

Thank you Madame Chair Harris & Senate Committee Members.

My name is Dr. Kimberly Regan, for the record. I am the Executive Director for Sierra Nevada Academy Charter School (or SNACS as you may have heard us referred to as), SNACS Preschool, the President of the Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children, and a mom to children enrolled at SNACS. Today I am here to speak on behalf of Sierra Nevada Academy Charter School. We are a Washoe County School District (WCSD) sponsored charter school and the first K-8 charter school in Nevada. I served on the founding committee and have served the school since. In fact, I am the longest running charter administrator in the state with 16+ years and running. SNACS is one of Nevada's 4-star schools serving nearly 300 students, with a 76% at-risk population by state definition. We are located in the North Valleys of Reno and like many charter schools, have unique facilities. We are located in the back end of a strip mall on Stead and Lear Blvd. We have a bar and a gas station on one side of our school gates, a car wash to the front left of our gates, and low-income apartments on the other side of our gates. Our location results in heavy traffic surrounding our school.

Charter schools in Nevada have come a long way since we first opened our doors in 1999. However, we still have work to complete in terms of ensuring school safety for all of our students, their families, and our staff members.

I would like testify for you a few brief but compelling stories to pass AB 321, providing for school police to have jurisdiction within all buildings, facilities, and property in which a charter school is located. Our school board has invested \$100,000 over the past few years in fencing and gates, surveillance cameras, and closed-circuit radios to secure the facilities and ensure school safety. We need help with law enforcement support and communication when it comes to issues that directly affect the school, whether it be by a specific instance or merely as a function of location.

The WCSD-sponsored charter school administrators participate in quarterly technical support meetings where we meet with the Charter School Liaison and any relevant department heads. It has become a ritual to hold a yearly meeting to request police services and propose options for acquiring those services with the WCSD Charter School Liaison and the Presiding Chief of Police. In the past, we have been told that we (charter admin and governing boards) would need to hire, individually or as a consortium of schools, a school police officer and purchase a police car in order to access services. Given the unique facilities in which charter schools are located, facility-related expenses, lack of access to public school bonds, and other dedicated special program funding charter schools already serve students at a deficit when compared to traditional public schools within school districts. We have proposed to school police an "on-call" charge where we would incur a fee per service so we could access police services when it a school

administrator determines it is necessary for police intervention and support. This is especially important when it is an absolute safety threat. We have been denied this request year after year. During our 2014-2015 annual meeting with WCSD School Police, Chief Trevino said the conversation has not changed from their end and that it would take “an act of legislature” for them to consider providing service to charter schools.

So I am hopeful to be here today and provide testimony and to plea for this amendment to be approved.

During the evolution of charter schools in Nevada, there has been, on rare occasion less than a handful of situations where we have had support from WCSD School Police.

One of the scariest moments as a school administrator occurred two years ago during dismissal. Part of our initial zoning required a plan for dismissal to ensure students are dismissed in a safe and orderly manner and to ensure traffic does not back up onto Lear Blvd. We established a procedure where “walkers” are dismissed first and then students being picked up are called out to the pickup line as their families arrive. This process involves a drivers picking up student circle through our fenced property. We call students out by walkie-talkie and load them into cars as they drive into the pickup zone.

We were about to dismiss students when a parent came in to report a fighting incident within 10 feet of our circle entrance gate. I went out to see what was happening when I hear someone shouting multiple times “What? You have a gun? Go ahead, shoot me”. I called for an immediate lockdown and called 911. Students were safe within their classrooms. However, families were still arriving. Dads were going to the fight and posturing to protect their children and the school. Family members were in their cars were stuck within our fences. We closed the gates and started requesting families come into the office for shelter. Some came and some refused. We could hear continued shouting, physical altercations, and car damage being done. Parents were discussing how they were prepared to intervene. I called 911 three times and RPD was on another call and could not respond. After 20 minutes, I called pleading for WCSD police assistance. Chief Mieras was in the area at another school and personally responded with multiple school police officers. I cannot explain the relief I felt when I saw the Chief himself and knew the situation was under control. RPD did arrive and were not going to arrest the non-school related folks involved in the physical fight. The Chief had them arrested and taken into custody.

We rarely have elevated incidents on campus and they are generally controlled by administration and require police follow-up. However, our threats are related to people outside the school community engaging in behavior that is dangerously close in proximity to the school. When incidents occur, they can escalate quickly and be extremely serious. We often find out about incidents in the area by happenstance: parents calling, social media, observing emergency vehicles in the area, hearing sirens or the helicopter circling. We have had incidents where

parents are calling our office line and asking if we are on lockdown because the school, that is less than a mile away, is on lockdown. As a result, we call RPD dispatch to determine the level of threat in order to follow our safety protocols and call for lockdown and/or evacuate the building. Often, RPD Dispatch cannot provide us with information to make an informed decision.

For whatever reason, we have had an increase of incidents in the Stead area over the past year. During non-school hours, we have had an increase in gang-related activity and violence. In fact, RPD reviewed our surveillance cameras in an attempt to collect video on two suspects that were involved in a shot-gun armed robbery at the neighboring gas station at 10pm on a Thursday night (located about 100 ft. from our school doors). Additionally, we have 9mm bullet holes on our back playground where individuals have used our school playground as target shooting. We have requested school police assistance in establishing an increased safety plan for our school playground with no avail.

