MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Eighty-third Session
April 25, 2025

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Angela D. Taylor at 9:35 a.m. on Friday, April 25, 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 Sandra Jauregui, Assembly District No. 41
Assemblymember P.K. O'Neill, Assembly District No. 40
Assemblymember Steve Yeager, Assembly District No. 9

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jimmy Lau, Nevada Association of Career Colleges
Anahit Baghshetsyan, Research Assistant, Nevada Policy Research Institute
Nicole Flangas, Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition

Tom Clark, Nevada Association of School Boards
Eduardo Martinez, Charter School Association of Nevada
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League
Brad Keating, Clark County School District
Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents

CHAIR TAYLOR:
We have two bills we are going to hear today.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER P.K. O'NEILL (Assembly District No. 40):
I am pleased today and honored to bring before you Assembly Bill (A.B.) 164.

ASSEMBLY BILL 164: Revises provisions relating to the Account for Student Indemnification. (BDR 34-544)

The Account for Student Indemnification was created in 1995 and is administered by the Commission on Postsecondary Education. The Commission oversees postsecondary educational institutions including private, academic, business, professional, technical and vocational schools. The Commission uses the Account for Student Indemnification to compensate the students who may have been harmed as a result of a licensed institution closing for unexpected reasons, such as a bankruptcy. It is basically an insurance policy for the student that protects them for their tuition investment.

Each student of an institution covered by the account pays a onetime fee of $5 at their initial enrollment in the institution. The institution then transmits these funds to the Commission each quarter for credit to the account. When the account balance reaches $250,000—which is what it is at today—the Commission notifies the institutions that they are not required to collect the fees until the balance falls below $250,000.

Since 1995, tuition costs have increased dramatically. Due to these inflationary pressures, we are asking to raise the cap on the Account for Student Indemnification from it is current $250,000 to $750,000 so we can protect students' investments if the institution they are attending unexpectedly closes its doors. The $250,000 cap has been in place since the account's creation in 1995. The increase to $750,000 will allow the Commission more flexibility in

processing claims such as those related to the February 2024 closure of the Career College of Northern Nevada (CCNN).

I have a PowerPoint presentation (Exhibit C) that I will go through very quickly. Basically, it just goes through what I have said before. It was created in 1995. It protects the students who have suffered harm from the closure of an institution. The statutes are quoted for you. It's a non-Executive Budget account that doesn't lapse to the State Treasury at the end of the fiscal year—the money stays in there—it is separate from the State budget. The $5 fee for a student enrollment at an institution is only paid once, at the closure.

The best example we had was back in February of 2024 when the CCNN closed its doors unexpectedly. The students were left trying to figure out what they were going to do next—and I have got to tell you the expenses to get a nursing degree now, at some of these colleges, is $90,000. It was unfortunate when the CCNN closed. The Commission was concerned that they would not have enough money in the account to cover the students. Several of [the students] were on the GI Bill or had federal grants and the federal government assisted them to recover their money. The Commission just barely had the finances left for those students that were not in those protected classes.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Is the $5 fee paid by all students who enroll in Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions? Or is it those independent institutions?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
No, it is only postsecondary education in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE)—University of Nevada, Reno; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Nevada State University. The community colleges are all part of NSHE and are excluded from it. It is just these private—various colleges that are postsecondary education—the technical schools, private schools that provide the training.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
How is this fee being paid currently? Is it added on to the student's fee?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
It is my understanding that it is a onetime fee paid by the student when they enroll, and the $5 fee is actually listed on a separate itemized account on their

invoice, or their billing. Not every student may pay the $5 fee because once the threshold is met—currently at the $250,000—then the $5 is not collected. Only when it falls below [would it begin to be collected again]. If we raise it to $750,000, the $5 fee will be collected again until we get to that three-quarters of a million dollars.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
So, it will never change from $5? It won't become $10? We are actually taxing students over 18 years old. We are actually putting a tax on them because we are asking them to pay a fee on top of what they are already paying to get an education.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
You are correct. It's in statute. The $5 is what they do pay. I have learned and most of us will agree—never say never in this building. It's like purchasing your vehicle, you have to have insurance. When you take a mortgage out, you have to have insurance. And this is basically an insurance fee that the student purchases for $5 that their $90,000 expense for that nursing degree will be protected, and they'll recover funds if the school that they've enrolled in closes its doors for some reason.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I appreciate that because I remember there was a Trump University that closed, and we could have compensated those people and we didn't. But my problem is insurance is a choice. You have lots of companies that you can choose from and different price points. You can choose what you want on there, depending on the kind of car you have, collision or what have you.

