

October 16, 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 October 16, 2020 SB543 Commission Meeting**

SB 543 Commission Members:

As you discuss funding and ultimately make your recommendation on this issue, CCEA would like to share our thoughts for your consideration.

For too long, adequacy in Nevada has meant the cost of meeting state resource requirements and student performance expectations. However, within Nevada politics the practical downside of using 'adequate' as the definition for funding our schools is that legislators can define adequate as meeting whatever the standards that are set by the State. If those standards have a low bar then 'adequacy' will more than likely be set at a low denominator. As a result, Nevada will continue its national ranking at or near the bottom on public education when it comes to several measures of student performance i.e. math, science, and reading. Equally relevant to the discussion on funding is a real concern based on current economic conditions that in the 2021 Legislative Session a low bar will be set if there is no new revenue introduced to fund education.

SB543 is the long awaited game changer in developing a more modern and efficient funding formula for Nevada's public education system. It was preceded by several studies on Nevada's funding system and several Legislative Sessions where lawmakers discussed, debated, and acted on funding our schools. The sum total of that experience panning almost a decade demands that SB543 not be short changed when we discuss what funding levels our schools really need to raise student outcomes.

Accordingly, we would recommend that the Commission adopt the doctrine of optimal funding and that optimal funding be defined as meeting performance outcomes to improve Nevada's education delivery system. Performance outcomes for student achievement must be evidence based and policy centric. And progress toward achieving those outcomes must take place over a recommended timeline. The cost of meeting performance outcomes is beyond the scope or expertise of this committee. It simply is not known.

So the second recommendation that we would advise this committee to make is that performance outcomes, the metrics used to demonstrate progress in achievement, and ultimately the cost of resources to achieve those performance outcomes must be set by policy makers. The Department of Education should facilitate that process and upon conclusion present to the Commission what the cost would be to properly resource achieving performance outcomes. That would give more meaning and substance to the recommended funding levels the commission would make to achieve optimal funding for our education delivery system.

The public at large, as well as parents, taxpayers, Legislators, and business leaders will all want to know what additional funding will produce for improving student achievement outcomes. They will also want to have strong accountability systems tracking the progress in achieving improved outcomes. These are fair questions that demand straightforward answers. Optimal funding must be defined as meeting very specific performance outcomes with a clear explanation of how much additional funding is needed to achieve those performance outcomes.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vellardita". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial letter that loops around.

John Vellardita, Executive Director  
Clark County Education Association