in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS). We do use the term medical provider in other instances. I am not sure if there's a certain type of medical professional you are looking for; we could potentially define that in this.

SENATOR TITUS:

Right, because for me, a paramedic would be a good one to have on those committees. I just did not know what your definition of medical professional meant—a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant? As a medical provider, we have expanded that definition. I think that if we are doing another amendment you might want to do what you are considering and perhaps your physician in Las Vegas could give you a better list.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

As originally written in the first iteration of the amendment, the medical professional was a cardiologist and that was considered too limiting at that point. We are trying to find that happy medium where you are consulting with somebody with medical knowledge. And I agree, our definition of medical professional or medical provider is pretty broad depending on which chapter you are looking at. We would likely need to make sure that that definition aligns with ... and forgive me, I am not super up to speed on all of the [NRS] education chapters. Most of my time is spent in the health chapters. Hopefully that definition either aligns or we can make a reference to it.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Don't we already do this?

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

Yes, kind of. There is an emergency operations plan required throughout the State. It does not specifically require cardiac emergency response training. Clark County has had a requirement to have CPR and AED training in their codes since 2004. So, Washoe County and Clark County both do this already in school regulations. Most of the rest of our counties either do not address it at all or have only taken the donations for Title I CPR and AED training. So, all of the schools that would be impacted by this are covered.

Assemblymember Nadeem's attaché and I worked to figure out the whole list of schools that would be covered by this. [That was] to make sure there would not be any fiscal impacts, which is also what we are trying to avoid here. The reason it feels familiar to you is because Clark County has been ahead of the game since 2004 in making this standard practice.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I felt like this was already in law or already being done. I know this is not a fiscal committee, but who teaches these classes and who does this so there is not a fiscal note? If we are including private schools, charter schools and public schools along the way, I am surprised there is not a fiscal note. Small districts may not have access to everything, as we do in Las Vegas or Reno.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

The bill requires the emergency operations plan to have a cardiac emergency response plan as part of it, which is statewide. All schools adopt this plan. We've actually been working in the interim with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to put cardiac emergency response plans into the emergency operations plan. This law codifies what we are trying to do and NDE does have paramedics and EMTs who help create these emergency operation plans.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I understand that, but who's doing the actual training? I can work for NDE, but I can't train the hundreds and hundreds of coaches that we have in this State. Who is actually doing the training for free? If I am a school and I need my people to be trained, whether they have to pay for it, I have to pay for it or the school district does, somebody has to pay for the training. There might be some outreach with a Red Cross or something like that, but not for all the hundreds of coaches that we may have.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

As you pointed out in your initial question, Clark County and Washoe County are already doing this, so it's built into the budget to provide this training. I know Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA) offers some facilitation of the training. There's training that comes from the Red Cross, American Heart Association, but it's already built in to provide that.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I am just trying to get a handle on ... you have already answered my question on section 1.5, subsection 7, paragraph (b) because I was wondering when I read that, it could be anything, that could be lots of different groups.

SENATOR TITUS:

Thank you, Madam Vice Chair, for those questions and pointing out who's training and how much [it would cost]. I will say for certain in rural Nevada, in all of the areas that I have been involved in, our local fire service loves to do this kind of training for free. In the rural communities, there's usually no charge for that.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I get that. I worry, I mean, we have some pretty small communities which may not have the same resources ... even your Smith Valley folks could go to Reno if they needed to. Austin, Nevada may be in a different ball game. The reason I ask that is because I was thinking about the private schools. It says they may develop a plan with the local fire department, local law enforcement agency or nonprofit organization to provide the training and certification required by the plan. I know schools all have relationships with their local fire department because we are mandated to have fire drills. That is why I was asking; I thought this was already in law.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

I like to read the amendments, but there's a lot going on here. I just want to make sure that I have not missed anything. Student activities, I know you clarified that to just be sports games and sports activities that are sponsored by the NIAA.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

This also applies to physical education classes, so physical activity.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Right now, what we have in statute requires physical education teachers to have this training? The whole intent of this is to extend this to those who play on our sports teams.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

That is correct. The second portion of the bill is to require that the emergency operations plan includes a cardiac response component.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

I am sure you have given some thought to this. Are there any concerns that in any of the rural communities this may not be possible? I know they have physical education teachers, so somebody's getting training somewhere. Any consideration of that?

