

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-Second Session
March 30, 2023**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod at 1:31 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2023, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Natha C. Anderson
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig
Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblywoman Erica Mosca
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas
Assemblywoman Selena Torres

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel
Nick Christie, Committee Manager



Funmi Sheddy, Committee Secretary
Connor Schmitz, Committee Secretary
Ashley Torres, Committee Assistant
Bet Torres, Data Information Technician

OTHERS PRESENT:

Stephanie Magallanes, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Amanda Vaskov, representing Associated Students of the University of Nevada
Olivia Ngo, Intern, Assemblywoman Selena Torres
Serena Evans, Policy Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual
Violence
Liz Ortenburger, Chief Executive Officer, SafeNest
Lindsey Walterbeek, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Regan Comis, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Nathan Noble, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Maria-Teresa Liebermann-Parraga, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Sarah Peterson, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Elizabeth Abdur-Raheem, Executive Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and
Sexual Violence
Mike Kamer, Senior Director, Project REAL
Aaron Sebastian, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Jacob Colacurcio, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., State President, Nevada Faculty Alliance
Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher
Education
Katie Broughton, Legislative Liaison, Department of Education
Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada
Eddie Martinez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Annette Dawson Owens, Director, School Readiness Policy, Children's Advocacy
Alliance
Cynthia Mejia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Brenda Pearson, Director, Strategic Policy Initiatives, Clark County Education
Association
Jesse Cruz, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Kevin Osorio Hernandez, Senator, Nevada State Student Alliance, Nevada State
College
Jeff Horn, Executive Director, Clark County Association of School Administrators
and Professional-Technical Employees
Lauren Bui, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Sebastian Cardenas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Michelle Tapia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Tristan Osorio, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ivan Gonzalez-Vasquez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Miriam Lachica, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Cynthia Romero, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Nick Vassiliadis, representing Nevada Resort Association
Angelika Tabujara, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jeff Jones, Executive Director, CORE Powered by The Rogers Foundation
Trevor Parrish, Manager, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber
Vince Saavedra, representing Southern Nevada Building Trades Unions
Tameka Henry, Cofounder, Rise Up Nevada; and Education Cochair, Las Vegas
Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Jonathan Norman, Statewide Advocacy, Outreach, and Policy Director, Nevada
Coalition of Legal Service Providers
Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada; and Director of Outreach,
Asian Community Development Council
Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District
Elyse Monroy-Marsala, representing ACE Charter School
Anthony Curry, Director, Public Policy, Opportunity 180
Felicia Ortiz, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada
Chelsea Capurro, representing Urban Chamber of Commerce; and Nevada
Association of School Administrators
Julianna Garcia, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Anthony Ruiz, Deputy Chief of Staff, Nevada State College
Aodhan Downey, representing Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance
Tamara Hudson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jack Glesea, representing Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
Tim Hughes, Private Citizen
Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada
Malia Poblete, Student Representative, State Board of Education
Mariness Solis, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Alexander Avila, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Allison Thibault, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
John Ezzell, Executive Director, Boys Town Nevada
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State
Education Association
Peter Guzman, President, Latin Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, Nevada
Karen Villatoro Gonzalez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Katie Gilbertson, Policy Analyst, Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation
Julie Wakefield, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Adam Csank, Professor, Department of Geography, University of Nevada, Reno
Will Pregman, representing Battle Born Progress
Trent Brenkus, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] Today we are going to hear three bills. We will start with [Assembly Bill 245](#), then we will hear [Assembly Bill 241](#) and [Assembly Bill 228](#), as the agenda states. I will open the hearing for [Assembly Bill 245](#), presented by Assemblywoman Torres and a couple of copresenters.

[Assembly Bill 245](#): Revises provisions governing education. (BDR 34-818)

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Assembly District No. 3:

Today I am excited to be joined by students to present [Assembly Bill 245](#). During the last legislative cycle, we started the work regarding sexual violence in schools, both K-12 and in higher education. The reality is sexual violence and violence on campuses continues to impact students today. Today I will not be presenting [A.B. 245](#). I will be allowing my copresenters to present. First we will hear from Stephanie Magallanes, a high school student who will talk about the impact of teen dating violence, then we will hear from Amanda Vaskov from the Associated Students of the University of Nevada (ASUN) who will speak to the impact of sexual violence on college campuses, then my intern, Olivia Ngo, will walk us through the piece of legislation. I will remind Committee members there is an amendment that has been posted to the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System [[Exhibit C](#)]. I encourage you to make sure you are looking through that. I apologize for the tardiness, as it has been a conversation and dialogue we continue to have. I will tell you, this is probably a dialogue and conversation we will continue to have in the coming days. Without further ado, I will introduce Stephanie Magallanes.

Stephanie Magallanes, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a survivor of teen dating violence. This bill will be important for girls and boys like me: victims of teen dating violence. As a victim, I feel this bill will be important for all grade levels. As a victim, you find it difficult to speak about it to peers and parents. You become embarrassed, overwhelmed with many emotions, and confused. Knowing you have a place or someone you can call who is available at any time will help you feel safe. It will help people like me know you can get the proper assistance and support to get out of that domestic violence relationship. It would be a great relief to know there will be someone there to help you when you need it the most.

With my personal experience, I felt trapped. I did not want to tell my mom due to her health because I did not want to add to that. I would hide it and try to handle it myself, but it did not help me. If there was any kind of assistance for this, I would have gladly taken it and reached out. I ended up getting myself into a more dangerous and difficult situation. I felt if there was a way for someone to help me besides my mom and I could get the guidance as well as support, it would not have gotten that far.

Having this bill will mean a lot to victims who go through it and who would love to be the voice for others who are currently struggling with being in a relationship like this. You can prevent many incidents and the loss of teens if we pass this bill and are able to send that help and support out and make sure to let people know this is nothing to feel ashamed or

embarrassed about and that there are many other people our age who go through this. Setting a sense of comfort for victims knowing they should not feel that way and it is not their fault is a great help in the first step to getting out.

The services expanded by this bill should be promoted in all schools and should be implemented due to the high rate of teens who are impacted by this type of violence. Twenty-one percent of girls aged 14 through 18 have been kissed or touched without their consent. Thirty-eight percent of LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning] girls; 24 percent of Latin girls; 23 percent of Indonesian girls; 22 percent of Black girls; along with the 53.9 percent of LGBTQ youth aged 13 through 21 have been sexually harassed. I urge you to support A.B. 245.

Amanda Vaskov, representing Associated Students of the University of Nevada:

The ASUN comprises over 14,000 undergraduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). At my institution, research from 2018 showed that 10 percent of our students reported experiencing sexual coercion, 23 percent reported unwanted touching, and 7 percent reported experiencing rape within their collegiate career. Given that 58 percent of those students reported incidents of violence experienced in their first year on campus, our newest students tend to be the most vulnerable.

This school year, knowing both the prominence of this issue and that Nevada's legislative session was coming up, I began having conversations about existing gaps in sexual misconduct prevention among my student body and my peers. Additionally, I implemented an informal survey about this issue and received responses from over 1,100 students.

Sexual assault happens often. As a resident assistant in on-campus housing, I assisted residents with this issue often. There are victims who are afraid to come forward. Most girls I talked to know someone who has been sexually assaulted. Here are the sentiments expressed in this survey and with conversations I had with students: I know someone or I am someone who has been sexually assaulted; I did not know assault could happen in a relationship; I did not want to tell someone for fear of ruining the perpetrator's reputation; I did not know it was an assault because the perpetrator was female; and I did not have any resources or help.

In talking with my peers, it has become abundantly clear to me that sexual misconduct is a problem in our institution—one that is more common than we think. While these sentiments came from students in my institution, UNR, we know this is an issue that is crosscutting among youth and institutions of higher education in Nevada. Nevada's 2021 Department of Health and Human Services Rape Prevention and Education State Action Plan reported that college students are particularly vulnerable. Nearly one in four women and 15 percent of men experienced forced intercourse throughout their collegiate experience.

As Assemblywoman Torres mentioned, this conversation comes off of the tail end of one that was started in the 2021 Session. At that time, Senate Bill 347 of the 81st Session was signed into law. This legislation created the Sexual Misconduct Task Force within the Nevada

System of Higher Education (NSHE), authorized NSHE institutions to enter into a memorandum of understanding with organizations that assist individuals with incidents of sexual misconduct, authorized the Sexual Misconduct Task Force to develop an NSHE-wide climate survey to assess the scope of this issue, and authorized NSHE institutions to provide training for faculty and students regarding sexual misconduct prevention.

While the passage of S.B. 347 of the 81st Session was significant progress in addressing power-based violence on our college and university campuses, more work must be done. Assembly Bill 245 proposes revisions to the membership of the task force, additional specifications regarding the task force's mandate, and revisions to the training that is provided for students and faculty regarding sexual misconduct prevention at our institutions, which are the next steps in continuing to address this dynamic issue at the higher education level.

I look forward to answering any questions the Assembly Committee on Education may have today.

Olivia Ngo, Intern, Assemblywoman Selena Torres:

I am a third-year student at the University of Nevada, Reno, currently interning for Assemblywoman Torres. I would like to thank the Assemblywoman, Serena Evans, and Stephanie Magallanes for their work in bringing this bill forward. It has been a long time coming. Our community deserves the resources and education to combat the prevalence of violence on our campuses. With that being said, I will now provide an overview of A.B. 245 with the proposed amendments.

This bill with the conceptual amendments [[Exhibit C](#)] will have two new sections. The first defines power-based violence as any form of interpersonal violence intended to control or intimidate another person through the assertion of power and control, generally replacing the term "sexual misconduct" with "power-based violence" throughout the bill. Power-based violence is a term referring to domestic dating and sexual violence, human trafficking, sexual misconduct and harassment, and stalking. This definition is more inclusive of all victim-survivor experiences.

The second new section proposed requires the Committee on Statewide School Safety through the Office of the Governor, established in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 388.1324, create a subcommittee focusing on K-12 school responses, intervention, and prevention of power-based violence, again in K-12 schools across the state. The subcommittee will examine best practices and make recommendations for the standardized procedures and prevention methods in a victim-centered, trauma-informed way. The subcommittee will be responsible for centering student experiences that related to power-based violence and student safety, examining current procedures and protocols statewide, identifying emerging trends and best practices, identifying possible service gaps, and making recommendations for standardized procedures that will focus on preventing and intervening in disclosures of power-based violence.

In terms of membership, the subcommittee should include two representatives from school districts from southern, northern, and rural Nevada; two representatives from organizations and programs that serve victim survivors of power-based violence; two K-12 students and families; one student survivor of power-based violence; two Title IX representatives; one representative from Safe Voice Nevada and/or the Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment; one member of school-based law enforcement; and two school counselors, social workers, or psychologists. The subcommittee shall also be required to create legislative recommendations to submit to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education by August of even-numbered years.

Moving back to what is listed in section 1, subsection 1 of the original introduced text, the amendment requires the board of trustees of each school district and the governing body of a charter school to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with an organization that assists victims of power-based violence. Examples in Nevada include the Crisis Support Services of Nevada [formerly the Crisis Call Center] in northern Nevada and SafeNest. This section further outlines the duties for both the school district and the organization within such an MOU and it provides for the inclusion of a fee structure for services provided by the organization.

Section 3, subsection 2(d) of the bill adds that the Safe Voice Program within the Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment of Nevada's Department of Education must include methods and procedures to ensure that a pupil who is a victim of power-based violence may obtain a referral to such an organization. Section 3, subsection 7 of the bill establishes that on behalf of the Safe Voice Program, the Director may enter into one or more agreements with agencies and organizations to facilitate referrals for wrap-around services or services relating to domestic violence. Such an agreement may provide for certain sharing of information. This is important to provide a survivor with confidential resources to recover from the dangerous and potentially violent interaction they have had.

Section 4 of the bill creates the Commission on Higher Education Campus Safety and outlines information pursuant to the membership, terms, meeting expectations, and other duties related to the Commission. Section 6 transfers duties to this Commission consisting of 15 total members. For the sake of clarity, I will give an overview of all the membership as amended. One is the Chancellor of the System or their designee; eight members who are appointed by legislative membership, that being four legislators and four community members who work with sexual violence and campus safety; two students appointed by the Nevada Student Alliance, two Governor appointees; one Chancellor appointee from the University Police; one faculty member appointed by the Governor upon any recommendations that represent professional employees of the Nevada System of Higher Education. This commission is housed within NSHE, required to make legislative recommendations to submit to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education by August of even-numbered years, and is authorized to order a climate survey.

Section 10 of the bill abolishes the existing task force on sexual misconduct at institutions of higher education.

Section 7 of this bill would require that the commission appoint researchers either within NSHE or from a third party to develop a biennial climate survey. On average, 20 percent of victims reported incidents, so this is another way to gauge the problem of sexual misconduct on campuses because we truly need to understand the problem as specific to our state in order to solve it effectively.

