

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING
JULY 13, 2020
9:00 A.M.**

Meeting Location

Due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission on School Funding met via videoconference. In accordance with Governor Sisolak's State of Emergency Directive 006, Section 1, no physical location was designated for this meeting. The meeting was livestreamed on the Nevada Department of Education's (NDE) website.

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Dusty Casey
Andrew J. Feuling
Jason A. Goudie
Guy Hobbs
Dr. David Jensen
Paul Johnson
Mark Mathers
Punam Mathur
Dr. R. Karlene McCormick-Lee
Jim McIntosh
Dr. Lisa Morris-Hibbler

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

In Las Vegas

Jessica Todtman, Chief Strategy Officer

In Carson City

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support Services
James Kirkpatrick, Administrative Services Officer III
Beau Bennett, Management Analyst IV
Megan Peterson, Management Analyst III

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT

David Gardner, Deputy Attorney General

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS PRESENT

Jeremy Aguero, Applied Analysis
Amanda Brown, APA Consulting
Justin Silverstein, APA Consulting

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Via Videoconference

1: CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 9:01 A.M. by Commission Chair R. Karlene McCormick-Lee. Quorum was established.

2: PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Jeff Zander submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula and recommendations of the Commission on School Funding. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Anthony Collazo submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Erin Blach submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Erik Bond submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Jessi Nadeau submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Marlea Martens submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Sam Erickson submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

John Vellardita, Clark County Education Association submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Educate Nevada Now submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent of Washoe County School District, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

3: APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Member Paul Johnson moved to approve the Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Commission on School Funding. Member Dave Jensen seconded. Motion passed.

Member Johnson moved to approve the Minutes of the June 12, 2020 Commission on School Funding. Member Punam Mathur seconded. Motion passed.

4: NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UPDATE

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent for Business and Support Services, provided an Update to the Commission regarding the progress made by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) on various tasks since the June 11 and 12, 2020 Commission meetings.

The Department has continued to work with school districts and charter schools regarding the budgetary comparison of the Nevada Plan and the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP), as well as confirming fiscal year (FY) 2020 funding that will be codified under the Hold Harmless provision.

The Department has also continued to work in partnership with the Department of Taxation, discussing the taxes that will flow through the State Education Fund, as well as the revision of budget templates used by school districts to submit their budgets to NDE.

The Department has worked to review options for support regarding the Commission's anticipated discussions regarding optimal funding.

NDE has continued to work with Jeremy Aguero from Applied Analysis regarding the PCFP Model and Blueprint. The Model has progressed significantly and is prepared for FY21 budget information to be entered and used to calculate the distribution of funds to districts and charter schools. FY22 and FY23 budgets will be included in NDE's Agency Request Budget for biennium FY22-23, due September 1, 2020.

The Department recently presented proposed budgetary reductions to the 31st Special Session (2020) of the Legislature. The recommended budget reductions for FY20, pertaining to categorical funding – the funds available for disbursement to districts and charter schools – were developed in collaboration with district superintendents and the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA). The FY20 reductions were related to funds that were going to remain unspent due to school building closures caused by COVID-19. Proposed reductions of FY21 funds were also developed in collaboration with districts and the SPCSA.

Final decisions regarding cuts to K-12 education are pending the conclusion of the 31st Special Session. As of July 13, no legislation had been introduced at the Legislature that would impact the work of the Commission on School Funding or the anticipated implementation of the PCFP for FY22.

5: PRESENTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SMALL SCHOOLS ADJUSTMENT AND SMALL DISTRICT EQUITY ADJUSTMENT INCLUDED IN THE PUPIL-CENTERED FUNDING PLAN AND THE ATTENDANCE AREA ADJUSTMENT INCLUDED IN THE NEVADA PLAN

Amanda Brown, APA Consulting, and Justin Silverstein, APA Consulting, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [comparison](#) between the Small School Adjustment and Small District Equity Adjustment.

Requesting clarification, Member Dusty Casey asked about the calculation used for the attendance area. Ms. Brown responded that the attendance area calculation was the same as the district size calculation, but used the individual attendance area rather than enrollment of the district. Under this model, funding would be allocated per attendance zone, but would flow to districts to then be disbursed from there.

Member Mark Mathers requested additional information regarding calculations and certain allocation discrepancies; Ms. Brown responded that differences in percentage were differences based on factors and allocations of size; these calculations, once made percentages, are then relative to the total impact they have within the larger system. Ms. Brown also noted that in a closed system with limited resources, differing allocations in one zone impacted allocations in another.

Member Johnson supported the attendance area model, including the disbursement to districts, as it addressed many of the struggles of rural schools, and added that a clear definition of attendance areas would need to be included. Member Jensen also supported the attendance area model, and noted that clarification would be needed for the sake of transparency to explain why or how funds would go to districts to fund services for rural schools within a plan that allocates funds by student. Member Andrew Feuling also supported the attendance area model, although he acknowledged that it was not ideal for a dense district such as Carson City, where he serves as the Director of Fiscal Services.

