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Testimony in Support of AB356 to Senate Government Affairs Committee  
May 12, 2003

By Joe Edson, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada fully supports AB356 and has invested a major amount of our time and resources to the development of the three reports upon which this bill draws: *Working Hard Living Poor, Parts I & II* by Dr. Susan Chandler and Alicia Smalley of the UNR School of Social Work and *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Nevada* by Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington School of Social Work and Jennifer Brooks of Wider Opportunities for Women, Washington D.C.

The calculations of family unit budgets called for in AB356 from the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation are founded on the calculations in the above studies and will reflect the real life costs of living in Nevada and will provide a basis for the evaluation of jobs brought into Nevada through incentives and abatements to companies locating here.

The Department of Economic Development already works diligently to bring in good corporate citizens that provide good, living-wage jobs and benefits in return for their incentives and abatements. They support the collection of data and the tracking of living wage jobs provided for in AB356 to supplement their current analysis and to establish an invaluable baseline for their future efforts.

Unfortunately, PLAN's studies found that despite the current efforts of both DETR and the Department of Economic Development, nearly 60% of jobs currently existing in Nevada pay less than a living wage for a 3-person family unit. In addition, among the fastest growing segments of new jobs in Nevada, nearly 90% pay less than a living wage for a 3-person family unit.

Beyond the benefits AB356 will provide to DETR and the Department of Economic Development in analyzing the job development over which they currently have purview, the data amassed by this legislation can serve in the future as benchmarks for other employers in Nevada, for the analysis of workforce development programs to address future employment needs, and even as criteria in budgeting for means-tested programs and services for more effective and realistic numbers needed to address the needs of our growing population. Studies like the Living Wage and Self-Sufficiency Standards have been utilized in other states' programs effectively and I simply ask that future use for this important data be included in your considerations of the benefits of AB356.

For these reasons, PLAN strongly supports AB356 and urges your support and passage.