Section 8, subsection 4 of the bill outlines certain requirements for Nevada System of Higher Education students and employees related to the institutional programming on the awareness and prevention of power-based violence. This section adds provisions related to an institution's ability to incorporate such programming into coursework and degree conferral. Section 8, subsection 5 clarifies that the program is to be attended in person for any college with on-campus housing. Institutions may create a waiver for students in a completely virtual program. This includes students who are living off-campus who are still working toward a degree program that is primarily completed in person. All other institutions are required to provide training virtually or in person. Furthermore, it outlines certain requirements concerning the provision of such programming to employees, including the programming delivery and materials. We wish to eliminate subsection 5(c), which originally stated a copy of the syllabus and instructional materials be made available for viewing because the intent of the bill was not to require course syllabi to be made publicly available.

Finally, the bill in other sections makes certain conforming changes and defines key terms.

I know that was a lot of information. Thank you for allowing me to walk you through the bill with the proposed amendments. I would like to conclude by saying that unfortunately, sexual violence continues to be a prevalent problem that our youth face. The trauma and aftermath of these experiences can be mentally exhausting and affect academic and professional performance, and lessen the feeling of safety and belonging on school campuses.

As we continue to celebrate Women's History Month, I humbly urge your support of this bill to defend our rights for a safe and consensual learning environment. Sexual violence also disproportionately affects those who are a part of communities of color or the LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus] community, so we must continue to take action to protect the vulnerable in our community who may be our children, our siblings, and our students. We are open to questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I want to thank all three of you for coming out here and sharing with us and putting yourselves out there. We are all very impressed.

I am going to start with a clarifying question on sections 7 and 8. I see there is a requirement for our Board of Regents. I would like our counsel to give an opinion on that.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

I know the provisions of the existing law that are amended by sections 7 and 8 authorizes the Board of Regents to engage in certain activities. The request in the proposed amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] is to require the Board of Regents to engage in those activities, specifically conducting certain research relating to issues of sexual violence within the system and then requiring employees and students within the system to receive certain training on those topics.

The power of the Legislature with respect to the Board of Regents is somewhat limited by *The Constitution of the State of Nevada*. As interpreted in the *King v. Board of Regents*, 200, P.2d, 221 (Nev. 1948) and *Board of Regents v. Oakley*, 637, P.2d, 1199, (Nev. 1981) the Nevada Supreme Court has held that the Legislature does not have the power to interfere with the management and control of the state university by the Board of Regents. Both of these topics, research done by employees of the system on issues within the system, and the training provided to employees and students within the system, could be construed by the court as interfering with the internal control and management of the state university. It is not clear that mandating the Regents to do this as opposed to asking them to do this would be constitutional under the *King* and *Oakley* cases.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I had the opportunity to speak with the Legal Division before this meeting, so it does not come as a surprise to me. Obviously, the amendment would have to be revised for sections 7 and 8 to only give authorizing permission, authorizing the Board of Regents to do so but not mandating that. I think this highlights a greater issue in our community, the fact that the Legislature's hands are tied because of the current status of NSHE. I think it is highlighting a different issue and I think it is important for this body to recognize the fact that NSHE residing right now within the *Constitution* as it is, is preventing us from protecting our kids. I hope the Board of Regents does something. Students have gone to the Board of Regents. This is not the first time or the second time they have had this conversation. I urge the Board of Regents to do something, but the reality is our hands are tied right now. We will continue to work with permissive language asking the Board of Regents to do this, but obviously we cannot require them to do so.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We have a few questions from members.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

One thing I want to do publicly is state that was the best presentation I have ever heard in this body. I am so impressed, so kudos to you all. I do not like the subject matter, but it needs to come forward. I appreciate your doing that. As a college student myself, walking campuses at night, back in the day, I know things like this happen on campuses; whether it be high school or college campuses. I appreciate your bringing this bill forward.

Assemblywoman Torres, I would like to know why my name is not on this bill?

Amanda Vaskov:

We can accept an amendment to make sure your name is on there as well. Thank you so much for your kind remarks.

Assemblyman Koenig:

I received a communication from a person in one of my rural districts. The requirement is that the school boards enter an MOU with a community-based sexual misconduct orientation. This was not a superintendent. I may need an answer from Mary Pierczynski, who I assume will testify. I do not know if there is anyone here from the National Association of School Boards. According to the person I talked to, they were not sure that organizations existed in their small town. They were wondering how that might affect them. They might exist, but they might not be aware of it.

Serena Evans, Policy Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence:

We currently have 13 programs statewide from northern Nevada, southern Nevada, to our rural communities. Nothing in the bill specifically states that the MOU has to require in-person services. Our advocacy agencies, as many other service providers throughout COVID-19, became very comfortable with virtual advocacy. In addition, many of our rural agencies serve multiple rural communities. We have advocates in every community.

Assemblyman Koenig:

The wording is "community-based." It does not say it has to be in your community, but there were some concerns. If you have 13, there are going to be some smaller counties that do not have one. As long as community-based does not mean your community, I guess we are good.

Serena Evans:

We can certainly work on some specific language to clarify that community-based advocacy basically means a nonprofit agency within a community. We can clarify that those agencies can serve multiple counties and do not have to be located directly in said county.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am not sure we need language for that as long as we have it on the record. The next question is from Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I think this bill is critical. I thank you all for your testimony today and for the presentation. You are clearly well prepared and have thought this through deeply, so I appreciate that. I have a question on the new term "power-based violence" in the amendment. Is there a reason we are using that term instead of the terms we typically see, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, or domestic abuse?

Amanda Vaskov:

We are using the definition of "power-based violence" because "sexual misconduct" in statute covers everything with the exception of human trafficking and sexual violence. We want to make sure those are covered because we see some of that in our communities, even at the collegiate or K-12 level as well.

Assemblywoman Torres:

Power-based violence is a little more inclusive than other similar types of violence that are defined in the amendment.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I continue to be impressed by the students in our state, and I really commend you because you go out of your way to make sure they are involved in what you are doing. When I listened to the three of them present, two of them I am certainly familiar with. I just hope you let me stay in this seat a little longer before you take it. It is clear these are the future leaders in our state, and we need you. Thank you for coming to share your stories and advocating for those who have dealt with things so others do not have to go through some of the same things you went through. I want to commend you for that. There is power in this legislation, and I think you all know that, and I know that is the intention.

The charters and our university schools for the gifted are not a part of this unless I missed it. Did I miss it?

Assemblywoman Torres:

In section 1 of the amendment, we do apply it to charter schools, but it is a fair point we did not apply it to the schools for the gifted. We can expand that.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

We want to protect all of our students.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I would also like to thank the presenters. You all did beautifully, and it makes us all proud. My question has to do with the amendment in the new section having to do with the Committee on Statewide School Safety. I love this language and the representation of Title IX being present and the nice variety of individuals you have listed.

I am wondering if you would be open to someone who is actually a college student to be able to serve on this subcommittee. Unfortunately, some of our students do not recognize it until they are away from the school site or when they get a chance to talk with others or they feel there will be no repercussions because they are away from the school site area. At this time, it looks like there are K-12 students and families. Is there any possibility of adding a college student or someone who is already a graduate?

Olivia Ngo:

At this time, we have not considered adding a college student to the subcommittee because we did intend for the subcommittee to serve K-12 students specifically in this capacity.

Assemblywoman Torres:

That subcommittee is aimed at K-12 students.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions from the members, I will open the hearing to support testimony. As a reminder, we will have 20 minutes for support. We will start in Las Vegas.

Liz Ortenburger, Chief Executive Officer, SafeNest:

I want to thank Assemblywoman Torres, all of the young women who presented today, and the Committee for hearing this important bill. What we know is, undiagnosed, unbelievable, and uncared-about early sexual abuses, rape, and molestation are a gateway into trafficking by girls and by boys. Youth and young adults must have support—anonymous, confidential, and available support this bill provides.

SafeNest can reach any community in the state that feels they do not have the resources in the community to provide the services in this bill.

Lindsey Walterbeek, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a current senior at Reno High School, and I am a survivor of sexual violence. After my assault, I found myself at a loss for words on what to do. Navigating the aftermath of my trauma definitely took its toll. After breaking my silence in my junior year last year and reporting my assault, I was disappointed from the lack of supports and lack of a system put in place in responding to my scenario. I remember sitting in the counselor's office, my counselor apologizing for her lack of professionalism, as she simply told me this was something they had not dealt with before. I remember sitting in an office alone, anxiety pacing through my body, while I waited for the sheriff's department to take my statement, while the counselor simply stood outside.

The lack of standardized procedures in our system has affected my life in many ways, including unnecessary and additional anxiety and mental health issues. Throughout the school year, I was met with silence from those who were supposed to support and help me as I tackled the hardest year of my life. I reached out many times and was simply met with nothing from the school system.

The reality is, I am lucky to be here today, graduating in the upcoming spring and actively taking steps to heal my trauma with the support of my friends and family. Unfortunately, not every victim in my situation is so lucky. It is vital for our schools to prioritize prevention and response to power-based violence for our students' safety and well-being. I am here today telling just a small portion of my story in hopes to make change for the students in the future, as no student or child should ever have to go through what I did.

Regan Comis, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am not here today representing a client; I am here representing myself. I want to share with you the experience of a child I know from northern Nevada and why this piece of legislation is so important.

A young lady I know was sexually assaulted. When other students knew and reported it to the school, the school took no action. Students, again, went to the school administration and informed them an assault had taken place, but the school took no action. This caused students to take matters into their own hands. They did a walk-out of class as well as posted online the victim's name thinking they were being helpful. But it was not; it just caused more trauma to that victim.

Several days after the walk-out, the administration did finally reach out to the victim and sat her down with a male law enforcement officer where she did admit the assault had taken place. At that point, they had her pull out her cellphone and on speaker phone called her mother to tell her over the phone that she had been sexually assaulted. While the mother was driving to the school, she sat in the chair alone with no one providing her support other than the vice principal sitting at her desk and saying to the student, I never get a chance to eat. She sat and ate her lunch while this child sat in a chair alone and afraid.

This piece of legislation must be passed. We cannot have any more students like the beautiful young woman who was sitting next to me or the young woman I know go through what they went through. We obviously need training at this level. I ask this Committee to please pass this bill.

Nathan Noble, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

This is a very personal issue for me. It is said the opposite of good is not evil, it is indifference. Over the past few years when I have been in the proximity of this issue and have attempted to work toward a solution, that has been my experience. This began my freshman year of college when one of my closest friends was sexually assaulted. However, when she went to the Title IX office, they told her they could not help and dismissed the investigation because the assault had occurred off campus premises. She was then referred to the police and to the counseling center. If you have ever tried setting up an appointment with the counseling center, they are so underfunded and overworked, it is virtually impossible to set anything up. I took it upon myself to try to create some campus policy. In doing so, I talked to the Title IX office. When I went in to speak with them, they said, We appreciate your efforts but we already got this covered.

Last session, when S.B. 347 of the 81st Session was enacted, it was a massive step forward, yet it had one fatal flaw. It had so many clauses where it said the Board of Regents may do this, this may be enacted, this may be put forward. It did not say shall. The Board of Regents did exactly what they were required to do—not much.

At every step in this process, victims encounter people who are unable to help them because they do exactly what they are required to do and nothing more. That is a flaw with the way that our laws are written and the way our system is structured. In order to correct that, we must take action. We can no longer kick the onus down the road to someone else, to a different office, to a different agency. We must step forward to defend the victims of this heinous problem because let me tell you, no one else will. The call of public service is to take action. Today, I call upon you and all the people here in this room to do more than we are required to do and protect the people you are elected to serve.

Maria-Teresa Liebermann-Parraga, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am the deputy director of Battle Born Progress, but I am here to represent that little girl who was me, one of those statistics. I was someone who suffered from unwanted touching and power-based violence, and even being here is scary. That little girl grew up with parents who did not speak English, we were undocumented, and on top of that you add that little girl was born with massive anxiety and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. You can only imagine the confusion of what that was and what I should do. I did not even tell my parents. I did not know what to do. If only there was someone there, maybe they could have saved me years and years of absolute trauma and not knowing how to deal with it. Only in my adult life have I been able to actually come to terms with that incident.

I thank Assemblywoman Torres. I thank the wonderful women and girls who came up here to do what is right. I hope you all stand up for those kids—present, future, and past—who have been affected by this. Please support this.

Sarah Peterson, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I support this bill because I work on campus in the Greek life community as a kind of peer-victim advocate. I am overwhelmed with how many people there are to serve with the little resources we have. I am tired of having to comfort my friends and Panhellenic peers with every new rape, domestic violence instance, or worse.

I mediate situations between fraternities and sororities. I want to stress the deep divide in sexual assault prevention and education across the board. I have had many women tell me they did not understand what they went through was classified as sexual assault until after I presented to their organization on the topic. Let me be clear, these are not small transgressions, but rather clear situations of sexual assault as defined by NRS 200.366.

