

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

**Eighty-Second Session
April 3, 2023**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Selena Torres at 9:06 a.m. on Monday, April 3, 2023, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 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.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair
Assemblywoman Bea Duran, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Rich DeLong
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblyman Bert Gurr
Assemblyman Brian Hibbetts
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblyman Duy Nguyen
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblyman Max Carter (excused)
Assemblywoman Cecelia González (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Assembly District No. 5

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

Minutes ID: 690



Lindsey Howell, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jayson Dagher, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Derek A. Rimson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Sofia Takhtadjian, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Naomi Karapetyan, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada
Saha Salahi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Michelle Maese, President, Service Employees International Union Local 1107
Kelly Miller, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Anna Binder, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada
Fahima Khalaf, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada
Liliana Trejo-Vanegas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Emily Persaud-Zamora, Executive Director, Silver State Voices
Kamilah Bywaters, President, Las Vegas Alliance of Black School Educators
Sean Parker, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Jeri Burton, Co-Executive Director, Nevada Chapter, National Organization for Women
Christopher M. Ries, Detective, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Jason Walker, Sergeant, Administrative Division, Legislative Liaison, Washoe County Sheriff's Office
Patricia Haddad, Director, Government Relations, Clark County School District

Chair Torres:

[Roll was taken. Committee protocol was reviewed.] Welcome to the happiest committee in the Nevada Legislature. We are going to have one bill hearing today. We will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 139. Assemblywoman Miller, when you are ready to make your dreams come true, please begin.

Assembly Bill 139: Revises provisions governing certain demographic information collected by governmental agencies. (BDR 19-122)

Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Assembly District No. 5:

I wonder if I should present all my bills in here and make all my dreams come true. I would like to thank Chair Torres for allowing me to wait until April to present Assembly Bill 139. That is quite a struggle for a chair.

April is Arab American History Month. We celebrated Black History Month in February, Women's History Month in March, and now Arab American History Month—you see how I get three months in a row. I enjoy these opportunities to celebrate and educate others on various groups' histories and contributions. I am very proud of my own diverse background, as my father is Black and my mother is Lebanese. As far as I know, I am the first Arab

elected woman and only Arab elected serving in any office here in Nevada. It is also my understanding that this will be the first bill heard that is focused, with direct impact, on our Arab and Middle Eastern community.

I would like to begin with my own personal story. My parents were fully aware of the additional responsibility of raising biracial children, especially at that time, which was quite a while ago. They were very intentional when it came to addressing issues of race, color, and ethnicity. They wanted to prepare me for a world they knew may not be understanding or accepting of who I am. I was three years old the first time my parents sat me down to talk about Mommy's color and Daddy's color and what I thought that meant for me. As a child, I was raised to embrace and celebrate both of my races. While it may seem tongue-in-cheek, I do not consider myself a mixture, but a solution. I mean that figuratively and literally. If you remember your fifth-grade science classes, you will know what I mean.

My parents were direct in their message and proactive and deliberate in my upbringing. They told me I was the best of both worlds. They explained to me that the world would try to define me, but I was not to let the world tell me who I was—I was to tell them who I was. They explained that people, based on their understanding or comfort level, would try to make me choose a side. They would try to put me in a box. Weirdly enough, as a kid, I still thought my parents were speaking figuratively. As I grew older, I realized that box was literal. That is what brings me to this bill.

First, a little context: Not all Middle Easterners are Arab, and not all Arabs are Middle Eastern. The Middle East is a geographical, geopolitical area that stretches primarily from Egypt to Pakistan, although Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are usually described as South Asia. The Arab world consists of 22 countries that belong to the Arab League. In the Middle East, the Arab countries include Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. These countries are also in Asia. Additional Arab countries, which include Egypt, Algeria, Djibouti, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia, are in Africa. Other countries that are in the Middle East but are not Arab include Israel, Iran, and Turkey. Turkey is partly in Asia and partly in Europe.