Even though it seems very minimal at $5, there's no guarantee it's not going to be raised, yet you are mandating that every student pays it—it's not like I can pay it if I want to. So if the university goes bankrupt, I have [the insurance] and maybe I do not want to pay for it because I am almost done and I do not need the insurance, so I don't care whether I have it or not. So it is your mandating that as a student, kids are paying this amount of money and there's no guarantee that it will not be raised.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
You're correct, and I really do not have an answer for you. Unless we wish to do another bill that makes it voluntary. Then, we should also look at NSHE and

their student fees and allow them to pick and choose what they would like if they do not want the student union services.

SENATOR TITUS:
Thank you, Sir, for at least recognizing the need. I know your intent is that it helps the students, but I have some clarification questions. Wording says it is per quarter. Nevada has a semester policy. Does that make any difference? How does it get written per quarter? Is it fiscal quarter?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
The institution pays it per quarter because students can come in at any time to start taking their classes. The student pays the $5 fee at their initial enrollment. The institution can keep that and then pay it quarterly. The director would be the best person to answer that question, but I would imagine their quarters are the same from—January, February, March and April, May and June.

SENATOR TITUS:
So, every student would pay this, regardless of whether they are a part-time student [or] they take one class. If they enroll, they pay this fee, correct?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
Again, when it is under—if the cap is not at its maximum—then those students enrolling for the first time would pay the $5. Just for clarification—I am already enrolled in XYZ technical college taking mechanics. You've just come in; you would pay the $5. I do not because I have already enrolled that first time.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
So my understanding is you are changing the threshold as to what can be collected because of the number of claims that are being received into the account. Is that correct?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
It is not necessarily the claims. It's what the claims can be or would be if a school closes down, like what happened in February of 2024. If the federal government had not come into play on the GI Bill and federal grants, they would have had trouble meeting those claims. With the inflation of the costs, as I said, a nursing degree will now run $90,000 at some of the schools. I'll use Touro as an example—they are part of postsecondary education. Touro not only has nursing degrees, but they also have medical degrees which, as we all know, are

even more expensive. We are just raising that cap to prepare or be available if the unfortunate should happen, these students are protected.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
As I am digesting this information, I think one of the things that is probably relevant, maybe not directly to this issue, but I think perhaps we need to look into what is the approval process is? Why are these institutions or these vocational colleges being stood up, and what is leading to them to fail? Essentially, what are the requirements that we are asking them to be able to maintain operations so that it is not a burden on the student? Because we should never be having institutions closing down or misleading students into falsely believing that they can receive an education there and [then] leaving students scrambling.

So while I understand the intention of helping students receive that closure or receive that incentive or payment back because they were misled, I think we need to have some repercussions for the institutions that are choosing to close down and misleading these students. So maybe that is aside from this bill, but I just want to reflect that on the record.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
This is already in statute. The intent of the bill is to increase that threshold from $250,000 to $750,000, correct?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
Correct.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I want to protect the students, so I am appreciative of that because we have had situations when schools have closed and left kids hanging. It almost seems as though the institution should be paying for this insurance, if you will—for the students. Has this ever been any part of the conversations?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
This bill was brought forward at the request of Dr. Kerner, and he made me aware of it. The executive director asked me if I would present the bill and carry the bill forward. I can't answer that for you. I will say this is not an everyday occurrence for a school accredited or licensed by postsecondary to fail or have financial issues. So I can't directly answer that for you, but I know it is not