Allocating resources to this issue will not be done in vain. There is a larger population of victims on our collective campuses than will ever be known by a climate survey, but it is a start. I urge our legislators to consider their own daughters and sons having to suffer in silence, attending lectures at the same institutions where their traumatic experience took place. I urge them to think of their mothers and grandmothers who have experienced the same thing our collegiate women are experiencing right now, but in a social climate that prevented them from speaking out. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit D.](#)]

Elizabeth Abdur-Raheem, Executive Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence:

I would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres for her continued advocacy for ending violence and establishing resources for victim-survivors. I would also like to thank the truly brave people who are testifying today, knowing this could create continued trauma in their life and hope they are also getting support for this testimony.

In the exhibits, you will see the Nevada Coalition to END Domestic and Sexual Violence has submitted written testimony [[Exhibit E](#)], but I wanted to highlight just a few key points as I sit before you today. Power-based violence is an epidemic among youth and students in our state, and the procedures being proposed in this bill are long overdue. Currently, schools have been given no guidance on standardized procedures and as a result, often leave student survivors and their families to research and seek out services on their own. However, in most cases, assaults cause victim-survivors and their families extreme trauma, and we routinely hear from parents that they just do not know what to do or where to go for help. Unfortunately, they often try to handle the aftermath on their own.

This approach leaves victim-survivors and their families in a vulnerable state without critical services. Consequently, students experience significant negative effects to their academic and overall success. A warm handoff or connection to a community resource could very well be the exact intervention so many students and families are seeking.

Our schools and systems need the guidance, support, and resources on power-based violence that our community-based agencies are able to offer. Our K-12 school systems and collaborators need to carefully examine the epidemic of power-based violence and develop recommendations on how to prevent, intervene, and respond to these forms of violence in a way that is victim-centered and trauma-informed. This proposed subcommittee is the first step in ending violence and doing better for Nevada's students.

Last session, we were able to start the process of preventing and responding to violence on our higher education campuses. This year's proposed changes are necessary to ensure that the work continues and students receive the best possible prevention education. Power-based violence is preventable, and now our students deserve better access to prevention education, intervention, and resources. We urge this Committee to pass [A.B. 245](#).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We have seven minutes left for support testimony, so we are going to go to the phones. Assemblywoman Torres has informed me she has a trained victim-advocate in her office who is happy to meet with folks. This conversation can pull up a lot of different emotions, so if anyone feels they would like to talk to someone, she is in Room 4115. Please feel free to go there. Thank you, Assemblywoman Torres, for providing that. We will now go to the phone lines for anyone wishing to provide support testimony.

Mike Kamer, Senior Director, Project REAL:

Project REAL is a nonprofit working exclusively statewide here in Nevada teaching kindergarten through college kids their rights and responsibilities under the law. We have been doing that free statewide for 18 years at no cost to the students or schools we serve. That is part of why I am here and what I am here to emphasize today. Along those lines, I should mention we will go into any rural Nevada community and serve in person at no cost to them, related to that earlier question.

Whether it is relationship violence or any form of sexual violence, oftentimes the people involved do not recognize they are victims or involved with a crime until they are in serious trouble. Over the next 12 weeks, Project REAL is going to be serving at least 25 percent of all high school seniors in Nevada with a 90-minute, evidence-based relationship violence prevention experience. We guarantee that no less than 80 percent of those students we serve will be somewhat to significantly less likely to become trapped in abusive and dangerous relationships thanks to that service.

We stick with relationship violence and working in high schools out of an overabundance of caution. However, we have similar experience covering sexual violence and consent designed and ready for college students. The current cost to students and schools who are going to be served with these is absolutely nothing. If we were invited to something like UNR's Nevada Fit, or UNLV's [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] freshman orientation to do it, it would also cost them nothing other than the time they spend saying yes to having us come and do our training. We just need the doors open and that is the challenge.

We currently have the capacity to serve more than 40 percent of the high school seniors in Nevada with the experience we offer with no additional funding or anything. The reason we are not serving all 40 percent is that even when Nevada's Department of Education highlighted our work in their Senate Bill 108 of the 79th Session report they issued in January, schools still have trouble finding time to fit us in. They need the incentive, or in this case the requirement, to say yes to work like ours.

Assembly Bill 245 would accomplish that, and it would potentially do it while costing the school districts and university systems little to nothing. One in four women, one in seven men, one in three noncisgender individuals are going to experience some form of relationship violence in their lives. Again, most of them do not know they are victims or even perpetrators of crimes like those until it is too late. If you do the math, it is saving lives and saving the state money in terms of funds spent on investigating and prosecuting the crime, having conflict, and addressing the needs of victim-survivors. It is all thanks to low- or no-cost prevention education that is available if these systems and organizations would just say yes to letting organizations like ours in. If we can stop the next Gabby Petito, or a child being stuffed into a freezer like what happened last February in southern Nevada in the Toseland case, all by just requiring students to learn about this, matters academically. Again, it can be done at little to no cost to the state or the system. There is no good reason to not overwhelmingly approve this bill.

Aaron Sebastian, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I reside in Senate District 12 and Assembly District 41. I am a Clark County School District (CCSD) high school student and founder of Teens Against Trafficking, which is a nonprofit organization aimed at fighting domestic violence and human trafficking.

I have seen firsthand the impact domestic violence has on our students in Nevada. For me and my peers, power-based violence is an imminent issue that needs to be solved. One in 15 children are exposed to intimate-partner violence each year. Even more stark are the millions of my peers sitting at home alone processing their abuse with no one to reach out to. Through this program, Safe Voice can refer those who seek their services to community-based victim advocacy agencies. This means all students will always have someone to talk to. That is something that is not available in the status quo, and it is so important to our students.

For my peers and me, a lack of resources and ability to consult authorities on situations we face in relation to domestic violence has always been an issue. Teachers and educators may not have the necessary ability and training to handle cases of domestic violence successfully. Allowing schools to sign into an MOU agreement is utilizing victim advocates to develop necessary policies.

Members of the Committee, our students for far too long have been trapped in a glass ceiling in a cycle of abuse. Assembly Bill 245 is needed now and for the future. I, along with thousands of other CCSD students, also advocate for its passage.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are over on our time for our support, but I will let those remaining say their name and organization. For those in the audience, if you are here for support of the bill, please stand. [All in the audience stood.] We will take the next three in Carson City. Ms. Pierczynski, are you here to answer the Assemblyman's question?

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

Yes, and I will be brief. We are in support of the bill because after conversations with Assemblywoman Torres, I was given the same assurance that was given earlier in the meeting that statewide organizations can meet the qualifications of a community-based operation for the MOUs. With that understanding, we are in support.

Jacob Colacurcio, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I come to you today in support of Assembly Bill 245. As a student of UNR for several years, I recognize that adding further language in accordance with S.B. 347 of the 81st Session is important for the continuation of our fight against sexual misconduct on campus. With 13 percent of nationwide college students experiencing some form of unwanted sexual encounters, it is necessary to require climate surveys and training every three years to keep topics of power-based violence fresh on college grounds. Moreover, we need government support within the task force. The combined efforts of community leaders and governmental personnel can push the envelope for promoting change. College students tend to spend hours

on end in the pursuit of their aspirations and are loyal to their home campuses. Let us pass this bill to make our home safer and a more suitable place to pursue our passions. I strongly recommend you pass A.B. 245 to make a significant impact on the lives of those who have withstood these harsh acts of violence.

Kent M. Ervin, Ph.D., State President, Nevada Faculty Alliance:

As a faculty member, I get more of these cases reported to me. We do not have the mental health or first aid training we need to help. We also need to be able to refer students to Title IX and counseling and expect they will truly be supported.

Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:

The Nevada System of Higher Education is in support of A.B. 245. We appreciate the opportunity to have been working with Assemblywoman Torres on this.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Hopefully, you can help us get the Board of Regents to make this happen.

I am going to close support and move to opposition testimony. Is there anyone in Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone wishing to provide opposition testimony? [There was no one.] We will now move to neutral testimony. Is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide neutral testimony?

Katie Broughton, Legislative Liaison, Department of Education:

We would like to thank Assemblywoman Torres and the presenters for their important work on this bill. The Department of Education is testifying in neutral on A.B. 245 as we review the language proposed in the amendment [[Exhibit C](#)].

On a personal note, I would like to commend Lindsey Walterbeek, who previously testified on this bill. I had the privilege of teaching her during her sophomore year of high school. I am incredibly proud of her for the bravery she displayed sharing her story with you today.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no one else in Carson City or Las Vegas, is there anyone on the phone wishing to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.] I will close neutral testimony. Are there any closing comments?

Amanda Vaskov:

I want to thank Assemblywoman Torres for being so cooperative throughout this process. She brought us into this process early on, and we had several stakeholder meetings at other institutions at UNLV. Last week we had a Zoom meeting with several institutions. Nevada State College is in the room, and they were involved in that conversation. Thank you so much for that. I do want to extend a thank you to Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Assemblyman D'Silva, Assemblyman McArthur, and Assemblywoman Taylor for signing on to this bill as

well. I appreciate your support. Per Assemblywoman Thomas' comment, if any of you would also like to sign on to this bill, let us know and we will make sure to get your name added with the amendment.

Olivia Ngo:

I would like to thank the members of this Committee for welcoming us into this space today, not only to present, but also to everyone who testified in the room. You are all very brave and thank you for doing this work. It is not lost on me the power you all have to legislate change and make our students feel more comfortable in our school system. I humbly urge your support of this bill.

Assemblywoman Torres:

The students said it all, but I want to make sure we recognize the work of every single student who is here today and what that means. Sexual violence is not just anecdotal; it is an actual trauma and an actual experience that far too many people have had and endured, and continue to endure. I want to thank Amanda Vaskov from ASUN who took the initiative and reached out to me during the interim. We started working on this for what feels like forever ago, but probably close to eight months ago. Thank you to my intern, Olivia Ngo, who has been a part of those stakeholder meetings and conversations, as well as Stephanie Magallanes, who flew up here from Las Vegas to join us today to share her story. I recognize how hard it is to share those stories. I urge your support of A.B. 245.

[[Exhibit F](#), [Exhibit G](#), [Exhibit H](#), [Exhibit I](#), [Exhibit J](#), [Exhibit K](#), [Exhibit L](#), [Exhibit M](#), [Exhibit N](#), and [Exhibit O](#) were submitted in support of Assembly Bill 245.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 245. I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 241, presented by Assemblywoman Mosca, who is joined by two copresenters. I know we have a lot of people in Las Vegas who are testifying. I want to remind everyone we are limiting testimony in support to 20 minutes.

Assembly Bill 241: Revises provisions governing the education of pupils enrolled in a public high school. (BDR 34-625)

Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14:

I appreciate the Committee today in considering a big policy change in Assembly Bill 241. I look forward to the questions as well as hearing your thoughts at the end. I am going to share my personal as well as my professional experience first to frame us with the problem. I am then going to share what we think is the solution with the College and Career Ready Diploma. I will quickly review the national and Nevada context before giving it over to my colleague, Dr. Tonia Holmes-Sutton, for an educator perspective, as well as Eddie Martinez for a student perspective [page 2, [Exhibit P](#)].

According to the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, a proximate leader is defined as someone who has experienced the injustice they are trying to solve [page 3]. Growing up, I had the most loving and caring parents. I would not be here today if it were not for them. My dad is an immigrant from the Philippines. He moved here and learned English from *Sesame Street* and earned his GED [general equivalency diploma]. He met my mom when she was still in high school. Even though he had just come to this country, she left her house and moved in with him for different reasons. They had me three years later.

Although my homelife could be called tumultuous, they were trying their best to make sure I had a roof over my head and food on the table. It was really because of systemic inequities they were facing every day that made it hard. My dad worked nights so someone could pick us up from school. They never saw each other because of that, and they tried their best to make ends meet. Because of this, I attended seven different schools while growing up. Every time we moved, we moved up on the rung of economic stability. Although I experienced eviction, the judgmental looks from buying food with food stamps, or walking to school because our one car was repossessed, school was always the most stable place, an important place, in my life. But sometimes school only saw my homelife—the poverty we lived in and my young, immigrant parents. That is all they could see.

In the seventh grade, after earning straight As, they did not put me on the accelerated track, which we know is what puts young people on a path to college. My seventh-grade English language arts teacher, after finding this out the very first week of eighth grade, was so irate, she went straight to the principal's office and got my track changed.

In the eleventh grade, I moved to a new high school in a much higher economic area because my dad was being paid a higher rate. I helped him with his resumé and made sure he got the interview. We did not realize we would be in the same position because of the higher cost of living. However, for the first time, I went to a non-Title 1 school. Now I was a lower-class brown kid in a rich school. Although I was ranked in the top 20 of my class in my first high school, it was this new school that showed me what I had never had access to. Classes I earned As in I would have to retake because I knew nothing compared to my peers. I was very confused, and I knew the one place I had found solace was no longer that place.

