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STATE OF NEVADA

Commission Members

Dr. KRISTOPHER SANCHEZ
Director



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Le Kim, *Member*
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Deputy Director

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Deputy Director

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY NEVADA COMMISSION ON MINORITY AFFAIRS

"The central advisory body advocating and providing a voice for Nevada's minority community."

MEETING MINUTES

Agency: Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs

Date: July 24, 2025

Time: 9:30 am

Location: Hybrid meeting – 3300 W. Sahara Ave., Suite 430, Tahoe Room, Las Vegas, Nevada 89102 & Webex (Remote technology system)

MEETING AGENDA

1. OPENING

A. Call to order & Roll call

The meetings call to order at 9:32 am by Chair Gabriela Wyett

Commission Members in Attendance: Gabriela Wyett, Demetrius Ware, Gina Jackson, Nina Gallagher, Juanny Romero, Kim Lee, Julio Jimenez-Wenz

Commission Members Absent: Nic Steele

Department Leadership & Staff in Attendance:

Michael Detmer, Chief Deputy Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
Angie Rojas, Management Analyst, Department of Business and Industry

Members of the Public Present:

Deana Lopez, Joseph Winn, Lana Winn, David Lopez, Magdalena Lozano, Maricelia Lopez, Josh Kempinski, Dave Burlin, Lynnelle Sanchez, Rochelle Nguyen, Susan Middleton, Rick Atkins, Kevin Osorio Hernandez, Ivan Carmona, Venise Karris, Elijah Wyett, Lena Paola, Jamie Schwartz, Ivett Aldava, Angela Taylor, Daphne Emm, Sabrina Schnur, Angelica Villarta, Rhonda, Marylin Dondero, Nicole Cannizzaro.

B. Silent Meditation & Pledge of Allegiance

30 seconds of silent meditation observed

C. Land Acknowledgements

Commissioner Jackson provided land acknowledgements honoring Nevada's native citizens and their land.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (1st Period)

None

3. NEVADA COMMISSION ON MINORITY AFFAIRS (NCMA) ACADEMY EVENT (FOR DISCUSSION ONLY)

- A. Welcome remarks for NCMA Event – Shaping Nevada's Educational Future: Equity, Access, and Policy in Action. *(See flyer for the event attached herein as "Attachment 1")* Commissioners Jackson and Lei opened a discussion on innovative educational policies, equity initiatives, financial literacy, and improved access for underserved minority students across Nevada's K-12 and higher education systems. They introduced prominent guest speakers.

Commissioner Jackson emphasized the historical impact of inequitable policies on minority students, highlighting the importance of inclusive and targeted legislative actions. The first speaker, Daphny M. Hooper, Director of Indigenous Relations at UNR, was invited to discuss her role in advocating for indigenous students and the implementation of the Native American fee waiver program to expand educational access for tribal students in Nevada.

B. Guest speakers' presentations:

- Daphne Emm Hooper, Director of Indigenous Relations, University of Nevada, Reno

Daphne M. Hooper, Director of Indigenous Relations at the University of Nevada, Reno, discussed her office's progress since its establishment in 2022. Initially, the Native American Fee Waiver—passed in 2021—covered only enrolled members or descendants of Nevada tribes, benefiting about 90 students. Due to implementation challenges, an amendment in 2023 expanded eligibility to include Nevada residents enrolled in any federally recognized tribe and changed it to a "first-dollar" waiver, allowing students greater financial flexibility. This amendment increased waiver recipients to nearly 250 students, many of whom pursue graduate degrees. Additionally, Hooper highlighted the creation of "Tribal Academies," hiring mentors to provide academic support, mental health resources, and assistance with food insecurity, emphasizing ongoing support for retention and graduation. Finally, she stressed the importance of addressing the lower graduation rates among Native high school students and their underrepresentation (around 1%) in higher education.

Commissioner Jackson shared a personal reflection, recalling how her parents benefited from scholarship opportunities for Native students at the University of Nevada, Reno, which led to strong Native representation and professional success in their generation. In contrast, during her own college experience at the same university, she was often the only Native student present, which she found disheartening. She expressed gratitude for the progress now being made—highlighting the impact of over 200 Native students currently accessing educational opportunities—as a meaningful step toward community empowerment and equity.

Jackson also asked Daphne Hooper to briefly share insights or concerns about a proposed legislative amendment from the recent session, so listeners and future viewers could understand its implications.

Daphne Hooper explained that while the waiver has significantly increased student access, it remains an unfunded mandate, meaning no state funding is allocated for it; each institution must cover the costs internally. Though growing, the number of students (around 450 statewide) is still relatively small, and the financial burden, while not massive, is notable.

She emphasized the importance of understanding tribal enrollment, noting that eligibility for the waiver requires official documentation, not just self-identification. She expressed hope for continued growth in Native student enrollment and encouraged finding sustainable funding solutions to ensure the longevity and success of the program.