As you can see, Arabs come from countries in both the Middle East and North Africa. While Arabs are the largest group in the Middle East, not everyone in that area is Arab. There are Persians, Kurds, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Armenians, Berbers, Turks, and Israelis. Hence the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) acronym. This MENA category captures this racially and ethnically diverse, yet with a similar shared culture, population.

As someone of two races, it has been a challenge, but always a priority, for me to accurately identify who I am. On the 2020 Census, I was able to select "Black," "African American," and "Lebanese." However, Lebanese, as well as Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Egyptian, were listed with German, Irish, and English under "white." I felt once again, even though I selected "Lebanese," that my identity had been diluted.

The reason for this goes back to a time before 1952, when the United States had racial restrictions on which immigrants could become naturalized citizens. Syrian immigrants therefore argued in court, trying to prove their whiteness in hopes of the possibility of being naturalized. As a result, most Arabs were conditioned to identify and select "white." This led to the invisible race that was absorbed into another. Even though there are distinct differences in our culture, history, ethnicity, appearance, and language from European descendants, we are still often classified as "Caucasian" or "white."

Growing up, being of Syrian and Lebanese descent, this started to become another question discussed among family, friends, and community: Which box do you check? Many responded that they checked "white," admitting it was because there were no other options. As time went on, others in my generation and younger started to identify as Asian, begging another question: Why were we considered "white" if we were, in fact, from Asia? Others responded that they checked "other." A recent study showed that 88 percent of people of MENA descent did not check "white" when given the option.

A few years ago, specifically here in Nevada, many of us spent an enormous amount of time and energy during the census to increase the population. It was imperative that as many people as possible participate in the census and that every individual be counted. Why? Because that is how the federal government determines the amount of funding that will be provided to each state. We need accurate information, so communities receive the financial resources they need in the areas of education, health care, housing, employment, language access, infrastructure, and even student financial aid and research.

However, as the data is currently collected, the numbers of people of MENA descent are diluted and absorbed within other groups, rendering us almost invisible. If you are from Egypt, you are "African," but not "Black American." If you are from Lebanon, you are "Asian," but not "Southeast Asian" as most consider it. What about those who are checking "white," "other," "African," or "Asian"? While we may reside in Nevada, communities of color have shared needs specific to their group. The current data collection makes it challenging. For example, right now, there are two medical studies researching the effects of COVID-19 on Arab Americans, as well as the prevalence of Alzheimer's dementia among Arab Americans—the same disease that took my grandmother. The biggest challenge is the numbers. Inaccurate data on population and statistics possibly cheats people out of cures and medical breakthroughs.

Additionally, there has been a decades-long initiative to get the MENA question on the United States Census. The current standards being used for race and ethnicity have not been updated since 1997 and are set by the Office of Management and Budget. In 2015, the Census Bureau tested the need for the MENA option and found it did deliver more accurate information. It was on track for appearing on the 2020 Census. Despite the findings, in 2018, they announced the addition would not occur. The Census would proceed with the same question as in the 2010 Census.

Led largely by the Arab American Institute, the charge continues. Recently, the proposal to put the MENA question back on the Census was put forward by the Biden Administration. The Federal Register has been issued, and Americans have until next week, April 12, to submit comments supporting the proposal. You can also do that on yellowvote.org. While I am more confident than ever that there may be success this time, the Federal Working Group will not announce whether or not it will be adopted until 2024. Even if it is adopted, that is still another six years until the 2030 Census.

The time for accurate numbers is now. Actually, it was forever ago. According to the Census, there are only 2.1 million Arab Americans. In contrast, the American Community Survey, a yearly survey collecting economic, social, and demographic information, suggests there are more like 3.7 million Arab Americans. It is estimated that with the MENA category, our population could expand up to 7 million Americans. In the meantime, Nevada, the third-most diverse state, with a school district that speaks over 100 languages and represents countries from all over the world, has the opportunity to once again lead the nation in how we embrace our diversity. It is estimated that here in Nevada, there are just over 17,000 Arabs. That is a 42 percent increase between 2000 and 2017, making us one of the fastest-growing Arab populations in the country. Again, that is just Arabs. What will our numbers reflect when we include everyone of MENA descent?