Chair McCormick-Lee requested clarification regarding previous recommendations of the Commission, and whether a recommendation on size adjustment would override the recommendation regarding the wage adjustment. Ms. Brown noted that this decision would override the previous recommendation regarding the district size adjustment, and the adjustment for regional cost differences is separate. Deputy Attorney General David Gardner confirmed that recommendations made today would override previous recommendations, but previous recommendations did not need to be officially rescinded.

Member Jensen moved to approve the APA recommendations regarding attendance area and size adjustment formula and removing the Necessary Small Schools adjustment. Member Casey seconded.

Member Mathers asked for further clarification regarding the Necessarily Small Schools adjustment and the language of Senate Bill (SB) 543. Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that SB 543 indicates that the Department of Education may draft regulations to identify how the adjustment factors will be established. Member Mathers asked if the Necessarily Small School adjustment was an administrative or statutory adjustment. Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that SB 543 would permit the Department to indicate that no adjustment was necessary.

Member Jensen amended his motion to include clarifying language regarding the Necessarily Small Schools adjustment. Member Casey maintained his second. Motion passed.

6: PRESENTATION ON UPDATES TO THE PUPIL-CENTERED FUNDING PLAN MODEL

Jeremy Aguero, Applied Analysis, provided an update to the Commission regarding changes made to the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan Model.

Mr. Aguero clarified that this presentation was not the Blueprint; it was a presentation of the Model as built to date. The Model includes three sections: inputs, calculations, and results. Charter schools were modeled as their own independent school districts for the sake of organization. The assumption control panel shows the data driving the variables necessary to run the model, followed by enrollment modules, Hold Harmless, and the model check, which checks the model for balance. Following that are the funds that will go to the State Education Fund and various adjustments, including an adjustment for distance learning, and the results of calculations based on weighted funding, etc.

Member Mathers asked if it was possible for the Governor to make an adjustment to certain districts under SB 543. Mr. Aguero noted that as a policy practice, it was possible, and the formula could make it work.

The Commission spent considerable time discussing the Hold Harmless provision and its possible variations, including how the Hold Harmless may require the redistribution of funds from other districts to honor their Hold Harmless numbers. Mr. Aguero also noted that it may take a significant amount of implementation time before the Hold Harmless is no longer necessary. Chair McCormick-Lee noted that Hold Harmless would be further discussed under the next agenda item.

[Convenience Break]

7: DISCUSSION ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SENATE BILL 543

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support Services, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding [Recommendations](#) for the [Implementation of SB 543](#).

Member Feuling moved to adopt the Infinite Campus model of identifying the At-Risk weighted category of pupils. Member Jim McIntosh asked whether the assumption is that every recommendation made under this item is for the implementation of the formula for the next biennium. The answer to Member McIntosh's question was affirmative. **Member Mathur seconded the motion.**

Member Lisa Morris-Hibbler indicated that she would be interested in the Commission making a statement on the record that they were moving forward with the requirements of SB 543 and making recommendations regarding its successful implementation, while being clear with the public that there is additional work to be done to prepare for implementation.

Member Jensen indicated that he would have difficulty supporting the Infinite Campus measure of At-Risk due to the fact that it lacked transparency as to how and why students are identified for the purpose of directing funding.

Chair McCormick-Lee shared that Infinite Campus had mentioned that they had 127 variables, but it seemed to her that the variables were clusters around concepts like attendance, academics, academic performance according to assessments, programs like free-or-reduced-price lunch (FRL), and grade point average. Member Feuling said that Member Jensen and the Chair had brought up an important consideration that the calculation cannot be proprietary to Infinite Campus if it also has to meet the goal of being easier to understand than the Nevada Plan. Member Feuling indicated his hope that Infinite Campus could return for an additional presentation to discuss transparency and to create understanding around the data being used, but reaffirmed that he believes it is

preferable to using eligibility for FRL as the definition of At-Risk. Member Johnson indicated that he is hesitant about the Infinite Campus model due to the concerns that had been raised, but would support exploring the model further.

Member Goudie stated that he had been very clear in his belief that eligibility for FRL was the wrong way to go primarily because most district and school staff do not have access to the information about which students meet the eligibility requirements. He stated that he believes the Infinite Campus is more robust model and takes into account a number of considerations that are data-driven. He added that he thinks there will be a challenge to implement the model without further explanation as to how it works. Member Goudie stated that he's unsure that they need to consider hundreds of variables but perhaps the Commission could determine the ten that they believe are most important to create transparency. Member Mathur stated that she felt much like Member Goudie does. She found the fact that Infinite Campus is used Statewide and is updated with real-time information on students was one of the most compelling aspects of the identifier. She noted that the Commission would need to work quickly to get clarity and specificity around the variables to support the Commission's confidence in the At-Risk definition.

