

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Eighty-Second Session
February 23, 2023**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Selena Torres at 9:05 a.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2023, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 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 Selena Torres, Chair
Assemblywoman Bea Duran, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Max Carter
Assemblyman Rich DeLong
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblywoman Cecelia González
Assemblyman Bert Gurr
Assemblyman Brian Hibbetts
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblyman Duy Nguyen
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Ruedy, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Sarah Delap, Committee Counsel



Diane Abbott, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Tony Grady, representing United Veterans Legislative Council
Darrol Brown, representing United Veterans Legislative Council
Lynn Chapman, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada
Joseph W.P. Theile, Executive Officer/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Veterans Services
Denise Tenata, Chair, Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council
Patricia Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education
Holly Welborn, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Kelly Crompton, representing City of Las Vegas
Tom Clark, representing The Children's Cabinet
Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada
Annette Dawson Owens, School Readiness Policy Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada
Amanda Haboush-Deloye, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Lesley Pittman, representing Waterford UPSTART

Chair Torres:

[Roll was taken. Committee protocols and rules were explained.] We are going to take the bills out of order today. We will start with Assembly Joint Resolution 1 and then the hearing for Assembly Bill 113. I will be participating in the presentation on A.J.R. 1.

[The Committee recessed at 9:07 a.m. and reconvened at 9:08 a.m. Assemblywoman Duran assumed the Chair.]

Vice Chair Duran:

I will open the hearing on A.J.R. 1.

Assembly Joint Resolution 1: Urges the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to study the effectiveness and use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy for veterans. (BDR R-838)

Assemblyman Richard McArthur, Assembly District No. 4:

This morning I am going to present Assembly Joint Resolution 1, which urges the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to study the effectiveness and use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) for veterans and share the results with the state of Nevada. There are only a couple of pages to this resolution, and there are a lot of whereases in it, so this will be a short presentation. First let me begin by answering the big question, What is hyperbaric oxygen therapy? Basically, it is breathing pure oxygen. It involves breathing pure oxygen in

a pressurized room or tube where the air pressure is increased to approximately three times higher than normal so that the lungs can get more oxygen, and this increase in blood oxygen temporarily restores normal levels of blood gases and tissue function. This is what promotes the healing process and fights infection. To get the full benefit out of this, most individuals must receive this treatment anywhere from 20 to 40 times. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has cleared 13 different disorders for HBOT treatment but has not approved it as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI). There are studies that have shown positive results by using HBOT to treat PTSD and TBI. Congress created a commission in 2016 to examine mental health conditions and to do research on alternate medicine therapies, including HBOT. There appears to be good reason to continue this research and study on hyperbaric oxygen therapy as it pertains to PTSD and TBI. This resolution is sending a clear message to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs that this Legislature supports the further study of HBOT for veterans in the hope that HBOT may lead to new solutions for persistent veterans' disorders like PTSD. That is all I have this morning, and there is no fiscal note to this resolution.

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Assembly District No. 3:

I am extremely excited to present this joint resolution alongside my good friend and colleague, Assemblyman Richard McArthur, whom I want to recognize as a Vietnam War veteran who served as a captain in the United States Air Force. Together we are calling on an improvement to mental health and physical health outcomes and treatment for those who have served. Moreover, it is important to note that in this Committee we have several individuals who have served. Assemblywoman Thomas served in the U.S. Air Force, and Assemblyman D'Silva, who is a Purple Heart recipient, served in the United States Marine Corps. As we review this resolution today, we urge our federal delegation and agencies to study the effectiveness of this new medical treatment, hyperbaric oxygen therapy. We also recognize the ongoing mental health crisis that confronts Nevada veterans, and I hope that this is one step forward for our community. Thank you. We are open for questions.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

What happens if the resolution should pass? What happens from there?

Assemblywoman Torres:

The hope is that this resolution will reach our Nevada congressional delegation and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take the steps necessary to study the effectiveness of HBOT. I do not know if the Legal Division [Legislative Counsel Bureau] wants to chime in there, but that is the process. This resolution will notify our congressional delegation as well as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that this is something that the Nevada Legislature would like to see. Assuming that we can pass this out of both houses and get the Governor to sign it, we will be able to send that message.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

To clarify, we want to put them on notice that we think this is important, and to our federal delegation to work on this on a national level, and hopefully it makes a difference.

Assemblyman McArthur:

Yes, that is basically it. They have shown a lot of studies and a lot of them work, but the FDA has not approved it yet for PTSD or TBI. We want them to keep working on it because it looks like it may be a good solution for those conditions.