It is not just about financial resources. It is about being fairly and accurately identified and counted. It is about demonstrating community numbers that can, in fact, drive policy. Our Nevadans should not have to wait until 2030 to be counted and considered, or for the dignity that comes from being acknowledged, because the need for resources, programs, and policies will not wait.

I ask for what is written as a very simple bill to resolve a very complex issue. This very short bill makes a small addition to *Nevada Revised Statutes* Chapter 239B, which addresses disclosure of personal information to governmental agencies. Specifically, A.B. 139 requires governmental agencies that collect demographic information on race or ethnicity to include a separate category for persons of Middle Eastern or North African descent. This bill sends the message that our state recognizes, values, and counts our Nevadans of MENA descent.

I urge your support. With that, I stand for questions.

Chair Torres:

I know this Committee is definitely where the magic happens. We have quite a few questions.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

Thank you to my colleague for presenting this bill—it is more than just wishing upon a star that things will change for you. You spoke a bit about the numbers of the Arab community in Nevada. Do you have any idea what it might look like if we include the entire MENA population? That kind of conjecture is wishing upon a star too. But do you have any idea that might be helpful?

Assemblywoman Miller:

Honestly, I could only estimate. Especially here in Nevada—in the Clark County School District alone, there are over 100 countries represented and languages spoken. We know we are the third-most diverse state in the country. We have seen increased populations in other North African communities, such as the Habesha, the Ethiopians, and the Eritreans. We have people here from all over the world.

What is also challenging—and why we do not have the accurate data—is that there are other options on boxes that include "multiracial" or "other." I remember, growing up, wishing that one day I could have a "multiracial" box. Once it came, I was upset because it dissolves—we do not know which races you are. If you are two or three races, which ones? A lot of times, again, for people who are biracial, it depends on which they are selecting. We see this in the schools all the time. It especially reduces and has an impact on our Indigenous population. Just looking at the difference between the national numbers, I would say that if it was on trend with the national numbers, it could possibly double.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

You spoke about the tremendous 42 percent growth even in the group we can identify. This is more of a statement: I think it is about growth. Being one of the fastest-growing groups in our state, obviously, we cannot put every racial and ethnic identity in the law. However, as numbers grow and get to a point of being recognized, that kind of growth is something we should strongly consider. To me, it is about being seen. There is a significant portion of citizens in our state and our population who do not feel seen. The impact of that is tremendous.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

It is a small world. As an African American, I would ask that I be included on A.B. 139.

Chair Torres:

I have one quick question. The language on page 2, lines 4 through 6 says, "a separate category for persons of Middle Eastern or North African descent." My understanding is, we want to capture the data for both populations. I want to note that with the use of the word "or" in the bill, a local government could have "Middle Eastern" or "North African" listed. My understanding is, it should be MENA. We want to be inclusive of both. I want to make it clear that is the intent. Correct?

Assemblywoman Miller:

Correct. Maybe I should amend it. I see your point in thinking maybe there should be a slash between Middle Eastern and North African, so it is included as "both" and not "or," which would imply there was a choice between which one they wanted to put on the document. Was that what you were getting at?

Asher Killian, Committee Counsel:

I believe as written, especially with the clarification from the requester that that is the intent, this language would capture that intent. This bill would create a single category for people of either descent. I think as written, especially with that clarification on the record, it would be clear.

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any additional questions? [There were none.] At this time, we will move into support testimony. Is there anyone wishing to testify in support of A.B. 139 here in Carson City or in Las Vegas? I am going to start in Las Vegas, but if you are here to testify in Carson City, approach the table, and I will bounce back and forth.