Because I went to a better school, I was able to get a scholarship and, no surprise, become a teacher to help those growing up with backgrounds similar to mine [page 4]. As someone who was a teacher, worked on policy, and supported a nonprofit for ten years, I saw the same issues. The same issues of low expectations for our most marginalized youth, better quality in some schools than others because of zip codes, and young people who just needed school to be the place where they could thrive. I want to say here and now that this is not all teachers, not all counselors, and not all systems. Mrs. Jackson, who got my classes changed, is my lifesaver. I believe and know that most teachers are this to students, but as a system, we know that tracking for our most marginalized students happens and their whole life futures are impacted by this. Like Linda on this slide [page 4] who was told to stop asking for letters of recommendation because we knew she was just going to stay in Las Vegas

anyway. She graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and is now a student at Touro University to become a physician assistant in her home community. With students like Eddie Martinez, who we will hear from soon, we know this is an issue our students face.

What can we possibly do as a state [page 5]? I know this awesome Committee knows I try so hard to be pragmatic. I understand we do not have the teachers we need to have, I know we do not have the support staff we need to have, and I know we rank near the bottom when it comes to per pupil funding. However, I also know we cannot let adult issues be student issues.

So what can we do? The most pragmatic thing we came up with was when it comes to the College and Career Ready Diploma—you do have this graphic on your desk because I know it is hard to see on the screen [page 5]—what we are saying is why do we not just allow all young people, regardless of their background or the school they go to, to be able to take the most advanced course work or have the highest expectations. If you look at the different diplomas we have in our state, the electives are the same.

What really is different is we know there is a grade point average requirement. We heard a lot of feedback about this, which I totally understand. This is why we want to make this opt out versus opt in, so we do not take away graduation opportunities for students and so we do not create great inflation. It is the column on the right, which I would argue from a values-based position, we should probably, I hope, want all students in Nevada to have access to language classes, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, dual credit, career technology, or work-based learning.

You will see the endorsements at the bottom of the screen. This is what it takes for a young person to graduate with the College and Career Ready (CCR) Diploma, but because we are allowing young people to opt out in this bill, if they are not able to access this before the time they graduate, we hope then they were on the advanced, and if not on advanced, they would still graduate with a standard diploma. I am excited to take questions on this when we get into it.

I will briefly go over the national context [page 6]. We were really trying to figure out what other states are doing. There are 35 states that do have a CCR or a higher expectation diploma, but there is really no standard of how different states are doing when it comes to opting in versus opting out.

I thought this was interesting [page 7]. A shout-out to the Legislative Counsel Bureau for doing all this research before the session started. We see in some states, such as the ones on the slide, they do ask for plans. You will see that later in the bill when it comes to what young people are doing when they graduate.

Finally, the question should be, What is happening in Nevada [page 8, [Exhibit P](#)]? I know some of our State Board of Education members are here as well, and they have been working hard on this issue. These slides come from one of their presentations. First, we know less

than half of our students graduate on the advanced or CCR diploma. When it comes to who has access, my qualitative story I started with matches quantitatively the disproportionality we see when it comes to who is actually even accessing these diploma types [page 9]. When it comes to subgroups [page 10], it is even worse.

The question I wanted to ask is what happens to our young people [page 11]? I asked the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) if we can see who is graduating. Do we see the rates when it comes to what diploma young people were on and then graduate from our system, remembering that our higher education system has certifications for those who want the work-based as well as two-year and four-year degrees? Right now, NSHE does not have the data for the actual graduation rates, which they are getting and will publish publicly when they have them. They were able to at least give me the access rates. This slide shows young people now accessing our system of higher education, which diploma they graduated with, and you can see—probably no surprise—that a student has a better chance of attending an NSHE institution if they graduated with the College and Career Ready Diploma or an advanced diploma, and had a better chance of attending our four-year schools.

I will kick it over to Tonia Holmes-Sutton to share an educator perspective [page 12]. [[Exhibit Q](#), [Exhibit R](#), and [Exhibit S](#) were submitted but not discussed.]

Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada:

I am a National Board-Certified teacher. I support teachers in leadership, in advocacy, and policy. I sit before you today as an individual who has earned a doctorate degree but who was also told she should not go to college. She should stay home and help her mother take care of the children. In pursuing that doctorate degree, I acknowledged that not only was I dissuaded in high school, but also dissuaded as a classroom practitioner by administrators and my colleagues.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak with you today and share a little bit about what my colleagues and I have been working on. On this slide [page 13. [Exhibit P](#)], there is a summary of the endeavors we have been pursuing since last year. We had the opportunity to connect with Assemblywoman Mosca this year, but we have been looking at this issue since our 2021-2022 cohort.

As Teach Plus Nevada Fellows, we have hosted focus groups and also had one-on-one sessions with individuals who have attended and graduated from Nevada high schools. We had the opportunity to engage with a diverse number of individuals who are represented in attendance at traditional public schools, at career and technical education schools, at alternative public schools, and at public charter schools. Those individuals identified as white, Black or African American, Latinx, Asian, or two or more races. They also included those who identified as female and male, he and him, she and her, they and them. Our graduates articulated through the focus groups and one-on-one interviews that they wished for greater preparedness for college, career, and community. They acknowledged that even though some of them were accepted into college, they did not feel they were prepared to be successful. We had one of our graduates join the focus group from Hong Kong.

He appreciated the opportunity to be able to travel and study abroad, but he noted he did not have confidence in his competency with his peers. We also note there were individuals who had attended school in other states and then transferred here. In those other states, they were on a trajectory for college and career readiness, and here they were told they did not have the opportunity to be placed in a college and career track.

I also acknowledge that the students asked for greater opportunities to pursue college and career exploration so they would be better positioned to understand what their options were and to make better- and best-informed decisions for themselves. In addition to that, those who had the opportunity to participate in internships and mentorships and those who did not asked for greater opportunities to do so, acknowledging that they have spent a number of years pursuing interests and spending money on that postsecondary, when if they had had an opportunity for greater college and career exploration, internships, and mentorships at the high school level, they would not have spent thousands of dollars pursuing opportunities that they did not then remain committed to.

On the next slide [page 14], I want to acknowledge that during the policy summit as well as working with my Teach Plus Nevada Fellows who have had an opportunity to hear from educators, we have also heard their concerns. Here on the slide, we acknowledge that what we have detailed is, we do have a collective responsibility to serve our students well and to ensure they are prepared for college, career, and community and that they have options they deserve to have those opportunities. We should not resign ourselves to allowing our students or saying that our students should get the minimum. We also acknowledge that there were colleagues who shared there should be intentional and strategic engagement of students and connections to real-world applications in their pursuit of college and career exploration and postsecondary success.

Lastly, I will acknowledge here—though you have in the exhibits submissions of the work that Teach Plus Nevada has done and the findings and recommendations from the focus groups and the one-on-one interviews [[Exhibit T](#)]
—that there was conversation around the inclusion and expansion of those internships and college and career exploration beginning in middle school. As an early childhood educator, I am going to say to you I start talking to students about college with 3- and 4-year-olds. I taught a 4-year-old who will graduate this spring from high school. He was very upset with me as he transitioned out of my preschool classroom and he struggled in kindergarten because he said, Ms. Holmes-Sutton, you lied. You said I was going to college, and I am in kindergarten. He has been waiting a long time for this opportunity. He deserves this opportunity. There are students who are not getting this opportunity. I compel you today to consider adopting [A.B. 241](#) and giving all of our children what they deserve. [Written testimony was also submitted, [Exhibit U](#).]

Eddie Martinez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am here to share my story [page 16, [Exhibit P](#)]. As I graduated from eighth grade, I was excited to start my high school journey. Unfortunately, I had a Clark County School District

employee attempt to shoot down my dreams. She told me I would not make it past the eleventh grade, I would drop out, and most likely turn to fast food. I used this as fuel to push forward in life.

While attending Las Vegas High School, I realized I was in an environment that did not encourage academic success, leaving students behind and making high school a place for socialization. My high school never encouraged me to reach my potential. A school with so many students facing more than just educational issues did not help prepare me for the future or how to advance in general. They never reached out to see how I was doing. I was not learning or applying myself as I could. No one gave me direction until I finally met my mentor outside of high school. My mentor presented me with the opportunity to attend the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) High School. I appreciated it so much because this did help me out a lot. I was able to get college credits in high school, and this helped me prove to those who had low expectations of me wrong and led me to join a new type of environment.

I am now a senior at UNR and graduating soon. It took me a little longer due to a firearm accident I had in my freshman year, during the fall semester, resulting in my traumatic brain injury. Due to my accident, I was unfortunately left in a coma and had to learn to do everything again. I am happy to be going back to the Las Vegas community once I graduate. I plan to give some of my extra time helping the community I love so deeply. I want to help give back to my community.

By allowing more access and resources, it will ensure other kids like me coming from low-income families and marginalized communities to have opportunities I could never imagine. I do not know what could have happened if I had stayed at Las Vegas High School (LVHS), but I am certain leaving LVHS was the best outcome because new opportunities opened after going to CSN High School. I hope every student out there has the chance I had to prove everyone wrong and succeed. That is why I support the bill as well.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

Finally Chair and Committee, this is the very brief bill overview [page 17, [Exhibit P](#)]. Section 1, subsection 5 calls for what we are sharing, that all high school students will be enrolled in the College and Career Ready Diploma courses. However, section 1, subsection 5(a) says after the ninth grade—so that could be tenth, eleventh, twelfth, it is just after the ninth grade—the pupil, the parents, or an administrator or counselor, can meet and decide if the student should stay on the current track or if they should take the advanced, the standard, the adjusted, or alternative. Section 1, subsection 5(b) says that students with an individualized education plan (IEP) are exempt because they must follow the IEP by law. Section 1, subsection 6 defines what an IEP is.

Again, trying our best to be pragmatic, section 2 is a phased implementation plan by grade level, so we are not trying to put this on all of our districts right away.

Before we get to questions, the last thing I will say is thank you for your time and considering A.B. 241. Because this is a policy committee, only because this is the biggest thing that comes up, I do want to say on the record that I and all of us who support this bill do support the fiscal implication it would take to make this bill happen for all students in our district. We do support that and know it is a thing, but we think the policy is what is most important. We are now open for questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Mr. Martinez, does it feel good to prove them wrong?

Eddie Martinez:

Absolutely.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for being here and thank you for presenting this bill. We will start the questioning with Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you to the presenters. I do appreciate your testimony and your witness to what is wrong at Clark County School District (CCSD). I will say that for the record. I do have a question about section 1, subsection 5(a). Are you saying individually or the student plus the parent plus the administrator and/or a counselor?

Assemblywoman Mosca:

We want to make sure with the Legal Division that it is correct. The intent was that it would be the student, the parent or legal guardian, and an administrator or a counselor. They would make the decision together.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you for the clarification. I do believe the parents should be involved.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I am a teacher in a high school where I see this. I see it in a lot of our schools across the state and I see the need to raise the expectations for our students. I see my students asking us to raise the expectations on them. I think your story on tracking is accurate. I have taught an honors freshman course and the kids who come into that course are the ones the eighth-grade teacher decided should be in that course. That is not always a standard process across every school. I think we need to ensure our students are getting the skills they need, even if it is hard, even if it takes more work. That is why we are here.

I agree completely with the intent of this bill. However, it references *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) about the College and Career Ready Diploma. In that NRS, it does not specify what makes up a College and Career Ready Diploma. It just says Nevada's Department of Education can decide what that is. If these are the things we want for our kids, and I think we do, should we perhaps specify a little more clearly what that means?

My concern is if we put this in statute tomorrow, the Department of Education could take away these requirements and then we are back to where we started. What are some safeguards to ensure it really is a higher-level diploma?

Assemblywoman Mosca:

Could we ask the Legal Division to answer that question?

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

Currently, the Department of Education does have the authority to adopt regulations that set what the diploma requirements are. Those are in *Nevada Administrative Code* (NAC) 390.430 for the advanced diploma, NAC 390.440 for the standard diploma, and NAC 390.443 for the college and career ready diploma. As Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch stated, those are all set by regulation and none of it is in statute. It certainly would be within the Legislature's authority to put all of that in statute instead. I would note the complication of that is once the Legislature puts it in statute, the Legislature controls it, and it can only be changed by law. The Legislature would only have the opportunity to modify those during the sessions once every two years.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

Thank you for that. We will think about it and work with you.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I thought it was a phenomenal presentation. I definitely understand the importance of making sure we are allowing students to be in vigorous academic environments. My question has to do with section 1, subsection 5(b). It is exempting students with disabilities. I think there should be some language for it, if the IEP team determines that student would not be eligible. Obviously, there are going to be students with IEPs who should be in vigorous classes and who will be successful receiving the college and career readiness diploma.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

That is definitely the intent, but that is something we can definitely put in.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

You mentioned IEPs. Would 504s [section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973] still be eligible?