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

As a rural person, I graduated from Silver Springs High School and there were just under 400 kids in my whole school. So yes, I am very sensitive to rural issues. I think part of the genesis of this bill, as we have noted, Clark and Washoe Counties were covered in regulations. This was not a requirement statewide. We have disparities among our rural and urban youth right now and how protected they are for cardiac emergencies. That is where we are going. We did reach out to representatives, the school board association and the different counties. There are representatives for Elko, Eureka, White Pine and Humboldt school districts here. We reached out to them and did not hear back with any concerns. If any do come up, we are happy to help address those. I do think it is important, personally and professionally, that our rural areas have the same protections.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Thank you so much. I know this is for private schools and public schools. I know there are some charters in Clark County that have sports teams, are they included as well?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER NADEEM:

Yes, it includes all the schools.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Okay, maybe I missed that.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

Charter schools are public schools, so it is our understanding that they are included. I see the policy analyst shaking her head next to you. So hopefully that suffices. But yes, the intent is to cover the entire school landscape.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Certainly, I know that they are public schools. But typically, when I see legislation, it also includes them specifically. That might be something to consider; making sure that it is very clear. I mean, it does not change the bill at all, but typically I am accustomed to it being, [written as] public schools, charter schools, private schools and so on.

NATHANIEL WAUGH (Clark County School District):

With the two amendments, we are supportive of this bill.

TOM CLARK (Nevada Association of School Boards):

First, I want to thank Ms. Cartwright and the bill sponsor for working with us on this piece of legislation. We are in a position of support, especially with those two amendments that were discussed during testimony. Answering a couple of the questions regarding the school districts in the rural parts of our State, this particular piece of legislation puts into their emergency plan, this element of that emergency plan. You never want to be absolute, so I will say most coaches, trainers or anybody on the sidelines is trained in CPR and will be able to manage these kinds of issues if they come up prior to and during any type of sports activity.

Those coaches are trained and a lot of them are trained by their fire departments. A lot of them have coached in other areas around the State as well. It is pretty much a prerequisite if you are a coach or assistant coach that you know how to do CPR. If you happen to have an athletic trainer, which most of our rural counties do not, they will have to have it as well. The Association of School Boards stands in support of A.B. 454.

MISTI DUPLEX:

I am reading from my written testimony ([Exhibit E](#)).

ENTTRODA HUGHES:

I am here to give my testimony about A.B. 454. I am as Ashari Hughes's dad, here to testify in support of the bill.

I am here to tell you about my daughter, my princess, my scholar athlete and my angel, Ashari Hughes. Ashari shone very bright with her self-discipline and hard work. She advanced at everything that she applied herself to. Ashari was a determined person at an early age. Her big brother played tackle football, and we used to practice in games. One day, she said, "Dad, I would like to play football like my brother." I told her no, she could not play tackle football and asked if there was any other sport she was interested in. She turned down every sport and said that if she could not play football, she did not want to play anything. To my surprise, at her junior high school, she joined the flag football team and fell in love with the sport.

As a parent, you love to see your kids happy. Ashari had been struggling with chest pains and shortness of breath while playing flag football to the point of almost passing out. We took her to the doctor and the cardiologist to get her cleared and everything seemed to be fine. We kept a close eye on her and on January 5 [2023], Ashari had a flag football game. She told us not to come because she might not play as much. As I am getting off of work, my son calls me and said Ashari had passed out on the field again, but this time they were taking her in an ambulance. I remember asking him if she was okay and he looked at me with a blank look and shook his head. I rushed over to the hospital and, as I was going, I could see the medical professionals performing CPR on her. I watched as they tried to get her heart back; it seemed like forever. The doctor eventually told us that they could not save her. Words cannot express the feeling and the overwhelming grief that takes over when you realize that your child is gone and there is nothing you can do. You start to realize all the memories and the last things that you did with them.

I am here to support the legislation that never puts another parent in a situation me and my family have been in. Cardiac arrest is something that needs to be taken very seriously. If we educate our schools and our community to have a plan to identify and react to these problems immediately, it will help save multiple lives. Even if it saves just one, all the hard work and everything that everyone is doing here will all be worth it. I urge the committee to pass bill A.B. 454.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

I am so very sorry for your loss, and we appreciate you calling in to share your story. She sounded like an angel.