Chair McCormick-Lee called for a vote on Member Feuling's motion to adopt the Infinite Campus definition of At-Risk, which had previously been seconded by Member Mathur. All Members supported the notion with the exception of Members Jensen, Johnson, and Casey, who opposed. Motion passed.

Member Jensen clarified that his opposing vote was related to the need to refine the measure and stated his belief that the Commission had adopted something without a lot of clarity. Member Casey echoed Member Jensen's comments.

In response to those comments, Chair McCormick-Lee asked if Member Feuling wanted to add to his original motion that the Commission would work with NDE and Infinite Campus to establish clarity the precise variables being used to identify At-Risk students. **Member Feuling adjusted his motion to reflect that the Commission would move forward with an Infinite Campus approach to At-Risk with further work necessary to provide clarity as to how the identification is determined in consultation with NDE. Member Mathur seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.** Chair McCormick-Lee indicated her interest in developing an alternative way to reference the At-Risk methodology used by Infinite Campus so as to be less vendor-centered.

The Commission reviewed and voted unanimously to make additional recommendations to the Governor and Legislature in accordance with Section 76.3 of SB 543. Such recommendations were officially submitted on July 15, 2020 and can be reviewed at the following links:

- [Transmittal Letter to Governor Sisolak](#)
- [Transmittal Letter to the Senate Majority Leader](#)
- [Transmittal Letter to the Speaker of the Assembly](#)
- [Recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature](#)

8: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that the Commission's next meeting would be August 14, 2020, and agenda topics would include the development of a plan for the implementation of the Funding Formula, a review of business rules and guidelines developed by NDE to be used by districts and charter schools, a review of budget templates, and an opportunity to engage in discussion regarding optimal funding. Additional items will also likely include a discussion regarding Hold Harmless, a presentation from WestEd regarding exemplars of monitoring and implementation, and a presentation from APA Consulting regarding the administrative reporting cap.

Member Mathur asked if Infinite Campus would return to contribute to further discuss the definition of the At-Risk weighted category of pupils.

It was also noted that the Commission would have future discussions regarding optimal funding.

9: PUBLIC COMMENT #2

Sylvia Lazos, the Nevada Immigrant Coalition, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Yvette Williams, Clark County Black Caucus, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

10: ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 P.M.

Appendix A: Statements Given During Public Comment

1. Jeff Zander submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula and recommendations of the Commission on School Funding.
2. Anthony Collazo submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula.
3. Erin Blach submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula.
4. Erik Bond submitted public comment regarding implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Formula.
5. Jessi Nadeau submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
6. Marlea Martens submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
7. Sam Erickson submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
8. John Vellardita, Clark County Education Association, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
9. Educate Nevada Now submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
10. Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
11. Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent of Washoe County School District, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
12. Sylvia Lazos, Nevada Immigrant Coalition, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.
13. Yvette Williams, Clark County Black Caucus, submitted public comment regarding the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.

Item A1, Jeff Zander

Madame Chair and Members of the Commission on School Funding;

Please accept this correspondence on behalf of the following county school districts and their respective superintendents: Elko, Eureka, Storey, Douglas, Pershing, Lander, Mineral, Lyon, Lincoln and Carson City. We are formally requesting that the Commission submit the following recommendation to the Legislative Committee on Education for Consideration:

This Commission hereby recommends that the statutory enactment period contained in Sections 74, 74.5, 76, 78 and 81 of Senate Bill 543 be delayed until at least the 2023-2025 biennium in order to properly vet the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan and ensure that the loss of revenues and educational budget shortfalls due to the Covid-19 crisis do not result in constitutionally inadequate funding for the students of Nevada as a result of hasty implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.

Senate Bill 543, Section 11(b) tasks this Commission with several duties including the requirement to, "[m]onitor the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan and make any recommendations to the Legislative Committee on Education that the Commission determines would, within the limits of appropriated funding, improve the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan or correct any deficiencies or the Department or any school district or public school in carrying out the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan." Thus, it is within the Commission's purview as provided in statute to make recommendations that would improve the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. At this time, a delay of the implementation of Senate Bill 543 is necessary in order to improve implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.

The purpose of and legislative intent behind Senate Bill 543 was to provide a transparent and more up-to-date finance distribution plan however, the current funding models that have been discussed and distributed throughout this process do not provide for transparency and are largely incomprehensible to the general public and to the superintendents that are tasked with identifying variances in regard to individual district outcomes and assisting in implementation. The lack of clarity is disconcerting. The formulas and assumptions that have been presented to this Commission require more scrutiny, vetting, and discussion than was anticipated by the Legislature when they passed SB 543.