Assemblywoman Mosca:

Section 1, subsection 5(b) does mention 504s, so I believe that it is included.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

The same language would probably be necessary for the IEP students.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

Yes, we will add that.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Mosca and presenters, for this important piece of legislation. I am certainly one who believes in high expectations for low-income kids and for students at Title I schools and others who are some of our most vulnerable. Actually, research backs that up. One of the first papers I wrote in my master's degree program was about high expectations for all students.

You are looking for a phased-in implementation. Could you talk about what that looks like?

Assemblywoman Mosca:

In section 2 of the bill, what we are attempting to do is say this would only start for students in the ninth grade starting in the 2024-2025 school year. We do not want to impact young people—even though we kind of do—but the way policy is, we do not want to mess with what is happening right now. What it means is with the new incoming freshman class, we would put this in. The next year, 2025-2026, would be ninth and tenth, the following ninth, tenth, and eleventh, to really give understanding to our school districts, especially those in our rural communities because this would be hard to make sure we have enough sections, teachers, and classes. I think those students in the rurals would want it as well.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

All of our schools have this as an option because that is part of what is in statute to do. I would hope this will help build up those programs that are already in existence. There are only a couple of districts mentioning there should be a fiscal impact if I read it correctly. We do not want to leave rural students behind either. We want them to have those opportunities for excelling at a higher level and preparing them for whatever future track they decide.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

You are channeling my education hero, Marva Collins, from Westside Preparatory Academy in Chicago back in the day. Based on your presentation and based on things we know are going on statistically in our state, this is the path. I am so thrilled. I am going to surprise everyone. I am not going to talk specifics, but we are here to spend money and we need to spend it in the right places. For me, I see this as a path forward for a solution we really need. I have to get my rural counties to settle down. I mainly want to make a comment to thank you. I think this is a path we need to consider getting on, and the sooner the better.

It is always the rollout. I think that is what all of us have been humbled by. What we do here, it is the rollout that can get a little tricky. In humility, I understand that may be difficult. I do want to be on the record for saying this is definitely a step—in my humble opinion, watching education issues over multitudes of decades—that helps us make those proficiency and achievement accomplishments that I think we are all seeking to find. No question, just thank you.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I would like to add my name to your bill.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other questions? [There were none.] I know we have a lot of people to testify. It is completely okay to say, Me too, I agree, or ditto. I would like to get as many of you on the record as I can. We will have 20 minutes for support testimony. We will start with the first three in Las Vegas, then we will come back to Carson City.

Annette Dawson Owens, Director, School Readiness Policy, Children's Advocacy Alliance:

We are grateful to Assemblywoman Mosca for bringing forward A.B. 241, and for the foundation and focus she brings to helping all of our students be successful. Every student deserves access to a high-quality education and to be college and career ready upon graduation with no option being unavailable or unattainable for them and their future. Careers in education are often a freeway with on and off ramps at different times in one's life depending on when or what one decides to pursue. Raising the bar for education in Nevada and putting in supports necessary to help all our students be prepared for their future is paramount. We believe this bill does that and is more inclusive for all students as well as reducing some of the disparities we are seeing.

Student to guidance counselor ratios are often high, and the graduation degrees can be confusing for parents and others who may not be aware. Therefore, providing a College and Career Ready Diploma that is of a higher standard and will better prepare students for our future workforce and their future with an opt out provision if it is found necessary, makes a lot more sense. Thank you to this Committee for your consideration.

Cynthia Mejia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am currently a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and former student from Chaparral High School. The Fulfillment Fund Las Vegas program has been there for me in my journey to fulfill my dreams. This organization contributed much to my pursuit to finish college. They have given me the tools necessary, not only for myself, to adhere to my education. I actually came here directly from a class, thanks to a professor. That is why I am here. It is crucial for me to be here. I am here to support A.B. 241 to place high school students on the College and Career Ready Diploma track, giving Nevada students a foundation for success, just like me.

As a CCSD graduate with this college ready diploma, I graduated with the skills expected of me at university level. In the current system, students are automatically enrolled in a standard diploma. Not all students have access to the college and career track, meaning they may not be ready for their next step as they graduate high school. Students are currently leaving high school without the foundation necessary for their success, which is significant in that it has disadvantages for them to embark on their own future. This problem will continue

to compound. Every single student deserves a chance to graduate from high school college and career ready. This bill is an opportunity to put every single kid on the path, not only for me. For these reasons, I am proud to support A.B. 241 today. I urge you to vote affirmative.

Brenda Pearson, Director, Strategic Policy Initiatives, Clark County Education Association:

Clark County Education Association believes students across Nevada deserve the opportunity to be prepared for college, career, and beyond. Nevada's economic future is dependent upon the quality of our education system. The low performance of our schools is often cited as one reason businesses do not come to Nevada. Our state must take steps toward ensuring our graduating seniors are prepared to enter high-skill, high-wage industries of Nevada's future. Nevada boasts a high graduation rate, but approximately half of all Nevada graduates entering into the UNR and UNLV must have courses remediated to meet their current academic needs.

Nevada has communicated to students that the ultimate goal of the K-12 education system is graduation; nothing more and nothing less. Nevada's low expectations for students impacts their belief in themselves and the goals they set for their own future. Clark County Education Association believes Nevada students can and will do better when offered a path toward college or career. Enrolling all Nevada students in the College and Career Ready Diploma gives every student the opportunity to succeed at their highest level.

During the presentation today, Assemblywoman Mosca shared data that demonstrates a lack of equity and access to this path of a College and Career Ready Diploma. This is a session about accountability at every level of our education delivery system, including the equitability and accessibility of educational opportunities. Clark County Education Association supports A.B. 241, and we thank Assemblywoman Mosca for her leadership on this issue.

Jesse Cruz, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a graduate of the CCSD high school magnet program, Canyon Springs High School to be specific. I am here to testify in support of A.B. 241. As someone whose older brother graduated from a magnet program similar to mine with an advanced honors diploma on top of the college and career readiness honor, the process of going through and advocating for yourself to receive a diploma that reflects the hard work you put into not only graduating, but receiving as much financial aid as possible at only 17 years old is unbelievable and should simply not be the case.

What A.B. 241 does is streamline the process for excellence in academics, allowing students to begin the track of receiving a prestigious honor on their diplomas that exemplifies and highlights hard work and employability. What I especially appreciate about the language in this bill and Assemblywoman Torres' comment during questioning is the flexibility for students with disabilities regarding their education plans.

As a student who had surgery in the summer of entering my sophomore year of high school, I had excellent teachers who tried to accommodate my needs as someone with a physical disability recovering from a physically and mentally strenuous spinal operation, which I am glad to have fully recovered from at the age of 15. I am glad this grace is being extended to students as well with proper enforcement, hopefully. I thank the Committee for listening to my testimony and hope you vote yes on A.B. 241.

Kevin Osorio Hernandez, Senator, Nevada State Student Alliance, Nevada State College:

I am a first-generation student at Nevada State College majoring in history and a constituent of Assembly District 14. I am also a supporter of A.B. 241. First, I want to thank my Assemblywoman for this amazing bill. Her story is similar to mine, and I actually see myself in her shoes one day.

I graduated from Valley High School in 2021. Because of my first-generation identity, I did not have a person in my family to look up to or to seek guidance from. Subsequently, I felt as though I was stuck in the standard diploma designating me as a standard student within my high school education. If only I had been tracked into the International Baccalaureate or advanced placement programs, I would have received the highest high school diploma with the highest rigor. This opt-out system would have taken away the burden of navigating a system that often does not work for first-generation students. Please support A.B. 241 so my siblings and other students receive the highest possible diploma.

Jeff Horn, Executive Director, Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees:

The Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees represents over 1,450 CCSD administrators. We are in support of A.B. 241.

As a former high school principal, I saw firsthand the positive impact educators have on students. Too many times students, especially minority students, are told this is where you will do your best; do not take that class, it is too difficult; you are doing just fine where you are. There is nothing more powerful than a teacher or an administrator who believes in a student and encourages them to achieve at a higher level.

In my past life as a high school principal, our staff created an advanced placement (AP) world history class with the same rigor and curriculum as any other section. The goal was to select students who had never taken an honors or AP International Baccalaureate class, targeting underrepresented student subgroups. We would enroll them in world history AP class. We recruited an amazing teacher who nurtured, guided, and believed in their success. That amazing teacher was Miss Vaden Fowler, who has sadly since passed away. At the end of that school year, students of Miss Fowler's world history AP class achieved at the same rate as honors AP students who were enrolled in the other traditional world history AP classes. Miss Fowler's students achieved because she believed in them. It was never a question in her mind; it was an expectation. Students need adults in their lives to encourage and push them to achieve, even when they are unsure.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are going to take a couple of callers waiting on the phone to provide support testimony.

Lauren Bui, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a junior at West Career and Technical Academy (WCTA) in Las Vegas, Nevada. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify for A.B. 241. Here at WCTA with the career and technical education program, we get a college and career readiness diploma. This is not something I actively chose or thought about; however, I am glad to be given this opportunity because it gives me a better education. Other students may not have access to or the knowledge about their diploma types. By making a college and career readiness diploma opt out, we are providing more equity in education and improving the quality of education of all of our students in Nevada. Thank you, Assemblywoman Mosca, for bringing this bill forward.

Sebastian Cardenas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a CCSD educator and a constituent of Assembly District 28 here to testify in support of A.B. 241. As a high school freshman in 2013, I attended a school with the lowest high school graduation rate in CCSD at the time. What was said to us at our freshman orientation was, All you have to do is get this number of credits, not do anything too bad, and you can graduate. Nothing was mentioned about career and college opportunities. The system gave up on us achieving those things before we even had a chance to give up on ourselves. If it were not for adults in my life that held me to the expectation of continuing my education and my having decided that I needed to at the age of 5, I would be in the same gray jail cell many of my friends who were also in the room are in now.

The current opt-in status of the college and career readiness degree sends the same message. Every student deserves to feel worthy of their dreams. Our school district needs to do that for them. Please uphold that ideal by passing A.B. 241.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We have a little under ten minutes left for support testimony. I will go to Las Vegas for the next three testifiers.

Michelle Tapia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a recent graduate of UNLV and an emerging professional with the American Institute of Architects. As a student in a low-income, minority household, my family and I were never made aware of opportunities like the college and career readiness track. Going into college, I felt I was incredibly unprepared. I urge you to support A.B. 241 to give all our students the opportunities they deserve and help prepare them for their future.

Tristan Osorio, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I also went to West Career and Technical Academy where I received my advanced honors diploma. Having that diploma and that study track allowed me to be highly successful in my college years, where I switched from civil engineering to architecture, and now I am an

emerging professional at Tate Snyder Kimsey Architects. Having this foundation of strong study habits is imperative to the success of establishing a strong future workforce in Las Vegas and other parts of Nevada.

Ivan Gonzalez-Vasquez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a senior at the UNLV School of Architecture and president of The American Institute of Architecture Students. I am here to testify in favor of A.B. 241. To me, this bill is not just about the diploma, but also about educating parents and students about what their education actually means. As a first-generation college student, I was pushed to graduate and pushed to go to college. I do not think people like me or in our community really understand what that means. The way the school system is currently set up does not allow students and parents to understand what an education actually means, not just as a checklist.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will move back to Carson City.

Miriam Lachica, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here in support of A.B. 241. I graduated high school from a college preparatory high school in east Las Vegas where I now work helping students like me with college access. Our school does not use a standard diploma, only in special circumstances. As we consider the relationship between teacher expectations and student outcomes, I ask that you hold students' success in education in higher regard.

As it is now, the standard diploma does not adequately prepare students for higher education. Many competitive postsecondary programs require credits from classes students are not required to take or simply do not have access to. Students often do not realize this until it is much too late.

Making the College and Career Ready Diploma the new standard will raise the standard for everyone and will make the students expect more from themselves. It is better to be optimistic about what our students can do rather than focus on what some think they cannot do. If I had not had teachers who believed in me before I even believed in myself, I probably would not be graduating from a university in May. This bill is a clear example of how we can challenge the bigotry of low expectations that we have for students in Nevada. I adamantly support A.B. 241, and I urge that you do as well.

Cynthia Romero, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am an educator from Las Vegas, a high school program manager, as well as a constituent from Assembly District 14. My experience in education has allowed me to inspire many elementary school students by teaching them that, through rigorous academics, they will achieve life's fullest opportunities, be it college, trade schools, or the military. However, this momentum of rigorous academics is kind of challenging for them once they reach high school because there is no transparency on how they can achieve the highest level of diploma. I have had a couple of high school students come to me and tell me they had to let go of their opportunities because they were unaware that their courses were not fulfilling the

requirements to go to an out-of-state university, such as having to have two years of a foreign language, which is required in California. I had students attain a full-ride athletic scholarship that have been turned away because their academics did not meet the requirements.

As I started to see many students miss out on opportunities, I recall asking my students if they knew what they needed to be on track for college. A lot of them said no. It became worrisome to me because I was working with students who wanted to pursue college, so I can only imagine what was happening to students who were not part of our program and were not getting the support my students were getting.

