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To: Members of the Nevada State Assembly Ways and Means Committee
From: Lillian Englund, 4025 Montoya Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89120 (702-898-3790)
Date: April 9, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of homeless children in Clark County Nevada.

I come before you as a college graduate, a homeowner and an owner of a business that is about to celebrate its fifth birthday; all measures of success by most people's standards. It was because of the dedication of my community to my education that I was able to achieve this level of success.

Both of my parents dropped out of school in the seventh grade and provided for 6 children with the aid of menial wage jobs, surplus food and handouts. They were homeless at my birth.

We were fortunate to move to a community that placed a high value on education. Because I was able to attend the same school through grade school, my teachers knew me and were able to make decisions about my educational needs that were personal to my circumstances and to allow me to succeed. When I completed eighth grade, I was at the top of my class and able to adjust to the more rigorous demands of High School.

Homeless children in Clark County are less fortunate. They change schools on average, several times a year. Their teachers can't know them and their individual needs. They attend school hungry, poorly clothed, and are often ill and suffering from poor dental health. Their social relationships are poor, and the academic demands of school cannot be supported in their living environment.

The single consistent factor in their ever-changing lives can be school. Even if a child is homeless and changing living arrangements frequently, that child can remain in the same school with the same adults and services and improve his chances for academic success. This is how you can help.

Research has shown that if a child remains in the same school with continued services, that child's test scores are more likely to improve regardless of race or English as a first language. By allocating funds to support the transportation of homeless students to their home school, you can help children have the only consistency they may know in their lives.

You hold in your hands the opportunity to help children grow into educated, successful citizens who are capable of supporting their communities, instead of needing their communities to support them. I thank you for providing for their transportation needs so that they can depend on their school for success.

Thank you for listening to me.

ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS

DATE: 4/9/03 ROOM: 3137 EXHIBIT I

SUBMITTED BY: LILLIAN ENGLUND