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STATE OF NEVADA

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Director



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
COMMISSION ON MINORITY AFFAIRS**

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Commission on Minority Affairs was held on Monday, August 16, 2021. Pursuant to public notice, this meeting was conducted by a Webex videoconference call.

1. COMMISSION BUSINESS

A. Chair Chaney called the meeting to order at 9:33 am.

B. Commissioners Present: Chair D. Edward Chaney, C. Hasaan Azam, C. E. Mercedes Krause, C. Yerania De Luca, C. Jose Melendrez, C. Amy Shaw, C. Kathleen Taylor, C. Angelica Villarta

C. Commissioners Not in Attendance: Vice Chair Myisha Boyce

D. Staff Present: Emily Ku, Management Analyst for the Commission on Minority Affairs

E. Public Attendance: Areli Alarcon, Lea Case, Linda Cavazos, Janae Cooley, Maggie Salas Crespo, Nicholas Dunkle, Amanda Goldfarb, Margie Gonzales, Jermareon Williams, Valerie B., Alex

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Margie Gonzales, former chair of AAPI (Asian-American Pacific Islander) Community Commission of Clark County, said the Commission just finished their term on June 30. Their duties focused on funding an AAPI cultural center. Hopefully they can have that building in the future. They completed three tasks: an AAPI community report, hosted a resource conference, and conducted a visibility study. It's not just going to be a cultural center, it will be a resource center for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders. The new team will be more focused on community engagement, and hopefully the funding will be there to build the center.

3. COMMISSION BUSINESS DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

A. Approval of July 19, 2021 meeting minutes (for discussion and possible action)

C. Taylor moved to approve the minutes. C. Melendrez seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Receive presentation from Linda Cavazos, Clark County School District Board of Trustees President

C. Krause introduced Ms. Linda Cavazos, President of the Clark County School District Board of

COMMISSIONERS: Chair D. Edward Chaney; Vice Chair Myisha Boyce; C. Hasaan Azam; C. Yerania De Luca, C. E. Mercedes Krause, C. Jose Melendrez, C. Amy Emiko Shaw, C. Kathleen Taylor, C. Angelica Villarta

Trustees. C. Krause said the Trustee Cavazos shows concern and respect for all of those viewpoints, and she brings a dignity to her position.

Trustee Cavazos will be talking about grading reform policy and anti-racism policy, which will be on the agenda on August 26th. She's been compiling a list of communications from the community about the grading reform policy. About 3 or 4 meetings back, there were high school students weighing in on this policy, both pro and con. Overall the grading reform policy in our district is a bit behind than other districts. Other district that are large such as the Los Angeles Unified, Denver, San Antonio, Boston, Houston, Dallas—they have been implementing a grading reform policy, fostered mostly by the need to concentrate on student mastery of skills instead of just the traditional grades. Going over the high points, we have 8-10 schools right now in our district that have already been using a form of grade reform, not based on grades but on mastery of skills for the last 5-6 years. She spoke to one of the principals, and the focus and benefits seem to be that children are not hopeless after they have received some not so good grades, or they have been late. The principal really focused on the social and emotional aspects, if the student does not have a very stable home environment. They may be working at night, or they may have parents are not able to support them with their academic pursuits. We have gotten a lot of pushback, particularly from the business community, that this doesn't prepare students for higher education. What we have built into the system, it does allow revision of assignments and retaking of tests, and most importantly, eliminates some of the behavioral aspects of grading. For example, a student has not completed an assignment within the time parameters. We don't want the hopelessness factor, where students come in and say, "I finally figured it out with the help of my teacher, but I might as well not turn it anymore is because the deadline has passed." Now that would be a behavioral aspect then looped into the grading scale. We have this child who has mastered this skill but has given up. The goal is to eliminate the hopelessness. This is where the 'minimum F' controversy comes in and the criticism we get on this. The 'minimum F' is designed so that if you have a zero and you don't have that at least that 50%, you have a zero. If you have 2 or 3 zeros, can you come back and be able recover if it's based on those grades. We're looking at giving a pathway to these students, not to be irresponsible or take advantage. She has taught for 15 years and knows teachers who are in the trenches giving her feedback on a constant. As we inform the community more on what this regulation actually is and how it's going to be implemented, Trustee Cavazos believes they are going to get more support for this when they see how much benefit it has on student achievement levels. No matter what zip code or what part of the valley they live in, they can be successful and have the opportunity to have those skills mastered.

Trustee Cavazos said when she was a teacher, the grading system was not flexible, but right now, it's a reasonable timeline and flexible boundaries. At the same time, we want to give teachers some grace and reasonable expectations because the last thing we want with everything we can is not to have so stressed that they have 50 assignments on the last day of school. So they are given some flexibility as well.

