MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Eighty-third Session
March 17, 2025

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Angela D. Taylor at 1:02 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 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
Senator Lori Rogich

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva
Assemblymember Ken Gray

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Committee Policy Analyst
Alberto Quintero, Committee Policy Analyst
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ivy Meyer, Legislative Intern to Senator Lori Rogich
Bobby Padilla, Senior Master Sergeant, retired, United States Air Force
Scott Caldwell, JROTC Director, Washoe County School District

Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Andrew LePeilbet, Chairman, United Veterans Legislative Council
Bill Grey, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 989
Paul Speaker, CEO, Las Vegas Desert Dogs
Dacia Persky, Vegas Strong Lacrosse
Mason Mclay
Ryland Peterson
Jeremy Sieverts
Conner Kirst
Justin Cutler, High Sierra Lacrosse League
Christy Cahill, World Lacrosse
Sy Frederick
Finn Hansen
T.J. Wright
Brigg Worthington
Tom Clark, Nevada Association of School Boards
Tess Opferman, Washoe County School District
Tim Jackson, Executive Director, Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association
Luke Funk
Audre Lueamrung
John Funk
Rhett Herald
Carolyn Palma
Kaitlyn Campbell
David Hancock
Emma Fargo
Ella Isaia
Maggie Grimes
Roman Cervantes
Niko Lueamrung
Adaline Schum
John Eppolito

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Welcome to the Senate Committee on Education. We do have a rather large crowd today with two overflow rooms, so I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 175.

SENATE BILL 175: Revises provisions governing the treatment of certain military credentials in the licensure and hiring of educational personnel. (BDR 34-663)

Our sponsor of that bill is Senator Rogich.

SENATOR LORI ROGICH (Senatorial District No. 11):
This bill is designed to address challenges in our education system while honoring the invaluable contributions of our military personnel. This bill seeks to revise provisions governing the recognition of military credentials in the licensing and hiring of educational personnel, ensuring that the skills and expertise of our armed forces are fully utilized in our schools. My legislative intern, Ivy Meyer, is going to continue with the presentation.

IVY MEYER (Legislative Intern to Senator Lori Rogich):
At its core, this bill aims to streamline the process for members and veterans of the armed forces who have received certification as Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) instructors, enabling them to obtain teaching licenses and secure employment in school districts with greater ease and efficiency.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our military personnel whose service and sacrifice have safeguarded our freedoms. Their unique qualifications of leadership, discipline and a commitment to excellence make them ideal candidates to inspire and educate the next generation. This bill also addresses a pressing issue—the persistent shortage of qualified educators in our school. By leveraging the expertise of our veterans, we can strengthen our education system while honoring their service.

Key provisions of S.B. 175 include authorizing members or veterans of the armed forces, certified as JROTC instructors, to obtain teaching licenses in Nevada as if they had completed the State's alternative route to licensure program. This includes all forms of certification, such as temporary, provisional or advanced certifications.

The bill also ensures that applicants with JROTC certification will be recognized on par with alternative licensure programs, and school districts will be required to consider military education, training and certifications, including JROTC instructor certification, as credit toward required qualifications for skilled positions.

One of the benefits of this bill is addressing the teacher shortage. This bill provides a practical and immediate solution to the ongoing teacher shortage by expanding the pool of qualified candidates to include highly trained military personnel. This bill leverages military expertise because JROTC instructors bring a wealth of leadership skills, discipline and real-world experience that can enrich the educational environment and serve as a source of inspiration for students.

This bill supports veterans and active military members. By recognizing their credentials, we honor the service of our military personnel and facilitate their transition to meaningful civilian careers.

Finally, the fiscal and administrative efficiency in this bill reduces unnecessary administrative barriers, saving time and resources for both applicants and school districts. I would like to point out that there is a fiscal note attached to this bill in the amount of $25,000 as the Department of Education would need to develop new software within the existing licensing system in order to process an application.

The inspiration for this legislation comes from the experiences of constituents like Bobby Padilla, a retired senior master sergeant from the United States Air Force. He joins us today in Las Vegas to testify. His story is a testament to the potential of this legislation and the positive impact it can have on our schools, our students and our communities.

Also, with us today, we have veterans of our military and active legislators. We have Senator Cruz-Crawford and Assemblymembers D'Silva and Gray. We also have with us today, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Caldwell, Director of Washoe County School District's JROTC.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER REUBEN D'SILVA (Assembly District No. 28):
Before I get started, I just want to say that I have a Nehru jacket on today. This is not a uniform; there's a historical connection there, but this is for the AANHPI [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander] heritage month that we are also celebrating today.

As a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps, I stand before you today with a deep sense of purpose and responsibility. My service to this nation has instilled in me a profound commitment to leadership, community and the values that make our country great. It is in this spirit that I address you regarding

S.B 175, a measure that seeks to remove barriers preventing veterans from continuing their service to our communities in educational roles.

This situation exemplifies the challenges many veterans face when transitioning from military service to civilian life. Despite their extensive training, leadership experience and dedication, veterans often encounter unnecessary obstacles when attempting to contribute their skills to our schools and communities.

Senate Bill 175 offers a solution. This bill allows veterans and active military personnel with temporary or provisional JROTC instructor certifications to meet the requirements of Nevada's alternative route to licensing program. Additionally, it ensures that school districts recognize JROTC instructor certification as credit towards any required training, experience or licensing for employment.

This change will enable veterans to work as JRTOC instructors while they complete the requirement for advanced or full certification. While this is a policy committee, I would like you to know that the bill does have a fiscal note which is available on NELIS [Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System]. However, the benefits of this legislation far outweigh any associated costs, and I respectfully urge your support for S.B. 175.

MS. MEYER:
Joining us today in Las Vegas is Bobby Padilla, a retired Senior Master Sergeant from the United States Air Force.

BOBBY PADILLA (Senior Master Sergeant, retired, United States Air Force):
I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in strong support of S.B. 175, a bipartisan effort championed by Senator Rogich, to remove unnecessary barriers for qualified veterans seeking to become JROTC instructors in Nevada.

I am retired Senior Master Sergeant Santiago Padilla. Most know me by my nickname, Bobby Padilla. I enlisted in the Air Force in 1993 and retired after 26 years of service in 2019. I started my career as an inventory management specialist and ended my career as an Air Force Major Command Functional Manager for the Force Support career field. I served four tours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and earned numerous awards. I am a decorated veteran.

In addition, I have volunteered service to my community for 20 years as a youth sports coach, teaching and mentoring our young kids on the values of teamwork, resiliency and perseverance. I would like to preface that for the statements I make regarding my JROTC application process, I can only speak on behalf of my branch of service, which is the Air Force.

In May of 2024, I started the journey to become an Air Force JROTC instructor in Nevada. On June 20, 2024, I received my Air Force JROTC Provisional Certification which reads basically, "in accordance to Air Force JROTC instruction 362010, Senior Master Sergeant Padilla has been issued a provisional certification and is clear to perform all necessary duties and responsibilities required of an aerospace science instructor if those duties are performed under the observation and supervision of a fully certified Air Force JROTC instructor or faculty administration official until completion of the finalization background check process."

I went through the background check process and had an opportunity to apply to a high school here in Las Vegas. Unfortunately, I was rejected and on September 17, 2024. I received a letter from the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and it reads, "Good afternoon. Unfortunately, it does not appear that you are eligible for the JROTC license. Although the document from the Air Force confirms eligibility for employment, it does not confirm full certification as a junior ROTC instructor. The junior ROTC educator license certification is required to teach and fulfill the full duties of the certified JROTC instructor." I provided this to the high school, and I was unable to progress with the interviewing.

So the issue that I found was that Nevada does not recognize the Air Force provisional certification while other states, for example, Arizona, Washington and California, accept the provisional certification. Candidates already meet strict federal screening requirements before being provisionally certified and therefore approved to instruct by the Air Force JROTC program. Nevada does not recognize the provisional certification, even though the candidate is qualified to instruct from their branch of service requirements. This means that even though I met all Air Force JROTC requirements, I cannot obtain a JROTC license in Nevada.

This State-level refusal to accept a provisional certification creates an unnecessary delay that prevents Nevada schools from hiring JROTC instructors, even when they are qualified to instruct.

In conclusion, I asked myself these questions: Did the Air Force approve me to be eligible to work as a JROTC instructor? Yes. Did the Nevada Department of Education recognize the Air Force provisional certification to instruct? No. Did the principal move forward with applications without a Nevada JROTC license? No. Was I the only one that this happened to? Most likely, no.

The other applicants in the same condition as me were met with the same barrier due to one word, [provisional], we were denied the ability to obtain the required State credentials to serve our school district. The JROTC program provides students with leadership training, the discipline and career readiness to prepare our young students to be better citizens.