Assemblywoman González:

I want to put on the record that I look forward to supporting your bill. Congratulations on your presentation as well.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I sought hyperbaric oxygen treatment back in 2007 when I was injured in the war, and it was not available at the Naval Medical Center San Diego. There is a lot of evidence that shows it can help with therapy, and it has been my opinion that the VA and the Department of Defense have been very slow to move on this. I am hoping that my fellow colleagues here in the Assembly and the Senate can pass this resolution and urge our federal delegation to take this all the way to the top and get this treatment more available to not only our veterans, but to those currently serving in the armed services. Thank you, Assemblyman McArthur, for bringing this measure to bear, and thank you, Madam Chair, for supporting it. I call him General McArthur because he is such a caretaker over the veterans community here.

Assemblyman McArthur:

That is what this resolution does. We have seen a lot of help with this HBOT, and we want to push the administration to keep the studies going because it looks like it will do some good for our veterans.

Vice Chair Duran:

Any more questions from the Committee? [There were none.] I have one comment. You look so happy presenting this bill, and I know you are going to help. Many veterans are going to appreciate you for bringing this bill forward. We will now move on to support of A.J.R. 1. Is there anyone in support here in Carson City?

Tony Grady, representing United Veterans Legislative Council:

I am speaking on behalf of the United Veterans Legislative Council (UVLC). I am not as good as Chairman Andy LePeilbet, who would give you the total history of that, but when you pull in the council and their families, it is a significant number of people. The reason that I am here today is I am speaking for the bill. This is very important, and I want to say "ditto" to what was brought before. I will say as a background of being a pilot, I understand how important oxygen is to the brain because of other experience I have in working with brain-injured children. One of the interesting things that happens is that when the brain is injured, the hurt part of the brain shuts down everything. Being able to get more oxygen on the cellular level to the brain is a therapy that we would like to have going forward, and we want to do anything we can to help our veterans. I would say the UVLC is for A.J.R. 1.

Darrol Brown, representing United Veterans Legislative Council:

I am a U.S. Air Force veteran like my brother here, Mr. Tony Grady. This is a priority for UVLC. It is one of the highest ones that we ask that Assembly Joint Resolution 1 be a favorable outcome so that we can get this nationally recognized. I am also hoping that this will encourage other state legislatures to get involved in this process so that we can get hyperbaric oxygen treatments. I am a 100 percent disabled veteran, and the answer to your question, Assemblywoman Taylor, is it is a hope and a prayer. We have worked on this a long time. It gets closer every day, but we are working with a huge bureaucracy. This is a very political issue, so we appreciate your support and UVLC asks that you vote favorably for A.J.R. 1.

Vice Chair Duran:

Is there anyone else in Carson City wishing to testify in support of A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in support of A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone lines wishing to testify in support of A.J.R. 1?

Lynn Chapman, Private Citizen, Sparks, Nevada:

I am a 48-year senior member of the Duby Reid American Legion Auxiliary Post 30 in Sparks, Nevada. Do veterans not deserve healing? Do they not deserve the best we can give them back for all their sacrifices? This is a study that deserves to be done for those who served us. Please vote yes for A.J.R. 1 for a study to help our veterans' health. Congress needs to hear from Nevada.

Vice Chair Duran:

Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.J.R. 1 in Carson City? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in opposition to A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone lines wishing to testify in opposition to A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.]

Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to testify in neutral on A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in neutral on A.J.R. 1? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone line wishing to testify in neutral on A.J.R. 1?

Joseph W.P. Theile, Executive Officer/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Veterans Services:

I am testifying in neutral. Each spring preceding the legislative session year, the Department of Veterans Services, along with the United Legislative Veterans Council, hosts the Nevada Veterans Legislative Symposia that allows veterans service members and their supporters to provide ideas of issues they would like considered by the Nevada Legislature in the next session. During the symposium held in March of 2022, there was a recommendation that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs should study the effectiveness and potential licensing of hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment. As this had to do with the federal agency, this was placed on the federal issues list, and federal issues are not given a priority number at that symposium.

Assemblywoman Torres:

I wanted to clarify one thing about a joint resolution. We do not need the Governor to sign off on it. I wanted to adjust my comments made to Assemblywoman Taylor earlier. The resolution needs to pass both houses and then it will be sent off.

Assemblyman McArthur:

I want to thank this Committee for letting me present [A.J.R. 1](#). I wish to say hello and thank you to all the veterans in the building here today. I also appreciate the bipartisan support that I have received for this measure.

Vice Chair Duran:

We will now close the hearing on [A.J.R. 1](#). We will have a one-minute recess [at 9:25 a.m.]. [Assemblywoman Torres reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Torres:

We will reconvene [at 9:26 a.m.]. Thank you, Committee members, and thank you, Vice Chair. I will now open the hearing on [Assembly Bill 113](#), which creates the Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Office of the Governor, and as introduced by our colleague Assemblywoman Thomas.

