

April 6, 2021

Nevada Assembly Committee on Education
C/O Chair Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod
401 S Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Public Comment for April 6, 2021: AB235: Enacts provisions governing financial education for pupils and their parents and guardians. (BDR 34-42)

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, and committee members. My name Dr. Brenda Pearson, and I am representing the Clark County Education Association.

CCEA is testifying in support on Assembly Bill 235 and thanks Assemblywoman Miller for bringing this bill forward. CCEA believes that a high quality K-12 system should include a clear path to post-secondary opportunities, and that path includes ensuring that every student receives the grant, scholarship and low interest loan opportunities available. AB235 helps to remove barriers to post-secondary and creates a data collection mechanism to understand how Nevada can improve upon access and equity in higher education through FAFSA completion.

Currently, Nevada has a 49% FAFSA completion rate, and it is important to understand what this statistic means to Nevadans. Of the anticipated 33,000 high school graduates this year, 16,830 will not complete the FAFSA. A 2020 report explains that only 55% of students enrolled in higher education without completing the FAFSA. Additionally, students of color are less likely to complete the FAFSA. Nationally, 34% of Hispanic students and 26% of African American students do not complete the FAFSA. FAFSA completion is an *access and equity issue* for students across Nevada.

Barriers exist to FAFSA completion; whether there is a lack of awareness, the complexity of the form, or parental mistrust. One strategy to increase completion of the FAFSA is to create a system that supports students in navigating its' completion, and Assembly Bill 235 does just that. Additionally, it creates a data collection mechanism to quantify the submission of applications and understand the populations who are accessing this benefit. With this data, Nevada can establish structures to resolve the access and equity issue for Nevada's high school graduates.

CCEA again is in support of Assembly Bill 235. Building a more diversified Nevada economy means that we work to remove barriers and align our K-12 system with post-secondary opportunities. We look forward to working with the Assemblywoman to bring this bill to fruition.

Respectfully,

Dr. Brenda Pearson
Clark County Education Association

CCEA

Clark County Education Association

the **union**
of teaching
professionals

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Good afternoon, Committee Chair Bilbray Axelrod, and committee members. My name Hawah Ahmad and I am a graduate of the Washoe County School District and a FAFSA recipient here representing the Clark County Education Association. The Clark County Education Association is the official bargaining partner to the Clark County School District, representing 18,000 licensed professionals.

CCEA is testifying in support on Assembly Bill 235 and believes that this bill will provide an important informational opportunity to teachers, students and parents on how to leverage existing federal funds via FAFSSFA to pursue and achieve success in higher education. My colleague will be going over the statistics for the percentages and number of students who utilize FAFSSFA, and the numbers frankly are not impressive. In the scheme of things, we are far behind many of our neighboring states in the rates of application to FAFSSFA, and though our existing K-20 educational delivery system provides some scholarships, FAFSSFA provides an opportunity for students to understand the cost of their education and how to calculate their cost of living.

Without FAFSSFA, I would not be speaking on behalf of CCEA. FAFSSFA gave me opportunities that I would not have had, and CCEA truly believes that this is a scenario where an additional activity at a parent night or after school program is more than worth the time spent. Every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their education, and cost should not be a prohibiting factor. It is our duty as the Association representing educators to make sure that our students leave K-12 with the tools they need to pursue their dreams, whether that be a dream to be a ballerina or an astrophysicist.

Thank you to Assemblywoman Miller for bringing this much needed opportunity forward in the form of a bill. We urge support of this bill and look forward to working together to trouble shoot how to provide opportunities for students who do not qualify for FAFSSFA in addition to this bill.

Respectfully,

Hawah S. Ahmad, J.D., CIPP/E
Lobbyist
Clark County Education Association