However, Nevada's current certification policy places barriers for highly qualified veterans from serving in these programs even though they are vetted through their military branch and ready to teach. I urge this committee to support and pass S.B. 175. It is a practical commonsense solution that removes unnecessary barriers, keeps talented instructors in Nevada and ensures that schools can fill critical JROTC positions without unnecessary delays.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER KEN GRAY (Assembly District No. 39):
This bill really is a boon for Nevada. Where else can you get teachers for classes at half price? The federal government steps in, pays half, and then the school district pays half. By denying these guys their certification, they are losing an instructor that is basically a half-off deal. It allows these military members, like Senior Master Sergeant Padilla, to come in and utilize the unique skills they have learned in the military and transition them—think of it as a skills bridge—to the classroom to help these kids.

The ROTC programs typically have a graduation rate well above 95 percent, so these guys working with these kids not only provide instruction, they provide mentorship. You can walk into any ROTC class, and you will see kids from all walks of life and they enjoy it. Some of these kids—I will say it—have no hope of getting in the military, nor do they want to get in the military. Then you have kids whose life is geared towards the military. One thing they all have in common is doing the best they can in that program and in school, and they

know that if they are not keeping their other grades up also, they may be forced out of that program

That is why we need these instructors like Sergeant Padilla. The fact that he did not have his background check completed within, I think it was seven months, does not surprise me at all. The DCSA [Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency] is very far behind in their background checks, and we're putting a further barrier in front of these guys. Our own teachers, I believe, only go through a State check and the real quick federal check that the FBI does.

It makes no sense why we turn away qualified instructors when they are sitting here ready to go to work. For those reasons, I would love you guys to to support this bill. It is good for Nevada; all Nevadans. As well, I think this is the first time that we have had a bill that has all of the Nevada Legislature Military Caucus on board.

SCOTT CALDWELL (JROTC Director, Washoe County School District):
My name is Lieutenant Colonel Scott Caldwell and I am the director for JROTC in the Washoe County School District. Because Clark County has not adopted a director of army instruction office and position down there, I am the senior JROTC official here in the State. This brilliant bill could have removed a lot of frustration for me over the last seven years during our hiring process. It is very difficult to find highly qualified military folks to come to Nevada unless they were born and raised here and are returning home to fill our vacancies. Per the military services, we get a very short window to fill those positions.

For schools that have three or more JROTC instructors, that third position is an optional position, so if we don't fill those slots, then those slots are taken away and used in other places nationally to start new programs. We don't need another reason to turn instructors away to go to some other state. In this case, this amazing senior master sergeant will now take his skillset to California, and he will be helping students there because he could not get the licensing here. The ironic thing is, when our instructors apply for their State license, they are given a provisional JROTC license because we have some education requirements that we have to complete. So I find it odd that when a service member presents a provisional certification, they can't get a provisional license.

Each of the services does this process differently. They use different terminology. So other terms such as "prequalification" don't seem to be an

issue or "approved certification" does not seem to be an issue. It is only this word "provisional" that seems to be a problem. I really appreciate this bill and hope you support it. This will really streamline the process and ensure that when we have qualified folks come in, we can get them in the chair quickly without what we would say in the military, "quibbling over a word."

If you have a copy of the letter from Senior Master Sergeant Padilla, it clearly states from the Air Force that this instructor is ready to enter the classroom. So it is quite clear he has provided and completed all the requirements he needs to have.

MS. MEYER:
Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel Caldwell for coming up to the Legislature today. We would appreciate your support of S.B. 175. It is a meaningful step toward removing unnecessary barriers for veterans who wish to continue serving their communities.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I was wondering if anybody contacted the NDE to see if this could be fixed through regulation or if you actually needed a bill.

SENATOR ROGICH:
Actually, I have not spoken to the NDE. I spoke with Lieutenant Colonel Scott Caldwell.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I was just wondering because this is an NDE issue. A lot of times, things can be fixed by contacting them and we do not need legislation.

The other thing that I would like to ask is in section 1, subsection 3, where it says, "may obtain a license as if such person has completed the alternative route to licensure program of this State." When you complete an alternative route to licensure program, you actually go through some education classes and some education procedure. As a teacher, I recognize the training and actually respect the training that they have gone through. I don't know if that same thing would apply to a math class or to an English class, because it says "has completed the alternative route to licensure program," which means they would have a teaching license.

I always reflect on other occupations. I don't know how lawyers, doctors, or other people might feel if we just started saying, "Oh, hey, this person has this training, and so we think they should be in that job."

The last thing that I would say is that I don't think I want a half-off deal for anything that is in education and that comment was made. As a teacher who recognizes what is going on here, I think this can be fixed through regulation. I don't think the bill is necessary, but that is just my opinion as a Legislator. I would not want it to be a full license, as if somebody had completed an alternative route to licensure.

MR. CALDWELL:
I understand that when our instructors get their license, it is a specific license to only teach JROTC. I am not licensed to teach any other subjects. To the second part of the question you asked, I will say I have been here seven years, and we have approached NDE numerous times to try to resolve this, and they refuse to change their policies. They accept terms such as "precertification" or "certification approved," but the word "provisional" is the word that they seem to be focused on and they will not accept it, despite what the letter says.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I did not have any discussion about this bill prior to this hearing, so I can only tell you what this says in the bill, which is that they would have completed the alternative route to licensure program in the State. And they would have a license, which is like having a teaching license that I own, or represent.

Whether you are a math teacher, a librarian or an elementary teacher, it does not matter. When you are a teacher, you have a license that you have obtained. I don't know who you talked to at the NDE, so that discussion we can have offline, but I do believe that this—and I have been around a little bit—I do believe that this probably could be fixed by going straight to the NDE.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRAY:
This issue has gone back and forth quite a bit and has been unable to get fixed through the administrative routes. Even if it had been, by putting it in legislation, this would prevent a different interpretation down the road. Most of these instructors do come with an instruction background, especially when you reach Senior Master Sargeant Padilla's level, and my level as a chief master sargeant.

We've instructed many times at professional military education institutions, which is why we choose to go on and do the programs within JROTC.

I would like to refer your question to counsel regarding the licensure. I do believe Nevada, even when you get licensure, it is only for certain subjects. This licensure would only apply to the military studies portion of the JROTC program. It wouldn't apply to math or science unless you had that certification as well.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Well, without talking to NDE myself personally or to the bill sponsor, I could not tell you that, but I can tell you that Mr. Jeffery Briske, who runs the NDE licensure department, would certainly answer your questions if you reach out to him. I know this from working with him on other legislation.

Once again, while I recognize the importance of the ROTC, that's not what I am questioning. What I am questioning is that in the bill, it says that you would obtain a license as if such a person had completed an alternative route to licensure, which means they could teach something else if the district so chooses.

For example, in Clark County, I am a librarian. I had a Master's in Library Science K-12. In Washoe County, the elementary schools don't have certificated librarians, but I believe the middle school and high schools do. So, different licenses cover different things. I think that if we can do this without the legislation and cover it through regulation, maybe that is a better way to do it.

I would be happy to help the bill sponsor contact the NDE because I know they are always responsive when you ask a question like that.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRAY:
My military background was as a chief master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force as well. But I do want to point out that the licensure you get is specific to JROTC, and the JROTC rules do not allow you to teach any other programs. If you left the JROTC program, you would have to go through whatever the alternative licensure protocols are for whatever instruction you wanted to present. As we know, in this State, it's extremely easy to get a substitute license and you can go in and substitute in any class, to include long-term substitutes.

Approaching it from the administrative side—the last time I checked was about eight or ten years ago—it is a disparate treatment between the service branches because of the way the letters are worded. So the only ones being cut out at this point right now are the U.S. Air Force instructors who are fully trained. They just have not received their licensure because they're waiting on their background checks.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I appreciate that. There are lots of substitutes, teachers and others who are waiting on background checks as well. I will tell you, it is not easy to get a substitute license. You have to have 60 hours of college, a background check, fingerprinting, et cetera. I don't know your line of work, but I can tell you what my line of work is.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRAY:
I am sorry, let me correct my words. Not extremely easy—that was a bad choice of words—not easy, but comparatively speaking, with regard to what our guys come to the table with. I would be willing to say that probably Senior Master Sergeant Padilla not only has an associate's degree, but he probably also has a bachelor's and maybe even a master's degree, which is what most Air Force senior enlisted folks come out with.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
And I am not questioning what Mr. Padilla has. I am not questioning what any of you have. What I am saying is what it says in this bill. And I am telling you—as a person who has been around and around the merry-go-round with education legislation, and as a certificated educator—this can be fixed by regulation. I am just telling you that.

Like I said, I can't tell you how to do your job. I can't tell Senator Rogich how to do her job as a lawyer, but I can tell you what I know on my side. We do not want a half-off deal on a teacher. We do not want an easy route to licensure. We want the most certified qualified person that we can get, so all you need to do in my opinion—and it is just my opinion—is to talk to Director Briske and I am sure that it can be worked out.