[Assembly Bill 113](#): Creates the Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Office of the Governor. (BDR 18-65)

Assemblywoman Clara Thomas, Assembly District No. 17:

It is my pleasure to present to you [Assembly Bill 113](#) concerning the creation of the Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Office of the Governor. Joining me today is Patti Oya, Director of the Office of Early Learning and Development at Nevada's Department of Education; Denise Tenata, Chair of the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council; and Holly Welborn, Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Alliance. Before I begin, I would like to point out two exhibits which are both available on Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System. First, you will find a presentation on [Assembly Bill 113 \[Exhibit C\]](#) with an overview of early childhood systems, and second, there is an amendment [\[Exhibit D\]](#) I am proposing to [Assembly Bill 113](#).

Early childhood systems refer to a comprehensive and coordinated approach to meeting the needs of young children and their families. This includes prenatal care programs and services to guarantee the best possible birth outcomes for both the mother and the child as well as support the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of children from birth to age eight. An effective early childhood system involves collaboration among various stakeholders, including parents, educators, health care providers, state agencies, and community organizations.

Establishing an Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Governor's Office in Nevada is important to ensure that young children and their families receive the support they need to thrive. By coordinating programs and services across various state agencies and

communities, the office could help to address gaps and redundancies in the current early childhood system. Second, the office could assist with improving the quality of early childhood education and care in Nevada. This could include supporting professional development for early childhood educators, promoting evidence-based practices in early childhood settings, and ensuring that children have access to high-quality early childhood programs. Third, an Office of Early Childhood Systems could help to promote equity in early childhood outcome. Children from low-income families and communities of color often face significant barriers to accessing high-quality early childhood programs and services. By focusing on equity and inclusion, the office could help to ensure that all children can succeed. In short, early childhood systems are important because they provide the foundation for a child's development and can have a lasting impact on their future success. Therefore, my copresenters and I are happy to introduce Assembly Bill 113 to you today with the objective to make Nevada's early childhood system more effective by creating a formal governance structure dedicated to this purpose.

Now I will hand the presentation over to my three copresenters, who will provide you with more details on early childhood systems and Assembly Bill 113.

Denise Tenata, Chair, Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council:

I am the chair of the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council and served as the early childhood comprehensive systems director at The Children's Cabinet. Our presentation today will cover four main topics [page 2, [Exhibit C](#)], including an overview of early childhood systems and what that is, what we are looking at for this office, providing some national and Nevada context around this issue, and then walking through specific provisions of the bill.

Starting with a review of early childhood systems [page 3], we know that early childhood is a period of rapid learning, growth, and development that shapes the foundation for healthy development, lifelong well-being, academic achievement, and economic productivity. We wanted to clarify that as defined by our state Early Childhood Advisory Council, and as proposed in this legislation, the early childhood system means the governmental structure of the state and its political subdivisions that provide early childhood services related to nutrition, health care, mental and behavioral health, protection, play, and early learning that stimulate a child's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. Essentially, we are taking a very holistic view of early childhood development in looking at not just early learning, but all those social determinants of health that impact growth and development.

The framework for addressing early childhood systems has been developed based on the 2013 BUILD, Early Childhood Systems Working Group model which includes six key components:

1. Define and coordinate leadership. This includes cross-sector decision-making and authority over systems issues.

2. Financing strategically by looking at fiscal efficiency and coordinated financing strategies.
3. Enhancing and aligning standards by looking at streamlining and coordinating policies, practices, and procedures across the early childhood sectors.
4. Creating and supporting improvement strategies with the family-centric focus, identifying strategies for program implementation that meet the needs of children and families.
5. Ensuring accountability by looking at cross-sector, coordinated data systems, reporting, and having the ability to make data-driven decision-making.
6. Recruiting and engaging key stakeholders by establishing a system for integrating all key stakeholders with a focus on supporting the integration of parents and families with lived experience into leadership and decision-making roles.

Early childhood systems governance [page 5, [Exhibit C](#)] is being addressed in nearly every state, and there are multiple assessments of structures as well as status of states, and developing those structures have occurred within multiple national organizations. This slide depicts three of those examples. The National Conference of State Legislatures has established an early childhood fellows program and has done articles looking at governance structure within the states. The Education Commission of the States has created an overview of government structures and has also developed some state profiles. The Bipartisan Policy Center has issued a report looking at integrated, efficient early care and education systems. We will talk about each of these a little bit more on the next slide.

There are multiple other entities addressing early childhood systems governance. These include The Hunt Institute, which we know several members of our Legislature are engaged with, the national organization called the Forum for Youth Investment, and at least three national initiatives that Nevada is involved with: the Health Resources and Services Administration's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Health Integration Initiative, the Pritzker Children's Initiative prenatal-to-three services, as well as the Preschool Development Birth through Five grants.

