

(Nevada Faculty Alliance
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TO: Assembly Committee on Government Affairs

FROM: Doug Unger, UNLV Chapter President, Nevada Faculty Alliance, and Vice Chair,
Government Affairs Committee; E-mail: (Removed)
Phone Number: (Removed)

RE: Meeting on Tuesday, March 4, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT LETTER - EXHIBIT FOR AB 191 – IN SUPPORT

Doug Unger, UNLV Acting President and Vice Chair, Government Affairs, Nevada Faculty Alliance. Thank you Chairs Considine, Nguyen, and Members of the Committee for your consideration.

Here we are again, for the fourth time, asking the Legislature to approve Collective Bargaining for NSHE faculty and professional employees, the largest class of state workers not yet covered by these rights in statute. Only this time feels different, as we seek new support from both sides of the aisle, also hoping that, during this unforeseen era of such heightened uncertainty, our Governor, given his extensive life experience with police and firefighters and their labor organizations, will see a renewed opportunity in Collective Bargaining for us all to work together to take on the hard challenges that may be coming.

AB 191 promises increased unity and stability for our campuses during this most perilous new era when student opportunity and wellbeing are every day more endangered by drastic federal funding cuts along with ideological assaults on Higher Education that seek to limit critical thinking, academic freedom, and to diminish resources that lower-income students especially rely on to pursue their educations. Studies suggest Collective Bargaining improves student success; lowers costs at least modestly; and supports retention and hiring. We know by surveys that at least 75% of NSHE faculty and professionals want these rights. Speaking as a professor with 14 years serving in various roles in faculty governance, including as the UNLV Faculty Senate Chair and the Chair of the Council of Faculty Senate Chairs for NSHE, I am convinced that Collective Bargaining can democratize a too-often unreliable managerial system run by ever shifting rosters of Regents, Chancellors, Presidents, Provosts, Deans, with their ever-changing leadership plans and styles. Collectively bargained contracts can provide a more predictable and dependable structure for how Higher Education operates.

Skeptics keep pointing out that NSHE already has Collective Bargaining, but Title IV, Chapter IV of the Board of Regents handbook is a policy, not a code or law. NSHE sets the terms. NSHE has resisted updating this antique policy for years, even now is using its obsolete wording to refuse to recongize the labor rights of Graduate Assistants. Most people think Collective Bargaining primarily addresses salaries and benefits. Based on my years of experience serving as a faculty

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advocate, I predict that AB 191 will be even more useful to achieve just and balanced mediations of personnel issues, a needed correction to flawed grievance processes in which Presidents have thumbs up, thumbs down power no matter the verdict of a grievance committee. Faculty at UNLV look at the grievance process with no little dismay because of its too often disappointing results. They give up, alienated and demoralized; or they leave; or the ones who feel they have the strongest cases go to the courts and file lawsuits. AB 191 will help to correct this flawed system. Mediation and arbitration can save our colleges and universities from costly litigation. How much? We can only guess, because, despite NSHE repeatedly being asked, its leaders have not so far provided a figure for litigation costs nor for costs to the colleges and universities. With the mediation and arbitration provisions of AB 191 providing fairer, more accessible pathways for personnel issue resolutions, faculty morale will improve significantly. This improvement in morale will benefit our students.

AB 191 will be unifying, not conflictive, and will embrace the whole state government. With the model proposed by this bill, agreements will be subject to checks and balances by the Executive branch, and any new financial impacts will require approval by the Legislature. We hope you see that this bill—for eight years and four Legislative sessions vetted, analyzed, discussed, melted down in the legal crucibles then cooled until taking shape again, re-molded, revised, given new numbers and new life—is now more than ever worthy of passage.

The 18th century economist, Adam Smith, the foundational thinker whose ideas helped to shape our free market economy, suggests in the *Wealth of Nations* that the freedom of markets must be balanced by the freedom of contract for labor. Higher Education faculty and professionals in Nevada are currently denied this freedom on which a healthy economy depends. We are asking for the same rights granted to other state employees, for similar rights to those that our county and city governments extend to police officers and firefighters in pursuit of the public good. In this same spirit—for common good—our teachers, professionals, researchers, and Graduate Assistants ask for your support, hoping you see how AB 191 offers a more sustainable vision for Higher Education—needed now more than ever—to pursue our shared mission to educate students, provide them with opportunities, and help them to succeed. Thank you.

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The [Nevada Faculty Alliance](#) is the independent statewide association of professional employees of the colleges and universities of the Nevada System of Higher Education. The NFA is affiliated with the [American Association of University Professors](#), which advocates for academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty rights, and the [American Federation of Teachers](#)/AFL-CIO, representing over 300,000 higher education professionals nationwide. The NFA works to empower our members to be wholly engaged in our mission to help students succeed.