Senate Committee on Education
May 2, 2025
Page 12

RUINA PEREZ:

I am in strong support of the bill of a cardiac emergency plan. It is very important for the safety of all students.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER NADEEM:

Assembly Bill 454 aims to standardize and elevate emergency response capabilities within school athletic environments by requiring regular certified CPR training for all the professionals involved in school athletic activities. The bill seeks to improve survival outcomes during cardiac emergencies, reinforcing Nevada's commitment to the health and safety of its students. I urge you to support this bill.

MS. CARTWRIGHT:

I would just say that we are offering CPR, AED and first aid training at the Carson City Aquatic Center on the first weekend in June. It is free if you also sign up to be a lifeguard.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Thank you so much for that added information. We will officially close the hearing on A.B. 454 and open the hearing on A.B. 495.

ASSEMBLY BILL 495 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to charter schools. (BDR 34-757)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER SELINA TORRES-FOSSETT (Assembly District No. 3):

Assembly Bill 495 requires the State to review the existing statewide system of accountability for public schools, the Nevada State Performance Framework (NSPF). As you all may know, this framework assigns a ranking to all public schools based on five categories. Each measure aligns with federal accountability requirements for funding established by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. In almost every conversation I have had with educators and school leaders, they have addressed some of the challenges with the current NSPF, chronic absenteeism being a main indicator. That is definitely one of the main concerns but also not a proper measurement for student achievement growth. Recognizing that in certain areas, student proficiency will drag down a school so much, but it doesn't accurately demonstrate the growth that some schools are creating and showing in their data.

The current NSPF has several considerations that include chronic absenteeism, academic proficiency, academic growth and English Language Learner performance on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment [test]. One of the criticisms that educators constantly mention is that the current system is not accurately weighing that proficiency or academic growth.

For example, a school that may have significant academic growth may still perform low with the current framework because their kids are not yet proficient. You could have a school that is growing kids two grade levels in a school year, but because their proficiency is low, this impacts their star rating. With the bill in the first reprint, it allows public charter schools that are a 1-star school with the current NSPF, to have a temporary pause from closure while this framework is being reviewed. I just want to reiterate that it is a temporary pause if they are showing academic growth, not a permanent pause.

Additionally, this piece of legislation does not require those schools to stay open. In fact, it gives the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) the authority to review that school, and not just for the NSPF. They might review other documents; they can review the financial responsibilities of the school board. The SPCSA would be empowered to shut the school down or keep the school open. I have been following what is going on in the Senate Education committee as our counterpart committee to Assembly Education, and I know that there's been a number of concerns specifically with schools that are shutting down. This gives schools that are showing growth, that would otherwise be in jeopardy of being shut down, a fighting chance to stay open, which has a positive impact on students. It has a positive impact on families and a positive impact on our communities.

Assembly Bill 495 introduces a more nuanced system by allowing the sponsors the flexibility to forego mandatory closure if they can demonstrate that the school is making meaningful progress toward meeting specific achievement and performance targets set by the statewide accountability system. This change acknowledges that schools operating under difficult conditions—such as high transiency rates, pandemic-related disruptions or serving economically disadvantaged student populations—may not fully capture their potential through a single performance metric.

The new provisions intend not only to prevent the abrupt shutdown of schools that are on an upward trajectory, but also to stabilize the educational pathways

for students who would otherwise face significant disruptions when their school is forced to close abruptly.

Under the current performance framework, it is very difficult for a 1- or 2- star school to rise to a 3. This is incredibly challenging for Title I schools. Statewide, 80 percent are 1 or 2 stars and almost 60 percent of Title I charter schools are 1 or 2 stars. I just want to make it clear; this is not just an issue that affects charter schools. This is a statewide issue that affects all public schools, not just charter schools. In fact, a large majority of Title I schools are 1- or 2-star schools regardless. You have fewer charter schools that are 1- or 2-star schools. In our districts our 1-star schools do not get shut down. In fact, they get the support needed so that we can hopefully see those improvements.

That is what this bill aims to do; empower those boards to make those improvements. There are examples of schools that have outperformed a majority of other schools and remain in the lowest star rating categories. The NSPF has challenges that can impact schools and it is the intent of this bill to address these challenges during the interim.

