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Good afternoon Chairman Rawson and members of the Senate Human Resources and Facilities committee. For the record my name is Mark Nichols, executive director of the National Association of Social Workers - Nevada Chapter. I am speaking in support of SB 49.

First NSW-Nevada would like to express our appreciation to Senator O'Connell and the Legislative Committee to Study Suicide Prevention for their excellent work.

Whether Nevada ranks number 49th or 50th doesn't matter, especially not to the survivors. It is unacceptable if we do nothing to address the underlying causes of our state's suicide rate. It is time for action to begin tackling the complex issue of Nevada's suicide problem. Nevadans deserve better.

SB 49 will provide a focus to our suicide prevention effort. NASW supports the funding of a statewide program for suicide prevention as an essential step in the process. But, I urge the committee to keep in mind that without adequate services and programs to address the underlying causes of many of our suicides, the professionals in these positions will continually be swimming upstream.

Nevada's human service systems are grossly underfunded because of inadequate tax revenue.

Compare the ranking of state's funding of Alcohol and Other drug (AOD) services and the suicide rates. Five of the ten highest per capita expenditures were in the bottom ten for suicide. Nevada ranks in the bottom five of AOD program expenditures. Nevadans deserve better. The same hold true for state mental health expenditures. Six of the states with the top ten per capita mental health expenditures were in the bottom ten for suicide.

NASW-Nevada urges the committee to support SB 49 as an important step toward reducing our unacceptable suicide rate. We also urge you to adequately fund the programs and services that will address the social conditions, which lead to our high suicide rates.

Thank you chairman Rawson.

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