SENATOR ROGICH:
Thank you, Senator Dondero Loop, I'd be happy to reach out to Mr. Briske at the NDE, and, if it cannot be resolved, looking at a conceptual amendment and working together to resolve it.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I would be happy to work with you. Like I said, this is the first time I have heard about this bill.

SENATOR BUCK:
I was wondering if this could work under a creative business and industry license. I am an educator too, and I, much like my colleague, Senator Dondero Loop, have a educator license. But I know there's a business and industry license that's more specialized. I know I couldn't teach junior ROTC; I couldn't teach aviation pilots; I couldn't teach violin, which I think are some of these subject areas. So I was wondering if there is a way to work this into the business and industry licensure.

MR. CALDWELL:
To answer your question, I really do not think that is necessary. The instructors are already, again, per the letter, certified to teach JROTC. The issue is not the subject. The issue seems to be not wanting to grant a provisional teaching license for JROTC to an instructor that is provisionally qualified. I think it's a hang-up around that word.

Because we fought this and haven't been successful, my concerns about trying again to renegotiate with a current director are, what happens when that director leaves and someone else comes in? Are we going to find ourselves back here again because we are having the same issue? So it feels like a more permanent solution should be in effect.

I do get frustrated when I read that letter and I see exactly what it says. I do not understand why someone on the other end can't look at that and see that the military service is saying that this person is ready for the classroom. For all the services, within a year, we have to go take in-person training. There are things we have to do before we've finished all of our basic training, but when the letter specifically says this person is ready, why are we ignoring that?

Again, you can't jump from no license to a standard JROTC license. You have to do that provisional one. So the words seem to work for me. "Here is my provisional certification letter, I'd like to have my provisional license so that I can get in the classroom and start getting paid and doing the things that I want to do."

SENATOR BUCK:
So then I wonder if it'd be a military license or something. How do other states do this? How do other states make this work, and we don't?

MR. CALDWELL:
I don't have experience with other states, but I will tell you, we do have all the other services here and this wording from the Air Force seems to be the issue. The Army letter says "prequalified"; the Marine Corps letter says "approved certification". Even though we still have things we have to do yet, they seem to be wrapped around this word "provisional" for some reason.

The services, as you all know, are big machines. It is very difficult to get them to change things. So it is easier, and I think correct, Senator Rogich, that we are going to address this here at the State level, so that we don't have this issue again in the future.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
When Senator Rogich came to each one of us that serve to present this issue, I was excited. I am still excited because as a current serving military member and also a school principal, I have principals reach out to me all the time, saying "I can't fill this position, I can't fill this position," and I knew we needed a solution.

However, on the same thing Senator Dondero Loop was concerned about, section 1, subsection 3, I went to Senator Rogich and said, "I just want to make sure this isn't an ARL [Alternative Route to Licensure] license; it is only specifically to teach JROTC." So we do need to work on that wording. I do believe that wording needs to be hammered out because right now, it does look like it's for an ARL, which is different. So if we actually hand this to NDE and say our goal is certification—and Senator Buck does have a point—there is a Career And Technical Education-type licensing that this might fall under.

I think we are trying to lead with a solution instead of the problem, so there might be multiple routes to deal with this. But this is a need. We do have a lot of openings. I know you probably do not have it offhand, but I would love some data on the number of openings we have in our State so we can identify that need. Junior ROTC is basically, at the very least, teaching our students those soft skills, those leadership skills—all those things we are talking about with portrait of a learner. Also, the very most you can get from the program is really our next generation of officers and/or enlisted leaders.

I am excited to help with the pipeline. I just want to get it right. Because as a principal, I have people all the time come to me and say, "I want to be a librarian, I want to be a speech pathologist," and I say, "Okay, well here's the schooling you need to do, here are your credentials." I don't think this was the intent, but to say, "Oh, you get your ARL license through the certificate," really downgrades what we are trying to do with education by lowering the bar.

So I would also recommend to meet with NDE to hammer out this section 1, subsection 3 language in order to build that pipeline. I am excited to work offline so that we also keep the bar up for educators in general, and also fill this very important need in our State.

SENATOR ROGICH:
Thank you. We will work with legal counsel on the language and also with the NDE and we will get you the data as well.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you, Senator. As you know, if you just have someone get the data to our committee secretary, she can make sure to distribute it to us if you would.

I do have a couple of questions. If I may, Lieutenant Colonel, I am going to start with you. Will you talk us through a little bit—obviously with my background as a former school board president—talk to us a little bit about what happens at Hug High School in Reno. Because I know that is the largest ROTC program in the State, and I know there are instructors there. Talk to us about how they manage to do that.

MR. CALDWELL:
Managing to do?

CHAIR TAYLOR:
To have instructors that are not certified teachers.

MR. CALDWELL:
Well, again, all of our instructors are licensed to teach JROTC.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
No, I mean, licensed in Nevada. I certainly understand they're licensed to teach JROTC, but part of what I am understanding is that what is being required of them is a teaching certificate in Nevada. And this is attempting to change that so that the certification they get from the military is acceptable, so to speak. Am I misreading this?

MR. CALDWELL:
So all the instructors from all these services initially start off reaching out to their service. They fill out an application, they take a physical exam and there are a host of requirements for them to reach the level of certification where they receive this initial letter that says you are now ready to go to a high school and receive your interview. They complete that process that then triggers, if they are accepted, an intent-to-hire letter. That goes to the military services, and that then triggers the in-depth federal background check that takes typically two to three months. In Senior Master Padillo's case, it was seven months.

We have come up with a solution here in Washoe County where, during that gap when they are waiting, we do not want them to go away, so we get them a long-term sub license and we put them in the classroom in the position that they are going to fill. That way, they can start working, start getting paid and getting familiar with that job. When the two to three months expires, usually they get their CNACI [Child Care National Agency Check and Inquiries] background check approved. That triggers the military service to calculate their minimum instructor pay, so they'll send a letter to the school district and to the instructor that says, "Here is your pay, it is all ready to go, now you need to go to NDE and apply for your license."

They provide that background check and that certification letter to NDE to get a provisional JROTC teaching license. It is provisional, because they have to complete a three-hour college course within three years, and then the professional development hours, to be upgraded to a standard license. The issue that is happening is that the letter from the Air Force specifically says,

"Congratulations, you have your provisional certification. You're allowed to be in the classroom, but you still have to do your in-person course" at Maxwell Air Force Base, or wherever it is.

When that letter has been received by NDE, they are like, "We don't accept the provisional letter, we need to see a fully certified letter," which they do not have yet. The Army letter says, "prequalification," and that does not seem to be an issue. Our instructors are getting their provisional state licenses. The Marine Corps letter says, "approved certification," even though they still have to complete some in-person training within the next year.

So that seems to be the stumbling block, and if you can't get that provisional JROTC license, you are not going to get paid your full pay. Now the instructor has a choice. Do I stay here, getting long-term sub pay and wait one year before I can go to Maxwell Air Force base to have this training? Do I move on to another state, or can I immediately get that provisional license and start getting paid the full compensation that I deserve? That seems to be the issue; they are hung up on provisional status.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you. The issue is, as you have experienced it, and the intention of S.B. 175 is the Air Force letter and the word "provisional."

MR. CALDWELL:
Yes, that seems to be the one that they get stuck on. I gave some different copies to the Senator from all the different service letters so you can see the difference. But it is clear in all those letters that this person from the military view is ready to go in the classroom. That is the challenge.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Okay, I just wanted to focus in on the issue. Senator Rogich, is the intention to address that issue with the Air Force? Or is it really broader than that?

SENATOR ROGICH:
My understanding is when the constituent came to me and we discussed this particular case, it was with regard to the Air Force. I was unfamiliar with the other branches until speaking with Lieutenant Colonel Scott Caldwell and getting an understanding. But there is a continued barrier that exists, and this is

an opportunity to streamline it and open up that pathway to having these JROTC instructors in the classroom.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRAY:
Yes, the Air Force is the one that precipitated this event. I love my branch, but they continue to be the fly in the ointment. This would also prevent any reinterpretations of the others down the road that all say the same thing, but they're interpreted differently. So by enacting this law, it would clear the way for everybody and not leave it open to interpretation again. As far as the way other states do it, I can tell you that Arizona, California and Washington do allow it.

So as to how California does it, Senior Master Sergeant Padilla may be able to directly answer that one head on because he is leaving this State to take a position in California.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I appreciate that. I think it is more of other states are doing it and so on, and I think that point has been made. Lieutenant Colonel, do you want to chime in for the record?

