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SB 34

Mr. Chairman and committee members, my name is Craig Kadlub and I'm speaking on behalf of the Clark County School District.

Senate Bill 34, no doubt conceived with good intentions, poses some significant problems for our district in the areas of funding, facilities, equity, program quality, and staffing.

First, the funding issue. For purposes of calculation, if we assume that only 1/5 of the eligible students actually enroll early in either kindergarten or first grade, our district would require an additional \$12.5 million in per-pupil allocations. This represents a brand new cost to Nevada's system of public education, and we question whether or not this is the year to expand budgetary requirements. There also would be extraordinary costs associated with purchasing tests and hiring staff to administer them prior to the start of each year.

From a facilities standpoint, our district already is under continuous pressure to produce additional classroom space. Again, if only one-fifth of the eligible 10,000 kindergarteners and one-fifth of the eligible 10,000 first graders were served, our first-year costs would increase by about \$7.5 million in necessary capital expenditures in order to provide each child with a seat in a classroom. In a year when legislators are contemplating class size reduction flexibility (which will likely eliminate team teaching and require additional classrooms), and in a year when full-day kindergarten for at-risk students is up for discussion (which will also increase class room demands on the district), the expectation that we bring thousands of new students into our schools would create an additional and costly facilities demand.

Equity is another consideration. It is not an illogical hypothesis to suggest that the students who will be admitted early based on test results are the students who come from homes where parents are involved or where intellectual stimulus is offered and learning is rewarded. Those are not necessarily the children who need a jump-start on school. Moreover, the premise of public education is to provide service to all children, not to all children *who qualify*.

With respect to the nature of the program, if the district were to support admitting children to school at age 4 ½, it would be with the understanding

that the curriculum provided would be somewhat different from the kindergarten curriculum. Six months is a long time in terms of child development – it amounts to about 1/10 of a kindergartener's life. For that reason, we feel it would be necessary to undertake the expense of delivering an appropriate program, rather than simply expanding the window of eligibility for kindergarteners. In fact, rather than increasing the number of kindergarteners we serve in a half-day program, we believe it would be better to offer a full-day program to the ones we already have.

Finally, in the current teacher market, increasing our need for teachers would add to the problems we already face in the recruitment and employment process.

In closing, the district feels that the current age threshold is satisfactory. The present law draws a clear line and it is helpful to the district to have a specific age requirement in statute. As it is, we already deal with parents whose children's birthdays are just a few days short of the cut-off date. Enacting this law would not only move the same debate from parents of the almost-five year olds, to the parents of the almost-four-and-a-half year olds, but further complicate the issue by stirring in a qualifying examination for the children. It's not too far fetched to think that an appeal process and provisions for re-examinations would be far behind.

Again, for the reasons cited, the Clark County School District respectfully asks that you not support SB 34.

Thank you.