Moreover, the Hold Harmless provision contained in Senate Bill 543, which is critical to the above-mentioned school districts, has largely been left unexplained and uncertain. There is no guarantee that the Hold Harmless provision will be implemented as it will require an approximate additional appropriation that is approaching \$90,000,000. Given the current economic environment and the impending financial crisis due to Covid-19, it is unimaginable how the Hold Harmless provision can be adequately funded to avoid severe unexpected revenue losses to the undersigned school districts.

Additionally, the Education Stabilization Account ("ESA") is a fundamental component that has not been vetted nor fully realized as part of this Commission's deliberation throughout the past several months. The purpose of the ESA is to provide a fiscal resource to subsidize the State Education Fund if additional amounts are necessary to meet the required funding levels. At this time, it is unclear how the ESA will be adequately funded prior to the implementation of SB 543, and in fact this Commission most recently recommended that the ESA not be funded. Indeed, it is imprudent to proceed with no ESA funding as the districts will have no protection in the event of continued economic downturns.

Finally, due to the current economic climate and the loss in revenue which will be experienced by every school district as a result of Covid-19, the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan cannot move forward as it was initially intended. The numbers that school districts reported to the Department of Education to assist in developing the funding models are no longer relevant. School districts have been instructed to be prepared for significant budget cuts, are attempting to adjust to distance learning, and are working to provide quality education in the midst of a global pandemic. Implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan would be detrimental at this time.

It is imperative for the success of the students of Nevada that the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan be fully vetted, reliable, and provide for proper distribution prior to implementation. These things cannot be provided on the

current statutory timeline, and thus delaying the implementation is the only correct action for this Commission to take until these other issues have been properly deliberated upon and determined by this Commission. This Commission can no longer ignore the serious nature of the current economic climate nor can it ignore the realities that school districts are facing as a result of such significant losses to its revenue.

It is the statutory duty of this Commission to determine what would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public education in this State and to provide recommendations to the Legislature. It is within this Commission's statutory authority to make a recommendation to delay implementation until the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan can be fully vetted and ensure that all of Nevada's students are successful.

As always, we appreciate the time and attention of this Commission.

Sincerely,

Jeff Zander
Ryan D. Russell, Esq.

Item A2, Anthony Collazo

To Nevada Commission on School Funding:

My name is Anthony Collazo and I am writing to you as a student representative of West Wendover High School. For those who don't know me, I am 15 years old, and I am on route to creating a nonprofit organization that focuses on planting trees in all of West Wendover to better the lives of future generations. I have raised over \$18,000 to plant trees, and am a very active member in the community. I am writing this letter in hopes that my voice will be heard. It has been said that our school's funding is going to be frozen in the new education plan. As a result, vacant teaching positions will not be filled, there will be a loss of basic learning essentials for students, the cancellation of educational field trips, and an unprecedented decrease in quality education at West Wendover High School. As a student of this school and a member of our community I know this is not the best decision for our town's future. Freezing the funds that this school depends on will inevitably lead to an unmotivated student body, being led by very underpaid teachers that cannot even provide their students with the materials needed to teach the curriculum. Our students will notice the decrease of a quality education within our school and begin to question why the people in charge weren't able to fight harder to provide us with the quality education we all deserve. In this case, you are those in charge. To say these times are challenging would be an understatement, but if the education of our students and their futures aren't listed as the number one priority then what is? The students of West Wendover High School will look to the adults on the commission, and the Nevada Department of Education to lead us into the 2020-2021 school year and beyond. We want to be able to confidently say that Superintendents, the Board and all who are in charge were able to get us through these traumatic times while giving us adequate access to learning necessities. According to the "Bureau of the Census' American Community Survey," the attainment of education in rural communities has steadily increased over the years. The percentage of post graduates in rural areas being able to obtain at least a bachelors has gone from 5% to 20%. In 2018 the percentage of rural adults that did not graduate was 13%, a dramatic decrease from the prior percentage of 60% in 1960. The point is rural communities have come a long way improving education and graduation rates. We must not let this plan set us back years of growth.

Please understand that we are the future. The students of West Wendover High School are important and deserve to be given a quality education. Without our success a great future cannot exist. Believe in us by giving us what we need to thrive in school, instead of holding it from us and we will not disappoint you. Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to your response.

- Anthony Collazo
West Wendover High School

Item A3, Erin Blach

My name is Erin Blach, I am a tenth grader at Elko High School. Education in a rural school can be very difficult. This is due to the lack of funding in these rural schools, like my own Elko High School. With rural schools already at such a disadvantage, freezing our funding can do tremendous damage to our school and the students' futures. We already have very few resources at the school compared to other schools in the state. We have overcrowded and dwindling numbers of elective courses. We don't have the ability to take as many diverse and specialized advanced courses, like AP, as compared to other schools in the state. We don't have the ability to specialize or become magnet schools. We simply already don't have access to the same quality of education that urban students do. It is unconscionable that we would freeze rural school funding, when instead we should be increasing their funding to provide equity across the state.