MR. CALDWELL:
Just one last thing. The way the services do this, it does change. I think the bill is broad enough that it is addressing the Air Force issue and the letter and the verbiage right now, but all these services constantly change how they do their requirements. So I think this will protect us for the future—that no matter what kind of terminology and how these letters are morphed or whatever the training process is for the services. If NDE will accept the letter and the verbiage in there that says this person is ready to go in the classroom—no matter what terminology is used—there won't be anything blocking them from getting that provisional license.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you, I understand that part. Just one other question. And this is for Senator Rogich. Is it required for these JROTC instructors to work under a certified teacher?

SENATOR ROGICH:
I believe that they have to be under the supervision of a certain instructor, correct?

MR. CALDWELL:
When they get that additional clearance, like in this letter, we call it LOSS, for line-of-sight supervision. Until they finish that complete one, they are supposed to be there with other certified JROTC instructors. In this case, it specifically lays that out in the letter. When we've had instructors get that LOSS clearance, that is not the full CNACI background clearance, but it is an interim clearance that says you can go ahead and get in the classroom now as long as you're there with other certified instructors so we can get you working. That is while we are waiting for this two-to-three month process to get their full CNACI background check. So it is important.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Okay, I appreciate that. I will open support testimony now.

SUSAN KEEMA (Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents):
On behalf of the districts, we support S.B. 175. We support eliminating any barriers for veterans to teach JROTC in Nevada. Thank you for your time and attention to this bill.

ANDREW LEPEILBET (Chairman, United Veterans Legislative Council):
I am the chairman of the United Veterans Legislative Council, representing nearly 250,000 veterans in our State and the half million Nevadans, when you include their families in Nevada. We are in support of this bill. I do recognize, having listened to the testimony so far, Senator Dondero Loop, I think there's a path there administratively. Also, I understand the other testimonies about how a change of leadership could affect that path. Why not do both? Get it accomplished through the administrative path but pass the bill to codify it in law so someone later does not change the design of the sentences. We support this bill entirely.

BILL GREY (Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 989):
We have 297 active members in our group, and we are in full support of this legislation.

MS. MEYER:
We would appreciate your support of S.B. 175 as it is a meaningful step toward removing unnecessary barriers for veterans who wish to continue serving their communities. We will continue to work on amendments for this bill, which is a testament to our commitment to veterans, students and the future of our State.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I will close the hearing on S.B. 175 and open the hearing on S.B. 305.

SENATE BILL 305: Revises provisions relating to interscholastic activities. (BDR 34-1007)

SENATOR FABIAN DOÑATE (Senatorial District No. 10):
I am here to present S.B. 305, a bill committed to building Nevada's future in sports entertainment. I am joined by Mr. Paul Speaker, the CEO of the Desert Dogs. Today, we will go through S.B. 305 bill language, national trends related to the provision and expected impact in the presentation, Building Nevada's Future in Sports Entertainment, (Exhibit C contains copyrighted material. Original is available on request from the Research Library.).

What brings us here today? We are talking about an act relating to interscholastic activities and requiring the NIAA [Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association] to adopt regulations that designate lacrosse as a sanctioned sport. The act also includes other information regarding a fund to support certain infrastructure and services to pupils who participate.

Senate Bill 305 directs the NIAA to adopt regulations that designate lacrosse as a sanctioned sport, putting it on equal footing with other high school sports in Nevada. This includes setting eligibility and participation standards, creating competition rules and establishing the length of the lacrosse season and practice start dates. The bill ensures the safety guidelines are aligned with existing regulations under *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) Chapter 385B. It would also establish a pipeline infrastructure fund to develop and manage the infrastructure and provide wraparound support services for our student athletes.

The reason we brought this bill today is that lacrosse has been one of the fastest growing team sports in the United States over the last few decades with participation growing in our high schools. Additionally, the International Olympic

Committee (IOC) has approved lacrosse's inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Lastly, just to conclude my remarks, let's talk about the impact of lacrosse in our economy. This bill aligns K-12 lacrosse programs with professional sports teams by creating a pathway for students to become professional athletes. Official recognition will unlock new funding opportunities, expand athletic sponsorship and recruitment efforts and promote inclusivity in the sports. On the economic side, sanctioning lacrosse will drive tourism and local economic growth through tournaments and events, creating new coaching and sports administration jobs and further enhance Nevada's reputation as the sports and entertainment capital of the world.

PAUL SPEAKER (CEO, Las Vegas Desert Dogs):
I am excited to be here today and walk you through a little bit of lacrosse and its importance. We'll start off with its indigenous roots. Lacrosse origins can be traced back as early as the twentieth century [*sic*] as the longest running team sport in North America. It's also the fastest growing sport in the U.S. We've seen a 22.6 percent increase in girls teams in the U.S., and an 18.3 percent increase in boys teams since 2018.

The Western States are one of the fastest growing regions. Everybody recognizes the East Coast has had lacrosse for a long time, but we have seen it move across the Mississippi into California and Utah. On the sanction side, California sanctioned high school varsity lacrosse in 2016 and Utah followed suit in 2024. On the college side, we have seen a 97 percent increase in growth in women's teams and a 60 percent growth in men's teams since 2000. New college programs have been added for women at San Diego State after being sanctioned in California and for men at the University of Utah.

Currently in Nevada, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) is the only college with a club program. Passing this bill will no doubt influence colleges, such as the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) to add lacrosse. On the professional growth side, there are two men's professional leagues, the National Lacrosse League (NLL), an indoor league which is where the Las Vegas Desert Dogs play. Then there's the Premier Lacrosse League (PLL), which is outdoor. The NLL chose Las Vegas as their expansion city. Our partners on that are not only our owner, Joe Tsai, but also Wayne Gretzky, Dustin Johnson and Steve Nash.

On the women's side, the PLL just launched the first-ever women's lacrosse professional league in November 2024. These leagues continue to see growth year over year in TV audience attendance and fandom.

The next slide on page 9, Exhibit C, shows that on the USA lacrosse side, in October 2023, the IOC announced the inclusion of lacrosse in the LA 2028 Summer Olympics. This will be the first time for women's lacrosse and the first time since 1948 for men's lacrosse. It is a huge step to expand lacrosse's footprint as a mainstream sport, especially for youth who will watch from home.

On the USA lacrosse side, Elevate '28 is a new program that USA Lacrosse has announced will double the participation in lacrosse to 4 million in the next decade. This group of established entities includes Joe Tsai Sports, the owner of the Las Vegas Desert Dogs. We've all come together to ensure equal access to the sport through strategic initiatives and platforms.

The goal of this bill is to help youth in Nevada have a chance to aspire to and achieve playing lacrosse at the next level, whether in college, professionally or the ultimate goal of being part of Team USA in the Olympics. Passing this bill can help us to do just that.

Youth participation in lacrosse in Nevada has grown tremendously over the last four years; however, there is still a long way to go. There are a total of 32 high schools and 25 middle schools in Las Vegas and Reno combined that currently have programs. There are six club organizations at UNR which, as I mentioned before, is the only university with a club team.

A really interesting thing about lacrosse, as opposed to other sports, is that there was a national survey done and the positive outcome—specifically for girls who participate in lacrosse—is impressive. Among all sports in the U.S., girls lacrosse athletes rank highest in these four areas—positive self-esteem, more social support, graduating from college and psychosocial health. So it is really healthy for young women to participate in this sport. There is a 99 percent graduation rate among Division 1 women's lacrosse players, and 51 percent of girls' high school lacrosse players earned an A/A- average and 28 percent of boys did the same.

There are a tremendous amount of annual lacrosse tournaments—five for both boys and girls that draw over 3,500 participants annually. This bill will help supercharge this effort and give young athletes the opportunity to complete for a State championship and be noticed by more colleges for scholarship opportunities.

We at the Desert Dogs have been supporting lacrosse since the inception of the team three years ago, when the team was formed. In 2002, we were an expansion team in the NLL, backed by Joe Tsai, as I mentioned, and Wayne Gretzky, Steve Nash and Dustin Johnson. We have a long-term commitment to Nevada, and growing lacrosse in the community is really important for us.

To that end, we are currently committed to educating and training youth through our free clinics and summer camps. We started the first two-sport camp, Camp 99, with Wayne Gretzky, which is a combination of hockey and lacrosse. We will do that again this year. It is in a partnership with the Las Vegas Golden Knights and the Henderson Silver Knights. We are excited about how participation is growing. It is a great program where you can spend a full week going back and forth from lacrosse in the afternoon to hockey in the morning.

We have had several free clinics over the past three years, and we are committed to making lacrosse more accessible to the youth in Nevada. One of the programs that we are really excited about is Sticks for Success, the school program that we have implemented through the Desert Dogs. We've visited over 40 schools to teach PE teachers lacrosse and instruct them on how to teach the game to students as part of their curriculum.

We work hand-in-hand with USA Lacrosse to develop a curriculum that is specific for grade schoolers and high schoolers so that they can actually get sticks in hand and be prepared when there's an adoption of a varsity sport at the school level.