To provide a little bit more context on some of those national initiatives, there are three top-level takeaways in what we have highlighted. One is looking at executive oversight and the importance of that in the early childhood system. The next is reviewing the different types of governance structures for early childhood systems, as well as key factors that influence government structure impact. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, there are six states that have established early childhood agencies within their director and cabinet-level positions. A key finding from their report is that elevating early childhood programs to a state agency level creates opportunities to serve children and families more effectively through an integrated whole-family approach. The resulting enhancements and program delivery, data collection, and data sharing can inform how young children and their

families are supported and help to drive improvements. The Education Commission of the States looked at governance structures in early childhood systems and identified three:

1. Coordinated, which is used in 29 states where early childhood programs are administered by two or more agencies that collaborate and coordinate.
2. Consolidated, which is used in 13 states and the District of Columbia where multiple program functions are consolidated into an existing state agency.
3. Created, currently used in 8 states, which is more of the emerging trend right now where a new agency or office is created with the responsibility for most early childhood programs and functions.

Some of the key factors for the success of early childhood government structures and the impact from the Bipartisan Policy Center include analysis of the number of state agencies involved in administering core programs, the distribution of funding streams across those agencies, and institutional placement of key offices. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center analysis, Nevada is ranked fortieth at this time. I would like to pass over the presentation to Patti Oya.

Patricia Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education:

The federal dollars [page 6, Exhibit C] coming in from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Education are just a few of the funding sources coming into Nevada. The lower half of the chart shows where the funding is going into the different Nevada departments, including the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and State Department of Agriculture. I think what is important to keep in mind is that each funding source has its own reporting requirements, data collection, and accountability measures that are separated by each office. For example, even under the Department of Education, you see funding goes into different offices for early childhood services. Those offices include the Office of Early Learning and Development, early childhood special education, the Office of Inclusive Education, and the Office of Student and School Supports. This chart is just a sampling of the federal dollars coming into Nevada. It does not include the general funds where the offices receive grants and foundational funds that come into Nevada.

The next page [page 7] looks at the early childhood data systems which could be the main part of an early childhood system because we have so many components of data that are collected across agencies, across programs, across our community partners that the need for this data really is part of the systems work. We look at child data, family data, classroom data, program data, and workforce data. All those pieces should be pulled in together into one system, and you can see that it would be one system that each agency or program feeds into so that we would have a comprehensive view of what we still need and what is working. For example, if we collect data and if you, as a legislator, want to know information, we often must look at different programs, make different phone calls trying to collect these

pieces individually, and not have a system. We do not have a system that I can turn to and ask, How many kids are in pre-K? As an example, Nevada Ready! State Pre-K numbers are very easily accessed, but if you ask how many kids are on a waiting list, or how many kids are in Head Start, I would have to pull that information from many different resources. This data system is a key part of the early childhood systems.

Denise Tenata:

I want to note that when we are using the data system, as one example of an infrastructure issue that needs to be supported in our state, the discussion of an integrated data system for early childhood goes back as far as 2012, I believe. There have been multiple reports, multiple discussions among various early childhood system partners to discuss what we needed to do with an integrated data system, but there has not been a coordinating body to take on that systems-level work. The concept of a coordinated office, or executive level office, around early childhood is not a new concept in Nevada. The early childhood system partners have been putting forward recommendations as far back as 2015, if not earlier. Recommendations to establish an executive-level authority over early childhood systems in Nevada for the reasons we have discussed have been documented since at least 2015 and discussed prior to that in the early childhood sector.

Examples of those instances [page 8, [Exhibit C](#)] where advisory bodies or similar initiatives have recommended a more coordinated state-level infrastructure include:

1. P-20W Research Data System Advisory Committee Council, P-3 subcommittee, and their recommendations for building a comprehensive prenatal-to-three policy in Nevada.
2. Nevada Pritzker Children's Initiative prenatal-to-three strategic policy priority, as mentioned earlier, includes this recommendation.
3. Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council 2022 to 2024 Strategic Plan includes the same recommendation.
4. 2022 Northern Nevada early childhood roundtable report.

We had some recent information as we will discuss in a later slide. We have a lot of initiatives going on right now to look at Nevada's early childhood system and what we can do to make improvements. One of those is a network analysis survey which is looking at how coordinated our system is right now [page 9]. Where do those gaps exist that we need to fill in, primarily looking at a variety of our state-level agencies, but also incorporating some of those key nongovernmental organizations that are critical to our early childhood system? One of the questions that was asked in the survey is, Would the Nevada early childhood system be more effective with a formal structure within government, such as a state office dedicated to early childhood? We received the results of this survey last week, and with 55 responses, 64 percent of respondents indicated yes to this question, no one

said no. Twenty-seven percent, or 15 out of the 55 respondents, indicated not sure, and 5 of those had another response to the question.

