

April 13, 2020

Chair Karlene McCormick
Nevada Commission on School Funding
2080 E. Flamingo Road; Suite 210
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Dear Chair McCormick:

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years. In our history, there have been few more challenging times than the one we find ourselves in right now, with the global COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Sisolak issued an executive order closing all Nevada schools on March 16th and extended school closures through at least the end of April. Since this time, our members have quickly responded, with classroom teachers now engaging their students in distance learning and food service workers on the front lines, providing meals to families in our districts. This transition has been a difficult one. We learned just last week of an NSEA member working in food service in Clark County who passed away after contracting COVID-19.

In addition to school closures, the Governor introduced a COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Initiative that closed all non-essential businesses and services and postponed or canceled all large gatherings. While this bold action was the right call to protect the health and safety of every Nevadan, we are afraid the economic impacts of this crisis will be devastating and long-lasting. On April 7th, Governor Sisolak asked all state agencies to review their budgets and make recommendations for general fund reductions of 4% in the current fiscal year and between 6-14% in FY21. As you know, the operation of Nevada schools also depends on revenues from Local School Support Tax (LSST) as well as the Public Schools Operating Property Tax. We assume LSST revenues will be devastated in the current quarter and will likely be depressed well into FY21. With the likelihood we are entering a recession, property taxes could take another long-term hit.

While NSEA believes the school funding plan should be updated to reflect the changing needs of Nevada, it would be completely irresponsible to implement this radical shift during these already turbulent times. While NSEA'S previous concerns with the new funding plan remain, the new economic realities not only undermine school funding generally but also the work of the Funding Commission specifically. The main charge of the Funding Commission is to model the new funding plan, running it alongside the Nevada Plan in the current fiscal year and to make recommendations based on these numbers. However, data from this fiscal year likely will need to be discarded, as Nevada's economy hit a wall toward the end of the third quarter. Even after stay at home orders are lifted and businesses begin to reopen, we know that the economy will take time to return to anything that resembles normal, and that normal may very well resemble the last Nevada recession.

Given these factors, NSEA believes the only responsible course of action for the Funding Commission is to document these conditions and recommend to the Governor and Legislature to indefinitely delay the July 1, 2021 implementation of the new funding plan.

Thank you,



Brian Rippet, President