By supporting A.B. 241, you are supporting students with opportunities to succeed and opportunities to life's fullest opportunities.

Nick Vassiliadis, representing Nevada Resort Association:

We would like to thank the sponsor for bringing forth this bill. I would like to thank the Committee for what appears to be bipartisan support. As the state's single-largest funder of education, we too agree that this is the right path forward. We urge your support on this bill.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go back to Las Vegas. We have a couple more minutes, so if you could make your testimony very brief in order to allow a few more testifiers, I would appreciate it.

Angelika Tabujara, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a first-generation immigrant college student at UNLV and also a proud graduate of CCSD at Chaparral High School. As a scholar of Fulfillment Fund Las Vegas, I received more additional support and guidance than your typical graduate of CCSD. As a result, I completed the career and college ready or advanced diploma. That is why I am here to support A.B. 241.

There are many reasons to support A.B. 241, but I want to highlight my perspective as a passionate high school athlete. I know the significant difference between the peers I had in advanced classes and the teammates I had in the field and on the court. Today, because of the guidance my peers and I had, many of us grew to be confident about our college journey and career options. Unfortunately, many of my teammates who focused on the only choice they felt they had—sports scholarships—never had the opportunity to have an alternative choice like I did. Because of the resources I was given, I was not trapped. I was given the guidance, support, and genuine care to succeed in anything and everything I chose to pursue going into college. Furthermore, I can confidently say that when I first stepped into college, it became easy to seek support from my counselors who had been with me since high school to relieve that pressure higher education put on me.

Even to this day, despite my tumultuous college journey, college career programs like Fulfillment Fund helped me stay in college. With that said, all students deserve to graduate from high school college and career ready no matter what their next step is. By enrolling every high school student in the College and Career Ready Diploma, we will be putting every

student on a path to success beyond high school and creating opportunities for brighter futures for kids, families, and our communities. For these reasons, I am proud to support A.B. 241 today.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are over our 20-minute time limit, but I am going to stay in Las Vegas. If you would please just say your name, who you represent, and that you are in support of the bill, we will be able to come back to Carson City to do the same thing.

Jeff Jones, Executive Director, CORE Powered by The Rogers Foundation:

I support A.B. 241.

Trevor Parrish, Manager, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:

The Vegas Chamber is in support of A.B. 241.

Vince Saavedra, representing Southern Nevada Building Trades Unions:

We are in full support of A.B. 241.

Tameka Henry, Cofounder, Rise Up Nevada; and Education Cochair, Las Vegas Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:

We are in full support of this bill.

Jonathan Norman, Statewide Advocacy, Outreach, and Policy Director, Nevada Coalition of Legal Service Providers:

Ditto.

Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada; and Director of Outreach, Asian Community Development Council:

I am also a proud sponsor for College Readiness Bootcamp for eight years straight. We are proud to support this bill.

Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District:

We are in support of this legislation.

Elyse Monroy-Marsala, representing ACE Charter School:

Ditto.

Anthony Curry, Director, Public Policy, Opportunity 180:

Ditto.

Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:

The Nevada System of Higher Education is in support.

Felicia Ortiz, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:

I am speaking on behalf of myself in support.

Chelsea Capurro, representing Urban Chamber of Commerce; and Nevada Association of School Administrators:

Ditto.

Julianna Garcia, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a student at UNR, and I support [A.B. 241](#).

Anthony Ruiz, Deputy Chief of Staff, Nevada State College:

Ditto.

Aodhan Downey, representing Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance:

Ditto.

Tamara Hudson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Ditto. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit V](#).]

Jack Glesea, representing Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada:

Ditto.

Tim Hughes, Private Citizen:

Speaking on my own behalf, I am also in support.

Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada:

We are here in support. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit W](#).]

Malia Poblete, Student Representative, Nevada State Board of Education:

Ditto.

Mariness Solis, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

Ditto.

Alexander Avila, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a current student at UNLV. Ditto.

Allison Thibault, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a counselor at Fulfillment Fund Las Vegas, the president of the National Association for Student Success, and a student at UNLV. Ditto.

John Etzell, Executive Director, Boys Town Nevada:

Ditto.

[[Exhibit X](#), [Exhibit Y](#), [Exhibit Z](#), [Exhibit AA](#), [Exhibit BB](#), [Exhibit CC](#), [Exhibit DD](#), [Exhibit EE](#), [Exhibit FF](#), [Exhibit GG](#), [Exhibit HH](#), and [Exhibit II](#) were submitted in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close support testimony and open opposition testimony for [A.B. 241](#).

Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years. We certainly appreciate the intent of this bill, yet we are in opposition. Today I will be reading some comments submitted by Karlana Kulseth, a teacher at Cimarron-Memorial High School in Las Vegas. She states, I am in opposition to [A.B. 241](#) placing all high school students on the College and Career Ready Diploma track. I teach 240 students. Out of all ninth and tenth grade students on our campus, 9 percent are proficient in math and 22 percent of those students are proficient in writing and reading skills. What if none of the college and career readiness courses being offered at a school appeal to a student? I cannot imagine we are going to force students through four years of courses that did not interest them. We should be working on making sure students want to show up to learn, not push them away with requirements that do not interest them.

Nevada is currently not funding our public education system at an optimal level. There is a teacher shortage. What support are we giving to school districts to hire more teachers who can teach the additional college and career readiness courses? If our state requires our students to take college and career readiness courses, there needs to be lasting commitment to support students in this manner. This commitment needs to include optimal funding, as well as ensuring districts are not carrying the burden of the state requirements for graduation and have financial support to hire highly qualified teachers to teach those courses. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit JJ](#).]

Lastly, I want to add that [A.B. 241](#) would lead to additional costs to school districts. We know there are three school districts projected to receive no increased funding from the state in the next biennium. College and career readiness includes an emphasis on high-stakes testing. The Nevada State Education Association has been vocal over the years about moving away from a culture of high-stakes testing, instead focusing on classroom learning.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I would like to remind everyone, if you have a business card and testified, please give your card to our committee secretary. That would help a lot in transcribing the minutes. Is there anyone else in Carson City, Las Vegas, or over the phone wishing to provide opposition testimony?

Peter Guzman, President, Latin Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, Nevada:

We are 100 percent in support of [A.B. 241](#).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I had a feeling that was going to happen. We are in opposition. Is there anyone on the phone waiting to testify in opposition?

Karen Villatoro Gonzalez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am also in support of A.B. 241. I am so sorry I did not get through on the other queue. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit KK](#).]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close opposition testimony and move to neutral testimony for A.B. 241. Is there anyone wishing to provide neutral testimony in Carson City or Las Vegas?

Katie Gilbertson, Policy Analyst, Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation:

For the record, we are here to testify as neutral for A.B. 241. The Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation is committed to building a talent pipeline for Nevada businesses. Assembly Bill 241 prepares more students for career success and builds a homegrown workforce that will help the state achieve its long-term economic goals.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone else in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Is there anyone waiting on the phone? [There was no one.] Are there any closing comments?

Assemblywoman Mosca:

We will continue to work on the bill. I want to say, I would not be here if it were not for the teacher who believed in me enough to change my track. I hope we can do that for all our young people.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close the hearing on A.B. 241. I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 228, presented by Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch.

**Assembly Bill 228: Revises provisions governing required courses in high school.
(BDR 34-572)**

Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25:

I am here to present another bill to raise expectations for our students and make sure every student has the opportunity to get the skills they need to graduate. Before we continue, I will let my colleague introduce herself.

Julie Wakefield, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I retired from Washoe County School District last year after 25 years of teaching geography. Now in my semi-retired life, I am a geography instructor at Truckee Meadows Community College, a College Board consultant for Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography, and

the professional development coordinator for the National Council for Geographic Education. Needless to say, I have dedicated my professional life to the teaching of geography and supporting other teachers who do too.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

You know me as your colleague, but I am also a social studies teacher. I teach world history. I have spent my career teaching world history. To give you some background, I helped write the standards we recently adopted a few years ago in world history—in fact, in all of social studies. I was one of the driving forces in that committee to make sure our standards were truly global and represented every group that is in history—they are not just Eurocentric as they used to be. Ms. Wakefield and I have both been very active in the writing of the curriculum within the Washoe County School District. We are very active within the social studies community. Through that work, we came to this bill. This bill comes from the teaching community. This has been a push within the community for a long time in order to support our students [[Exhibit LL](#)].

As we jump in, I would like to explain what geography is because many people believe geography is looking at maps. That is not what geography is. I am going to show you a very quick geography lesson. Normally, this takes half a class period, and we are going to do it in about two minutes. You each have a handout that is called "Geography in your Starbucks cup" [page 2, [Exhibit MM](#)]. I asked my kids to think about the four main ingredients of a java chip Frappuccino. They listed them and then I asked to think about where that ingredient came from. Who was the first person who looked at a cow and decided to milk it and drink what came out? Where does chocolate come from? Where does coffee come from? Then I asked them to think about where it comes from today. Where is it grown? How do we get it here for our morning Frappuccino? Yes, my students do come in with a morning Frappuccino. And, who consumes it the most?

Normally I would let you have some think time to try to get those answers. I am just going to tell you the answers today because we have to get going. For chocolate, the red circle on this slide [page 3] is where chocolate originated. It is Mesoamerican. The green circle is where it is most grown in west Africa. The blue circle is where chocolate is most consumed per capita today. There is a lot of cultural significance to cacao and Mesoamerica. There is a lot of colonialism tied into Africa. There are modern child slavery issues tied to Nestlé and colonial issues with chocolate production in Africa. There is a whole lot of global stuff going on.

Sugar comes from India, but it was brought to Brazil as part of colonization there [page 4]. The reason Brazil has some of the largest Afro-Latino populations is because slaves were brought in to grow sugar on those plantations. The slave trade was largely tied to sugar, which many people do not know. Obviously, today the people who consume the most sugar per capita is the United States.

Cows come from southwest Asia [page 5]. They are now largely in India and eastern Europe today. I will not go into all the details of this. As I said, this is usually a huge lesson. The same is true for coffee [page 6]. As you can see, the place where it originated, the place where it is grown, and the place where it is consumed are all very different places. Even ice—ice is the one ingredient that is American [page 7]. The United States used to export ice from the northeast United States. That is why ice in drinks is typically an American thing that you do not find everywhere else.

The reason I am showing all of this to you is because I want you to know that even in this one drink that you might not think about is the entire history of the world, our global cultures coming together and blending in a very harmonious way, and is an entire global supply chain which gets disrupted when we have conflicts, global pandemics, weather issues, and everything else. What I want you to understand is when we are talking about geography, we are talking about modern issues; we are talking about culture; we are talking about why the world is the way it is today.

I notice our third presenter is here. He was just teaching geography at the University of Nevada, Reno, but it looks like he was able to join us. I will pause for a moment and let him introduce himself.

Adam Csank, Professor, Department of Geography, University of Nevada, Reno:

As Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch was just saying, geography is a critical issue to the world today. Geography is more than just facts and knowing the state capitals. It is about connections between people, between place, and between people and place, and connections between the entire society. All of the big issues the world is facing today are fundamentally tied to space and place; and they are geographic issues. To grapple with those issues requires a population that can assess and use geographic information to make these decisions.

For example, how can you understand environmental justice issues around urban heat and its impacts on disadvantaged populations in Las Vegas or Reno without understanding both the scientific dimensions of urban heat waves and the social aspects that underlie why those populations are disadvantaged. Or how could you understand the interplay of water resource issues and policies; how they impact agriculture, mining, and communities in rural Nevada. Geography and the connections studied in that discipline are at the heart of those issues.

More and more fields in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are becoming interdisciplinary in their focus. Geography can also serve as a way to lower that area of entry to STEM fields. Geography can serve as a way to engage students with anxiety around math and science in a way that keeps their interest by focusing on concepts and an applied approach to math and science, and it shows them, yes, you can do science even if you do not think you are good at it. I see this all the time in my freshman introduction to geography course, which includes mostly nonscience majors. Likewise, geography can also serve as a way to demonstrate to STEM-focused students that the humanities and social sciences also have value and are equally important by focusing on how society and science interact and what the interplay between those are.

Julie Wakefield:

Geography of 2023 is the most relevant global course taught today. Geography is so much more than what people think, which is memorizing locations and capitals. We have already told you it is more than that. Geography is the science of understanding the spatial organization of space and place [page 9, [Exhibit MM](#)]. Geography is the science that uses field work, observation, and technology to gain that scientific spatial understanding. Our students are global citizens but do not know much about the world. They take for granted the power of globalization because for them, it is always how it has been. They do not understand the interconnectedness our world has today and the impact it has on our everyday lives.

On a local scale, geography is everywhere. Urban geography and transportation infrastructure. Why does the Spaghetti Bowl keep getting bigger? Why did the price of eggs spike and is now going back down? Contagious diffusion with regional outbreaks in supply chains trying to make up for those deficits. Why does the development of the industrial park on USA Parkway have an impact on local housing markets and the demand for skilled labor requiring statewide education systems to respond appropriately?