Patti Oya:

The Nevada Context [page 10, [Exhibit C](#)] for the children enrolled in some of our early childhood programs shows that the notable number here, unfortunately, is 0.8 percent: less than 1 percent of eligible children are receiving home visits. The number of pre-K children is 15.8 percent of eligible children, and that is across three different types of pre-K programs.

We believe the numbers are low because if we look at the 2019 Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Databook, from 1990 to 2017, the number of children in Nevada's population grew by 117 percent. That is the largest increase reported within the United States. For context, Arizona's growth was 62 percent in that same period of 1990 to 2017, and the national average was 15 percent. You can see that we had huge numbers of growth, and we could not keep up with that as far as infrastructure across the state for early childhood programs.

Recently we received federal funding to not only address the pandemic responses and recovery, but to assess our current infrastructure and to begin rebuilding. As an example, when we talk about Nevada Ready! State Pre-K, we have continued to grow those seats for four-year-olds whose families are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty limit. If our goal is to get to universal pre-K, we need to think about the infrastructure, the building space, the teachers, and the workforce. All those things have to be in play in terms of how we build the infrastructure, and not only our desire to increase numbers of seats.

The next slide [page 11] shows the numerous systems projects that are either happening or wrapping up in Nevada. These focus on improving quality, provider supports, reducing costs for families, expanding access to services that meet the needs of families, integration of holistic wraparound supports and early childhood setting, improving data collection, and reporting and accountability. You can see this list of projects that are happening, and the systems office level would be able to take recommendations, would be able to synthesize this information and make it more useful and more readily available so that we can understand where the biggest impact is across Nevada.

Holly Welborn, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada:

My part of the presentation will focus primarily on [Assembly Bill 113](#) and the amendment that was submitted [[Exhibit D](#)]. We did assist Assemblywoman Thomas with developing that amendment. I will not belabor the definitions, but the bill does provide definitions in section 1, subsection 5 of what "early childhood" is and what the "early childhood system" is. I think Ms. Tenata and Ms. Oya did a great job of explaining what that means in the larger context. We are talking about the period of time from prenatal through the age of eight years old, and the full spectrum of systems, not just early childhood education, but health care, prenatal health care, and the full spectrum of services and programs that children need to improve their outcomes.

The duties and purpose of this commission [page 13, [Exhibit C](#)] will be to:

1. Analyze existing early childhood systems in relation to needs.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships and coordination.
3. Improve equitable access and reduce disparities.
4. Identify and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature related to unmet needs for comprehensive early childhood services, opportunities for funding, strategies to improve coordination and alignment, maximizing efficiency in the delivery of services, and integrating parents and families into leadership and decision-making.

The goals [page 14] are to mobilize resources around priorities for children, improve coordination and efficiency, facilitate a holistic approach to serving children ages 0 to 8, strengthening partnerships with nonprofit and private sector entities, and identifying and implementing strategies for fiscal efficiency and accountability, establishing integrated systems, and increasing equitable access to programs and services in the early years of childhood. We are hoping to reach that gap of folks who are eligible, yet for some reason are unable to access the programs and services. Perhaps the system is too complex to know and understand what they need to apply for or when, or how to access a particular program. That is what this would seek to resolve.

Regarding the amendment, there are a couple of changes we want to make in the drafting. The original amendment is on file for you [[Exhibit D](#)], but it does vary a little bit from what is presented on this slide [page 15, [Exhibit C](#)] as far as the second amendment that we seek to propose. The first amendment's purpose would be to allow the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council to be part of the decision-making process for the candidates whom the Governor would consider appointing to this particular office. That is very common. We have seen that in a lot of new commissions, boards, and offices that have been created, for example, the Department of Indigent Defense Services, and the Nevada Sentencing Commission. Those commissions make some recommendations because the members of that committee have the best and the particular expertise to help the Governor make the informed decision. The second amendment that we are proposing is also common in newly developed commissions. It does vary from earlier. We were wanting to give a bill draft to that particular office, but typically what happens with the formation of these new entities is that there is a controlling board. Those boards, such as the Board on Indigent Defense Services and the Sentencing Commission, are oftentimes given a bill draft when they are in that beginning process, and we want to make sure that recommendations are realized in the legislative session. We are asking that this Committee consider giving the Early Childhood Advisory Council a bill draft to submit to the Legislature that would encompass some of the recommendations that would come out of the formation of this office.

That is what we have for the bill. We are happy to answer any questions that you all might have, and unless Assemblywoman Thomas has any further comments, we can open it up for questions.