every day. But when it does occur, at the prices of what it costs to run basically a higher education training facility, we want to protect the students and make sure the funds are there. So it may be for further discussion at a later date.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I appreciate that, Assemblymember.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
While I recognize this is already in statute—what happens to the money if they don't go defunct? These students have paid for the insurance, right? And I am at Touro University and it is a greatly respected, highly accredited university and it does not go under, but they've collected this $5 from all their students. So they just keep it more like an insurance company?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
The institution has to take that $5, and every quarter, pay it to postsecondary to go into the Account [for Student Indemnification] per the bill. So I am not sure if I understand your question. The institution does not keep the money or have an account.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Right. So that account is building because every student at a private university is paying it. So after the pandemic, we did have some institutions that had struggled. But in all good times—let us just pretend—we don't have anybody that goes under, it's going to continue to build in that savings account, right? Is there ever a cap? What happens to that?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
Now I understand. Yes. And that is actually what we're talking about, right here in the statute as it is. Right now, that cap is set at $250,000. We're asking for it to be raised to $750,000 or three-quarters of a million dollars. Once that cap is met, the students who are enrolling, no longer pay the $5. So not every student is going to end up paying $5 if the cap is met.

I guess maybe it is best to show that today, the cap is at $250,000, the money is at $250,000 in the account. So if you enroll today in Touro or some of the other schools, you will not pay the $5.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Basically, I pay the $5 for four years. I never use it. The person who comes in behind me doesn't have to pay the $5 I paid, so I essentially bought the insurance for the next person. Just a question for a friend.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER O'NEILL:
You pay it once, one time. So, in your three or four years, however many years it takes, you have only paid that $5 once. But yes, you are right. If the cap is met, and the account is at the quarter now or the three-quarters if it's passed, that student coming in would not pay it. You are right. One student may pay at one time; another student may be fortunate in the cycle where they don't have that fee attached to their tuition.

JIMMY LAU (Nevada Association of Career Colleges):
Nevada Association of Career Colleges is the trade organization for the proprietary schools that are licensed and regulated by the CPE [Continuing Professional Education]. I have submitted an information sheet (Exhibit D).

We are proudly in support of this bill today. The initial cap for the Student Indemnification Account was put in place prior to the year I was born, and it has not been raised over time. Obviously, we know that tuition has gone up in both the private postsecondary world and the public postsecondary world. I think both of them are at about 200 percent growth over the same period of time.

To answer some of the questions that came up from the committee, the fee is actually leveraged directly against the institution. However, just based on the way that these things work, it is passed through to the students because it is levied at specific times. So when it is levied in each quarter, and based on the number of enrolled students, it is a pass-through that occurs at that time. Once it reaches the threshold balance, the fee collection stops against the institution, and the institution stops collecting it against the students.

In addition to that, what we learned from the closure of CCNN is that these closures are very infrequent and this account is not used often. But over the years tuition increases were not in line with the amount that the Student Indemnification Account had increased by. The claims that were levied against the indemnification account exceeded the balance. Even though collections had stopped several years prior because it did reach that $250,000 cap, there was

interest that accumulated in the account, so I believe the actual balance of the account was about $400,000 when the claims started to come in.

But you have to meet certain criteria in this. And basically, I think raising the cap to $750,000 is a good thing for the students, to protect them against bad actors.

ANAHIT BAGHSHETSYAN (Research Assistant, Nevada Policy Research Institute):
Today, Nevada Policy Research Institute comes in support of A.B. 164. This legislation proposes a vital increase to the cap of Student Indemnification Account, as we heard from the presenter and the testimony before me. This is an essential safeguard that ensures that Nevada students are protected. In the event of institutional closures or disruptions that take place, oftentimes not necessarily because of the institution, this is a great rainy-day account to have.

The importance of it cannot be overstated, because Nevada boasts far too many institutions that fall under this umbrella. Touro University in itself serves around 19,000 students as of 2021. Roseman University serves around 600 students as of their most recent data. These are only the two private institutions and not tens of other ones that serve specific career and technical education.

These programs play an integral role in preparing the workforce for the future and addressing critical shortages in fields such as health care, which we have seen very pronounced during this legislative session for example. This bill recognizes that the students investing in this path deserve the reassurance and the security in case of a closure of their institution. It also ensures that the robust pipeline to our workforce is safe and safeguarded. So for those reasons we urge the committee to support this bill, and thank you so much for your time.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Having no more testimony either in support, opposition or neutral, and no closing comments from Assemblymember O'Neill, I will close the hearing on A.B. 164 and open the hearing on A.B. 501.