Finally, we have had two incidents recently occur within 10 days of each other. First, our Education Director, happened to be at the gas station getting coffee when he walked in the middle of a police pursuit of robbery suspects. The chase began at the gas station (which is one side of our school gates) and ended at the apartments (which is the other side of our gates). It resulted in a stand-off between Reno police and the suspects where guns were drawn. We immediately went into lockdown and moved students on the incident side to neighboring classrooms so they would not be in the line of fire should any shooting begin as we have full length glass windows. While the incident ended peacefully (being no shots fired), one of the suspects were arrested while the other was reportedly "hunkered down in the neighborhood." Students remained in lockdown while 15+ police cars were outside our school gates and helicopters hovered looking for the suspect. RPD informed school administrators we could remove the lockdown after the initial suspect was arrested. Yet there were multiple cars and the helicopter present. I called school police for assistance and they were not able to send anyone or provide information as it was a liability. Instead, I was referred to contact the School Safety Person's cell phone (where I was sent to voicemail). I called WCSD Charter School Liaison, Stacey Cooper, who kept me on her cell phone as she walked to the school police office and facilitated a conversation to assist with the lockdown procedures (regarding when to lift the lockdown). She then walked to the communications office where she had them assist me in drafting a message to our families to inform them of the incident.

We appreciate her advocacy and support and only wish it were not so difficult to get help to ensure school safety. Of course, she is being reassigned within the school district so we will not have access to her direct support in the future. We have endured seven changes in Superintendents and seven Liaison changes. The changes often result in charter schools re-educating new leaders about our unique schools and stalls the process toward progress.

The final incident I will describe was within 10 days of the incident I just described. Most of the school was on a field trip to see a play performance at the Nugget. Several students, staff, and our entire preschool were present. This happens to be the date where there was a shooting outside of High Desert Montessori School on Silverada Blvd. I cannot directly represent them, but I can portray that Principal Tammie Stockton reported her Administrative Support Staff member was outside when she noticed bizarre behavior between several suspect directly across from her school entrance and parking lot (30 feet or so). She was calling 911 to report the suspicious behavior when she heard the shots. The school was on lockdown and the suspects fled. Principal Stockton reportedly called WCSD School Police for information and support, which she was denied.

Consequently, the suspects drove to Stead, and pulled into our preschool driveway (between the gas station and the car wash) – go figure! Reno Police Officers apprehended them through surrounding the car pointing shotguns at the suspects to exit the vehicle. Several of my teachers were normally conducting class when one lead teacher happened to look out the window witness the shotguns drawn. She called an immediate lockdown moving children to the back of the building and away from the possible lines of fire. The administrator in charged called RPD Dispatch and requested support via information with no avail.

While we are grateful police are addressing issues when they arise, we are concerned with the challenges regarding communication and assistance to ensure the school community is safe and orderly. When we call a lockdown and don't have information as to what is occurring we are limited in our ability to make informed decisions. We have the right to information so we can make decisions to ensure our school community is safe at all times. Choosing to be a charter school should not overshadow that right.

Two weeks following the incident, Principal Tammie Stockton and I met with WCSD Stacey Cooper, RPD Lieutenant Robert Larsen, and WCSD Chief Trevino to debrief and discuss options to increase communication and school safety. Lieutenant Larsen recognized several challenges related to communication and acknowledged RPD doesn't even know where charter schools are located. He has since pursued completing a map of the local charter schools and their respective grade levels. He has also been working on a safety protocol for charter schools to gain access to emergency procedures. Chief Trevino reported that he wanted to work with charter schools but there were liability issues since it is not written in legislation. He committed to ensuring any WCSD charter school administrator who calls in with an emergency be put in direct contact with an officer who would remain on the phone line and provide communication. They would provide support as a link between the school and RPD Dispatch so charter school administrators would at least be provided with information regarding a situation when it is occurring to make informed decisions. These are steps in the right direction. However, lack of police assistance or response when it involves the direct safety of an individual person or entire school community is unacceptable.

We need to work together as an entire community to ensure all of Nevada students, their families, and our educators are safe when they are at school. These issues continue to present a threat to the school community during an incident, but fear and lack of police presence can inhibit instruction and student learning and diminish a school culture and climate of achievement. This is 2015 and we should not be victims of circumstance. These situations can be prevented or diminished through cooperative efforts and communication, which are paid for by the public.

As I mentioned, SNACS has invested over \$100k in school safety initiatives. I have personally taken Krav Maga Self-Defense classes, keep pepper spray and a stick-like baton in my office as safety precautions. I have considered getting a bulletproof vest as the reality is that I may be the first and only responder if an incident occurs. I do not understand why we would not work together as a community to ensure the safety of all students and our school communities. Students, their families, and educators who choose to attend charter schools should be able to do so based on unique school models and curricular opportunities that meet their families educational needs. In doing so, they should have access to and be ensured the same level of school safety as traditional schools in which they are located.

I read the Clark County School District Proposed Conceptual Amendment. Their proposed timeline where charter schools apply for services between January 1 – March 15 for the following school year would mean charter schools would not receive school police services until the Fall of 2016. This is unacceptable if there is an issue that occurs tomorrow. We need access to services as soon as possible.

Additionally, this should be an access issue, not a financial burden for the charter schools. We already pay a portion of our DSA monies for sponsorship. School police is public monies and charters should have access to the services. However, if a charge is incurred, it should be based on the level of service and an as-needed basis to ensure it is reasonable. I don't believe I should have to pay for these services out of my limited school budget, but if that is what it takes to ensure my school and students are safe then I will absorb that cost.

Thank you for your time in listening to my testimony. I appreciate your support in the passage of AB 321.