Chair Torres:

Committee members, do you have any questions?

Assemblyman DeLong:

I am trying to understand the scope of what is being proposed vis-à-vis the budget in section 3 of [Assembly Bill 113](#). It looks like it covers one person. Is that what is envisioned, that one person would be hired to do all of this?

Holly Welborn:

Yes, that is the basis of where it would start, and I think there are some offices in the state such as the Governor's Office for New Americans and a few others that have started with one employee. That amount is to get the system started and if needed, we can come back to the Legislature and ask for further appropriations in the future.

Denise Tenata:

I would like to concur with Ms. Welborn's statement and wanted to note that the Governor's Office put in a fiscal note that would include three positions for this office with a little bit of a higher fiscal note attached to it. We are open to any of those recommendations.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I also have a question related to section 3 of the bill. As you stated in the bill, or as the fiscal note states, whether it is one person or three, there are two fiscal years in here. Does that mean then that every biennium it will have to be intentionally a part of the Governor's recommended budget for the office to continue?

Chair Torres:

I am going to go ahead and have the Legal Division [Legislative Counsel Bureau] answer that question.

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

The bill, as currently structured, would provide specific funding for this office in the first and second years of the coming biennium. I will note that the amendment [\[Exhibit D\]](#) and section 2 of the bill amending *Nevada Revised Statutes* 223.085 give authority to the Governor to use any money available to the Office of the Governor to fund this office in addition to the other offices housed within the Governor's Office. Ordinarily, the Governor would, in the following biennia as part of his budget request, submit his total budget for his office and then he would have authority to use that money within his office as he sees fit, including per section 2 of this bill funding this new office.

Chair Torres:

Are there any additional questions from the Committee? [There were none.]

What role does this office have in addressing disparities and access to pre-K and education services from birth until the age of four? I do not see anything specified, and I am thinking about the gaps that we have as a state for low-income communities, for students of color, and for rural students.

Holly Welborn:

When we are looking at all the programs in these systems, we take a look at the vast number of programs that exist that are early childhood programming. That list is monumental. When we are talking about issues of equity, we are talking about those kids who are falling through the cracks who are unable to access systems. It begins with that question of equity. It begins with those children who are living below the federal poverty level. It begins with children who have a hard time accessing services when they are dual-lingual or unilingual students. It addresses individuals who are racial minorities. That is who these programs are meant to serve. The focal point is to meet those needs. When we are talking about this 117 percent increase in the population of children when the national average is at 15 percent, the vast majority of the children who are falling through the cracks are the exact communities that you are talking about. In all those systems, that is at the heart and the core of what it is that we are trying to achieve.

Chair Torres:

Thank you. I appreciate that response, but I do have a concern and I think that there would be room to include that in the legislation because I do not see anything that identifies where the gaps are in the services. We do talk about some of the needs for students, for learning, and the funding, but none of the recommendations that would be made include that. I want to make sure that it is very explicit in the legislation because I do believe that is the intent of this conversation, and I want to make sure that that becomes a responsibility of that office as well.

I do have another statement. I am noticing on page 2, line 27, of the bill where it says, "Identify and make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature" I would like there to be a timeline of that, when that report would have to be submitted to the Legislature and the Governor's Office. That way, there is something that would be submitted to create policy. Because if we keep it that vague, that might not actually result in policy. I do have another question on how we will measure the efficacy of this office. How will we know that this office is working?

Holly Welborn:

The measurements that are used in some of these offices in different states such as Connecticut, Oregon, and Florida show that more people are accessing services across the board. Those numbers that we went through will increase. That is showing the tangible effects of access to those services, and then providing for the measurement of high-quality services to show outcomes for kids are really changing through the data that is collected.

Denise Tenata:

On behalf of the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, we would be open to any language changes that would help clarify the intent, but we are looking at the intent as being a very close relationship between the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council and this proposed office within the Office of the Governor. In some ways, I would see that the role of the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council is to provide some accountability and oversight to look at. We do have metrics for our goals and objectives within the Early Childhood Advisory Council which incorporate some of those systems initiatives. Speaking as the chair, I would think that part of our role would be to hold that office accountable to some of those same goals and metrics that we have in place for the early childhood system as well.

Chair Torres:

Another note would be to have that director report to someone. In this case, it seems like the best place for the director to have to report to might be the Early Childhood Advisory Council. I imagine any director who was working in this space would go to those meetings, but I believe that there should be required reporting to that office. Additionally, I was doing some research to see what we did in the Legislature when we established the Office for New Americans. In the 2019 Session, we added a section of language that required other state agencies to provide assistance to that office. That might be something worth looking into. Requiring state agencies to provide that information, providing that data could be helpful. Otherwise, in this office you might have somebody requesting the information or data and it is still not available.