Jayson Dagher, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

First, I want to say *sobh bekheir*, or good morning, to the Committee. I am in strong support of Assembly Bill 139. This bill has been a decades-long fight to create a category for people like me and Assemblywoman Miller. Currently, when filling out the U.S. census, many of those of our descent have to categorize ourselves as "white." I want to make this clear: Our experience as those of Middle East and North African descent is not white. "White" renders us invisible in official population counts. Without correct data, our state lacks adequate resources to effectively handle everything from funding educational programs, to battling infant mortality, to tracking employment discrimination, to staffing hospitals with enough Arabic or Farsi translators. Currently, there are barriers in doing research on MENA populations in the United States. Many people of MENA descent in our country are rendered invisible in official statistics researchers rely on for health research and other key studies.

However, in states like Michigan and California, where they do track MENA descent, the data is really jarring. In Michigan for example, years after creating MENA categories in its state and local forms, the state's health department conducted a survey using this data and found that the Arab American infant mortality rate was 40 percent higher than that of white Americans. In San Francisco, data from MENA small business owners found discriminatory practices and crimes committed against the owners post-9/11.

The number of Nevadans who claim Arab ancestry has more than doubled since the census first measured ethnic origins in 1980. It is among the fastest-growing Arab populations in the country. However, state and local data is important. It makes us visible and allows us to address issues in our community. It is estimated there are 30,000 Nevadans of MENA descent, but we do not know that for certain. It is estimated there are over 300 Nevada business owners of MENA descent, but we do not know. There is no data, and how can we know one another and tackle issues in our community without the right information? Please vote in support of A.B. 139.

Derek A. Rimson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

We honor the Chair and the Committee. We want to ditto all that has been said and show our support of A.B. 139.

Chair Torres:

We will now hear support testimony in Carson City.

Sofia Takhtadjian, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here today in support of A.B. 139 to include Middle Eastern and North African as a category when collecting demographics on race and ethnicity. I am a first-generation Armenian and Syrian who has grown up in Las Vegas, Nevada. Growing up, I felt unseen filling out government paperwork, not knowing which box to check when it came to demographics. It was the closest thing, but when I clicked on "white" or "other," it felt wrong. I knew my family and I did not fit into that demographic. No matter how many times people of MENA descent check that box for "white" or "other," Middle Easterners and North Africans will never live the same experiences of those who are white.

Today, I am also sitting in front of you as a researcher with Brookings Mountain West, but on a personal note, I cannot look into government-collected data on Middle Easterners and North Africans and where they stand in the state on many issues, such as when it comes to how many of them rely on welfare programs, their average annual income, or what health issues they are statistically faced with. I, and many other researchers, cannot look into that data because it does not exist. We do not collect that data, and that leaves holes in our ability to serve those communities. It is more than just being able to check a box that feels right to those communities. It is making sure North Africans and Middle Easterners are able to be properly represented and accounted for, so their needs can be properly addressed by Nevada's government. We cannot serve a community we cannot identify. Please vote in support of A.B. 139. Thank you.

Naomi Karapetyan, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am an Armenian student, and I am testifying in support of A.B. 139. I think this bill will fill the identity gap in our state census and allow for Middle Eastern and North African people to identify themselves as such. Many Middle Eastern and North African people do not identify as white because of their lived experiences and associate themselves more closely with communities of color. Through my own lived experiences and witnessing the experiences of my Armenian family, I know this bill will allow the state census to more accurately reflect the identities of all populations in Nevada. This bill would also allow for more research to be conducted about people of MENA descent, especially as this demographic is particularly underrepresented in social science research.

