

# CCEA

Clark County Education Association

the **union**  
of teaching  
professionals

April 5, 2021

Nevada Senate Committee on Education

C/O Chair Senator Moises Denis

401 S Carson Street

Carson City, NV 89701

**Re: Public Comment for April 5, 2021: SB352: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34843**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members. My name is Marie Neisess, and I am the president of the Clark County Education Association. CCEA is the official bargaining partner for the Clark County School District and represents more than 18,000 licensed professionals. We engage in bipartisan advocacy for advancing public education in Nevada and Clark County.

I am speaking in support of SB352. This bill is important to me personally because while attending college part-time, I worked as a support staff employee in a variety of roles. I have worked for the Clark County School District for 29 years. I was honored to work alongside teachers who inspired me to become an educator. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. Along the way, I faced many challenges while attending school, working full-time, raising a family, but mostly preparing for the financial burden of student teaching. While my support staff pay wasn't significant, it was part of my family's household budget. I saved what I could to prepare for the 16 weeks without pay or benefits. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough, and I considered giving up. A few weeks before I was scheduled to student teach, I was in an automobile accident. The accident's settlement gave me the financial support I needed to take a leave of absence to teach. While that was an unfortunate accident, I was thankful I didn't have to drop out of school.

During my journey to become a teacher, I noticed very few educators of color, yet many of our support staff and paraprofessionals are people of color. We have an educator shortage, and one way to address the pipeline issue is to support our paraprofessionals who would like to become educators. Many times educators come to work in Clark County but do not stay until retirement age. Our paraprofessionals are

vested in CCSD and would more than likely stay till they retire. Paraprofessionals have a significant amount of classroom experience.

Throughout my teaching career, I have encouraged and mentored paraprofessionals to become educators, but like me, they face the financial burden that comes with student teaching. We must continue to find ways to invest in our paraprofessionals. Allowing paraprofessionals who are enrolled in a program to become a teacher by completing an accelerated program of student teaching will help with the teacher shortage in their specific area in which they are employed. I urge you to vote yes on SB352.

Respectfully,

Marie Neisess, President  
Clark County Education Association