



December 18, 2020

Chairwoman, Dr. Karlene McCormick-Lee
Commission on School Funding

Dear Chairwoman McCormick-Lee and members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on behalf of Educate Nevada Now.

In regards to Agenda Item 12, ENN supports implementation of the PCFP in the coming biennium. However, issues with implementing the formula during an economic crisis should not be ignored.

Given the recent budget turmoil, changes could be made to ensure students are not harmed during the implementation. Please consider the following recommendations:

1. Delay movement to true school-level weights that “follow the student” until we are sure our most vulnerable students will not be harmed in the process.

The effective weights for students with unique needs were abysmal before the current economic crisis, but the loss of funding during the 2020 Special Session has only made the situation worse. Currently, SB 543 gives districts discretion in how they appropriate weighted funding to schools during the 2021-2023 biennium (allowing districts to maintain Zoom and Victory schools during the transition to weighted funding).¹ However, beyond the coming biennium, districts must allocate weighted funding directly to schools based on their enrollment of eligible students.²

With the loss of SB 178 dollars meant to aid in funding weights and the potential for even more cuts during the coming session, the Commission should consider recommending an extension to the discretionary two-year period. This will allow time for the restoration of funds that are critical to the effective implementation of weights. Additionally, it would give the Commission time to study the impact of transitioning to weights on our high-need schools, avoiding harm to those students, and preventing a premature transition to insufficient effective weights.

¹ SB 543 § 78.

² SB 543 § 8(3).

2. Adopt a hold harmless that promotes wider investment in revenue growth, preventing deterioration of resources in counties that are not currently adequately funded.

The economic crisis may set the state back, creating a longer road to appropriate school funding levels. Even prior to the crisis, fifteen out of seventeen counties were inadequately funded per the APA study.

The current model freezes the majority of districts funding levels, for potentially several years, before receiving additional funding to account for increased costs or enrollment growth. Many districts will find themselves unable to support their teachers and staff, replace books or technology or afford the essential resources and programs that support their students. ENN recommended the adoption of the Illinois adequacy distribution model during the 2019 session as a way to move all underfunded counties towards adequacy. With the prospect of falling even further behind, this alternate model could be a more responsible and fair way to grow into the PCFP.

The Illinois model calculates each district's adequacy target and provides a proportional amount of new or additional dollars based on each district's distance from that target. This growth model presumes good faith by lawmakers when they state their intent to move towards adequacy versus simply reshuffling inadequate funding. This method is more likely to gain wider support than the current method that simply freezes all funding for districts that do not benefit from the new PCFP redistribution. This model would ensure no district receives less funding than they currently do, and each district that is not currently receiving adequate funding would proportionally benefit from additional revenue down the road. This model avoids harming students in the coming years and should be considered give the current economic turmoil.

3. Re-evaluate funding and programs to be included in the Restoration Funding Target in the event of additional cuts during the 2021 session.

The Restoration Funding Target seeks to avoid implementation of the formula in a worse situation than we found ourselves pre-pandemic. For example, the target includes restoring funds that were initially expected to support weights, such as SB 178 funding lost during the special session.

We do not know how long a road we have to reach pre-pandemic funding levels, and unfortunately, we also do not know if more cuts to K-12 are on the way. Additional cuts may negatively impact implementation of the PCFP and its intent. For example, we do not know if districts will be held harmless at 2019-2020 funding levels as intended in SB 543. We do not know if other programs designed to support weights will be reduced or cut. With this in mind, we urge the Commission to consider including potential funding or programs lost during the 2021 session in the Restoration Funding Target to honor the original intent of the bill.



In sum, we believe there is a path forward to implement the PCFP responsibly, and we thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Morgan", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

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