Eric Jeng, Acting Executive Director, One APIA Nevada:

One APIA Nevada advocates for the growing Asian and Pacific Islander Americans here in this great state. The work I am doing because of AANHPI [Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander] is a very political term. For us to be able to serve our community every single day, we talk about and advocate for data desegregation. Accurate, detailed data for our state's racial and ethnic composition and information about how those data intersect with education, employment, housing, health care, political representation, and other important social institutions are essential for realizing our state's goal for equity, diversity, and inclusion. The collection of this data must be improved.

This is also really close with how two months ago, the federal government's Office of Management and Budget officially started requesting public notice and public comment, making sure the federal government starts addressing this issue head-on to start aggregating MENA categories. Currently, in the whole country, there are 50 million people who self-identify as "some other race." We believe a large chunk of that comes from the Middle Eastern and North African identity. That also trickled down to our state data. In order for us to serve our community with equity, with justice, this is the first, very important step.

Saha Salahi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here to testify in support of A.B. 139. I believe this bill will give a sense of identity to community members who have continuously been forgotten. As an Afghan American myself, this bill can promote a sense of belonging, which is important to the well-being and confidence of people of MENA descent. Data is power, and without this bill, my community will continue to be invisible.

Chair Torres:

At this time, we will go to the phones.

Michelle Maese, President, Service Employees International Union Local 1107:

We are calling in support of A.B. 139. The Service Employees International Union Local 1107 represents 18,000 workers in Nevada. We recognize and are proud to represent a diverse workforce. The Service Employees International Union strongly believes in communities united, and in order to unite communities, communities have to be appropriately identified. This bill recognizes the workers who are Middle Eastern and North African, therefore creating value and belonging when being counted for representation, providing services, and celebrating the MENA community. We support A.B. 139, and we urge you to do the same.

Kelly Miller, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am calling in support of A.B. 139 to have Middle Eastern and North African persons be counted. I am in full support of this bill. It is personal for me, as somebody who is both Lebanese and Black. As an educator in the schools here in Clark County, I truly believe this needs to be included and this bill go through. That is because the one thing I see here in the schools—and I have personally experienced my entire life—is that we who are Arab, Lebanese, Iraqi, and any of the Middle Eastern nations have no group to identify with, except under "white." Any time that I or members of my family have had to write down what we are, we have always had to say "white." When I provide reports to the state, including my students or the demographics of students, anybody who would be Middle Eastern or Arabic has to be included as "white." Therefore, it does not provide us with the proper demographics to give us inclusion and give students opportunities for things such as scholarships, awards, or grants based on being Middle Eastern or North African. I am here to 100 percent say I am in support of A.B. 139.

Anna Binder, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:

I am calling in support of A.B. 139. Ditto.

Fahima Khalaf, Private Citizen, Henderson, Nevada:

I am in strong support of Assembly Bill 139. I am here today to address an issue of vital importance to the continued growth and progress of our great state—the inclusion of the Middle Eastern and North African category when collecting demographic information on race and ethnicity by Nevada government agencies. As we all know, Nevada is a state characterized by its rich diversity, with residents from all corners of the world calling it home. As we continue to evolve as a society, it is crucial we ensure every community is fairly represented and given the opportunity they need to flourish. By adding a MENA category to our demographic data collection, we will be taking an essential step towards recognizing the contribution and needs of the incredibly vibrant community of those of Middle East and North African descent. The data provided will allow for better understanding and addressing of needs in areas such as education, health care, and social services. Subsequently, the data collected will help policymakers such as you all make informed decisions that impact the well-being and success of the Middle Eastern and North African community in our state.

As a proud Nevadan, and as a proud first-generation Palestinian woman, the MENA category is a rightful step for the representation in our state. As we all know, representation matters. To actually know we exist and our ethnicity is important enough to matter in the Census, to have a form where we can actually properly identify our ethnicity instead of "white"—we do not consider ourselves "white," and most of us consider ourselves "Brown" or "other"—will help break down barriers, combat stereotypes, and promote understanding among our diverse population. It will also ensure equity, inclusion, and social justice for all and continue to make the commitment to building a state that values and respects all of its residents.

As a mother of four and grandmother of one, with another one on the way, I plead with you to vote yes for A.B. 139. You have my full support.

Liliana Trejo-Vanegas, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Salaam alaykum to the Committee. Our communities are made stronger when everyone is represented. Middle Eastern and North African communities in Nevada have often faced inequity, and it is time for state and local government to recognize this vibrant community. With that, I stand strongly in support of A.B. 139.

Emily Persaud-Zamora, Executive Director, Silver State Voices:

I am in strong support of A.B. 139. We thank Assemblywoman Miller for carrying this bill and sharing her story of what it is like navigating as a biracial woman. We support this bill as an organization that has done so much work around the Census. It is also a data-driven organization. We know the impact of being able to tell the story of our community. Passing a bill like this would give light to so many different communities. We urge your support.

Kamilah Bywaters, President, Las Vegas Alliance of Black School Educators:

I am also the chair of the National Action Network education committee. We are in support of A.B. 139 and agree with all the previous comments. We think this is a perfect opportunity to be in solidarity with our MENA community to ensure their voices are seen and heard.

Sean Parker, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

So much has already been said. I am going to ditto that and just say, To me, it is about two things: creating a sense of belonging in our state, for all who deserve it, which is all of our residents; and as the brilliant Assemblywoman Miller said, having accurate data, because data allows us to make decisions. I am here in support of A.B. 139.

Jeri Burton, Co-Executive Director, Nevada Chapter, National Organization for Women:

I am calling in support of A.B. 139 to include the MENA category when collecting data. We hope you will support this bill to support these communities that deserve representation.

Chair Torres:

Does anyone else on the line wish to testify in support of A.B. 139? [There was no one.]

[[Exhibit C](#)] in support of A.B. 139 was submitted but not discussed and is included as an exhibit of the hearing.]

At this time, I will invite anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 139 in Carson City.

Christopher M. Ries, Detective, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department:

We are opposed to A.B. 139. However, I want to be abundantly clear that our concerns are not with the collection of MENA data, and we severely appreciate the important intent of this bill. However, when the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (Metro) reports crime data to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the Unified Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), we are required to collect Middle Eastern or African descent as "white." This will need to be technologically reconciled before we do this. We appreciate Assemblywoman Miller's bill, and we hope to work with her on this, but at this time, we are opposed to A.B. 139.

Jason Walker, Sergeant, Administrative Division, Legislative Liaison, Washoe County Sheriff's Office:

We are in soft opposition to Assembly Bill 139 as well. Assemblywoman Miller, apologies in advance that I did not warn you we were going to oppose it. I echo the comments of Mr. Ries from Metro. Reporting technology is currently not in place. We would hope to continue to work with Assemblywoman Miller to possibly move to a better position.

Chair Torres:

Maybe in the closing remarks, this can be clarified: Would the system not be able to add a box? Every time we do the Census, there is a box where, as a Latina, I have to identify as

"white," and then it says, Are you Hispanic or Latino? I understand when you send it to the FBI, the data has to go over that the individual might be white. Could there not be another question asked so that we, locally as a state, could track that data?

Jason Walker:

When I reached out to our traffic enforcement group—we use the Brazos reporting system—they said, Sure, no problem, we can just add that dropdown box. From that standpoint, it is simple for the traffic stops. For the Uniform Crime Reporting that has been in place for decades, as well as NIBRS, I believe there is a larger issue, but I am not a subject matter expert in that, and I would have to follow back up with you.

Chair Torres:

If it was not an addition to the drop-down box, but a separate box, could you ask if they could add another question?

Jason Walker:

I will.

Chair Torres:

That goes out to Mr. Ries too. Is there anyone else wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 139? I do not see anyone here in Carson City. Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 139? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the line wishing to testify in opposition? [There was no one.] Is there anyone here in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to testify neutral to A.B. 139?