Our players and staff have introduced the game of lacrosse to over 7,000 students through this program. We are committed to working with local community leaders to expand and improve current recreational resources and building new lacrosse-focused complexes to make the sport more accessible for all youth in Nevada.

Talking about the economic growth, as the Senator said, Nevada can be the hub for lacrosse. And this bill is a step in the right direction. Nevada's huge potential to be a hub for youth lacrosse with expanded infrastructure, organized leagues, more tournaments, training facilities and camps for youth will all be generated through this program.

This sanctioning can also draw residents of nearby states to train and participate in camps, clinics and tournaments here. The sanctioned teams will be able to travel to Nevada from Utah and California to play high school teams in Nevada. Currently, without the sanction, this is not allowed. This can help bolster the local economy and help local businesses thrive.

In closing, I support the passing of S.B. 305. As a parent of four daughters, we moved 15 years ago from the East Coast to California outside of Los Angeles, and all four of my daughters played lacrosse. There was not one women's program—a travel program, a young women's program, a school program—for them to play lacrosse, so their lacrosse years then ended. They did play some Division 1 tennis and some other things, but we all missed lacrosse. I think it is really important for us to move forward. Passing this bill will give young Nevada women the same opportunity to compete at the highest levels and help young men pursue their dreams.

SENATOR TITUS:
I asked you this, but I just want to get it on the record. Why the need for the study per se? Do other programs—when we expand a sports program—is there typically a study to do this? Is there a need for a study? Is that how it's been expanded in other states?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
The bill was filed several months ago prior to the legislative session. The study itself is separate from the provisions of lacrosse. The rationale for the study was, I think, because over the long term, we have seen this in discussions with football and other sports. The question is, what would it take for us to align our economy or our local sports infrastructure to professional sports so students have the pipeline to go play in high school, college and hopefully stay here to play in professional sports?

The question that has come up over time is, "Have we developed the infrastructure to actually provide wraparound services for student athletes as

they are going through high school education?" Because a lot of the time, infrastructure and support services are at the collegiate level and not at the high school level. So the goal was, if this bill were to be passed, over the next two years, we could take a look back at how to ensure that Nevada athletes of the State are supported so that they can go to UNLV or UNR and actually participate. Eventually, if they wanted to, they could become a professional athlete or represent Team USA in the Olympics. That was the rationale for that section of the bill.

SENATOR TITUS:
Thank you for that. As I also mentioned to you, I am a sports enthusiast and I've certainly watched a lot of sports, especially now with March Madness and the Knights. When we watch these collegiate sports on TV, usually the colleges will say that 99.9 percent of their student athletes do not go on to professional careers in sports, adding that what's most important is their education.

So having the presentation about the pipeline for professional sports has me a little concerned because we're not touting the benefits of participating in sports, but emphasizing, "Oh, you might become a professional at this." I know that most student athletes do not become professionals. There are things you gain from participating in a team sport. You yourself, Senator, spoke of the benefits of being an athlete—the cooperation, the team spirit and all those things you gain are valuable, yet it's not the professional sport component of it that is the most important. So could you clarify this emphasis on becoming a professional?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
The intention was to provide support so that students who want to participate in athletics at the high school level have the support to participate. The thing that we have noticed is that—and there are a lot of studies to back this up as well—students who participate in sports generally have better, higher academic achievement, but not all of that is the case, right?

So we want to make sure that as they are going through school, they actually participate or have the support to participate because of the benefits you mention. If there's an amendment that needs to come forward to make that more aligned, I am happy to work with you on that as well.

SENATOR BUCK:
I for one work with youth in my day job and I love the idea of having another opportunity for children to be involved and especially active. I was wondering though, you had mentioned that you can't host tournaments here because it's not a sanctioned sport or it's not allowed. Could you go into a little bit more depth with that?

MR. SPEAKER:
Right now, as an unsanctioned State, you can't play other sanctioned states in any kind of interstate play. Also, if you are coming here for tournament play, you'll increase them because you'll just have way more kids playing lacrosse.

So it's two separate things. The five tournaments that come here will be increased by having more participation at the State level. Secondarily, you'll be able to play California and Utah in sanctioned opportunities for high schools.

SENATOR BUCK:
Can our teams go to Utah because they are sanctioned and play them?

MR. SPEAKER:
No. It's sanctioned to sanctioned. And on the other side of it, one of the greater things is that you can have kids playing for state championships like they do in other sports.

SENATOR BUCK:
Great. Thank you.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
My questions are around the NIAA and working with them. Have you talked with them? And is that how you came up with your list of what they need to change in the provisions, or are these your recommendations? Can you go into that a little bit?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
Just to be clear, are you referring to section 2 of the bill?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Yes.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
These are the requirements that generally exist when a sport becomes sanctioned. It's the same requirements traditionally set in other states. They set the ground rules as to what everyone plays for. We are in preliminary discussions with the NIAA in terms of what the right protocol procedure is. There are different structures as to how they survey students and so forth. So this section would pretty much read that they would start the process of setting up the ground rules. It is not a mandate that every school has to set one up, but at least they all have this opportunity to do so if they want to establish a program at their high school and participate.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Okay. Where you say under—and it may be that it goes with the funding, I could not quite figure out—section 3, subsection 1, paragraph (c), where it says, "provide wraparound services," are you referencing the funding, or are you referencing wraparound services within the sport?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
Excellent question. In section 3, we were referring to the support services that we need to develop so we can cultivate athletes in our schools and programs. It is not specifically tied to lacrosse; it is more broad and general. A good example of a wraparound service would be tutoring support for students who are athletes. It would not be just unique to lacrosse. So the NIAA would be able to accept grants and donations based on what this section of the bill would establish.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Okay, thank you very much. I have some other questions, but they belong in another committee that I chair, so we'll wait for those.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I do have a couple of questions. You mentioned that you had conversations with the NIAA, but you have not really gone very far with them; they are just kind of surface level. My question is, doesn't the NIAA have a process for adding sports and why not go through that process?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
One of the things we discovered is—and I will use this just as an example—flag football was the most recently established and sanctioned through that process.

The difficulty right now is the accessibility of understanding the process of becoming sanctioned as a sport. If you are a general member of the public, you would not have been able to find that currently. That was among the challenges that we were facing in terms of why it was necessary. The second question is, there's this idea that if you don't have surveys of students that want to participate, it makes it more challenging to advocate for the sanctioning of the sport. For flag football, that process took four years before they even got to the point where they could sanction it.

We are in a different situation because we have a professional sports team in our State; there's already going to be an interest in that platform. So ideally, what we wanted to do was at least establish the rules so that schools could start aligning themselves to do that process. In speaking with the NIAA, they also have the ability to do an open division, which might be something we are looking at as well.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Why don't you explain open division for those who may not know what that is.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
When you sanction a state sport, from my understanding, a high school will determine at that point that it wants to establish this program. That is because there is student interest, and they have the ability to start a girls' or boys' program. At that time, many of the students that participated in that club sport would now sign up to be a part of the sanctioned sport, which means they can compete against other high schools.

There is a process of establishing an open division where essentially—if I understand this correctly—you wouldn't be necessarily tied to a programmer school, but you can still participate as the sport is going through full sanctioning. So full sanctioning is the final step for it to be participatory, but that would be the first route to start that process. That's from my understanding.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Okay, I think we will see what happens as we get more comments. I would like to hear from the NIAA in terms of what that piece is. The other thing is, in the bill, in section 3, subsection 1, paragraphs (a) and (b), it talks about the NIAA

really being involved in promoting the sport and contracting people that would help grow the sport.

Help me understand, because I just haven't seen that model before. It doesn't mean it isn't there, it just means I do not know about it—that the NIAA would be responsible for that, as opposed to schools or communities. Walk me through that a little bit.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
Let me give an example as to how this could be stood up as a side note if the bill was to be passed. Football is a good example. Many of the problems we are having right now is that oftentimes high school students who play football and want to go play professionally either at UNLV, UNR or beyond that, feel like they have not been given the right support systems in terms of participating in that sport and moving beyond that.

As I mentioned earlier, at the university level you would be given coaching, advice in terms of financial assistance, how you can become a professional athlete and so forth. The NIAA traditionally is just focused on setting the ground rules and so forth. The idea was if there was a donor or multiple donors that said "we want to provide more support, doing financial training for students," for example, the NIAA would have the ability to do so as part of this fund. That was the idea of why it would be established with the NIAA.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you. So just in terms of follow-up, I know this is not a finance committee, but I just want to make sure I understand the policy behind it. Would the NIAA only do that if there was a donor? Is that a must or is it prescriptive?

SENATOR DOÑATE:
It is prescriptive, so that if they wanted to accept these funds for these parts of regular wraparound services, et cetera, they would have the ability to do so.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you. We will hear support testimony for S.B. 305 now.