ASSEMBLY BILL 501: Authorizes certain pupils to receive academic credit for completing certain outdoor recreational activities. (BDR 34-1142)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER STEVE YEAGER (Assembly District No. 9):
I am honored to be here this morning to copresent A.B. 501 with my colleague, Assembly Majority Floor Leader Jauregui. I believe this bill is an important step towards integrating outdoor education into Nevada's public school system by authorizing—not requiring—credit for certain outdoor recreational activities completed outside of school hours. Outdoor education has long been recognized as a powerful tool for fostering critical life skills such as communication, resiliency, curiosity, civic engagement and problem solving.

These skills align seamlessly with Nevada's Department of Education's Portrait of a Nevada Learner framework, which emphasizes holistic student development. Assembly Bill 501 builds on Nevada's strong commitment to outdoor learning following prior legislation like A.B. No. 385 of the 79th Session in 2017, which provided free state park passes to fifth graders, and the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program established by A.B. No. 331 of the 80th Session in 2019, which I tried to affectionately call the "No Child Left Inside" Act, but then it got turned into the Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant Program.

And then just last session in 2023, we appropriated $500,000 over the biennium to that grant program. We established the program in 2019, but as you all know, 2020 was a pretty terrible year. Budget wise, we were not able to put any money into the program, but in 2023 we were able to fund it to the tune of $500,000. And that grant program has already demonstrated success, supporting projects ranging from gardening to mountain biking and benefiting students in all 17 of Nevada's counties.

Assembly Bill 501 in front of you this morning takes these efforts further by integrating that outdoor experience into formal education through academic credit. Assembly Bill 501 is also part of a broader effort to ensure that all Nevada students benefit from outdoor education. It complements ongoing initiatives like this session's A.B. 108, which again proposes to expand funding for that No Child Left Inside Grant Program.

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

And it also aligns with recommendations from the Outdoor Education Advisory working group from the last biennium to integrate outdoor learning to preK-12

education. At this time, Chair, with your permission I would like to turn it over to my colleague, Majority Floor Leader Jauregui, who will provide a detailed breakdown of what the bill does, as well as some supportive testimony.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER SANDRA JAUREGUI (Assembly District No. 41):
With the background and context provided by Speaker Yeager, I will walk the committee through the bill. Section 1, subsection 1 authorizes the board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of a charter school to allow junior high, middle school and high school students to receive academic credit for completing approved outdoor recreational activities outside of school hours. Any credits earned must count towards elective course requirements.

Subsection 2 authorizes these entities to approve such academic credit and establish criteria for approved outdoor activities. These activities must be completed outside of school hours, require a significant amount of time spent outdoors and teach relevant skills such as identifying native plants and animals, building trails, habitat restoration, outdoor survival skills, hiking, archery and bird watching.

Subsection 3 requires the entities approving these activities to determine the maximum number of credits a student can earn through these activities, set rules for how students may apply for credit after completing an approved activity and set procedures for obtaining parental or legal guardian consent before student participation.

Subsection 4 clarifies that a board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of a charter school are not required to provide, facilitate or fund any outdoor recreational activities.

Assembly Bill 501 addresses a growing need to integrate experimental learning into formal education. Outdoor education has proven to show student engagement and academic outcomes while promoting physical health and mental well-being. This is especially important at a time when Nevada's officials have been concerned with the State's chronic absenteeism numbers. Outdoor education has proven to work in other states. For example, in Oregon's outdoor school program, teachers reported significant improvements in student engagement and academic support after participating in outdoor learning experiences. This bill also supports equity by providing students from all backgrounds with opportunities to engage in meaningful outdoor experiences.

By allowing academic credit for activities, such as trail building or habitat restoration, A.B. 501 encourages students to develop practical skills while connecting with Nevada's diverse landscapes.

I submitted two exhibits this morning; the [first is the] Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Program Impact Report (Exhibit E contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.). The second shows some of the projects that have been funded by the 2024 Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Awards (Exhibit F). I have always envisioned these two programs working together.