C. Melendrez asked what is the makeup of the Anti-racism Taskforce. Trustee Cavazos said that on August 26th, they have already compiled reports from three in-person meetings at Las Vegas Academy and a virtual meeting. There are 2 task forces. One is an internal task force headed by Dr. Mike Barton and Sam Scavella, who is heading the Equity Division and was just recently appointed to

the role. That task force has already been chosen. It has staff from central services and principals. Most of the inquiries are about the external task force. There was an interest form on the website, and a student, parent, community member, business owner, and educator could all apply. They had over 200 applications and had the interest form translated into Spanish. The Trustees had asked to extend the deadline by a few days to make sure all applicants could apply. She believes it grew by another 75 applicants. They have to condense it down to 25 or possibly add 5 more. Trustees have not been given that list yet, they will hopefully receive it a few days before it's posted on the reference materials for the August 26th meeting. She wants everyone to see the reference materials beforehand so they can have a chance to review those. They have chosen two facilitators to support the work of the task forces. One is an attorney who used to be employed by CCSD, another attorney, one who used to be the School Board President from Compton Unified School District and a district superintendent. C. Villarta liked to see if we can have an advocate from the Commission on Minority Affairs on the task force or review the things going on in the task force and get the information out to the community. Trustee Cavazos has been asking questions about representation on the task force. She has been hearing a lot from students whether they can be on the task force too because they are the ones experiencing it firsthand and want their voices heard.

C. Taylor asked about the rollout in other high schools, and how it can be a positive impact for those students. Has it enhanced the mastery of skill level and the graduation rates? Ms. Cavazos has talked to a board member from Washoe County, and they had a sweeping policy. They also talked to Los Angeles Unified, San Diego, and Denver. She doesn't have specific statistics but they have had an upswing not only in the kids that were in a low achieving cohort, they have also seen a rise in graduation rates. In Black, Latino, and Native American groups, they have seen an uptick in all these groups. One of the things that has been an additional bonus is that these districts have seen fewer attendance problems. When the social workers talked to them, they believe they might as well not come to school because they are so far behind. They will show up now because this is being offered to them, and a big part of this is the communication factor between the students, teachers, and parents. We're letting students know to not be afraid to talk to anyone in their schools, whether it's another teacher, counselor, or a peer. Overall, they have seen some improvements but it has not been uniform and have had some glitches. We've had numerous parents write in and say they are not happy. They believe their high achieving students are being cast off to the wayside, so we are trying to address all these factors, not just the achievement factors, but the social emotional as well. C. Chaney thanked Trustee Cavazos for her presentation and welcomed her back to give any future updates.

C. Subcommittee Updates (for discussion and possible action)

1. Community Liaison

C. Villarta wanted to mention that the Korean community is celebrating Korean Independence Day this week. They had a historic moment yesterday where the City of Las Vegas issued a proclamation to recognize the holiday as of August 15. The Friends of India also did an Independence Day celebration day yesterday.

2. Legislative

None

3. Economic and Business Development

C. Shaw said on August 4th, the SBA (Small Business Administration) opened the direct forgiveness portal for people to apply directly to the SBA by filling out an online form. Based on what happened before, they have created a two-factor authentication sign-in. One of the concerns is when you sign up and use an email address, they can't change it. That's part of the security process. The difference between this PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) and last PPP, you can only go through a bank that has signed up to participate. Many banks declined to participate this time. If they visit <http://directforgiveness.sba.gov>, a list of the banks are there. The Vegas Chamber had a webinar called "Update with Congressman Porter". There were 12 appropriations bill that include projects affecting Nevada, so that's a great thing for us. They also talked about concerns of increasing the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28% and is projected to have a really big impact on our local businesses. One thing that was interesting is that they were talking about the importance of in-person meetings, and because of what is happening in DC, everything is going along partisan lines. There's 150 people going with the Vegas Chamber to Washington, DC. There was a lot of discussion about the respect the Nevada delegation has with legislators and how important it will be to open up discussions again. Their focus this time was on tax reform, labor policy, economic development, drought conditions, and workforce development. They are looking forward to is the infrastructure bill. It's really designed for construction but it's stimulus because people who get construction jobs will be spending money in our local economy. Also, McDonald's Corporation announced that it is going to increase spending with diverse suppliers by 25% by 2025, so that's going to add \$200 million in the diverse community. There's about 150-170 McDonald's in Nevada, so there should be some benefit to the people working in the McDonald's and the companies who provide supplies to McDonald's.