I have already found this disadvantage hard. I want to go into film production and hopefully become a film director, yet I can't do anything to prepare myself due to the lack of electives at my school. This makes it considerably harder to get into a good post-secondary school. The closest elective I can take at my school that pertains to a film class are art classes, which would most likely be one of the first to go if budgets were impacted; making it even harder for me and any other student wanting to go into an art degree. For AP classes, we don't have as many options as many students I know from schools in Reno and Las Vegas. Most students can get a lot of basics out of the way for college with AP classes, but at rural schools like Elko high school, we have a limited number of them. This makes it harder for students, and puts them in debt later in life if they do decide to go to college.

We shouldn't be considering freezing budgets for rural schools because we already are at such a disadvantage for schooling. This affects our entire lives because of less opportunity after high school. We should be increasing funding for rural schools not taking funding away. We need to give students like myself a better chance at following our dreams, getting a good education, and a good job.

Sincerely,
Erin Blach
Elko High School, 10th grade

Item A4, Erik Bond

Dear Commission on School Funding,

“And so, does the destination matter? Or is it the path we take? I declare that no accomplishment has substance nearly as great as the road used to achieve it. We are not creatures of destinations. It is the journey that shapes us. Our callused feet, our backs strong from carrying the weight of our travels, our eyes open with the fresh delight of experiences lived.” From Brandon Sanderson’s *The Way of Kings*. It is important that we ensure that all students have the same opportunities as each other so that they each have the ability to undertake the journey that is life without any impediments. That is the fundamental issue at hand here, ensuring that funding is appropriately distributed to each school so that each student is presented with the same opportunities to experience life. It is because of this fundamental issue that funding cuts must not fall upon rural schools such as mine, Elko High School, for a few key reasons: funding cuts would restrict opportunities for rural school students for extracurricular activities when compared with their urban counterparts, funding cuts would restrict rural school’s abilities to fund eye-opening courses that we would not have otherwise.

The first issue with funding cuts to rural schools is that it would restrict access to extracurricular activities. When it comes to rural communities, extracurricular activities are much more expensive for students than urban school students. This is due to the distance between rural schools (where competitions are more likely to be held) and urban schools. For example, take the Elko High school Speech & Debate Team, all but one of the normal league tournaments are held in Reno or neighboring cities, and only one tournament is held in either Elko or Spring Creek. This means that Elko and Spring Creek members have to travel to Reno every time that there is a tournament, which can be upwards of 6 times a year counting districts. This translates to increased travel costs, food costs, and lodging costs when compared to urban Reno teams, where they stay the night at their own house, travel a lot less and can have food from home easily. Budget cuts for urban schools would mean that students would have to shoulder a lot more of already expensive costs. This would restrict more students from being able to participate in extracurriculars due to the increased price that would have been lower with more funding. This closes doors to more students for no fault of their own, they were just unlucky to live in rural areas when people they never knew restricted their opportunities in life.

Another similar issue is that funding cuts would restrict a school’s ability to effectively invest in new, beneficial courses that otherwise wouldn’t have existed. More specialized or different courses allow students to choose which courses would better help them develop a unique portfolio of educational experience that would both help them succeed in college and in their future jobs. They would also serve as interesting points in one’s life where they begin to walk down a path that they never had even considered before. For example, this next year Elko High School is having Biotechnology and Biotechnology honors added as potential new options for the school’s science curriculum. This course could inspire students to explore a job in a field of work that they never would have considered without biotechnology, therefore giving students more of an opportunity to choose the path that they want to walk in life, rather than restricting their path to the basics.

Rural schools only tend to have one high school, and if that school gets funding cut, the entire community is harmed. It is because those communities have only one option that their one high school’s ability to invest in educational programs and extracurricular activities is incredibly important. There is no other option for students who would like different educational experience, so the budget of these schools should be protected to ensure that the students of those communities have as many doors open for them as possible, doing otherwise would be an extreme disservice to the entirety of those communities. The restrictions that these funding cuts would impose upon these rural schools would hurt every single one of those hundreds of students who attend these schools, simply because they live in a rural community as opposed to an urban one through no fault of their own.

Sincerely,
Erik Bond, Student
Elko High School

Item A5, Jessi Nadeau

Dear NV DOE,

My name is Jessi Nadeau; I am the life science teacher at West Wendover High School. I have been working in the West Wendover Schools for five years and my husband and I have lived in West Wendover for six years. My husband is the Golf Professional at Toana Vista, he is the boy's golf coach and referees basketball. Along with being a teacher, I am a class student advisor and an after school tutor for GEAR UP and Learning Labs. Needless to say, we are both extremely invested in our community and the students that live here. I am writing this letter with concern of the upcoming budget freezes of public schools, especially those that serve rural communities such as West Wendover.