In the second part of the bill, there is an opportunity for schools that are demonstrating growth to continue using this objective criterion for up to two academic years. We want to emphasize that this is a temporary solution to ensure that schools are doing what is needed to improve and remain in the community and continue to serve students and families. I am going to go ahead and skip through the very detailed explanation of the NSPF, but I will be happy to take any questions on it because I know that it is very lengthy.

Section 2 states that NDE will convene an advisory group comprised of representatives from various educational stakeholders in the State, including educational personnel, subject matter experts, NDE representatives, students and parents, and education association representatives. The results of this review must inform the creation of the NSPF that, at a minimum, aligns with Nevada Academic Content Standards and reflects a real-life milestone with the statewide outcomes necessary to advance individual economic mobility. [This] aims to boost enrollment for credit-bearing postsecondary coursework, access to in-demand livable wage careers, does not increase reporting burdens and aligns with existing efficiency. Additionally, NDE must make every effort to obtain the approval necessary from the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that the statewide system of accountability for public schools complies with all

requirements for the receipt of federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

I know that there is a proposed amendment ([Exhibit F](#)) for you. It just does a couple of things. The first thing is that changes percent to points. That was just clearer and was under recommendation from several conversations I had with individuals within SPCSA and charter school leaders. Additionally, it limits that section 3, subsection 2 of this act expires on October 1, 2027. The goal is also to leave the remaining parts of section 1 because that's currently in law. The goal would be to leave that in place. Section 1, subsection 1, where it says if a charter school receives in any period of five consecutive school years, three annual ratings, changes to three consecutive ratings.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

You and I had a couple of conversations, and I just want to make sure that I understood everything. Will you walk us through section 1, subsection 6 where it talks about the sponsors of the charter school not being required to terminate the contract of the charter school?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

Right now, we use a point system to measure schools and where they are at on their performance. If they are within five points of where they need to get to that second star ... I will refer to the star rating in the legal terms. I do not refer to it as a star, but that second level would be the star. If they are within five points of getting to the star rating, this would give the SPCSA the authority to leave that school open. I want to make it clear this is not just the SPCSA, this would also apply to district charter schools as well. Both Washoe and Clark [counties] have a number of those schools as well.

The next part of this in section 1, subsection 6, paragraph (b) says it would be within ten points. If they are within ten points of that lowest rating and they have demonstrated at least 50 percent growth ... if you had two points and you doubled your growth, you would get shut down because four points out of the current metric system would not be acceptable. But if you are within those ten points and you had demonstrated significant growth, this would give the authority for that school to remain open if they decided to leave it open. I think this is helpful information.

Based off the 2024 data, if they decided every school—I am not even sure that the board would—but if the board decided that they would leave every school that was within these metrics open, you would still have six schools shut down last year. There would still be a mechanism that I think is valuable for them to continue shutting down schools that are ineffective.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Back to the description of where the schools are located or governed, the SPCSA. Clark County has given up their charter schools, they have none. What about the City of Las Vegas?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

Yes, you are completely right. This would apply to any local education agency that has charter schools.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Section 2, [about] NDE establishing the committee, can we kind of talk through that? I think you and I talked about some options there. I just wanted to clarify that. Whether you are still going to do the committee and whether those members might be different?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

I am completely open to reimagining what members of this committee look like. What I think remains true is the need for us to reevaluate the NSPF. If members of this body have recommendations or members of the public, I am happy to have those considerations. I can understand why there might be the need for us to make some changes. It was commented to me earlier today that it is a little NDE heavy, and I am happy to have a conversation about what those changes look like. That would make sense for the reevaluation of the NSPF.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Yes, I know there are a couple bills out there that talk about this so we may want to even just combine so that we do not have committee after committee after committee. We will continue offline and have that conversation.

SENATOR BUCK:

Currently, do you know the proficiency rate for a 1-star school?

JIMMY LAU (Imagine Schools):

For an elementary and a high school, that would require 27 points currently under the NSPF to become a 2-star school so anything below that would be considered a 1-star school. For middle schools, that threshold is 29.

SENATOR BUCK:

And that's proficiency without the growth? Or are you talking points?

MR. LAU:

That's total index score points on the NSPF.

SENATOR BUCK:

Okay. So, the proficiency tends to be about 20 percent or less. Right now on the NSPF, there are three ways to demonstrate growth. Are you aware of those ways in which the majority of the points are based on growth? Can you articulate those?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

I do not think this is a competency test for myself. If you have a specific question about the bill, I am happy to answer that.

SENATOR BUCK:

Well, I was just concerned about growth and demonstrating growth. It was stated that growth was not based in this bill. There's opportunity gap growth, median growth percentile and then there is adequate growth percentile. Three different ways in which a school can prove that they are growing kids. If they remain at 1 star, my concern is that we are failing kids year after year. Charter schools were created to be different and better than district schools and prove that they can work in innovative ways. I worry a little bit about that. The part of the bill that I do like is in relooking at it because I do think there are ways that it can be fixed. Attendance being one because I think attendance does a double hit. I was wondering if you considered making attendance a completely separate rubric because it has little to nothing to do with actual outcomes or academics and double penalizing school.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

I just want to be very clear that this bill is a two-year pause and look back so that the SPCSA can look at those specific schools. It is a two-year pause that does expire. It would only be for the upcoming two school years and would

expire October 2027. This is a pause, but there's still the complete authority for the SPCSA to make the recommendation to shut down schools. I agree that if schools are underperforming and not doing a good job, they should be held accountable. That is still true in this piece of legislation.

Additionally, in the comments regarding the NSPF, I think that there is very much a community need for us to reevaluate how we are looking at and evaluating schools. It has been over ten years since we last looked at our current reporting metric and a lot has changed in those ten years. It is time we take a look at the NSPF and reevaluate it. I could have done this with the bill if I wanted to, but the NSPF right now does not exist in statute. This is something that is created by the NDE; it did not make sense for me to just have a bill and say, "This is Selena's version of the NSPF, and this is the version we are going to go with." I did not do that. Instead, the community would come together and make recommendations. I think you are presenting a recommendation and that is the exact type of thing that this committee would then be looking at so that we can have an NSPF that I think addresses those concerns that I have also heard from educators and school leaders.

HOLLY NEAL:

I am a teacher at the Honors Academy of Literature, but I am here today to speak as a mother of a 10-year-old scholar. My son is highly curious, funny and energetic. He is kind; he is thoughtful and empathetic; and he also has significant struggles with learning in traditional ways. Reading and writing have always been a challenge for him throughout his years in school. While he continues to make progress and grow, he is still not on grade level compared to his peers. He continues to receive support and instruction from our special education teacher, as well as support from speech therapy and occupational therapy services.

As a parent of a child with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), I just want to take a moment to thank this incredible school and its dedicated staff. It is no accident that our school has one of the highest percentages of students with IEPs in the State. From day one, my child has been met with patience, understanding and a true commitment to helping him thrive, not just academically but emotionally and socially too. The communication, individualized support and the way every teacher in our entire staff works as a team has made such a difference in his life. My child feels seen, supported and

confident and that means everything to me as his mother. The school does not just accommodate differences, it celebrates them. For that, I am truly grateful.

I am a middle school teacher. As a teacher, I have had conversations with students and with families that have said that they have come to our school and found that their kids have been able to grow and have more success in a smaller school setting or having the different structure. Having that opportunity for them, another choice for them to help their children grow and be able to get to a place where they feel comfortable and confident in school. The fact that we have different options for kids is incredible to me.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

You have two minutes and that time is up. If you have other comments, send it in to our committee secretary and she will make sure that we get them.

ANDREA MORENCY:

I am the principal and founder of the Honors Academy of Literature, a school that has served Nevada students with excellence for years. Today, I am here to share my concerns about the NSPF and its disproportionate impact on small schools like ours. Our school has a long history of measured success based on 4- and 5-star ratings and nonsuccess at 1- and 2-star ratings with very little difference in curriculum, teaching staff or students. This volatility is caused by our size and can be seen playing out across the State within small schools.

In our small school, 75 elementary students and 75 middle school students learn together in the same environment with consistent teaching staff. Yet elementary has earned 1 star and middle school has earned 3 stars. We are now facing an unimaginable potential closure. Let me be clear, we believe in holding schools to high standards. We welcome accountability and stand by the importance of measuring students in school performance. However, the measurement tool must be accurate and fair. Unfortunately, for small schools, the NSPF introduced significant errors that dramatically skews results. This volatility does not reflect the quality of education we provide; it reflects statistical noise.

These star ratings are not just numbers; they determine the fate of our school, the trust from our families and the opportunities for our students. We're not asking to be excused from accountability. We're asking for time. We are confident that through thoughtful revision and consideration of the impact on

small schools, the NSPF can yield an accurate and meaningful measure. The reality is that our students are thriving. Our families know this. Our data over the years has shown this and two years of volatile results may be due to a small sample size which could erase over a decade's worth of success.

TREVOR PARRISH (Vegas Chamber):

The Chamber is in support of A.B. 495 as it allows for charter schools to continue the progress that they are making despite potential setbacks that paint an inaccurate depiction of school performance. The current system in place for restructuring charter schools mandates that charter schools must restructure if they have had negative performance in three years within the last consecutive five years, regardless of whether they show progress. This process is disruptive and harmful to students and does not take into consideration any factors such as individual student performance nuances or setbacks from the COVID-19 school closures.

SARAH ADLER (Coalition of Independent Public Charter Schools of Northern Nevada):

I am representing a consortium of independent public charter schools in Northern Nevada. Honors Academy is one of our schools and Dr. Morency shared their situation. There are other schools that have this small size overweighting, if you will, of certain components of the NSPF, as well as chronic absenteeism. Some of these schools are rural schools. So, this looks at the NSPF, which I think can assist many schools in our State. I would also like to acknowledge what Senator Dondero Loop brought up.

Your bill, Senate Bill (S.B.) 403, does a great job at bringing forward the same need to look at our education in terms of Portrait of a Learner, competency-based education and [examining] how our system of measurement can really incorporate the future of education.

SENATE BILL 403 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-611)

Aligning section 2 with S.B. 403 is an important part of this bill. The CCSD-sponsored charter schools have now transitioned to the SPCSA. Four of those six have 1- and 2-star ratings. They will really benefit from an opportunity to get their feet under them under their new sponsor and have an opportunity to succeed.

ANTHONY CURRY (Director of Public Policy, Opportunity 180):

Opportunity 180 is a nonprofit organization working towards the North Star of every kid graduating high school, college and career ready, prepared to live the life they dream. Through our work, we support innovative high-potential charter schools that serve zip codes and student populations that historically had the least access to opportunities to high-quality education experiences. We support A.B. 495 because it will create a clear standard for public charter schools to continue operations as long as they are making measurable strides in improving student performance.

Furthermore, the committee created by the conceptual amendment [Exhibit F](#) will begin the much-needed review of the NSPF. I look forward to working with the committee to ensure that the updated metrics support improved life outcomes that are aligned to college and career success indicators, such as the ACT [test] and industry-based credentials. This bill will give these schools additional time and additional evidence-based ways to demonstrate progress, providing these schools with an accountability-driven opportunity to illustrate how they impact kids, families and communities. For these reasons, we support A.B. 495 and thank the bill sponsor for bringing it forward.

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

I am here in support of A.B. 495. This bill brings much needed fairness and flexibility to Nevada's accountability system. It allows sponsors to consider real progress when deciding a school's future. It also creates a diverse and inclusive committee to help modernize our accountability system framework here in Nevada. I urge your support of A.B. 495.

NICOLE SHAFFER (Imagine Schools):

I currently serve as the principal of Imagine Schools at Mountain View, a public charter school. Imagine Schools at Mountain View has served over 600 students annually in the Las Vegas community for 14 years, achieving 3 stars or higher in all but two of those years in our elementary school. Our middle school remains a 3-star school. Our regional and campus leadership teams are committed to leading our community of learners as we have proactively adjusted to shifts in our student demographics and unforeseen staffing changes.

One change in particular is transitioning to a Title I school over the past two years. In response to this new designation, the leadership team has mapped

out priority areas and action steps aligned to maximize student growth and academic achievement, which include a rehiring process, a professional development plan for teacher growth, adopting a more rigorous curriculum and utilizing data to inform decision-making.

At Imagine Schools at Mountain View, we have implemented systems and processes that are yielding positive results for our students and community with 41 percent proficiency in English Language Arts, which is higher than the state proficiency. We ask for the time A.B. 495 will provide our school, the necessary time for full implementation of these systems, increasing the opportunities for success that our students and families deserve. On behalf of the students, families and faculty of Imagine Schools at Mountain View, we want to thank you for your time and consideration of this very important bill.

JANELLE VEITH:

I proudly serve as the principal of Quest [Preparatory] Academy, a K-8 charter in Las Vegas, in its 17th year of operation. I testify in strong support of A.B. 495 that allows for a sunset provision and a statewide accountability review from a diverse advisory group that is essential to reflect equity nuance and student growth. We support accountability and A.B. 495 still gives an authorizer discretion when they see real measurable progress being made. That flexibility is critical for schools like Quest, which serves 100 percent free- and reduced-lunch students, the majority of whom are black and from historically underserved communities. We are a small size as other schools have mentioned. Our elementary is just one of a handful currently impacted by the statute at this time, but many more will follow. The burden falls disproportionately on charter schools, while similarly rated district schools face no closure threat. In fact, 199 schools scored lower than Quest. That is not equitable and the uncertainty hurts morale, community trust and teacher retention.

Despite the challenges, Quest shows strong progress. Our middle school students who have been with us long-term outperform all State proficiency rates and none scored at level 1 last year on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

We outperform the 20 percent of growth, and we only have 12 percent in the bottom 20 percent. Our students come to us severely behind. Ninety percent of our students in elementary school, fourth and fifth grade are two or more grade

levels behind. The point-allocation system for opportunity gap growth and AGP [adequate growth percentile] are almost insurmountable for our students.

The accountability system does not reflect the progress we have made, and it penalizes schools with students who start significantly behind, regardless of how much growth they make. Consider 47 percent of Title I schools received a one-star rating compared to just 8 percent of non-Title I schools. Of the 775 schools, 232 are 1- star and 204 of those are Title I, 88 percent of 1-star schools despite Title I schools making up less than 60 percent of the total.

The system was not built to account for this kind of imbalance. Quest Elementary is not designated CSI [Comprehensive Support and Improvement], TSI [Targeted Support and Improvement] or ATSI [Additional Targeted Support and Improvement] bottom 20 percent. Our middle school is ranked in the top five, yet closure is threatened.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

I need to cut you off. You're over your two minutes. If you have more comments you would like to share, please send those to the committee secretary and she will make sure that each committee member gets them.

BEN SALKOWE:

I was the founding principal for Equipo Academy, a 5-star high school in East Las Vegas. I am also a director for Nevada Public Schools. We are in support of A.B. 495. Public charter schools founded by local educators in Southern Nevada are tackling some of the greatest challenges in our educational landscape because they take on tremendous risk. There are many valuable things in the NSPF right now, and it represented a tremendous step forward for accountability in our education system.

I also agree with Assemblywoman Torres that now is a great moment to step back and ask how it can be better. We support A.B. 495 for this reason and for the clarity it offers charter school leaders. We hope that a thoughtful discussion about accountability for education in Nevada will ensue.

ROBERT MUNSON (Nevada State Education Association):

Originally, the Nevada State Education Association opposed this bill. However, we fully agree that the NSPF needs to be revisited, especially when it comes to

growth and some of the other criteria. However, we also feel that, as the NSPF is currently written and utilized, it does not effectively measure growth or other issues, such as chronic absenteeism. We agree with the bill's sponsor on many of the issues. However, we also feel that schools need to be held accountable and that this bill does not fully address these issues at this time.

CHAIR TAYLOR:

That would actually fall in opposition testimony, but we understand what you are saying. Assemblymember Torres-Fossett, any closing comments?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER TORRES-FOSSETT:

I am committed to continuing to work on this, especially regarding the reevaluation of the metric system. I think it needs to be a collaborative discussion that should not be done just through legislation. I think that this is a good start to reevaluating to make sure that we have a statewide system of accountability that holds schools accountable in a fair and equitable way.

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

Senate Committee on Education
May 2, 2025
Page 25

CHAIR TAYLOR:

Having no more public comment, we are adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Virginia Weitzel,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Angela D. Taylor, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
A.B. 454	C	3	Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem	Proposed Conceptual Amendment
A.B. 454	D	5	Lea Cartwright / American Heart Association	Proposed Conceptual Amendment
A.B. 454	E	10	Misti Duplex	Written Testimony
A.B. 495	F	15	Assemblymember Selena Torres-Fossett	Proposed Amendment