- Trevor Parrish, Manager of Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber & Kevin Hernandez, Student Body President, Nevada State University

Assembly Bill 345 Overview

- AB 345 is a community-driven bill, originating from the 2024 Southern Nevada Forum's Education Committee, sponsored by Assemblywoman Mosca.
- It aims to build a more transparent, efficient, and student-centered education system in Nevada.

Key Components:

1. Student Outcome Data Dashboard:

- NSHE (Nevada System of Higher Education) is directed to create a public dashboard tracking student outcomes, such as:
 - Enrollment in remedial courses
 - Time to graduation
 - Post-graduation employment and public assistance usage
- Modeled after similar dashboards in states like Indiana and Washington.
- All data will be aggregated and de-identified to ensure student privacy.

2. Low-Cost/No-Cost Educational Materials (OER):

- Encourages the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce textbook and material costs.
- Institutions will be supported in training faculty and transitioning to OER, particularly in high-enrollment and general ed courses.
- Allows students to view material costs in the registration system to make better financial decisions.

3. Study on Food & Financial Insecurity:

- Commissioned study will assess the real-life struggles students face, including:
 - Food insecurity
 - Housing challenges
 - Financial stress from tuition and textbook costs
- Aims to guide future targeted policies like emergency aid, expanded food pantries, and housing support.

4. Student Perspective – Kevin Osorio Hernandez

- Former Student Body President at Nevada State University and Chair of the Nevada Student Alliance.
- Advocated for AB 345 based on firsthand experience with:
 - Student hardship (food, housing, financial aid)
 - Overpriced textbook access codes
 - The value of OER and transparency in material costs
- Conducted “Listening Tours” with students and departments to understand and advocate for:

- More accessible academic and social support
 - Resources tailored to students with disabilities, transportation issues, or economic hardship
- Highlighted the importance of integrating student feedback into state-level policymaking and higher education strategy.

5. Fiscal Responsibility

- AB 345 was intentionally designed to be cost-neutral by leveraging existing systems and data, avoiding new bureaucracy.
- Future costs (if any) will go through the standard budgeting process.
- Confirmed feasibility and support from NSHE and the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR).

- Nicole Cannizzaro, Nevada Senate Majority Leader, Nevada Legislature

6. Financial Literacy Legislation – Senator Nicole Cannizzaro

- Highlighted the state’s multi-year effort to advance financial literacy education across K–12 and higher ed:
Legislative Timeline & Key Bills:
- 2017 – SB 249: Required financial literacy education in grades 3–12 and created a \$2.5M funding account and professional development for teachers.
- 2019 – SB 314: Created the Financial Literacy Advisory Council, a statewide summit, and a seal of financial literacy for graduating seniors.
- 2023 – AB 274 & AB 289:
 - Added student voice to the Advisory Council.
 - Empowered the Board of Regents to offer college-level financial literacy courses for the first time.
 - Reinforced budgeting, credit, loan, and savings education.
- Financial literacy aims to prevent issues like predatory lending, poor credit, and uninformed financial decisions.
- The need is critical, with Nevada ranked 50th in financial literacy in recent reports.

7. Community & Business Support

- Commissioner Romero emphasized the role of employers in supporting student-employees through:
 - Flexible scheduling during exams
 - Providing tax and financial education resources
 - Collaborating with the IRS for free tax filing kiosks
- Referred to many young employees as “social orphans”, highlighting the need for wraparound support systems in workplaces and beyond.

8. Conclusion & Shared Themes

- Speakers repeatedly stressed:
 - The importance of equity, particularly for first-generation and underserved students.
 - The power of data transparency, financial empowerment, and cross-sector collaboration.
 - A commitment to breaking cycles of disadvantage and fostering a resilient, informed next generation of Nevadans.

Commissioner Jimenez raised concerns about two key issues:

1. Most teachers lack the tools to effectively teach financial literacy.

2. Nonprofits face major barriers when trying to offer financial literacy education in schools, particularly within the Clark County School District (CCSD).

In response, it was acknowledged that this is a significant challenge. While specific processes for nonprofit access to schools weren't known, it was suggested that this question be brought to Superintendent Ebert or her team, especially Deputy Jesse Walsh, who has been involved in related efforts.

There's recognition that educators need support, and the state is exploring ways to provide resources in collaboration with the Department of Education. Partnering with nonprofits is seen as a valuable strategy, and follow-up is needed to determine how access and collaboration can be improved.

- Dr. Angela Taylor, State Senator, Nevada Legislature

Optimism from Past State Investments:

- Significant education investments made in the last session are still in the early stages of producing results (e.g., teacher raises, student outcomes).
- These efforts were intended to boost retention and long-term academic success.

Federal Funding Crisis:

- Major reductions at the U.S. Department of Education have already started, including layoffs and plans for the department's potential elimination.
- \$61 million in federal funds for Nevada are currently impounded (frozen for review) and at risk of being rescinded (revoked), especially those tied to:
 - DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)
 - LGBTQ+ support
 - English Language Learners
 - Special needs and gifted students
 - Migrant education
 - Teacher training
 - After-school and community learning programs

Disproportionate Impact on Vulnerable Students:

- Nevada is among the top 20 states most dependent on federal education funding.
- About 85% of Nevada students qualify for free/reduced lunch, placing them at five times the risk of negative impacts from funding cuts.
- Impacts are expected to fall hardest on:
 - Students of color
 - Low-income students
 - English learners
 - Students with disabilities
 - Working families that rely on before/after school programs

Higher Education Concerns:

- Cuts are already affecting **research funding** and **international student enrollment**.
- Potential disruptions to student loan processing, FAFSA, financial aid, and federal oversight of discrimination complaints.

State's Role Moving Forward:

- The Nevada Legislature is closely monitoring developments and will work to mitigate harm where possible.
- Fiscal staff and finance committees are actively engaged in evaluating budget implications and planning contingencies.

Despite uncertainty, Senator Taylor emphasized that **education remains a vital pathway** to opportunity and upward mobility. She reaffirmed the state's **commitment to supporting students, families, and educators**, while adapting to evolving federal and fiscal landscapes.

C. Closing remarks

Commissioner Jackson expressed gratitude to all presenters and attendees, emphasizing that everyone's presence reflects a shared commitment to education. They highlighted that education is more than just earning a degree—it's a foundation for economic growth and opportunity, especially for future generations. The event underscored a collective dedication to supporting and uplifting children and students across Nevada.

4. COMMISSION BUSINESS (FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION)

A. Approval of May 20, 2025, meeting minutes (For Discussion and Possible Action)
Chair Wyatt tabled discussion and approval of May 20, 2025, meeting minutes for the next public meeting. No action was taken.

B. Updates on NCMA bills presented to LCB during the 2025 legislative session

Commissioner Romero provided updates on legislative activity:

The Commission successfully got two bills through the 2025 legislative process:

- AB 52 (related to healthcare and prompt payment) was signed into law.
- SB 71 (focused on procurement and contracting) was vetoed but still considered a significant milestone for the Commission.

Despite the veto, commissioners celebrated the effort and viewed it as a major win, especially since it was the Commission's first legislative session.

Reflections from Commissioners Romero and Jimenez:

The legislative process was collaborative, welcoming, and provided valuable experience for future bill drafting and advocacy.

There was bipartisan support and engagement with both legislators and departments.

The Commission aims to build on this momentum for the next session, starting conceptual bill drafting early.

Commissioner Jimenez emphasized the importance of legislator outreach and highlighted how direct engagement helped shift votes in favor of NCMA bills.

Gratitude was extended to the Director's Office (B&I) and fellow commissioners for their collective effort.

C. Swearing in of Newly Appointed Commissioner, Elizabeth Lopez

Commissioner Lopez was formally sworn into the Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs after she was appointed by the Legislative Commission on July 7, 2025. She took the oath to support, protect, and defend the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Nevada, pledging faithful service to the Commission and its duties.

In her remarks, Commissioner Lopez expressed her enthusiasm and gratitude for the opportunity to serve. She thanked her family, friends, community leaders, and fellow commissioners, acknowledging their support over the years. She emphasized her commitment to working collaboratively with the community and making a positive impact across Nevada.

D. By-laws re-revision of pending items from May public meeting

Commissioners discussed proposed bylaws updates and redlines, previously circulated by email. Key revisions include:

Article 4 – Officer Duties:

- New Section 3D was added:

- Officers must prepare subcommittee reports for public meetings when requested by the chairperson.
- Officers must draft findings and recommendation reports for NCMA Academy events, which will serve as reference material for the Commission's annual report submitted to the Governor's Office.

Article 7 – Removals and Vacancies:

- Redlined and updated to clarify procedures:
 - In the event of a vacancy, the Chairperson (or Vice Chairperson) will inquire with the Legislative Commission regarding appointment timelines.
 - The Chairperson or Vice Chairperson may submit a recommendation directly to the Legislative Commission, instead of requiring a full Commission vote.
 - This aligns with recent procedures involving B&I and LCB.

Commissioner Romero moved to approve the proposed changes on the by-law, Commissioner Jackson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

5. NEW BUSINESS (FOR DISCUSSION ONLY)

None

6. PUBLIC COMMENT (FOR DISCUSSION ONLY)

Ivett Aldava, an educator at UNLV, expressed concern over the emotional and mental stress students are experiencing due to federal-level uncertainties. She emphasized the importance of not just passing policies, but also ensuring they are effectively implemented to truly support students.

Aldava urged lawmakers and commissions to actively listen to constituents, as they are the true experts of their own experiences, and to do so with genuine intent—not just for political gain. She concluded by thanking the Commission for its ongoing work and support.

7. NEXT MEETING

Chair Wyett mentioned that the meeting scheduled for September might be bumped up to August.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jimenez Wenz moved to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Le seconded it. The meeting was adjourned unanimously.