The year of 2020 is not only a new decade, but a new way of life for most Americans. Because of trying economic times, public schools always seem to be the first institute that loses funding. Public schools are not easy, they cost a lot of money and there is no tangible output of product to show for that money. However, it is time to start thinking long-term about what does come out of public schools. At a time when producing workers with high-level technical and analytical skills is increasingly important to a state's prosperity, producing a plan that redistributes resources instead of investing into students could cause lasting harm or at the very least leave us stagnant.

As common sense suggests, and academic research confirms, money matters for educational outcomes. For instance, poor children who attend better-funded schools are more likely to complete high school and have higher earnings and lower poverty rates in adulthood [1].

By making existing ECSD schools stronger, quality teachers will be likely to stay and invest in these rural communities.

At a time when the nation is trying to produce workers with the skills to master new technologies and adapt to the complexities of a global economy, large cuts in funding for basic education undermine a crucial building block for future prosperity not only in the state of Nevada, but across the country [1]. In the long term, budget cuts of rural public schools may cost the state of Nevada, more specifically West Wendover, much more in diminished economic growth.

Sincerely,
Jessi Nadeau
Life Sciences Teacher
West Wendover High School

Item A6, Marlea Martens

Governor Sisolak,

My name is Marlea Martens and I will be a Junior in the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. I go to Elko High School and am heavily involved in the offered extracurricular/academic activities there. It saddens me to hear that funding for rural kids' education will be taken and distributed to urban high schools. Rural kids already have a big enough disadvantage to start with.

When visiting urban schools outside of Elko, I often feel jealous of their learning environments and opportunities offered to them. The first time I went to a Reno High School, I was amazed. My jaw was on the floor because their bathrooms had working ventilation and stalls that actually locked. Such a simple thing made me envious. Urban kids get hundreds of choices in terms of opportunities, clubs, activities, classes, and teachers. They have the privilege to be able to pick and choose, while we have only a handful of opportunities offered to us. We have to be happy with what we've got, because we don't have any other choice.

I believe that students living in rural areas are already disadvantaged enough to begin with. It would do rural students a great disservice to defund our learning environments when we're already in dire need of funding in the first place.

Thanks,

Marlea Martens

Item A7, Sam Erickson

Dear School Funding Committee,

My name is Sam Erickson, I am an 11th grader at Elko High School. When I heard that there was a possibility that our school district would be losing even more money so that the urban schools would be able to do more I was furious, and I still am. As a rural community, we are already at a disadvantage when it comes to education due to the fact that we are missing infrastructure that is present in urban areas such as quality internet, up to date buildings, and functioning facilities. During my entire education career, I have always heard that teachers are struggling to get supplies in the classroom from curriculum to even pencils and paper because there just isn't a budget for it. Now I hear that we will be subjugated to more funding erosion that has the potential to remove even more from our education further proving we're seen as second class students.

As it was, we maybe got to perform two or three sub-par labs a year in science because there wasn't money to allow us to participate in labs that would allow us to actually learn the scientific process because we were doing prepackaged or virtual labs that were closer to baking recipes or video documentary than a scientific lab experiment. In math, we get taught the bare minimum of the years' standards because there is not enough money to fund more math teachers that would allow more specialized and enjoyable classes to be held at Elko High School. How can rural students hope to compete in fields when they are at a blatant disadvantage in comparison to urban areas? My English classes have been teaching the same lessons with the same novels that have sat in storage for decades and the students can feel, see, and smell their age. Most of our novels are either bound by tape, missing pages, stained beyond belief or are simplicity nonexistent. History textbooks have been the same close to a decade or more and are frankly far too outdated for today's standards and contribute to the whitewashed history recited by my peers. We are being taught ignorance in history due to a lack of current materials let alone an absence of activities or demonstration that could further our understanding of the world, our history, and others if resources were made available to rural schools rather than taking them away. I think every year we've had to ration paper products such as printed tests or notes because there was never enough of a budget to allow for them across all of my classes and schools.

Urban schools are afforded many opportunities that rural schools are not. They have the funding and capacity to have extensive extracurricular and co-curricular programs that we simply cannot fund. They have magnet schools that launch them into great post-secondary schools and opportunities. Meanwhile, our elective class opportunities fade into nothing but outdated courses that teach foods and drawing. While those classes continue to be valuable to some students, what about the students who wish to specialize in STEM electives? We have little to nothing. Instead, the standard classes students use to fill their elective credits are cooking and pottery classes.

Those were just our current plights in just my core classes, and now you want to further our ineptitude by reducing funds? How much will be removed to fund urban schools that already have so much more opportunity than us? Rather than pit us against one another, why don't you support us all? Will our extracurriculars be removed completely? Will my children be forced to experience the same education I have years from now as rural communities continue to be suppressed and put to the side of the attention of our state? At what point do we become an area of focus rather than being pushed to the side and told to make due? I'm begging you to look at the state of mine and my fellow students' education and decide that we matter just as much as the urban students.

Sincerely,

Sam Erickson
Elko High School
11th Grade

Item A8, John Vellardita, Clark County Education Association

SB 543 Commission Members:

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 neediest in terms of students and has 70% of Nevada's public education students. Given the economic collapse our State is experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is tremendous pressure 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 you prepare to make your recommendations the Governor and Nevada Legislature are in Special Session making critical decisions regarding Nevada's k-12 funding. A number of critical programs are being proposed to be cut. We think today, more than ever, the Commission should proceed with its recommendations that clearly spell out the funding needs our schools need. The Clark County Education Association (CCEA) would like to once again propose for your consideration four (4) recommendations for the Commission to consider.

1. Make funding recommendations that reach adequate levels so that legislators know exactly how much funding our public school system really needs. We are asking that a recommendation propose full adequate funding levels now. In other words, what would the cost be **today** if our system was funded to adequate levels for the basic per pupil support and the four weights? The Pupil Centered Funding Plan is supposed to address the 'needs' of students.
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, then 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 neediest 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 as CCSD has been forced to do year after year.
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 is facing. 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 because in the final analysis a good education system is critical to rebuilding our economy.

Thank you,

John Vellardita, Executive Director
Clark County Education Association

Item A9, Educate Nevada Now

Dear Chairwoman McCormick-Lee and members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Educate Nevada Now. We appreciate the hard work of the Commission and its willingness to consider our input.

ENN has previously identified several issues that are critical for the Commission and legislature to consider to successfully transition to the PCFP, including examining the at-risk designation, developing a Hold Harmless that does not set students back, and most importantly, identifying targets for adequate funding to be achieved over time. We believed that with careful consideration and serious future commitments, this formula could be successful.

However, given recent developments at the legislative special session, we have grave concerns about the State's ability to responsibly transition to the new formula. Specifically, the proposed elimination of the SB 178 program funding will further deteriorate the already abysmal effective weights under the PCPF. Under these cuts, the average weighted funding levels for at-risk students and English learners will fall below \$200 per pupil. To give context, APA's recommended "starting" point under the Successful School model contemplated weights of \$1,859 per pupil for at-risk and \$3,099 per pupil for English learners.

We had held out hope that with additional investments, the transition to weighted funding could be done in a way that would not harm Zoom or Victory students and would positively impact the vast majority of EL and at-risk students not in those programs. With the proposed reduction in funds designed to support weights, we now have doubts this will be possible. Though section 78 of SB 543 allows for some district flexibility in targeting additional funds to high need schools during the first biennium, this simply will not be enough given the step backwards in funding proposed by the Legislature.

In total, the Legislature is proposing more than \$170 million in cuts to public education. Projections for the coming biennium could lead to even more cuts. Without a serious commitment to additional revenue for the state, our already struggling K-12 system stands to be devastated.

Though these recent developments are out of this Commission's control, the Commission has a duty to inform the Legislature that transitioning to this formula will have destructive effects on student outcomes. ENN has long maintained this formula does not work without additional investments, so it especially will not work with funding reductions. We urge the Commission disclose, with candor, the difficulties inherent in transitioning to the PCFP at this time.

Sincerely,
Amanda Morgan, Executive Director
Educate Nevada Now

Item A10, Nevada State Education Association

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years. As today's Funding Commission gets underway, legislators in Carson City are beginning Day 5 of the 2020 Special Session; continuing their deliberations on a proposal that includes \$156 million in cuts to K-12 education funding. While this budget-balancing plan preserves per-pupil, base K-12 education funding and Zoom and Victory Schools—both NSEA priorities—it includes cuts of \$18 million to class-size reduction, \$31 million to Read by Grade 3, and \$70 million to SB178 weighted funding for English learners and at-risk students.

Even though the public has been physically excluded from the legislative building due to concerns around COVID-19, NSEA felt there was too much at stake to just stay home. That is why on the Session's opening day, hundreds of educators turned out from across the state to Carson City and lined the street from the legislature to the capitol with the clear call to "Fund Healthy Schools". As the issue of safe school reopening gathers more attention, NSEA has been consistent that districts require the resources necessary to implement the state school reopening guidelines. Educators chanted, "Be Brave, Be Bold. New Revenue's the Way to Go!" We flooded legislator inboxes with thousands of emails calling on new revenue and have phoned in public comment pointing out the legislature could backfill nearly all education cuts with the elimination of mining tax deductions alone.