On an international scale, geography is everywhere. How does a cargo ship getting stuck in the Suez Canal impact global trade, supply chains, and Christmas? How does a global pandemic impact the auto industry—when microchips that most cars require now and are only made in two locations in the world—when those two factories are shut down? How does understanding the cultural heritage of the people of Ukraine and Russia help lead to a better understanding of the Ukraine/Russia conflict? Only a better understanding, not the answer.

On a national scale, geography is everywhere. How is urban planning responding to environmental and social injustices? How is urban planning responding to food, medical, and daycare deserts? How are urban areas responding to remote workers? It is changing the economic and demographic makeup of the central business district. Many of my examples are from human geography, but the physical geography branch is just as important.

Can we talk about this winter? That would be global warming. That would be the human impact on our environment. Access to resources and their environmental impact—lithium mining. The impact of urban heat islands, as we have said in Las Vegas and Reno, and so much more is the field of geography today.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

These are skills we believe our students need to be prepared to compete in a global economy [page 10]. We are in an increasingly global world, and the rest of the world is having an impact on us whether we realize it or not. We want to make sure our students are being prepared with those skills.

Julie Wakefield:

Geography will develop the spatial thinking skills that will help other social studies classes. It will introduce technologies to students that are involved in every sector of the economy. Technologies like GIS [geographic information systems], remote sensing, all of which go from everyday life, your cellphones, is geographic technology. Farming is now done with geospatial technology. We already talked about where our food comes from. Offering this as a ninth-grade course will help fill that learning gap. As a geography teacher who got students as a sophomore who did not have a social studies class in ninth grade, their brains are on other things, not trying to remember what they learned in middle school. The continuity, as we know from other subjects—language, science, math—social studies has a gap. We need to fill that gap.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

To clarify that for those of us who are not in a classroom or a high school, right now our students do not take social studies their freshman year. They have a gap year, then they come in sophomore year and are expected to learn the entire history of the world in one year, which does not make a whole lot of sense. As a result, world history is one of our top-failed courses. It is my belief, and I think the belief of the social studies community, this would help alleviate that. We would have far fewer students failing world history if they were prepared with geography beforehand. In addition to the fact, what my colleague pointed out in the previous presentation, we should have high expectations of our students and we should ensure they are graduating with the skills they need. This is twofold: it is tackling a gap and an issue we are seeing with our students and also ensuring our diplomas are meaningful.

This slide [page 11] shows all the states requiring geography in high school. As you can see, there are many, and Nevada is not on that list.

Julie Wakefield:

I would love to see Nevada on this list. As I talked to colleagues in many of these states over the last couple of days asking if they could give me some information—do they see this as an additional burden to students or do they see this as an advantage? Without going into data, because I gave them very little time and they are all overworked classroom teachers, they anecdotally could tell me they saw geographic thinking skills in upper-level social studies classes. They could see patterns when talking about migration and U.S. history and looking at their civics course when we talk about redlining and gerrymandering. That is not just a political process, it is a spatial pattern. We are looking at all of these social studies working together and by not having a geography course in there, we are missing an important link.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I will pass it to our colleague on Zoom just briefly so he can speak to what he is seeing in his students at the university level.

Adam Csank:

I often find it a little frustrating in my introductory geography classes where sometimes I have students who come in who do not know which side of the United States the Atlantic

Ocean is on. It actually makes it very hard to teach more advanced concepts when this basic knowledge is lacking. I will say, students who have taken geography courses often have the ability to grasp these patterns and understand these connections when we start talking about how events that may have happened in the past impact what is happening today, or how events that may be happening in other parts of the world are impacting places today. Also, being able to read maps and gather basic visual information is a skill we do teach in geography. Not just to read maps, but to read graphs and figures. These are critical skills anyone in society needs to develop.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

Assembly Bill 228 means to address this gap and to raise the expectations for our students [page 12]. It would add geography as a graduation requirement for high school. Currently, students have to take a half credit of American government, one credit of American history, a half credit of economics, and then they are allowed an "or." They could take one credit in world history or geography. We are saying it is an "and." There will be four credits of social studies.

I understand people get concerned when we are adding courses. What I would like to point out is I teach world history, but I have also taught geography. At my school and many other schools, geography is an honors course. As I mentioned, when our colleague presented on the last bill, the kids who get chosen to take geography are tracked. They are chosen by their eighth-grade teacher at random for honors material—whatever that teacher decides honors material is. I believe every student deserves to learn this. I believe every student should have these skills.

Here is the other component we have not mentioned. I teach at a very diverse school. In my geography course, that is the one time in the curriculum where every student in my classroom gets to see their culture positively reflected in the curriculum. I do not think that happens enough. I think this is something that is important for all of our students to have their cultures honored, recognized, and taught in our schools so they can see that. This bill would change those credits.

We are not requiring additional credits to graduate [page 13]. The standard diploma would still be 23 credits. The way we are doing that is we are changing one of the flex credits. Currently, Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) requires two flex credits. Those flex credits can be filled with math, science, or geography. We are saying one of those flex credits now has to be geography. Students can still do math or science for the other one, and there is still plenty of room in the schedule for electives. If students want to take more math and science, there is room for that. We are saying explicitly, geography is a science; it is a social science, it includes math. We think it encompasses those other things and it is worthy of its own place.

In the second part of the bill, you will notice there is some compulsory language. That is to make sure the State Board of Education adopts these standards within a certain time period. We want this to go into effect for the class of 2029. We are going to go into all of those requirements in just a moment.

I do want to make it clear. This bill does not require more credits for graduation. It does not require new certifications for teachers. All of our social studies teachers are licensed to teach geography, so it does not require that additional change in licensure. In addition, our students will still have plenty of elective opportunities. Many high schools are on a seven-credit schedule. That means by the time students graduate, they will have taken 28 credits. You will notice a standard diploma requires 23 credits. That is with five elective credits built in and the flex credits. In addition to the electives and the flex credits, they have five extra credits to do whatever they want with those credits. That is in case they fail, there is some redundancy built in. I just want to be clear, we are not taking away their options.

This is a side-by-side showing the change so you can actually see the change we are making [page 14.] We are adding world history and geography as separate courses. We are taking away one flex credit.

This is the timeline [page 15]. I am in this community. I have been part of the standards writing and part of curriculum. I did not want to do this overnight, so the next school year will be used to write standards. The year after that would be to write curriculum and then it would start in the 2025-2026 school year for the class of 2029. We did not want to surprise seniors with another course before they graduate, which they did not know about their entire high school career. It is going to move up with them.

I will pause for a moment and let Ms. Wakefield explain why we need the time to write those standards and curriculum.

Julie Wakefield:

Currently in the Nevada state standards for social studies, there are four geography standards that are dense, complex, and impossible to teach on their own let alone incorporate into other social studies courses. As a geography teacher, my responsibility with the social studies standards was not just to teach geography, even though that was the title of my class, my job was also to incorporate the civics standards, the history standards, and the economic standards to the best of my ability.

I have training—most of it taken upon myself—to learn the content to be able to incorporate those into my geography classes. Every social studies teacher, according to the standards, should be teaching every single part of those standards. Unfortunately, since the early '70s-ish, geography has become the stepchild of social studies because it was maps. We make maps in world history. We show a map of the Roman Empire. That is geography. That is not geography anymore. We need to expand their exposure to the different social studies. Geography is not historical perspectives. It is spatial perspective. We are not looking at things linearly, we are looking at things spatially. It does take time to train the

thinking. If we are doing this with ninth graders, we have to start developing their critical thinking. This is a great way of doing this by looking at what geography is—maps, charts, graphs, the world, why is this important to them, why is this happening. That is building critical thinking.

We are step number one in the process. Across the United States, geography does not have to be a freshman course. In fact, with the AP course, it is a great debate on whether we offer AP geography to ninth graders or seniors. Granted, AP geography does great with seniors because they have so much more life experience. However, my students taking AP geography as sophomores work toward that. This timeline [page 15, [Exhibit MM](#)] works really well to be able to get them ready for implementing this course.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

In the course of drafting this bill, we noticed the diploma NDE has created does not currently align with the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) [page 16]. In NRS, which I have highlighted, we are requiring a half credit in government, two credits in American history, world history, geography, and the one-half credit in economics. That is not currently listed on the standard diploma. I will pass it to our illustrious counsel to talk about why that is an issue, but his advice was we include that compulsory language to make sure they are actually getting aligned so we are not out of compliance. Would you like him to explain that?

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

In fact, we are going to lose several members in just a few minutes. I know we have some questions.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

We can move on to questions.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I would like to give a shout-out to Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch for being not just a teacher, but the best of social studies teachers out there. I know there is some concern among folks in the education community about the addition of an extra mandatory credit requirement and what kind of effects that may have on failure rates and high school graduation rates. How do you address those questions?

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I know people get concerned when we talk about graduation requirements. I believe this will actually help our graduation requirements. As I mentioned, world history is one of our top-failed courses. I believe students coming into world history more prepared means they are less likely to fail that course. While there is an opportunity for a freshman to fail a course they did not have to take before, there will be significantly fewer sophomores failing world history. As our previous presentation pointed out, we need to look at the expectations we have for our students and ensure we are holding them to the highest expectations. We are truly giving them the opportunity to get the skills they need to be successful.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I definitely see value in having a geography program, but I do have some concerns. When I looked at the flex credits to see what the flex credit requires, the argument is one credit of geography is more important than giving students the opportunity to take career and technical education (CTE) classes. The argument is that year is more important than a fourth year of mathematics which is often required in entry to universities. They could take geography because the flex credit could be used for social studies or science. I do not think I see that this is so critical. Do we not already allow for geography to be taken? This is already a class offered at high schools throughout the community. We have some kind of push so there would be more credits available. I just do not know if it is more important than those classes.

I also have concerns, and I do not know what has been done to address the issue. Oftentimes, students go to school for their CTE classes. I am an educator at school with a strong, robust CTE program. Our kids come for those CTE classes. That is why they are coming to school. I can tell you right now, they are not coming for geography or my English class.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I would argue some of my geography kids are coming for my geography class. However, I understand the argument. We are not taking away any of those. I do not think it is an "or." They still have the other flex credit, the five electives, and the additional room built into their schedule.

I would like to point out, in the College and Career Ready Diploma, which we just heard in this Committee [Assembly Bill 241], it seemed we were pretty excited about it. That takes away both flex credits. That takes away significantly more than this bill does, and it mandates significantly more and restricts significantly more. I am on board with that bill. If we are on board with raising our expectations on that bill, then it makes sense on this bill. I do not think it is an either/or, but I also think civics is critical, and I think social studies are critical, and I think these are skills our kids need in the real world. Social studies is critical thinking. It is learning how to analyze evidence, learning how to craft an argument, it is learning how to get along when you have different viewpoints. You may not agree, but you can have a civil discussion. Those are skills we are critically lacking in the world today. I think this is one of the most important classes a student can take. Yes, it is offered at some schools, but in Washoe County, we counted four high schools that offer it. Even though we offer it, it is only for those track honors kids. It is not being widely offered to everyone. This is a course everyone deserves to take.

Assemblywoman Mosca:

I know you had told me before that you talked to NDE about it. Could you talk a little bit about that for the record?

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I have talked with NDE and I have talked with their social studies coordinator, whom we have worked together with in the past on standards. We are working with them to make sure

the process is smooth and they have everything they need for this to be successful. They obviously cannot testify in support or opposition on that, and she let me know she cannot do that either way, but we are definitely including them in the conversation.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We do have other questions, but I am going to ask Asher Killian to explain what we discussed earlier.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

To respond to the issue the Assemblywoman had brought up during her presentation about the difference between the required courses in NRS and the graduation requirement, NRS 389.018, which is being amended by this bill, establishes the courses pupils are required to take in high school. It does not establish a requirement that they successfully complete those courses, merely that they enroll in the courses. The units of credits required for graduation are established by the Nevada State Board of Education, as discussed during the previous bill, for each of the different types of diplomas.

With Senate Bill 249 of the 79th Session in 2017, which added the half unit of credit in economics, I think there was an intent at the time that the graduation requirements be updated to reflect successful completion of the half unit of economics. As of yet, the Department of Education has not adopted a regulation that updates graduation requirements to require completion of that half unit of economics. That is what the provision in the transitory language of A.B. 228 would do, which is effectively require the State Board of Education to update its graduation requirements to reflect the courses that are currently required by law to be taken, and then additionally to later update the graduation requirements to reflect successful completion of this unit in geography that this bill will newly require students to have taken.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We need to do some work with NDE.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

There are a lot of teachers in the room. Ms. Wakefield retired but is still in the business. Thank you for all those years you have put in. I think this is a great conversation to have around requirements because we have been doing that all day. One thought is the balance between the College and Career Ready Diploma, which will take away those flex credits, which would then leave a student with five electives to choose from. When you put those two together, there is more of a shift in the options for students. That could be okay because we want our kids to do well. My main question is, have you had an opportunity to look at the college requirements, even in our own state? We know they need four years of English, but also four years of math, three years of science, et cetera, for a college admission. I am digging back to when I worked at the university. Have you had a chance to compare the two? If not, you may want to take a look at that.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

This would not stop students from having four years of math or three years of science. Students can take geography and still meet those requirements. I want to make it clear on the record, students have every ability to still do that. I can pass it to Mr. Csank, who actually is a professor at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), to see if he knows the exact requirements. I know some states do require geography and our students who go out of state are at a disadvantage because they do not have it. I do not know all of the requirements, so we will see if Mr. Csank can answer that question.