Assemblywoman González:

On the slide where it says "Example: Early Childhood Data Systems" [page 8, [Exhibit C](#)], and it talks about provider and site data, are we requiring in this bill a centralized data system? Are you requiring a place for all this data? My second question is, What is the confidentiality around that data when we are talking about some of our sensitive populations, and how are we ensuring that that data will not be used for unintended purposes?

Patti Oya:

The data system Ms. Tenata mentioned is something we have talked about for a long time. Yes, it would be able to pull all of these pieces in together so we could collect across the board, and it would be in general disaggregated data so children's names are not there. We do not even know currently how many children are in different programs. We do not have information on our workforce that is reported in one central place. For instance, what types of degrees do our teachers have? How long have they been in the field? What is the turnover of the field? Are new people coming into the field? Those kinds of workforce questions we have started to collect, but we do not have it in one place. That would be the purpose of the data system, and it is something that we have looked at in our federal preschool development grant in previous years and something that we have further information on if needed.

Chair Torres:

Are there any additional questions from the Committee? [There were none.] On that conversation about data, too, I would like to add that requirement to the office that there is data because this is a conversation, but it is not in the bill. I want to make sure that this conversation is demonstrated within the bill language.

We can go ahead and move into those coming to testify in support.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

I am here representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents, which is an organization comprising all 17 superintendents in the state, and we are in support of this bill and want to thank Assemblywoman Thomas for bringing it forward. This will put an emphasis on early childhood which we have not always had in the state, and it will help us analyze where we are and where we need to go.

Kelly Crompton, representing City of Las Vegas:

The City of Las Vegas created the Strong Start Las Vegas campaign to advocate for and bring awareness to the importance of early childhood education from birth through elementary school. We created the Department of Youth Development and Social Initiatives. We started the Strong Start Academies within our urban core area as well as brought mobile pre-K to the urban core in the city of Las Vegas because we believe this is an important thing for our constituents. This bill would address the challenges that exist due to the various services and support for young children who are currently housed under different statewide agencies with little collaboration and means of data collection. We believe this bill is an important step in support for early childhood services throughout the state, and we are in support.

Tom Clark, representing The Children's Cabinet:

I am here on behalf of The Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet is a statewide, nonprofit organization that works very closely with the state agencies and the other stakeholders that you have heard today presenting this piece of legislation. We support A.B. 113, and more importantly, we support this conversation of getting started talking about early childhood as a system and looking at all the different elements of that system that need to be supported. If we have one director in charge of consolidating, looking at efficiencies, making sure these resources and where they come from, whether that be from the federal government, the state government, or even the local government, that they are funneling down through that system to benefit the families, to benefit the kids. That is what we support, and we will look forward to working with the other stakeholders to answer a lot of the questions that we have here. If we need to further amend the legislation, we will look to do that as well, but thank you very much for hearing this bill. It is an important conversation that we need to have in this state.

Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

I am here on behalf of our Asian Pacific Islander Americans community who make up 392,000 people of Nevada, 12.5 percent of the state's total population, and 7 percent of all

our children between the ages of 0 and 6. I am here in support of A.B. 113, and noting that we need a comprehensive system in order for us to see the data for racial disparity and for ethnic disparity because we cannot change what we do not see. We are in support of A.B. 113 to create the accountability and data system-wide, the first step to create equitable change in early childhood systems, reduce disparities, and support our children. Currently in Nevada, this is 2022 data, 43 percent, two out of our five kids, are dual-language learners. As Chair Torres and Assemblywoman González already noted, this is an important part for us to make sure that we ensure their success at the early end. Last session, Chair Torres passed the English language learners bill of rights. This, with the early childhood system, could be comprehensive, that can extend that. That will be amazing support for our little ones here in our community. [[Exhibit E](#) was submitted but not discussed and is included as an exhibit.]

Chair Torres:

Is there anybody else wishing to testify in support here in Carson City? [There was no one.] We will go ahead and go to Las Vegas for anyone wishing to testify in support.

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

I am speaking today, especially as a parent and an advocate for Nevada's children. The Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada has a long history of listening to, working with, and training parent advocates and children's advocates in general. We hear their stories and often they testify here before you on issues that have affected them and their families. They share concerns, and they put their energy into working to make the system better for other families and children. Their voices and their lived experiences are incredibly insightful and shed light on the needs in Nevada, and they often end up leading much of this work as testified here today. Most key early childhood stakeholder responses said we would be more effective with the formal structure in the Governor's Office, and no one responded no, or to the contrary. We ask you to support A.B. 113 and establish the Nevada Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Office of the Governor. I truly know and believe this bill will move Nevada forward in ways that we have not achieved in the past. I am grateful for all my colleagues who have testified here today, especially Assemblywoman Thomas, and for your consideration of this bill.

