

K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING

Date: February 19, 2019
To: Assembly Committee on Ways and Means and Senate Committee on Finance Subcommittees on K-12/Higher Education/CIP
Re: K-12 Education Funding

The Nevada State Education Association represents teachers and education support professionals across the state. We believe that every Nevada student deserves a high-quality public education.

NSEA is encouraged by this year's focus on K-12 public education, including a 3% salary increase for K-12 education personnel next fiscal year. NSEA calls on the legislature to build on proposals in the Governor's budget to reduce class sizes, get resources to diverse student populations, and ensure adequate base education funding to provide a quality education for every Nevada student.

Yesterday, hundreds of educators from across Nevada rallied under the banner of Red for Ed to draw attention to chronic underfunding of public education. Despite recent efforts, Nevada continues to rank near the bottom of states in most metrics. In the 2018 Quality Counts report from Education Week, Nevada ranked 47th in per-pupil funding and dead last in both class size and overall education quality.

Nevada needs to do better.

In his 2019 State of the State address and budget introduction, Governor Sisolak proposed additional funding for education, including a 3% salary increase for K-12 education personnel next fiscal year. The Governor's budget also proposes increases to the New Nevada Plan, career and technical education, literacy support related to Read by 3, school safety, and the classroom supply reimbursement program— all proposals worthy of support.

At the same time, we should remember that after a 2017 legislative session with modest increases to public education funding, school districts across the state struggled with serious budget deficits. NSEA is fearful that school districts could be back in the same position this summer. All you really must do is look at proposed per-pupil base funding, year over year. (See *BA 2610: Distributive School Account*.) While overall education spending, including categorical funding is increasing by a moderate amount, the basic support guarantee is only increasing by 1.4% and 1.1% over the two years of the biennium. With projected inflation at 2%, school districts relying on base funding for operation costs will be falling further and further behind. This could mean layoffs, reductions in services, and even larger class sizes. Employee bargaining units have already heard from school districts that they are going to have difficulty delivering on the 3% raises promised in the Governor's budget due to the issue of base funding.

NSEA has been a strong supporter of increasing equity in school funding to make sure that our schools have the resources necessary to provide a quality education to our diverse student population. We have been supportive of Zoom and Victory schools. We believe that it is past time to modernize Nevada's funding plan to reflect the state's changing demographics. NSEA participated in the SB178 Funding Study

Working Committee and supports the recommendations to implement student weights while also adequately funding the base. We would caution against moving to a new funding plan that just creates different winners and losers without addressing the structural shortfalls across our entire education system.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, NSEA called attention to the IP1 room tax money that was intended to supplement, not supplant, education spending. Since that tax was introduced by NSEA in 2008 and passed by the legislature in 2009, over \$1.3 billion in IP1 room tax has been diverted away from our schools. In the next biennium IP1 room tax is projected to total \$377.9 million. This type of additional investment in public schools would go a long way to getting us where we need to go.

NSEA calls on our elected leaders to take a courageous stand this session to ensure our schools have the resources they need, either by creating new revenue or redirecting existing revenue like those from the IP1 room tax.

The Nevada Constitution requires that all public schools receive adequate funding to fulfill their duty to educate every Nevada student. NSEA will continue our work to make sure Nevada moves the needle to provide adequate funding for the basic operation of public schools, so that every Nevada student has access to a high-quality public education.