

June 12, 2020

SB543 Commission  
C/o Chair Karlene McCormick  
Nevada Commission on School Funding  
2080 E. Flamingo Road; Suite 210  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Re: **Public Comment #1 for June 12, 2020 SB543 Commission Meeting**

SB 543 Commission Members:

As the Commission begins to make recommendations to the Governor and the Nevada Legislature, the Clark County Education Association (CCEA) would like to enter into the record a statement followed with four (4) recommendations for the Commission to consider.

CCEA represents over 18,000 educators in CCSD, the largest number of educators in the State of Nevada. Our district is the largest, poorest, and most diverse in terms of students and has 70% of Nevada's public education students. We supported this legislation when it was passed, with the exception of our primary concern-that it was not funded. Out of all the recommendations, the most critical is the one the Commission will make regarding funding. Today, with the economic collapse our State is experiencing, there is tremendous pressure for us to not look at the reality of the true cost to bring our education system up to adequate funding levels-but to default to a cynical view that says "this is not the time". We believe there is no other time, nor moment, in history to put forward what our schools and students really need regarding funding.

As the Governor and Legislators receive your report, they will be consumed with dealing with the significant loss in State revenue this COVID-19 crisis has created. Today, their direction is cuts. However, we believe there is not enough budget cuts one can make to bridge the fiscal gap without decimating our public education delivery system. We believe that any budgets cuts must take place in the context of new revenue and restructuring the current revenue system. And that discussion should be done in the context of rebuilding Nevada's economy. Our economy must be more diversified, and key to that is having an educated workforce for today's economy to attract economic growth. And there will be no educated workforce at the levels needed to build a new economy without improving our public education system.

Accordingly, we are suggesting that the Commission do the following:

1. Make funding recommendations that reach adequate levels so that legislators know exactly how much funding our public school system really needs. Assign adequate funding levels for basic per pupil allocation as well as the four weights. We are asking that a recommendation propose full adequate funding levels now- not over a period of time. In other words, what would the cost be **today** if our system was funded to adequate levels? The Pupil Centered Funding Plan is supposed to address the 'needs' of students. We trust you will issue a recommendation regarding funding under the parameters outlined under SB543. However, we are asking that you put before the

- public, at a time when significant cuts to education are being proposed, what the **real cost** to adequately fund education would be under the new funding formula.
2. On the hold harmless issue, we have heard comments to build in an inflation factor after the baseline year. We disagree with this. Until the formula indicates that those school districts should receive more funding beyond the hold harmless level, it should remain the same level without inflation. Otherwise, if we build in an inflation factor, then that money will be taken from the formula's allocation for CCSD and as a result the District with the largest population of the most diverse and poorest will be shortchanged again. Furthermore, if Districts who are part of the hold harmless experience a shortfall in funding, then we would advise those Districts to look at their ending fund balances if they need more funding above the hold harmless level. Why do we propose this? Because that is what CCSD has always done year after year and as a result CCSD has the lowest ending fund balance state wide of all school districts at 2.25%, where other Districts have anywhere from 6%-16%.
  3. The definition of at-risk should be academically centric and focus on students who systematically are underperforming and are at the bottom proficiency levels. In 2017, SB178 was passed and it targeted the bottom quartile student proficiency to allocate resources with prescriptive instructional intervention strategies to raise academic performance for those students of greatest needs. Given the significant impact any change in the definition of at-risk could be, we suggest the Commission's recommendation require further study and input from education stakeholders and experts to work on this issue.
  4. Finally, we do not agree with any proposal that would delay the implementation of the new funding formula. The Commission should move forward with its recommendations and not alter that implementation date.

In closing, your charge and ultimate recommendation is being done in the most challenging times that our public education system has faced. However, it is also an opportunity to plow ahead and make structural changes to fund our educational system as part of a strategy to rebuild Nevada's economy. And though addressing Nevada's economy is not your charge-what recommendations you make will have an impact in that context.

The next significant decision will be before Governor Sisolak, who pledged when running for office to make our education system a number one priority. Please provide a recommendation of what the real cost to adequately fund our schools would be under the new formula. As we have shared with you in the past, CCEA will be advocating and organizing to fight for the needed revenue our students need.

Thank you,



John Vellardita, Executive Director  
Clark County Education Association