I want to go over some of the grants that were awarded and how they benefited students throughout Nevada. What we would like to see is these students who are taking advantage of the Nevada Outdoor Education Recreation Grant Program to also get credit for them while at school. The Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Program Impact Report, Exhibit E, received $1.4 million in requests in 2024. As you know, we only funded it for $500,000 for the biennium, so there was only $250,000 in grants available but they were able to fund 23 unique projects—9 Tier II projects and 14 microgrant projects. They reached 10,944 young Nevadans in 2024 and allowed students to spend 25,855 hours outside, and it supported 57 jobs.

Some of the projects that received money, Exhibit F, are the Great Basin National Park Foundation, which served students in every county and took students out to learn in and about the Great Basin National Park; a project in the Nevada Outdoor School that provided outdoor education programs for rural students in Pershing, Humboldt, Lander, Elko, Eureka and White Pine Counties; The Tahoe Rim Trail Association that took students backpacking and supported students in Carson City, Washoe County and Douglas County. We also had the Sierra Nevada Journeys project, which supported girls in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] at a camp event for Title I students and that supported students statewide. These are just some of the projects funded with the grant program. We envision more students wanting to participate in it, knowing that they would also get school credit for it.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
You heard the power of the grant program, and I just could not be happier that this program really did work as envisioned and helped students in every county of the State. Those of you who know me know that I love the outdoors. After

we passed the State Parks program back in 2017, I realized that I had not been to many of our State parks, so I made it a mission to go to every one of our State parks between the 2017 and 2019 legislative sessions. It took a long time to do that because you have to kind of do them in little buckets depending on where they are in the State. But it was a wonderful experience and reminded me of just how great our State is—from the Valley of Fire in Southern Nevada to Sand Harbor and everything in between.

I just think about when we are here in this building—and I think you can all relate—we're stuck in this building for really long hours sometimes, so I try to get up early and get outside. It is hard because we are sleep deprived. But I know what it does for me in terms of my mental clarity and helping me get ready for the day. I think most of us grew up in a time where we did not have devices, we did not have cell phones—we spent a lot of time outside. Unfortunately, that is not the case for students today and that is not the case for a lot of reasons. One of which is just a tremendous pressure that are on educators and students on standardized tests and all of that. So part of the impetus here is to try to incentivize students to get outside. Because I think we know when they do that, when they are able to communicate with each other and interact outside of the classroom, it helps them socialize; it helps them get off of their devices.

We were very mindful not to make this a requirement to put an extra burden on our education professionals who are already overworked. This is not going to supplant anything that is happening in the classroom; it is elective; it is optional. But I think, you know, the more we can get students outside to connect with nature and realize that there's more going on in life than just social media and what is on your devices, we are all going to be better off as a society. So I would just ask the committee to strongly consider A.B. 501 as an elective program that a board of trustees or charter school board could enter into.

SENATOR TITUS:
I know it's been a passion of yours since 2017. At the time, in 2017, I was opposed to it, thinking that I can walk out my door and I have outside recreation. Why are we creating yet another government agency? But frankly, I think it is a good program, but I need clarification on the policy and where it fits. I appreciate that you want to enable the schools to give credits if students participate in these programs. Will it be up to the school districts, the individual schools or the school boards to get the credit? Apparently, it is an elective, so it

does not necessarily have to be a certified credit. In other words, for me as a provider, I have to take continued medical education credits, but I can also get credit for electives. Is that what you are anticipating versus certified programs?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
I do remember those discussions in 2017. You are exactly right. The way we envision this is, first of all, the school board has to decide whether they are going to allow it. This bill sets the parameters for things that have to happen there. But if a school board or a charter school authority allows it, it would be up to the individual classroom schoolteacher to allow their students to do that. I would sort of see a couple of different layers there. I believe there would probably be some regulations or some additional policies from the school board because you certainly want proof that they actually did something. You do not want students walking in and just saying, "Yeah, I did a backpack trip, and I should get credit." So I envision that will sort of be layered in there.

Part of what we are trying not to do is be too prescriptive about how this would work because we realize it might look different in Clark County than it would look in Lyon County or Lincoln County. I think that is how I envision it, that it would really be a decision made at the district level, then would flow down to the classroom level and include parental involvement as well. Hopefully there's some checks in there where we're not just going to be giving students credit for going outside and playing at recess.

SENATOR TITUS:
Is it the standard that this body, the State Legislature, gives permission or mandates? I think it is policy that they require so many classes and so many things. Does that come through the State Board of Education, or do the individual school districts come up with what they want to allow? I mean, I am just wondering what the policy is. How often do we say you must—you should be able to acknowledge outdoor recreation. Are there other programs that we have put into statute?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Curriculum standards come through the Department of Education (NDE). However, you are right, there are "shall" and "must" and what have you. Right? Then there is district, but they can be differentiated at a district level. We could say we are going to have 120 minutes of reading, but the district could alter that a little bit in their regulations.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I will add in that, yes, the number of credits requirement is the State; that's NDE.

SENATOR TITUS:
That's one of my earlier questions, but it was answered in the bill's maximum credits they could get for this particular thing. They still have to have a minimum of certain core requirements. This would be additional, correct? So anyway, thank you for that clarification.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
And yes, just to follow up with Senator [Titus], this would be more like an elective. However, Speaker Yeager, I am concerned about the maximum number of credits because a student like you, might want your 22.5 credits of running and hiking and then, you would have outdoor survival skills, but I am not sure you would have indoor survival skills that you need here in this building. We've just got to work through this a little bit.

One of my questions was the maximum amount of credits, and if it was going to be an elective, or if it was just going to be something that you could accrue and add on to, maybe a science credit if you identified plants and animals. It might be some extra credit to a science class if you were taking a biology class and you needed a little extra credit—maybe you would do it that way. I can see all kinds of creative solutions in here.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI:
Section 1, subsection 1 does specify that it has to be an elective credit. So, they can't apply it to science credits or math credits. It has to be applied to elective credits, and I know there are only a certain number of elective credits a student can earn. There is also a maximum in section 1, subsection 3, paragraph (a) as well that sets a maximum.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
And I will just clarify, the standards are still the standards. You still have to have those, the math and science and reading and civics and all of that. This would just be an opportunity for an elective.

SENATOR BUCK:
I actually love the bill. I was principal at C.T. Sewell in the "concrete jungle." I saw that kids didn't get out of their neighborhood. So, I worked closely with the Henderson Community Foundation and the Kasner Foundation to take fourth-grade students out to Hoover Dam, out to the Valley of Fire and out of their neighborhoods. So I really like that idea—with gardens and STEM to provide some context.

Also, I was wondering if you had the chance to speak to the honorable Mo Denis because I know he does a lot with the scouts. Earning your Eagle Scout is all done outside of school, and I can see a nice tie-in with this, to provide the schools and school boards with a list of different ideas that they can come up with for their policy. Because I do believe that a lot of times in these neighborhoods, these kids do not get out of their neighborhood or out of their school community, and it does provide some opportunity for that. The BSA [Boy Scouts of America] thing would be a natural fit.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
To your point, there's nothing quite like seeing a student, pull up to Valley Fire for the first time to see those red rocks or drive up to Lake Tahoe when you come around a bend and for the first time, you see how majestic Lake Tahoe is. I think that is really what this is about.

I have not spoken directly to former Senator Denis, but I worked with him on Green Your Planet initiatives as well, so I think that is a good suggestion. The way that I would envision this is that the board of trustees is going to determine that so I would anticipate they would take public testimony. I will talk to him, and I think any of those groups that are already doing outdoor—I think about Get Outdoors Nevada is really big in Southern Nevada. I think they'd be able to go to the district and talk about their programs and hopefully find a way to integrate that, because we are not really trying to create brand-new things. We're trying to integrate what we already have in the State, whether it is the No Child Left Inside Grant Program, whether it is Scouts, whether it is Get Outdoors Nevada or all the other amazing programs. So, I really appreciate the suggestion, and I will make sure that [Mo Denis] is looped in on this as well.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
I have to tell you when I first saw this bill, I was a little freaked out. Then as I noticed it said electives, I was like, okay, that totally makes sense. I know some

people do work experience for electives—this goes hand in hand. Being on the Committee for Natural Resources and seeing all these great initiatives that we have, I think they'd go really nicely together. You said outside the school day, or is it during the school day, because I did not see it on the bill? And you also mentioned a maximum number of credits, but I couldn't find that on the bill, unless I'm missing that.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI:
Thank you for the question, Senator Cruz-Crawford. What was the second part of your question?

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
You said that a maximum number of credits was in the bill; I didn't see the number.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI:
It does not set a maximum number. It allows them to set a maximum total number of credits that can be earned in section 1, subsection 3, paragraph (a). It says maximum number of total credits that a pupil may earn. So it gives that authority to the board.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
Okay. And then because it is electives and six credits are what our high school diploma … I imagine it would be less than that.

I just wanted to say one thing on the record—kind of a plug. We did fund our outdoor recreation youth at $500,000, right? And you mentioned Oregon's and we have about 500,000 students in Nevada. So, we pay about a dollar per student and Oregon funds theirs at $3.5 million. So, they fund theirs at $6.30 per student. Not that we have money to do that, but I did want to say it takes a clear investment, and I am excited to keep investing in our students.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
We do have A.B. 108 this session, that purports or proposes to increase the funding to $1 million. Obviously, you on the budget committees know that we are in a pretty tough situation right now. So we are not sure if we are going to be able to do that. But I think the need is there. We heard about the $1.2 million in requests—and that was for just one fiscal year. So really

five times the amount of funding just in requests came in for the State. So, it would be my hope that that someday we can increase that.

And by the way, if anyone's listening, this fund can accept grants and gifts as well. It does not have to be funded entirely by the State—the need is there. If there are folks who are looking to make that happen, I believe we would gladly accept those funds and be able to help get more kids outside.

SENATOR ROGICH:
Thank you for bringing the bill. I think it is terrific and it incentivizes a lot of the children to return to school. I like that part. As someone who was a single mom for a lot of years, my daughter participated in after-school programs—a latchkey kid. Would this program be connected with programs that are there for children after school when their parents are working?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI:
I think it really depends on what the board of trustees of the school district does when designing the program. We talked about including various organizations who already do activities outside of school hours because one of the requirements is that the activities be done outside of school hours. So we are leaving it up to every single school district to design what the requirements look like, and that is where it would fit in—including programs if they are doing safety for [other] school programs.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
More of a comment, not really a question. I took a few courses that were outdoors in college at UNLV. I did golf and then I did a canoeing class down the Colorado river, and it was pretty amazing. So for that experience to be happening at the earlier levels, I think many students would benefit. So, thank you for bringing this bill.

I don't want to be nitpicky, but perhaps you might be open to my recommendation. If you are open to an amendment on section 1, subsection 2 that breaks down the types of activities—one thing that I did not notice, which hopefully you would be interested in, is stargazing or astronomy education. The reason why I say that is I had a grant donation when I was in elementary school to go to Space Camp. And I think that this is an opportunity to do STEM education early on at the elementary level. I know this bill is more guided towards later in middle and high school. But just something if you wanted to

take advantage of our dark skies initiative and so forth. Perhaps you would be open to that.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I like the stargazing idea, but I think that is a different strand in the education world. It may not be. I would have to look at the benchmarks and all the guides that we have in the science education.

I think I have mentioned it here before, but I taught geology to second graders for years, and we took field trips to Spring Mountain Ranch. So the outdoor skills can be taught to younger kids, but some of those skills, if you are teaching a geology unit, they would be over in a different science area where this might be its own little thing. So I do not know, we'd have to research that.

SENATOR TITUS:
Frankly, I think stargazing is probably not a bad idea. Certainly, astronomy and some of those astrophysics classes are very important. But what I like about the bill, it says specifically that it is not excluding anything, it just lists a few ideas. So, I think it would be up to the school board if they wanted to include that, and it did not interfere with something else they already had going on. I like the open-ended wording, frankly, in the bill.

NICOLE FLANGAS (Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition):
I am here today in support of A.B. 501. Our mission is to promote outdoor recreation in our great State, traditionally through business initiatives and partnerships as well as through environmental conservation. But another pillar within our advocacy is outdoor education and recreation. Building a secondary education curriculum that supports outdoor conservation and education efforts allows students to incorporate a passion for the Nevada landscape in a wonderful way to get hands-on experiences and contribute to class credit. We ambitiously hope that those same students continue on to support and even be part of the next generation of entrepreneurs within outdoor recreation. We urge your support of A.B. 501.

