

OFFICIAL BARGAINING PARTNER TO CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, REPRESENTING MORE THAN 18,000 LICENSED PROFESSIONALS.

May 5, 2021

Nevada Senate Committee on Education
C/O Chair Senator Denis
401 S Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Public Comment for May 5, 2021: AB235: Enacts provisions governing financial education for pupils and their parents and guardians. (BDR 34-42)

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Good afternoon Committee Chair Denis and Committee members,

My name is Marie Neisess, President of the Clark County Education Association.

CCEA is testifying in support of Assembly Bill 235 and thanks Assemblywoman Miller for bringing this bill forward. CCEA believes that a high-quality K-12 educational system should also lead to a clear path to post-secondary opportunities and includes ensuring that every student receives any grant, scholarship, or low-interest loan opportunities available to them. 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 have not filled out the FAFSA. A 2020 report revealed that only 55% of students enrolled in higher education completed 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.

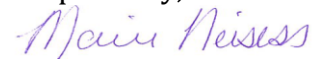
Barriers exist to FAFSA completion; whether there is a lack of awareness, the complexity of the form, or parental mistrust. One strategy to increase completion of the FAFSA is to create a system that supports students in navigating its completion, and CCEA believes that this bill will provide an important informational opportunity for teachers, students, and parents on how to leverage existing federal funds via FAFSA to pursue and achieve success in higher education. 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.

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 and ensure

that we fund those opportunities. This bill will help create a data collection mechanism to quantify the submission of applications and understand the populations who are accessing this benefit and those who are not. With this data, Nevada can strategically invest in structures to resolve the access and equity issue for Nevada's high school graduates. Of course, we still need a bipartisan effort to fully implement and fund SB543 to achieve this goal.

We urge support of this bill and look forward to working together to troubleshoot how to provide opportunities for students who do not qualify for FAFSA in addition to this bill.

Respectfully,



Marie Neisess, President
Clark County Education Association