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

Sabah al-khair. It is certainly not lost on me how important this topic is. As someone who has grown up checking the "other" box, it always hits you in a very interesting, often negative way.

However, I am coming up in neutral, as I am here representing the Clark County School District, only to share that there are some technological barriers to including the MENA designation on race and ethnic data gathering. The most important thing I wanted to be sure was on the record was that in order to add any new racial and ethnic category, it will require everyone in the school district to reidentify. We are talking about 304,000 kids and families who would have to go back in and reidentify. There are—I do not want to say barriers—challenges to implementation aligned to that. There would certainly be some work necessary, recognizing that would take additional resources as well.

That said, I am certainly not opposed to ensuring we have accurate data reflecting the student demographics and student populations of the Clark County School District. I wanted to be sure to recognize there will be some implementation challenges, and I want to ensure that as this is put in place, the time line and resources necessary are provided as well.

Chair Torres:

I do not see anyone else here in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to testify neutral to A.B. 139. Is there anyone on the phone lines wishing to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] At this time, I will invite Assemblywoman Miller for any closing remarks.

Assemblywoman Miller:

First, thank you to everyone from the community and all our supporters in solidarity with us. Chair, I appreciate your clarification. To your response to law enforcement: Again, the ultimate goal is for the federal government to put this on the Census. However, it could also be a combined question. We see that currently with, Are you white? Then, are you Hispanic or non-Hispanic? Are you Black? Then, are you Hispanic or non-Hispanic? I would urge law enforcement to do the extra work to aggregate that data in terms of how they must report it differently to the UCR or the federal government. There is a very long history between law enforcement and our Middle Eastern Arab communities. If you are not aware of it, I will let you research it on your own.

In response to the school district, nowhere in that bill does it say everyone needs to go back and refill forms. Again, the Clark County School District should be the flagship when it comes to embracing and calculating our diversity. I know when I look at the languages spoken by our students, the only Arabic language I saw were Arab and Farsi—except there are actually dozens of different dialects spoken, and there are plenty of Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African students in the Clark County School District. I see them in my classrooms all the time. They do not get the language access or support other groups do, and it is not because they are not there. It is not because they are not in need. It is because they are not counted or seen. With that, I would suggest to the school district that this could occur when all the students and parents register again for the upcoming school year. There is no need to go back and redo every single student. We have a new school year coming.

I thank our AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] caucus for supporting this bill as well. I wanted to dedicate this bill to my *sitty*—to my grandmother. She was the one who actually got me into politics. At 11 years old, she started taking me door-to-door to canvass with her, because she was a precinct delegate. The thing about my Lebanese grandmother is, she always taught us all the history and the contributions of our Arabic people. We are some of the oldest civilizations in the world, bringing math, science, and the three major religions practiced on this planet.

Also, she was born in 1921, one year after women got the right to vote. Every day, when I walk into this building, it is never lost on me that my grandmother was born in a time just after receiving the right to vote, and her granddaughter would one day be a member of the first female-majority Legislature in United States history. It would also never have occurred to us that one day, her granddaughter would be able to bring forth legislation to advocate for and represent us as a people. With that, I dedicate this to my grandmother.

Chair Torres:

With that dedication, we will close the hearing on A.B. 139 in honor of Assemblywoman Miller's *sitty*. At this time, we will move on to public comment.

[Public comment was heard.]

I will open it to any remarks from the members. Assemblyman McArthur, we have a big day today, because both of us will be escorting the Senate into our joint chambers with Senator Rosen tonight. Do you have any additional remarks? He does not, but he knows we always have a friend in one another.

As Mary Poppins has taught us, in every job, there must be a bit of fun, and that is what we do here in the hardest-working Assembly Committee on Government Affairs. With that, we will adjourn [at 9:56 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Lindsey Howell
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is written testimony from Deanna Hua Tran, Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Immigrant Coalition, in support of Assembly Bill 139.