DACIA PERSKY (Vegas Strong Lacrosse):
I am proud to represent Vegas Strong Lacrosse (VSL) and Bishop Gorman High School. As a Las Vegas native and as someone who proudly says that I grew up playing lacrosse in Las Vegas, I was fortunate to experience the sport at its peak when there were multiple varsity, JV and middle school girls' teams. The accessibility of the sport at the time provided me with ample opportunities to grow as a player and an individual, eventually earning a scholarship to play lacrosse at the collegiate level.

When I returned to Las Vegas in 2020, I was saddened to see the drastic decline in girls' lacrosse shrinking to just five total teams. Determined to reignite the sport's presence, I immersed myself in coaching and founded VSL, a 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to making the game financially accessible and widely available to female athletes. Through year-round programming and a commitment to inclusivity, we have seen firsthand the transformative impact of accessibility.

In just two years, our club has grown to over 120 players spanning ages 10 to 18. We have sent ten young women to play lacrosse at the collegiate level with another eight committed to NCAA programs. Our local league and VSL has also experienced steady growth with a 5 percent yearly increase since 2020, bringing us to 220 registered players this spring. As I read these statistics, I am thrilled by the progress we have made as a community.

However, I strongly believe that lacrosse is growing at a fraction of what it could be, primarily due to the lack of school support and recognition. Just this year, seven of my club athletes were denied the opportunity to sign their national letters of intent at their local high schools simply because their schools do not acknowledge lacrosse as a supported program. Imagine the impact if their peers had witnessed them using lacrosse as a pathway to collegiate success. With surrounding states like California and Utah sanctioning high school lacrosse, more college lacrosse programs than ever before, a newly launched professional women's league and lacrosse making its Olympic debut in 2028, the opportunities for girls' lacrosse athletes are limitless.

I truly believe now is the time to invest in the future of lacrosse in Nevada, ensuring that every girl has a chance to play, compete and achieve their dreams in Nevada and beyond.

MASON MCLAY:
I am a sophomore at Pinecrest Academy Sloan Canyon in Henderson. Today, I am here to voice my support for S.B. 305. Lacrosse is more than just a sport; it is a way for student athletes to build strong relationships, develop discipline and learn valuable leadership skills. As a player, lacrosse has taught me the importance of hard work, time management, balancing practices, games and school work and that has helped me become more responsible and organized.

Additionally, the sport has given me a sense of belonging and requires teamwork that extends beyond the field. Making lacrosse a sanctioned high school sport will give more students the opportunity to grow, both as athletes and as individuals. Sanctioning lacrosse would give me and many others the opportunity to compete for our school and create many memories that will last a lifetime. I hope you will support S.B. 305 so that more students in Nevada can experience this amazing game.

RYLAND PETERSON:
I am a 9th grader at Pinecrest Sloan Canyon High School in Nevada. I am here to express my strong support for S.B. 305, which would officially sanction lacrosse as a high school sport in Nevada. As a lacrosse player, I have seen firsthand how this sport has fostered teamwork, discipline and leadership. Lacrosse is not just about competition, it is about building relationships and developing skills to help us both on and off the field. The sport has given me confidence and taught me the importance of hard work and perseverance,

Sanctioning lacrosse would provide more students like me with this opportunity to compete at a high level, represent our schools and create long-lasting memories. It would also allow our State to catch up with the growing interest in lacrosse across the nation. I know many of my teammates and classmates would benefit from having more opportunities to play and improve. I hope you will support S.B. 305 so that more students in Nevada can experience the positive impact of lacrosse. Thank you for considering this important step toward expanding our opportunities for students throughout the State.

JEREMY SIEVERTS:
I am a Las Vegas resident, a teacher at Pinecrest Sloan Canyon, a high school lacrosse coach, nonprofit director for Pirates Lacrosse Club and co-founder of Westward Lacrosse, the largest provider of lacrosse programming to the Las Vegas community. I have also been blessed to have played collegiately at

the University of Maryland and professionally for ten years in Major League Lacrosse and the Premier Lacrosse League.

I am honored to be here today to proudly support S.B. 305. To me, this bill is simply about one objective—providing opportunities for young people in Nevada to follow lacrosse. As a second-generation lacrosse player in my family, lacrosse has been a part of my entire life. While I can't share all of my story today, I can share that a major theme has simply been following lacrosse, sometimes excitedly and willingly, and other times with uncertainty but without hesitation, I have followed the game, and it simply made all the difference.

I began by competing on an athletic scholarship from my home state at the University of Maryland, then enrolling at Durham University in England to coach lacrosse and earn my master's degree as part of their postgraduate sports scholarship program, to playing ten seasons professionally, to moving west to coach high school, and sitting here before you today, talking about my favorite sport and North America's oldest sport, lacrosse.

There's no better time to follow lacrosse, as opportunities now for young people to continue to develop educationally through scholarships, name image and likeness opportunities, and now competing professionally and internationally in the Olympics and beyond. Our neighbors in California and Utah both sanction lacrosse and further, both added college programs and professional teams.

Sanctioning lacrosse in Nevada would not only provide young people the opportunities to follow where the sport leads them, but also to return home in the future to Nevada to a more robust lacrosse community with more opportunities to get back to the game. I tell my players frequently, most of the good things in my life are due to lacrosse. I believe with the passage of S.B. 305, more young people will be provided the opportunities I have been so blessed to experience by following lacrosse.

CONNOR KIRST:
I serve as the team captain for the Las Vegas Desert Dogs as well as the director of youth lacrosse. Lacrosse is a remarkable sport that fosters community, and it would be an excellent opportunity for students to compete and represent their schools at the highest level. Over the past three-and-a-half years, I have witnessed significant growth and enthusiasm for lacrosse across all age groups.

During my visits to various elementary and middle schools throughout Las Vegas, I have introduced the sport to thousands of kids and there's a genuine interest in participating. It is important that we provide these young athletes the opportunity to engage in this beautiful game. I am so grateful for lacrosse, not for the games or championships I have won, but because of the relationships I have formulated with coaches and teammates that are truly lifelong relationships.

Having grown up in New Jersey, where there's a rich tradition and community around the sport, I have had the honor and privilege to be a part of it. It would be incredible to put the foundation in place for something similar here in Nevada. It is an honor to be here today, and I really appreciate you listening, but it all starts with your help in getting S.B. 305 passed.

JUSTIN CUTLER (High Sierra Lacrosse League):
I am the president of the High Sierra Lacrosse League (HSLL). That's the organization responsible for the administration of lacrosse here in the Reno/Tahoe area.

I would like to give a little history of lacrosse in Reno. We started 20 years ago this year and it was just one high school program, a boys program at Galena High School. Over the last 20 years, we have seen that grow to 600 student athletes at the high school level, 1,200 including the youth level. There are ten boys' varsity and nine girls' varsity programs in Reno and the surrounding counties to include Fallon and Douglas. We have had incredible growth here locally in the game of lacrosse.

I would like to address a couple of things. As far as the effort to get it sanctioned, we have worked with the NIAA over the last, probably, decade and we connect with them on a yearly basis to see how we can move the sport to a fully sanctioned, recognized varsity sport in the schools. There's not a clear path forward for us. There's not a clear map to getting the sport fully sanctioned. In referencing a four-year threshold to get the sport as a fully sanctioned sport, that's a whole high school career. So, not one of the jerseys that you see in this room or the four overflow rooms will ever be recognized as a varsity athlete in their sport right now. I think this is a remarkable and a commendable effort to get this bill in front of the Senate in support of Nevada's student athletes.

Funding-wise, the High Sierra Foundation in that 20-year period has spent over $600,000 to fund the growth of the sport and growing programs. They have over $300,000 in the foundation to support this effort and to be there in the development of programs, equipment, underwriting coaches, all those things. We have lots of resources to support this effort and we have full support from the HSLL for this bill. I have submitted a letter of support (Exhibit D).

CHRISTY CAHILL (World Lacrosse):
I am speaking on behalf of World Lacrosse, the international governing body for the sport of lacrosse as recognized by the IOC. We represent 93 member nations across the continents. We are charged with the important task of growing, developing, promoting, governing and leading the sport around the world. As one of the only U.S.A. international sports federations, we care deeply about the growth of lacrosse in this country. This is where the game was created among native Americans. It is our original team sport with a truly unique history and cultural significance that prevails today.

Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. In 2028, we will take the global stage at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles as a medal sport for the first time in over a century. The return of lacrosse to the Olympics and the debut of women's lacrosse in the game is already fueling unprecedented growth worldwide, inspiring new generations of athletes to take up the game. This momentum presents an incredible opportunity, not just globally, but right here in Nevada.

We see firsthand how access to lacrosse creates pathways for young athletes to engage in their communities, excel in academics, represent their country on the world stage and possibly pursue careers in the sport. With the Olympic spotlight on lacrosse in just over three years, the sport's popularity will surge with the potential to reach a global audience of five billion people. That surge will not just occur in traditional hotspots, but in emerging markets such as Nevada, where young athletes will be inspired to play. They deserve the same opportunities as their peers in other states. We strongly urge you to support S.B. 305 to sanction lacrosse as a high school sport. By doing so, you are not just recognizing the sport, you are investing in a global movement and in the future of Nevada's student athletes.

SY FREDERICK:
I am the athletic administrator at Faith Lutheran Middle School and High School. I am in support of this bill sanctioning lacrosse in Nevada. I have witnessed firsthand, over the last decade, lacrosse at Faith Lutheran grow our community and grow our athletes' ability to belong and find a place of belonging in both our boys and girls programs. It's been a tremendous thing for our school and our community. It has provided a pathway for a lot of our athletes socially and athletically. I look forward to seeing it being sanctioned in Nevada, so all our high schools have the same opportunity and the same pathway.

FINN HANSEN:
I am a freshman at Bishop Manogue Catholic High School and I am here to fully support S.B. 305. I am the grandson of Senator Hansen, but don't use that against me. Like many, I am the first in my family to play lacrosse, a very new sport in Nevada. Also like many, I have grown to love the game and it's a passion for me now. We are very fortunate to have experienced coaches, talented players and a community that supports us.

By playing lacrosse, I am able to be part of a team that represents our school, our community and our State. Making lacrosse a sanctioned sport increases access to people, especially those who have to pay to be part of these clubs. It opens doors to us all. Competition may be hard to find, especially if we can only play in Nevada. Making lacrosse a sanctioned sport allows for more teams and states that we can play in.

Lastly, pursuing lacrosse after high school can be difficult, but by making it a sanctioned sport, colleges can look at this and it can be easier to pursue it and possibly even get scholarships to assist us in college.

T.J. WRIGHT:
I am here to voice my support for S.B. 305. I am the head coach of the UNR men's lacrosse club, an MCLA [Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association] Division 1 program. I do not represent UNR, and my opinions and thoughts expressed today are my own.

I was born in Reno and started playing lacrosse in 6th grade. I instantly fell in love with the sport and knew I wanted to play in college, but that would prove an extremely difficult task for me. Given the barriers that existed because lacrosse was not a sport that was fully supported by the local high schools, I

feared colleges wouldn't take me seriously. Access to game film, athletic resources like a weight rooms, field space during inclement weather and academic support for missing classes for travel games would still prove to be hurdles in my recruiting journey.

To overcome these challenges, my single mom had to invest massive amounts of time and resources to try to make my dream come true. This included driving me four hours to San Francisco every single Sunday in the summer to practice with a travel team that had the resources to travel to the East Coast.

Through the monumental effort of my mom and the HSLL, in 2015, I committed to the University of Denver, a top ten NCAA Division 1 program, led by the greatest lacrosse coach of all time, Bill Tierney. Since my commitment to Denver, HSLL has generated multiple NCAA and MCLA college players, both men and women, including AJ Mercurio, who now plays lacrosse professionally, and was my teammate at Denver. This is with the hurdles I mentioned earlier. Imagine how many more success stories would exist if those hurdles were gone.

My four years playing lacrosse for Denver were the most valuable and transformative experience of my life, so much so, that I came back to Reno and now volunteer more than 12 hours a week as the head coach of UNR men's lacrosse club in an attempt to share my experience with as many lacrosse players as possible. With lacrosse becoming an NIAA-sanctioned sport, many of the hurdles I experienced would disappear, allowing for many more Nevada lacrosse players to have the same amazing college experience I had. There are players in high school right now who are of NCAA-level talent that are facing these same hurdles and would benefit greatly from the passage of S.B. 305.

BRIGG WORTHINGTON:
I played lacrosse at Douglas High School from 2017 to 2021, where it remains a club sport. Lacrosse had a huge impact on my life. Not only did I build lifelong friendships, I also earned a scholarship to play in Idaho. Now as the head coach of the Douglas boys' lacrosse team, I see firsthand how this sport benefits our students. This year, we nearly have 30 players, both experienced and new. Lacrosse keeps them active, teaches teamwork and motivates them to keep good grades and good attendance.

However, financial barriers prevented some students from playing. While our program has provided scholarships to cover these costs, sanctioning lacrosse at the NIAA level would eliminate this hurdle altogether. Lacrosse is a rapidly growing sport, and Nevada should be a part of this growth. I urge you to support S.B 305 and give more students the benefit from this incredible sport.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I will hear opposition testimony now.

TOM CLARK (Nevada Association of School Boards):
There is no argument that lacrosse is a big deal in this State. We are seeing it in Northern Nevada and Southern Nevada, even in some rural parts of the State. The Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB) is opposed to this bill simply because we have a set of rules that these athletes and the organizers have to follow through the NIAA to become a sanctioned sport.

A lot of the things in there are important because it sets the standard for us to be able to set these programs up in each of the individual schools and each of the individual districts.

I don't want to say, "jump the line," because that's not what it really is, but coming to the legislature to force the NIAA to push this forward and sanction it with the deadlines and the timeframes that it has, the NASB simply has to oppose it.

TESS OPFERMAN (Washoe County School District):
I want to echo NASB's concerns. This is not about supporting or not supporting lacrosse. We love lacrosse; it's a great sport. I am excited that a number of Washoe County School District (WCSD) students are here supporting the bill. The NIAA does have a system to bring sports into the district, and we have to follow that system. We don't see there being a point to singling out lacrosse and putting that into law. We don't single out baseball, football or any other sport. Those are done through NIAA and not put into NRS.

The WCSD is concerned about the cost to the district. We have a process through NIAA where we can evaluate those costs. Most of the funding that goes to the NIAA comes from the school district. We are also concerned about Title IX and making sure there are women's sports teams as well.

I love lacrosse and I know women's lacrosse is also popular, but we just saw a number of men testifying on this bill. We want to make sure that when there are sports in schools, there are sports for women, as well, following those Title IX requirements.

TIM JACKSON (Executive Director, Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association): I'm here on behalf of the NIAA in opposition to S.B. 305. We're not in opposition to athletics or lacrosse; we're in opposition to the process they're attempting to do. We support student athletics, but we also have to look at the overall benefit of bringing it on as a sanctioned sport, not that it doesn't benefit students academically, socially, emotionally or just as part of a team.

Every stat that was shared with you today could be shared for every sport that we currently offer in Nevada and many sports that we don't offer in Nevada. We are the number one dropout prevention program in Nevada. Our students graduate, and we want to continue that. We're not saying that the lacrosse players would not. We're saying that we'd like to bring them through the process.

We are also concerned with this funding. We don't want there to be an inherent disproportionality of funding. There is no one sport greater than another; they are all equitable and equal for all of our student athletes. What we are asking is that this be reviewed and closely scrutinized. We do not want there to be the appearance that we are funneling money out of the NIAA into a certain sport. We do not function in that manner. We are not a funding source. Student athletics is funded by the school districts that participate.

We are also concerned with the wraparound services that they are asking the NIAA to provide. That is a school-based item that I do believe exists at the school level and would continue to exist that way. The introduction of a new sport must be done in a way that fosters competitive balance with varying sizes of financial capabilities, and the ability of the school to meet those capabilities must be addressed.

My biggest concern is the word "sanctioning." I think there's a very confused statement as to what sanctioning would involve. There are many intricacies to sanctioning, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you have about it, but the one thing we need to consider involves the mention of a tournament that brings club teams to Nevada that compete in Las Vegas. Sanctioning would

mean our teams could no longer compete against those teams because we do not allow club versus high school teams. We are not in favor of this bill. I have submitted two letters of opposition (Exhibit E and Exhibit F).

CHAIR TAYLOR:
We will open it up for neutral testimony. Seeing none, we can take more support testimony now.

LUKE FUNK:
I go to Our Lady of the Snows School in Reno. I play lacrosse for the North Reno Outlaws, and I try to represent our community with the High Sierra Avalanche. I play on both teams. I am here today in support of S.B. 305. Please pass this bill because it will help our lacrosse community grow. I have played many sports, including basketball, flag football, soccer, baseball, skiing and others. Lacrosse is my favorite sport because it is the most fun out of all of them. Lacrosse brings people together. I made good friends through lacrosse. It has also taught me that in order to get better at something, you have to practice and try hard. It has taught me that hard work pays off. I look forward to playing lacrosse in high school with my friends. If you pass this bill, my friends and I would have a better high school experience. More people would be able to play lacrosse in high school. Please pass this bill.