C. Villarta said Henderson's Water Street Association has been planning their Shop Small Henderson event in November loaded with a lot of entertainment and events. They are doing a Shop Small Every Saturday, and people can visit <https://shopsmalleveryaturday.com/>. They are encouraging the community to do business with their neighbors. She attended the LVGEA (Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance) Perspectives last week, and there some really big key takeaways. UNLV (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) currently has an incubator for students looking to start a tech business at Blackfire and learn how to start their own businesses. One of the speakers, Erica Orange, was very insightful on workforce development. Right now Nevada is ranking number 2 for women entrepreneurs. Our population is up 2.2% from last year, and the majority of the newcomers are from California. Business employment is down 12.3% from last year, and our visitor volume is down 55.2%. C. Villarta said she sat next to the one of main contractors for Allegiant Stadium, and how the contracts were working with the minority businesses. Their biggest challenge at the very beginning was finding the certified minority and women-owned businesses with enough capacity to be able to take on the roles and responsibilities. Instead of hiring one company, they ended up hiring 3 or 4 different businesses and coached them. They got them their certifications, helped them find the capacity to fulfill their contracts, and whenever there were struggles or challenges, they would help

them find the right resources and connections. C. Chaney was part of a team that was trying to increase diversity and inclusion of small businesses in the initial phase of the Raiders stadium being built. This team created application fairs at two specific centers to get small businesses to apply and get mentored or shepherded through the process. They did bring small businesses in from other states because they could not find enough businesses in Las Vegas. As we look at more development coming, we have to be ready for the next wave.

C. Taylor attended the LVGEA event as well and mentioned their Perspectives book is full of statistics on different sectors. In addition, she was a judge for a pitch contest for start-up businesses and established businesses sponsored by the Urban Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with UNR (University of Nevada, Reno). It was a wonderful event and great to see businesses in competition. The prizes were \$10k cumulatively. The winners were a husband and wife team and were featured on the Commerce First radio show on KCEP the following Monday that she hosts with Deputy Director Marcel Schaerer from the Department of Business and Industry.

C. Melendrez said that US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce convention will be in Las Vegas in September. M. A. Ku said if there any Commissioners who are interested in attending, please let her know so she can complete the paperwork.

4. Workforce Development

C. De Luca participated in the Summer Bridge program with Western Nevada College to assist first generation college students with college preparation. They needed some academic readiness in English and math and combined career readiness with a professional skill set and self-care especially coming out of COVID. Some of these students are in training program for skilled jobs. They had 22 students from the local high schools to Western Nevada. The students were really happy, and they felt that the support was them from the beginning. C. Taylor said that Jobs for Nevada's Graduates, which is a statewide program, receive \$725,000 federal grant to launch a workforce pathways for youth program. Governor Sisolak commended the non-profit, for achieving impressive success rates, including 97.3% graduation rate and 92% full-time job rate after high school. They operate in both urban and rural schools across Nevada. This grant will allow the nonprofit to connect more youth to apprenticeships, certificate programs, internships, job training, secondary training, for students to find a career path.

5. Housing

C. Taylor said recently with the passage of Assembly Bill 486, which provides rent protection such as staying or pausing an eviction proceeding if the tenant has a pending rental assistance application. This is really critical because it is estimated that 35,147 renter households are at risk of eviction according to a report in Nevada. Of those behind on rent, about 23.9% are likely to be evicted, so that stat is really daunting. Hopefully AB 486 will give renters some protection if they are waiting for their rental assistance application to be processed.

6. Health

C. Melendrez said higher education is to reopen with 80% live classroom and then 20% traditionally online. They are letting faculty make that decision whether to continue to teach online at least at UNLV. That's all being debated right now. Unfortunately the numbers are going the wrong way and

people are getting sick. In Nevada, as of Friday the 13th, there have been 2,137 positive tests, and there are 1,395,968 fully vaccinated people. More than 3 million people live in Nevada, so that's not even 50%. The average age for those getting sick are between 18-34, so it's impacting a younger crowd. They are also showing more kids under the age of 12 getting infected. As long as they stay unvaccinated, the delta variant will grow. Also, the new lambda variant has been found in the sewers in Nevada but it's not widespread yet. As it stands, none of the vaccinations have any impact on the variant. The other part is that Pfizer and Moderna are looking to produce a third shot in response to the COVID-19 delta variant. The elderly and those with underlying conditions would be the priority and then it would be available to others. UNLV continues to have clinics open in the evenings for testing and vaccinations. They Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition has been teaming up with Immunize Nevada for vaccine equity work. They have taken the political organizing model to "get out the vaccine." Over the last two months held in conjunction with Region IX and FEMA, they have conducted 72 get out of the vaccine efforts. FEMA is here with over 80 volunteers working alongside the community partners to get the information out.