The severity of the situation with the state budget underscores how completely irresponsible it would be to implement the radical shift of the school funding plan during these turbulent times. The main charge of the Funding Commission is to model the new funding plan, running it alongside the Nevada Plan last fiscal year and to make recommendations based on these numbers. However, data from last fiscal year likely will need to be discarded, as Nevada's economy hit a wall toward the end of the third quarter. We have been aghast as the Funding Commission has continued as if literally nothing has changed amidst a global pandemic! Meeting after meeting, the numbers in the formula vary and fluctuate. Now we are looking at massive budget cuts in the current fiscal year and great economic uncertainty moving forward.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, you heard the call from the community not to water down the successful Zoom and Victory School model. We were heartened to find last week in Governor Sisolak's budget proposal that he agreed. While most other categorical funding was proposed for cuts, Zoom and Victory dollars were preserved. While legislators are concerned about the cuts to student weights and Read By 3, preservation of Zoom and Victory School funding has been universally embraced. In the toughest times we find out what we truly value – and it is not moving to a risky, new funding plan.

While the new funding plan was unworkable before with no new revenue, it is even more unworkable facing decreasing revenue and difficult budget cuts, including wiping out student weights. SB543 will not safely reopen schools. SB543 will not bring greater transparency. SB543 will not bring greater education equity. And SB543 is not truly centered on the student, 90% of whom attend our neighborhood public schools. NSEA invites you to table the obsolete agenda in front of you, so you can join with us to petition the legislature to stop cuts to public education. Thank you.

Item A11, Dr. Kristen McNeill

Madame Chair and the members of the Commission on School Funding,

As superintendent of the Washoe County School District, I want to continue to express our frustration and opposition to the current version of the Pupil Centered Funding Plan Model. At less than 24 hours before the meeting is set to begin, no materials have yet been posted on agenda item 6 or 7, however, past materials have demonstrated a significant negative impact to per pupil funding for the Washoe County School District and our 64,000 students.

We reaffirm our offer to provide alternatives to the Nevada Cost of Education Index as the cost adjustment factor that better reflects cost differentials across districts, and we ask that you consider either setting that factor at 1.0 until we are better equipped or that you recommend removal of that factor in future proposed legislation.

Thank you,

Dr. Kristen McNeill
Superintendent
Washoe County School District

Item A12, Sylvia Lazos

July 13, 2020

Dear Chair and Commission Members:

Foremost thank you for your service.

The most important comment today was by Commissioner Paul Johnson, who noted that the Commission should be looking at the revenue part of the funding formula. After the budget cuts that are being contemplated by the Special Session of the Legislature, the revenues to finance an equitable and sufficient funding formula will be meager.

After the Education budget cuts are approved this special session, there will be no revenue streams for equity weights, or equity adjustments for rural counties. Zoom and Victory escaped categorical budget cuts for the simple reason that these programs are effective in addressing structural poverty and persistently underperforming by schools. Our position is that structural poverty/structural racism on Indian reservations, previously racially segregated schools and isolated ethnic immigrant enclaves, should be addressed with targeted investments from the state directly to those schools. The “per pupil” funding formula is insufficient to help these children in these chronically disadvantaged areas that exist because of a legacy of structural racism. So we continue to plead for grandfathering of zoom and victory, with transition funding that deals with structural poverty/racism.

Without a serious look at revenues, the formula, in practice, will seem unworkable. We urge you to consider how to raise revenues for a formula that approximates adequacy funding, as your work goes forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia R Lazos
Education Committee
Nevada Immigrant Coalition

Item A13, Yvette Williams

Dear Madam Chair and Committee Members,

The CCBC is in support of moving forward with the planned expansion of the New Nevada Education Funding Plan, where funds follow the student. SB178 was Nevada's first step to creating an equitable funding formula for students with unique needs. Categorical funding leaves too many students out that qualify for the program. As we have found with SB178 funds, where dollars follow the student, resources are targeted to help students achieve.

During this pandemic it is more important than ever to ensure each student gets the best opportunity to succeed and provide some kind of stability. Our most vulnerable students have been impacted the most by COVID19 and we know that categorical funding cannot provide the equitable distribution of funds, our students require.

It is important to the future of all students that their needs are addressed in Nevada's new weighted funding formula and includes the unique learning needs of our most vulnerable students. Currently, NRS provides for the EQUITABLE needs of students who are the least proficient in Nevada. The existing New Nevada Education Funding Plan adopted in 2017 addresses this student group. This Plan was put in place to adhere to the U.S. DOE ESSA guidelines, mandating that a priority be given to student subgroups demonstrated to be least proficient.

The Nevada legislature has established that metric as the lowest 25%. It is unconscionable to exclude this student group from Nevada's weighted formula or any recommendation from this Commission. Data shows over the past three years that a funding formula where dollars follow the student is the most effective way to deliver EQUITABLE funding. These students are ALREADY part of the New Nevada Education Funding Plan and any attempt to remove them from any future funding plan is an education INJUSTICE.

With that said, we are in support of moving forward with the New Nevada Education Funding Plan and respectfully ask that you protect these students throughout our State and include them in your recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yvette Williams
Caucus Chair
Clark County Black Caucus