

---

**PUBLIC COMMENT TO SENATE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

July 9, 2020

While the public has been excluded from the legislative building, there is too much at stake to just stay home. That is why yesterday, hundreds of educators lined the street from the legislature to the capitol with the clear call to Fund Healthy Schools. Educators chanted “Be Brave, Be Bold. New Revenue’s the Way to Go!”

Any budget balancing plan should include at least a dollar of new revenue for any dollar cut—a shared sacrifice. We recognize raising revenue is not easy, but not to do so will make it impossible for schools to follow state health and safety guidelines when reopening. For example, Nevada has the largest class sizes in the country, and the \$18M slated for cuts would otherwise help schools trying to figure out physical distancing in overcrowded classrooms. Monies cut from school equity programs are erasing years of work to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students.

But revenue is possible. While hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, 11 Nevada billionaires saw their combined net worth jump over \$11 billion. Meanwhile, Nevada is the world’s 5th largest producer of gold, which hit a 9-year high this week, yet the mining industry pays very little in state taxes.

In terms of alternate cuts, over 16 million general fund dollars were appropriated for student assessments, like the SBAC, for this fiscal year. This is an example of a possible cut that would actually make policy sense as the old accountability system of student assessments, school star ratings, and evaluations have failed to foster the improvements in achievement or student engagement they were indented to deliver. With a continued reliance on these old schemes during COVID-19, students and educators will have counter-incentives to come to school when sick; to teach to tests instead of teaching and reinforcing health and safety; and to maximize numbers and time in classrooms, even when outside of the guidelines.

Please be brave, be bold, and do what’s best for Nevada students. Thank you.