I also wanted to comment from the school perspective, as someone who took independent PE through Washoe County School District—that was a program where they set parameters. I went out and found an organization who supported that, reported it back to the district and then they were approved by the Board of Education. So, it was a process that created parameters, went out

to the community and then got approval, and now has moved forward for other people within my school to do the same process. So it is kind of a partnership that flows from the top down and then back up.

TOM CLARK (Nevada Association of School Boards):
Through the questioning of the sponsors, you have answered most of the questions that I think are really important. If you are a school district and you have a teacher or a principal come forward and say I have a group of students, or one student who would really like to do this program. It is outdoors; it meets the standards. Can you approve it? And the district would seriously take a look at those [standards] and say yes or no, if it meets that side of it. I think what is going to be very attractive to the school districts is to get those kids outside.

We've heard about the mental health. We've heard about the benefits of just getting—especially kids that are in urban settings—those kids outside. But the discovery that happens when you are outside leads to all of the STEM. As Senator Doñate brought up, it leads to the things that Senator Dondero Loop discussed. You may be working on a trail with the Nevada wilderness but you also might be curious about the biology, the geography and the geology. All of the sciences that you will discover when you are out doing those activities could lead to a career path and other things that are related to the STEM sciences. So, from the Nevada Association of School Boards perspective, this is an opportunity for a lot of students to not just get outside, but to learn when they get there. It is a phenomenal opportunity.

EDUARDO MARTINEZ (Charter School Association of Nevada):
We want to come out in support of A.B. 501. This bill offers an innovative opportunity for students, including those attending public charter schools, to earn elective credit through meaningful outdoor electives. It recognizes the value of exponential learning and supports student engagement with nature and each other. It offers those schools the flexibility they need to enhance student experiences without adding an additional cost. So we want to thank the sponsor of the bill for making this thing happen, and we urge your support of A.B. 501.

CHRISTI CABRERA-GEORGESON (Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League):
I'm very excited to be in education today. I do not get to be here very often, but we are in strong support of A.B. 501. We think this is a great additional tool to some of the great programs the State has to increase outdoor recreation. The

Nevada Conservation League has been a longtime supporter of getting more and more kids outside, and the continued funding for the Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program continues to be one of our top priorities.

We have had the privilege of following up with a lot of these organizations, grantees, teachers and even students and hear about their experiences. We have heard study after study say that getting outside increases cognitive benefits and physical benefits—all of that. But we have really been able to hear from some of these students who say when they came back from these outdoor experiences they felt rejuvenated, ready to learn and it was easier to focus. We are really looking forward to this program moving forward and getting more kids outside in our State.

BRAD KEATING (Clark County School District):
I'm happy to be here in support of A.B. 501. I wanted to mention, in 2017, my first session representing the Clark County School District, I had the privilege of supporting A.B. No. 385 of the 79th Session, presented by Speaker Yeager, to allow every fifth grader in the State the opportunity to visit State parks for free. It has been an incredible opportunity that the kiddos look forward to every single year, receiving those passes and having the opportunity to go out to the State parks. This bill furthers what we were able to do in 2017 and allow students the opportunity to keep getting outside to learn the benefits of all of the incredible things the State has to offer. So, for those reasons, we are happy to support A.B. 501.

SUSAN KEEMA (Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents):
We are in support of A.B. 501. Thank you for working on this bill.

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CHAIR TAYLOR:
Seeing no public comment today, we are adjourned at 10:39 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sharon McCallen,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Angela D. Taylor, Chair

DATE:

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	**Exhibit Letter**	**Introduced on Minute Report Page No.**	**Witness / Entity**	**Description**
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
A.B. 164	C	3	Assemblymember P.K. O'Neill	Student Indemnification Presentation
A.B. 164	D	8	Jimmy Lau / Nevada Association of Career Colleges	Regulations Related to CPE - Student Indemnification
A.B. 501	E	12	Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui	2024 Impact Report Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program
A.B. 501	F	12	Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui	2024 Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Awards