

TESTIMONY TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS



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Chair Flores, and Members of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 161. Nevada’s teachers already enjoy exceptionally broad collective-bargaining rights and binding arbitration, ensuring disputes over wages, hours, and conditions are resolved without classroom disruption. SB 161 would layer on a new “right to strike” by court petition—allowing unions to halt instruction whenever they gather sufficient signatures and win judicial approval—undermining the stability our students and families depend on. Nevada has historically had some of the highest teacher absenteeism rates with the amount of teachers habitually missing school in Nevada is higher than any other state, except Hawaii in 2016.¹ The number is still of concern and rising post pandemic.

We need look no further than Clark County’s October 2023 “rolling sickouts” that resulted in one-day closures at eight Clark County School District schools over seven instructional days as teachers called in sick en masse—effectively striking.² That action sprang from an impasse resolved only after nine months of arbitration. Adding a legal right to strike would make such disruptions even easier to initiate, inflicting academic harm on the very students the system is designed to serve.

Moreover, SB 161 rewrites collective-bargaining deadlines to accelerate negotiation timelines and trigger strike petitions if talks fall short within those new windows. This change risks pit-bulling school districts into last-minute concessions or frequent work stoppages, rather than encouraging good-faith resolution through the existing arbitration process.

Finally, granting strike privileges to an already-powerful public-sector union shifts the balance too far toward labor at the expense of parents, taxpayers, and most importantly, students. Instead of expanding privileges, we should focus on student achievement and encourage perfect attendance of educators. For these reasons, we urge the committee to oppose SB 161.

¹ Teacher Absenteeism, Education Week, 2017, <https://infogram.com/699fcd4-d5b5-4617-8c01-62d11dd23328>

² Girnus, April Combin, “CCSD ‘sickouts’ ruled an illegal strike, teachers union to appeal decision,” Nevada Current, September 14, 2023, <https://nevadacurrent.com/2023/09/14/ccsd-sickouts-ruled-an-illegal-strike-teachers-union-to-appeal-decision/>