Adam Csank:

The required high school course work for new freshman, at least at UNR—I cannot speak to what the University of Nevada, Las Vegas might be—is four years of English, three units of mathematics, three units of natural science, and three units of social studies. Geography is an option for the social sciences.

Assemblywoman Hardy:

I can remember me and both my daughters going in as sophomores taking AP world history. That was quite a struggle, I will say. I appreciate what this bill is trying to do. You both mentioned that currently it is Honors Geography. Would it only be an honors class offering or is it honors, AP, and regular?

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

The intention is for it to be all of the above. It could be an honors, regular, or AP, but it is offered to everyone. It would be offered at the level that is appropriate for each student. We currently have some AP courses and honors courses in the district, but we want to ensure there is also just regular geography, so every student has that opportunity.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Seeing no further questions, I will open the hearing for testimony in support of A.B. 228.

Kevin Osorio Hernandez, Senator, Nevada State Student Alliance, Nevada State College:

I am a first-generation student at Nevada State College (NSC) majoring in history. I am in full support of A.B. 228. I want to thank Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch for this necessary bill. The more I am involved in the Assembly Committee on Education, I am inspired to pursue a career in education. I remember in high school my favorite course was geography, which has subsequently helped me in my major in history at NSC. I am currently taking Latin American history, which is my favorite course. Can you guess what the first test I received was? It was a geography test. I believe history is not only a discipline of the past, but a connection to the present and the future. The study of geography only amplifies the ability for students to better understand the world they live in. Please support this commonsense legislation.

Jesse Cruz, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a community advocate and a sophomore at the College of Southern Nevada. I am here from Las Vegas to speak in support of A.B. 228. I hope you are not tired of us yet. One of the underlying positives of this bill is its inclusion of a credit course in geography. This provides the ability for students, not just future cartographers, to understand the basic fundamentals of countries outside of our own and to expand their knowledge of their own country and those of their peers.

What is important is that students have the opportunity to learn more about cultures, ideas, arts, and people from different states, cities, and continents. I know for myself I was not taught all of these things in the United States in the Clark County School District, much less countries on the other six continents, excluding Antarctica. I hope you vote in support of A.B. 228.

Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:

The Nevada State Education Association supports A.B. 228 to strengthen education in social studies. A strong education in social studies teaches students to be better citizens. It is not just a foundation for education, it is critical to building a better society. According to the National Council for the Social Studies, the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. Geography is an important component of social studies, studying how place impacts how the modern world works the way it does. Geography prepares students to compete in a global economy and allows them to learn real-world skills, leading to greater success in a student's postsecondary career.

The Nevada State Education Association initially did have some of the same concerns we had with the previous bill in terms of impact on districts. However, after looking at the bill further and talking to the sponsor, we felt A.B. 228 actually does a pretty good job of meeting an important need while also balancing additional burdens on students, educators, and districts. We note there would be no new requirement for certification for teachers, no increase in the total required credits for graduation which—unless the previous bill passes as well—would not take away the ability of students to take elective courses. [Written testimony was also submitted [Exhibit NN](#).]

Cynthia Romero, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here in support of A.B. 228. For me, it is crucial we support this. It teaches us about different cultures, teaches our students how to interact with each other. Now more than ever, students at the elementary level are learning how to interact with each other. People from different cultures in Las Vegas are super diverse, and understanding interactions with one another is crucial. I think we need to know geography to understand where people are coming from.

I know when I took geography in high school, that is what sparked my interest to travel to different countries and know where places were. We learned from people in the community who came from different cultures. Now, when I ask my high school students about different things with their learning, they do not know what is going on. Some of them have experience with AP geography, but not everyone does. I feel it is really crucial for everyone to be knowledgeable about the outside world. I have students who have never left Las Vegas, all they know is Las Vegas, and when we are not teaching it in school, it is hard to rationalize what is going on outside.

Miriam Lachica, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am supporting A.B. 228. I did not have geography in high school. Most of my knowledge on geography came from four years of Spanish class, where every week we learned about a Spanish-speaking or Latin country. I would have definitely liked to learn more that was not just limited to that side of the world. After hearing what Assemblywoman Torres said about some students not wanting to take geography or English classes, I am someone who did everything to avoid science and math classes in college because that was not my niche. I do appreciate wanting to teach students geography and teaching them about other cultures because it would give students the opportunity to realize what they want to do.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone in Las Vegas who would like to testify in support? [There was no one.] Are there any callers wishing to provide support testimony?

Will Pregman, representing Battle Born Progress:

We are in full support of the bill and thank Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch for bringing it forward. I will simply ditto the remarks from Nevada State Education Association.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Having no one else to testify in support, I will close support testimony. I will open opposition testimony for A.B. 228. There is one person in Las Vegas.

Trent Brenkus, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am in opposition to A.B. 228. Me being 18 and just out of high school last year, I look back on my teachings from social studies and find it difficult to see what I really got out of those classes. I see us here talking about these flex credits and how students can get takeaways by teaching them how to interact with one another in social studies.

I believe there is a new class that should be required where there is room for greater benefit, which would be mental health teachings in the classroom. With all these children suffering from depression, gateway drugs, and suicide, if you look at the statistics, it is gut wrenching to see how high those numbers are. With the environment inside schools today, it is hard for kids to blossom into leaders or creative thinkers who can actually help the world. With mental health teachings inside schools, it would allow kids to learn self-love and emotional intelligence, which are terms that sound almost foreign in today's world, which is full of hate and assumptions.

There are a lot of differences in the world that many of the teachers and administrators teaching these kids do not know about since they are not inside our shoes. I am speaking from the students' learning and being taught this material. There are a lot of differences in today's world than back then, which would be phones for one, and other important factors, including the mindset of all children. Children at nearly all times during the day compare themselves to others and many children have lower self-esteem. With all of these terrible statistics and growing numbers, the way to put an end to all this chaos would be by implementing mental health classes.

I am not the only one experiencing these difficulties, as I have talked to many of my peers and started a petition with over 500 signatures, with the number still climbing. I believe these children need our help and we are the only ones to help them. We need to act on it.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone in Carson City who would like to provide opposition testimony?

Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District:

We appreciate the comments made by Assemblywoman Torres and are in agreement there. In addition, on behalf of the Clark County School District, I would like to respectfully share our opposition to this legislation. Making geography a separately required course rather than maintaining the ability for students to have a choice will create undue issues, including undue issues around staffing and financial stressors on the district, mainly challenges with high school master schedules and, in the time of teacher shortages, creating the need for additional teachers to meet this requirement.

It is also important to recognize that the shared world history/geography standards are already in the existing world history/geography credit requirement. In addition, students receive instruction from the interwoven standards of economics, civics, geography, multicultural and financial literacy, in every social studies class from kindergarten through Grade 12.

Finally, while I recognize this is a policy committee, I would be remiss not to also mention this will require the district to purchase additional Tier I instructional materials. We are currently in the midst of a multimillion-dollar purchase of state adopted Tier I instructional materials aligned to the current Nevada academic content standards for social studies, which were approved by the State Board of Education this school year. I appreciate your time and appreciate this Committee's consideration.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone on the phone lines in opposition? [There was no one.] I will close opposition testimony and move to neutral testimony. Is there anyone in Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone wishing to provide neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Are there any closing remarks from the bill sponsor?

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

Thank you, Chair, and all of my colleagues for considering this bill. I understand that anything dealing with curriculum and diploma requirements are difficult conversations. I think it is important that we look at the big picture of what we want our kids to know and be able to do.

I would also like to point out that Clark County School District is in opposition to this bill, but in the previous bill, which requires more money and more staff and more courses, they were in support. I am looking forward to working with them to make sure we are on the same page and working out whatever their issue is. That previous bill will require significant financial contributions as well. I think that should not be the barrier. We are a policy committee and should think about what our kids need, and I believe this is that. Thank you for your consideration.

[[Exhibit OO](#) and [Exhibit PP](#) were submitted by Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch but not discussed.]

[[Exhibit QQ](#) was submitted in support of [A.B. 228](#) but not discussed.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close the hearing on Assembly Bill 228. That brings us to public comment. Is there anyone in Carson City, Las Vegas, or over the phone who wishes to provide public comment? [There was no one.]

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 4, 2023. That concludes our business for the day.

This meeting is adjourned [at 4:19 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Funmi Shetty
Recording Secretary

Lori McCleary
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is a proposed amendment to [Assembly Bill 245](#), dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Assembly District No. 3.

[Exhibit D](#) is written testimony submitted by Sarah Peterson, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit E](#) is written testimony submitted by Serena Evans, Policy Director, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit F](#) is written testimony submitted by The Women of Kappa Alpha Theta, Beta Mu Chapter, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit G](#) is written testimony submitted by The Women of Delta Delta Delta, Theta Theta Chapter, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit H](#) is written testimony submitted by Young Democrats UNR, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit I](#) is written testimony submitted by Tess Fouassier, Association President, The Reno College Panhellenic Association, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit J](#) is written testimony submitted by Yvette Machado-Tuinier, President, The Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit K](#) is written testimony submitted Lexy Ashford, President, Delta Gamma, Eta Iota Chapter, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit L](#) is written testimony submitted by Macie King, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit M](#) is written testimony submitted by Vickie Cooper, Private Citizen, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit N](#) is written testimony submitted by Nicole Garduno, Private Citizen, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit O](#) is written testimony submitted by Ryan Chapman, Private Citizen, in support of [Assembly Bill 245](#).

[Exhibit P](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Hearing Presentation Thursday 3.30.23," presented by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14, regarding [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit Q](#) is a bill summary submitted by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14, regarding [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit R](#) is a link to an article titled "Why aren't all Nevada high school graduates 'college and career ready'?" published by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, submitted by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14, regarding [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit S](#) is a document titled, "Nevada Graduation College and Career Ready Credit and Assessment Requirements," submitted by Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Assembly District No. 14, regarding [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit T](#) is a document titled, "College, Career, and Community Readiness: Reflections from Teach Plus Nevada Policy Fellows," submitted by Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada, regarding [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit U](#) is written testimony submitted by Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Executive Director, Teach Plus Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit V](#) is written testimony submitted by Tamara Hudson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit W](#) is written testimony submitted by Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit X](#) is a compilation of letters in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit Y](#) is a letter dated March 29, 2023, submitted by John Sawdon, Nevada President, American Institute of Architects, and Carlos D. Fernandez, Nevada Executive Director, American Institute of Architects, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit Z](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Jonathan M. Johnson, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Rooted School Foundation, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit AA](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Deanne Moyle-Hicks, Senior Policy Fellow, Teach Plus Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit BB](#) is a letter dated March 28, 2023, submitted by Jen Loescher, Senior Policy Fellow, Teach Plus Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit CC](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Athar Haseebullah, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit DD](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Michelle Booth, Communications Director, Educate Nevada Now, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit EE](#) is a letter dated March 26, 2023, submitted by Renisha O'Donnell, Program Director, CORE, Powered by The Rogers Foundation, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit FF](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Johnny Dominguez, Executive Director, Leaders in Training, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit GG](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Catherine Francisco, President, Nevada AAPI Chamber of Commerce, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit HH](#) is a letter submitted by Liridian Gamboa Sanchez, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit II](#) is a letter dated March 30, 2023, submitted by Dillon Booker, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada, in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit JJ](#) is written testimony submitted by Karlana R. Kulseth, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada, and presented by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association, in opposition to [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit KK](#) is written testimony submitted by Karen Villatoro Gonzalez, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada in support of [Assembly Bill 241](#).

[Exhibit LL](#) is a bill summary titled "Geography Graduation Requirement AB228," submitted by Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25, regarding [Assembly Bill 228](#).

[Exhibit MM](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Geography Graduation Requirement AB228," submitted and presented by Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25, regarding [Assembly Bill 228](#).

[Exhibit NN](#) is written testimony submitted by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association, in support of [Assembly Bill 228](#).

[Exhibit OO](#) is an amendment to [Assembly Bill 228](#), submitted by Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25.

[Exhibit PP](#) is a student assignment sheet titled "Geography in your Starbucks," submitted by Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch, Assembly District No. 25, regarding [Assembly Bill 228](#).

[Exhibit QQ](#) is written testimony submitted by Northern Nevada Council for the Social Studies, in support of [Assembly Bill 228](#).