C. Villarta said on a positive note, UNLV Professor of Physics Ashkan Salamat has been recognized globally for his discovery. He has been able to figure out how to warm room temperature conductor to transport energy from state to state. It's been one of the biggest discoveries in science for some time. C. Melendrez heard a story this morning that a person passed away from brain cancer, and UNR has apple trees planted in her name. He said there are a lot of good things happening, and it's hard to share that with things happening right now, but we are building something good out of something bad. The next time it happens, we will be better prepared as a community. C. Chaney encouraged to get their groups all vaccinated.

7. Education

C. Krause said that for this school year, CCSD (Clark County School District) has had 416 cases of COVID. The school district is now conducting the weekly COVID testing requirement for staff who have not been vaccinating. There is a new partnering for that testing because the lines for were long, teachers had to wait outside for hours in the heat, and they ran out of tests. The August 12th CCSD Board of Trustees was a very chaotic meeting, many attendees were unmasked, and police were slow in responding to directives by the trustees. They went over the Reimagining Schools for the Future of Children. It talked about career readiness and grading reform. It also talked about grading reform, differentiated support to schools, and the professional learning that took place over the summer. UV disinfecting towers will be in all campuses and they are reported to kill 99.9% pathogens. A group called Make the Road Nevada with student leaders, and they shared concerns about incidents where students had been pepper sprayed. There was more discussion on the Anti-Racism and updates on the secure storage notification to protect our students from unlocked firearms. They also received a presentation on leadership pipelines for our educators.

C. De Luca said that the Washoe County School District is seeking members for the Superintendent Task Force on Supplementary Materials for students from kindergarten through 5th grade. There will be 5 individuals representing parents or guardians within the school district, 2 students, and 4 community members. One of the main concerns from the community is the type of facilitator. They want to make sure they are clear who is going to facilitate this task. She proposed a letter of support to them as well. Students in Washoe County started last week, and there was a COVID outbreak that affected 80 students at an elementary school. TMCC (Truckee Meadows Community College) has also faced some COVID challenges and are cancelling some events and going back online. C. De Luca said that Northern Nevada is dealing with poor air quality due to fires, and the health district has recommended that teams avoid outdoor activities. That combined with the new delta strain,

everyone is on edge. UNR has been able to mitigate effects of COVID, and they have had very good controls as they welcome their students and still have their events.

7i. Letter of support for Clark County School District Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force.
C. Chaney read the letter of support. C. Taylor asked if we can incorporate our meeting with Trustee Cavazos into the letter of support. C. Krause suggested mentioning in the email that we send and attach the letter, so we wouldn't have to change the letter. C. De Luca agreed with C. Krause's suggestions. C. Melendrez suggested to add all of the Commissioners names to our letter. C. Taylor would like to make a motion to the Commission for the approval of the content and additional supportive content for the letter. C. Melendrez seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Management Analyst update (for discussion and possible action)

- a. Commission updates – The Legislative Commission met end of July and reappointed Commissioner Taylor, Commissioner Shaw, and Commissioner Krause to a second term.
- b. There are a few webinars of interest all on Wednesday, August 25 – The Nevada Housing Coalition is having their monthly lunch and learn on community land trusts and affordable housing. The Federal Reserve is hosting a webinar on fin tech, racial equity, and inclusive financial systems. The third is a panel by the Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition, UNLV School of Public Health, and several other groups called Conversations that Matter: The Pandemic Stops with Me. They will discuss the importance of vaccinations. There is another Federal Reserve webinar on October 14th on Equitable Access to Small Business Credit.

4. NEW BUSINESS

C. De Luca proposed drafting a letter of support to Washoe County School Board similar to the one to Clark County for the next meeting. C. Chaney said it will be added. C. Melendrez proposed inviting Mr. Nicholas Dunkle and High Sierra AHEC to speak at a future meeting about their cultural competency course.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Margie Gonzales said for education committee, another thing that you look is the teacher shortage. Based on data, Nevada is number 2 highest teacher shortage, California being number 1. She has been in contact with many teachers because Clark County recruits many special teachers from the Philippines. The first batch in 2017 are scheduled to go back home next year. We could lost about a 100 special education teachers. Some teachers are pulled from regular teaching into becoming a resource teacher. When students have a hard time learning a lesson, they go to a resource teacher. On the first day of school, one resource teacher had more than 20 students who came to her. That was a record. If you pull more teachers from the regular classroom, we would lose more teachers. She doesn't know the limit, it used to be 8 and now it's 12. In California, they gave them another year and extended their visa, so at least give them one more year to hire teachers.

Amanda Goldfarb from Employ NV is still helping businesses of all sorts. They have been open since the pandemic. She attended the meeting to see what the needs are in the public.

6. ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting adjourned at 11:15 am
- Next Meeting: Monday, Sept 20, 2021 at 9:30 am