AUDRE LUEAMRUNG:
I love playing lacrosse. I am in 5th grade and play for the North Reno Outlaws and the High Sierra Avalanche travel team. Lacrosse is very special because it uses every skill—running, passing, teamwork and quick thinking. When I play lacrosse, I feel strong, focused and empowered. Playing lacrosse is important for kids like me. It keeps me active and healthy. It teaches me teamwork, discipline and how to overcome challenges. I love to be part of my school lacrosse team and compete against other schools. Right now, many kids don't know how amazing lacrosse is because they have never had the chance to play it. If we make it an official school sport, every kid can try it and see why it is so special, so please pass this bill.

JOHN FUNK:
I am a father of a lacrosse player; my son sits to my right. I am a coach of lacrosse players; one of my other players sits to my left. I have been coaching in Northern Nevada for nearly 15 years. I have been involved in trying to have lacrosse sanctioned at the school district level. I can confirm to you that the

impact of lacrosse seems to be the same for everybody. Candidly, the things we are hearing from the NIAA and others is the same thing we've been hearing for the last ten years. There is always an excuse. There's always a reason: "There's something difficult in our path and that's a reason why you shouldn't take action." That's false.

Look at the children in this room. Can you look them in the eyes and tell them it's not worth doing something that might be difficult? It might be worth doing something for the first time. You tell them that it's not worth your time or effort to direct the NIAA to make this a sanctioned sport and allow everybody to be on the same level and compete. I urge you, do not let our children fall behind. You have the opportunity today to sanction lacrosse and keep our children on the same footing. Or you can do nothing, allow the NIAA to come in here and tell you there are too many obstacles. Do nothing, and they fall behind. The choice is yours.

RHETT HERALD:
I am the team captain for the Douglas Lacrosse Club. I think lacrosse is an amazing sport. Honestly, I think it's the best sport out of all of them. My teammates and I have made a stronger bond than I have made in any other sport. I've played football, Little League baseball, flag football and in any of those sports, the best friends I have made have been with lacrosse. It is the best place to learn hard work, effort and embracing the grind. I would really like to see this bill passed to help other people play this sport and find themselves in this sport and make good friends.

CAROLYN PALMA:
I am a goalie at Galena High School. I would like to ditto everyone else, especially on community efforts. I think building community is one of the most important parts of youth sports and activities.

KAITLYN CAMPBELL:
I am part of the Galena Lacrosse program. This is my third year with the program. I am a junior, and I just want to go on record and say that out of all the sports—I played basketball, volleyball and softball—and out of all those sports, lacrosse has such a big community and everybody supports each other. I have had the most support from lacrosse and being part of the programs in our club, the Avalanche. I am for this sport to be sanctioned, and I really hope that this happens.

DAVID HANCOCK:
I am the Reno High School varsity lacrosse team coach. I can't believe I sat here and saw three people who claim to be for kids sit up here in opposition to this bill. It blows my mind. For girls' lacrosse, 450 percent growth has happened in just the past ten years. There are three girls who got $2.5 million to $5 million contracts for NIL [name, image and likeness] deals. Five colleges have dumped over $30 million to build facilities just for girls' lacrosse. This sport definitely has its afterburners on full blast.

I see it like this. You have a binary decision here—yes or no. It is the easiest one that I could imagine. Because yes means you are voting for opportunities for our young student athletes. But a no vote is a vote to deny opportunities in the fastest growing sport—not just in the United States—but in the world. So for Nevada to stay ahead, especially for sports, this has to be a yes vote.

I seriously cannot believe that I just saw the NIAA and school board presidents come here in opposition of sanctioning a sport that would provide absolutely remarkable opportunities to student athletes in Nevada.

EMMA FARGO:
I am from Reno High School, here in support of S.B. 305. I just want to say ditto to everybody who came and spoke because the opportunities that lacrosse represents are very important.

ELLA ISAIA:
I'm here to speak in support of S.B. 305. I am a tri-sport athlete; lacrosse is my third sport. I have participated in track, mock trial, speech and debate and leadership, and this is the very first place I can say I have gotten to take a breath of fresh air. That doesn't come very often when you try to get involved in as many things as possible. It should be noted that the culture I have surrounded myself in within lacrosse is immense. As far as women within this sport, there are plenty within all these rooms—some of them are standing behind me—who love this sport. I am sure there are plenty of students and athletes who are looking for an opportunity to take that breath of fresh air. I hope that can inspire everybody and I ditto everything that has been said.

MAGGIE GRIMES:
I am a senior at Reno High School. I am one of the captains of the lacrosse team there. I think it would be a complete disservice to the younger generations

of Reno and Nevada to not pass this bill. It is very important to show the support to these generations and invest in this bill. As someone who was very involved in academics growing up, lacrosse was something that gave me an opportunity to think that I could do something more than I ever thought. I never thought I would be on a varsity sport or even a team captain. This really showed me a community, and the ability to be a part of something that I never thought I could be a part of. I think that this is something that needs to be an investment for the future generations of Nevada.

ROMAN CERVANTES:
I'm a two-year captain for the Spanish Springs Lacrosse Team. The opposing side said there's a funding issue and I don't believe that's true at all. Our football team has spent maybe $20,000 on brand new top-of-the-line football helmets. If lacrosse was to get sanctioned, I feel like that would be very beneficial to us because, as a team alone that is not sanctioned, we have to do all of our own fundraising.

Last year, we made around $18,000 just on our own. If we had the school support, who knows what we could do? I feel like our recruitment would be way better. Coach Tatro, a former UNR coach, has to distribute most of the equipment and use our fundraising and buy all the equipment and distribute it to the students. None of it is owned by the school. I feel like we should be sanctioned because it would be really beneficial and give lots of my teammates better opportunities to go to college or even further than that.

NIKO LUEAMRUNG:
I am in fifth grade, and I play for the North Reno Outlaws and the High Sierra Avalanche travel team. My friends at school ask me why we don't have lacrosse at our school. It looks so fun. But the problem is, most schools can't offer teams because its not an official school sport. If you pass this bill, schools can finally have lacrosse teams. It'll give me and my friends a way to grow closer. It will also help schools get equipment and coaches so everyone can play lacrosse. My classmates and I deserve the chance to play the game we love so much. We promise to work hard, play fair and represent Nevada as the best athletes we can be.

ADALINE SCHUM:
I am a defensive player for Galena Lacrosse. This will be my third year playing. Coming into my freshman year of high school, I had zero clue what lacrosse

was. I had never heard of it, never picked up a stick, none of that. I got encouraged to play by one of our family friends where their whole family plays boys lacrosse. I started playing, and it quickly grew to be my favorite sport. I always thought basketball was going to be my favorite, but now lacrosse is my favorite. I look forward to it every year. I could not wait for basketball to be over, quite frankly, because I was so excited for lacrosse to start.

I want everybody to have the opportunity to play. Not only will it give people the opportunity to play and the exposure, it will also give transportation to our games. Our very first game was to Spanish Springs, and I drove a car full of six girls because we had no bus and no way to get there. That bus would be one thing we could gain if we sanctioned lacrosse. I am in favor of this bill.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I have received three letters of support (Exhibit G, Exhibit H, Exhibit I). I will take testimony in opposition or neutral now. Seeing none, I will close the hearing on S.B. 305 and open public comment.

JOHN EPPOLITO:
Carson City School District invited Colin Kartchner to speak about kids using cell phones, social media and more. During one of Mr. Kartchner TedX talks, he said, "It is time that we start talking to the Ed. Tech. companies who have duped school boards and school administrators into the notion screen-based learning is only for the child's benefit when the research is starting to prove otherwise. We have to stand up to the big tech companies who are creating products, games and apps that are deliberately exploiting and manipulating our kids, all for insane profits."

Protect Nevada Children has been suggesting Internet-free cell phones for young children for years. Protect Nevada Children has tried to get Washoe County School District to educate parents about the dangers of the Internet and screen time for young children and about Internet-free cell phones. To date, the District has refused.

Washoe County public schools also make it almost impossible for parents who try to severely limit their own kids screen time and Internet use. Instead of helping parents protect their children, the school districts contribute to the problem by giving the kids one-to-one devices and sometimes Internet access.

Then things happen, like elementary school kids watching pornography on their district devices, and kids becoming addicted to screens. Even worse, kids are accessing suicide quizzes and many other inappropriate things. The school districts take no responsibility for the harm done to students even though they are the ones causing or contributing to the problem.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Seeing no more public comment, we are adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Linda Hiller,
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
S.B. 305	C	20	Senator Fabian Doñate	Presentation – Building Nevada's Future in Sports Entertainment
S.B. 305	D	34	Justin Cutler / High Sierra Lacrosse League	Support Letter
S.B. 305	E	39	Timothy Jackson / NIAA	Opposition Letter Number One
S.B. 305	F	39	Timothy Jackson / NIAA	Opposition Letter Number Two
S.B. 305	G	43	Chair Taylor	Support Letter
S.B. 305	H	43	Chair Taylor	Support Letter
S.B. 305	I	43	Chair Taylor	Support Letter