

## COMMENTS TO THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING

*November 13, 2020*

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years. We are submitting these comments on item #6, the continuing discussion of optimal funding. NSEA previously submitted comments on optimal funding at your meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> and would again encourage the Commission to adopt the work done by the Funding Study Work Group and Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) who completed the Nevada School Finance Study in 2018. The result of this work led to a strong consensus of education stakeholder groups both in terms of student weights and the need to phase in significant funding increases to achieve “full adequacy” in base funding. The rough estimate at the time was Nevada was underfunding public education by about \$1B per year.

When the legislature passed SB543 in 2019, no one could have foreseen the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic crisis hitting hardest here in Nevada. The unfortunate new reality is Nevada is falling further away from optimal funding for K-12 education. During the first Special Session this summer, \$156M in painful cuts were made to K-12 education, including total elimination of weighted funding for at-risk students and English learners—the very basis for the new funding formula. And with COVID-19 cases hitting record highs this week, the crisis and the related economic impacts are far from over. Before this week’s meeting of the Economic Forum, the Governor requested 12% reduction proposals from all departments, including NDE, for the next biennium.

NSEA maintains it is completely irresponsible to effectuate a radical shift in the state’s education funding formula in the middle of a global pandemic, as devastating cuts are being made to our schools. The only responsible course of action for the state is to delay the implementation of SB543 until after the pandemic, while education stakeholders are able to develop a revenue plan to get us out of the current economic crisis and on our way to optimal funding.

To this end, NSEA is again asking the Commission on School Funding to adopt a formal position in support of AJR1 from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Special Session. AJR1 would amend the Constitution to increase the mining tax from 5% of net proceeds to 7.75% of gross proceeds. This would generate \$485 million in new revenue. While AJR1 is only a part of what is needed to deliver a high-quality public education to every Nevada student, we see it as a critical first step toward building a funding plan to achieve optimal funding.