Amanda Haboush-Deloye, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am the executive director for the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy. The Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council lives within our center. However, I want to make it clear that I am not here today representing the Nevada Institute for Children or the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, but I am here representing myself as a resident of Nevada. I want to testify as somebody who was born and raised here and who has had the benefit of some of these systems. I have colleagues, friends, representatives, and families who have shared with us some of the struggles that they have in navigating these systems and some of the wonderful successes from successfully navigating these systems. We can see that working together, collaborating, and an integration of these systems will only move our state forward. Focusing on early childhood is the way that our state is going to thrive and be

successful in the future. Having a position within the Governor's Office will allow us to be able to advocate and educate daily to bring the recommendations that community members have been making as a team for many, many years. We know when there is dedicated staff and dedicated time and a person to advocate for those things every day that we are more likely to succeed and to move them forward, and for individuals around to understand the power that these systems and integration can have. Therefore, I urge you to support this bill.

Chair Torres:

Is there anyone else wishing to testify in support in Las Vegas? [There was no one.] I will go ahead and go to the phone. Is there anyone wishing to testify in support on A.B. 113?

Lesley Pittman, representing Waterford UPSTART:

Waterford is a nonprofit organization that partners with families, school districts, educators, and communities to help every child build the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. We applaud Assemblywoman Thomas for bringing A.B. 113 forward, and it is designed to create an Office of Early Childhood Systems within the Office of the Governor. As Ms. Tenata indicated in her presentation, several states, like New Mexico through its Early Childhood Education and Care Department, have created a cabinet-level entity designed to optimize the health, development, education, and well-being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of high-quality prenatal and early childhood programs and services. Nevada should do the same. While we have made some improvements over the last decade and those should be applauded, Nevada continues to fall woefully short on a number of child well-being indicators as determined by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2022 Kids Count Profile which ranked Nevada number 47 in child well-being. In particular, the report indicated that 63 percent of Nevada's 3- and 4-year-olds do not attend any sort of school. That is due in no small part to a host of barriers that exist, including families who live in rural areas with limited preschool options, transportation challenges, affordability, and cultural preferences. This is a travesty when one considers that 90 percent of a child's brain growth occurs during the first five years of life. It is time for a cabinet-level focus on these unmet needs and how to effectively develop a robust and comprehensive approach for the provision of early childhood services in Nevada. We agree that improving coordination, increasing efficiency, implementing opportunities for increased family engagement, and maximizing the use of federal and private dollars will lead to better outcomes here in Nevada.

Chair Torres:

Are there any additional callers? [There were none.] I will now invite anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 113 here in Carson City. [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone line? [There was no one.] I will now invite anyone wishing to testify in neutral on A.B. 113 up here in Carson City. [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in neutral in Las Vegas? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone wishing to testify in neutral to A.B. 113? [There was no one.] I will now invite the bill sponsor to give any closing remarks.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I am so excited. I really am because this is the foundation building for our children to start with. This is something that has been missing in our state. We have other states that are competitive with us, and we need to get up from being forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, or forty-eighth, fiftieth, and I think this is a start. This council being in the Governor's Office would be a voice for those who cannot speak, and that is our little ones. That is our kiddos, and I look forward to asking you to support A.B. 113 because it is a start. This is the foundation. This is what we have been lacking. This is what The Hunt Institute, Senator Nguyen and I, the Office of the Governor, and the Nevada early childhood education office did back in August. We sat and listened to the other states to see what their programs are about. We came up with this council along with the advisory council, and this is that foundation. This is what is needed in our state to build upon our kiddos who are like sponges. They want to learn, and we need to do that. I am asking this Committee to please push this forward for our kiddos in the state of Nevada.

Chair Torres:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Thomas, and I do not think I can think of anymore synonyms for the word "child," but really appreciate your testimony on A.B. 113. At this time, we will close the hearing on A.B. 113, and I will invite anybody wishing to testify in public comment. [There was no one.] Are there any remarks from Committee members? [There were none.] Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 14, here in Room 4100. Thank you. This meeting is adjourned [at 10:22 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Diane Abbott
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "[Assembly Bill 113](#): Governor's Office of Early Childhood Systems," dated February 23, 2023, presented by Denise Tenata, Chair, Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council; Patricia Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education; and Holly Welborn, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada.

[Exhibit D](#) is two proposed amendments to [Assembly Bill 113](#) presented by Holly Welborn, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada.

[Exhibit E](#) is a copyrighted article published by Migration Policy Institute titled "Overlooked but Essential: Language Access in Early Childhood Programs," dated October 2022, submitted by Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada.