

DELAY SB543

Date: January 22, 2021

To: Legislative Commission Budget Subcommittee

Re: K-12 Education Funding and SB543

Since the introduction of SB543, NSEA has expressed our concern about the new funding plan at every opportunity. Despite being an active participant in the development of SB178 during the 2017 Legislative Session and sitting on the Funding Study Work Group during the following interim, NSEA was shut out of the process of developing SB543 during the 2019 Session. Our first chance to see language did not come until the 99th day, and what was called that session's most important legislation received only a single public hearing. NSEA testified in force, raising numerous policy issues. Despite active educator voice denied representation on the Commission on School Funding, NSEA has appeared and/or submitted written testimony at each meeting of that Commission, with numerous educators from across the state also weighing in. Unfortunately, over a year and a half of meetings, the Commission failed to substantively address a single concern we raised, as if the voice of educators does not matter when deciding how to fund schools in Nevada.

We are submitting NSEA's public comment to the Commission since September 2019 for the record.

The policy concerns expressed by NSEA during the last legislative session all stand—the lack of educator voice; no new revenue for our chronically underfunded schools; watering down of our model education equity programs, Zoom and Victory schools; freezing and squeezing most school district budgets for a period of years; a multi-million dollar giveaway to charter schools without increased accountability, and rewriting the rules of collective bargaining to make it nearly impossible for education unions to win a raise at the bargaining table.

Now with the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic impacts other serious problems with the new funding plan have emerged. During the interim, the Funding Commission was charged with modeling the new funding plan alongside the Nevada Plan, but numbers varied wildly from month to month, projecting new winners and new losers at three consecutive meetings. During the Commission's September meeting, Applied Analytics' Jeremy Aguero stated his main concern was not about Nevada's economy operating at 20-30% productivity for a few months, it's operating at 70-80% for the next three years. He said, "It is the long arc of the COVID-19 crisis that that keeps me up at night."

NSEA maintain it is completely irresponsible to effectuate a radical shift in the state's education funding formula amidst a global pandemic, especially as the legislature considers further general fund cuts to our schools. This is what keeps us up at night. While NSEA was encouraged the Governor recommended a phased implementation of the new plan, we believe the only responsible course of action is to delay SB543 until after the pandemic, while we are able to work together on optimal funding and the revenue plan to get us there.

Thank you.