### SENATE BILL NO. 311-SENATOR FORD

## MARCH 18, 2013

#### Referred to Committee on Education

SUMMARY—Revises provisions governing empowerment schools. (BDR 34-637)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: May have Fiscal Impact. Effect on the State: Yes.

EXPLANATION - Matter in bolded italics is new; matter between brackets formitted material is material to be omitted.

AN ACT relating to education; authorizing the parents and legal guardians of pupils enrolled in an underperforming public school, under certain circumstances, to submit a petition for the conversion of the school to an empowerment school; establishing the requirements for such a petition and the procedure for acting upon it; authorizing parents and legal guardians to file a petition reversing such a conversion; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

#### **Legislative Counsel's Digest:**

Existing law establishes the Program of Empowerment Schools for public schools in this State. Generally, an empowerment school operates with more flexibility and autonomy than other public schools. (NRS 386.720, 386.740)

This bill provides for the conversion of underperforming public schools, other than charter schools, to operate as empowerment schools. **Section 2** of this bill requires the board of trustees of each school district annually to identify the schools in the district that are eligible for conversion from among those which have been rated as underperforming by the Department of Education. After these schools have been identified, **section 2** requires the board of trustees to post a list of the schools on the school district's Internet website.

**Section 3** of this bill provides that 55 percent or more of the parents and legal guardians of the pupils enrolled in an underperforming school may submit a petition to the board of trustees of the school district for the conversion of the school to an empowerment school. **Section 4** of this bill establishes the procedure for determining the sufficiency of the petition and acting upon it. If the petition is found to contain the requisite number of signatures and is otherwise sufficient, **section 4** requires the board of trustees to begin the statutory process of converting the school to an empowerment school, effective at the beginning of the next succeeding school year.



23456789

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18



Under existing law, participation in the Program of Empowerment Schools is discretionary for boards of trustees of school districts in counties whose population is less than 100,000 (currently counties other than Clark and Washoe Counties) and, accordingly, such a district may elect not to participate in the Program. (NRS 386.720) However, if a petition for conversion is submitted pursuant to **section 3** and determined to be sufficient pursuant to **section 4**, **section 5** of this bill provides that the provisions of statute which otherwise apply only to school districts participating in the Program become applicable to the school district if the petition is submitted and found to be sufficient, regardless of whether the district otherwise participates in the Program.

If an underperforming public school is converted to an empowerment school through the petition process, **section 6** of this bill provides that the parents and legal guardians of pupils enrolled in the school may thereafter petition to reverse the conversion. Any such petition is subject to the same requirements as a petition for conversion and is processed in the same manner.

# THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

**Section 1.** Chapter 386 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto the provisions set forth as sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act.

- Sec. 2. 1. On or before September 15 of each year, the board of trustees of each school district shall identify each public school in the school district, other than a charter school, which is rated as underperforming by the Department pursuant to the statewide system of accountability for public schools. Unless the board of trustees determines on or before that date that any such public school should be excluded or is required by law to be excluded from eligibility for conversion, any public school which is not so excluded is an underperforming public school and may become the subject of a petition for conversion submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act.
- 2. On or before October 1 of each year, the board of trustees of each school district shall cause a list of the underperforming public schools in the school district to be posted conspicuously on the Internet website of the school district, with a statement that the schools on the list are eligible for conversion to empowerment schools by the submission of a petition to the board of trustees pursuant to section 3 of this act. The statement must also set forth the deadline established by section 3 of this act for the submission of such a petition.
- 3. For each underperforming public school in the school district, the board of trustees shall include with the statement required by subsection 2 a statement of the minimum number of valid signatures required pursuant to section 3 of this act for a petition for conversion of the school.





- Sec. 3. 1. The parents or legal guardians of pupils enrolled in an underperforming public school may submit a written petition to the board of trustees of the school district for the conversion of the school to an empowerment school.
  - 2. A petition submitted pursuant to this section must be:
- (a) Made on a form prescribed by regulation of the State Board;
  - (b) Signed by not less than 55 percent of the parents and legal guardians of pupils enrolled in the school, as stated for that school year in the posting required by section 2 of this act; and
  - (c) Submitted to the board of trustees on or before December 1, unless December 1 is a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, in which case the petition must be submitted on or before the last day before December 1 that is not a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday.
    - 3. The petition must include:
  - (a) A conspicuous designation of one petitioner as the representative of the petitioners, to whom the determination and summary required by section 4 of this act may be mailed; and
    - (b) For each petitioner:

- (1) His or her printed name and address;
- (2) The printed name of each child of the petitioner who is enrolled as a pupil in the school; and
- (3) The signature of the petitioner and the date the signature is affixed to the petition.
- 4. Each parent or legal guardian of a pupil enrolled in the school may sign the petition. Each such signature must be counted in computing the number of signatures on the petition. No person may sign the petition on behalf of another person.
- Sec. 4. 1. Upon receipt of a petition submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act, the board of trustees of the school district shall:
- (a) Notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board in writing of the receipt of the petition;
- (b) Not later than 15 calendar days after receiving the petition, verify the signatures or cause the signatures to be verified in accordance with procedures prescribed by regulation of the State Board; and
- (c) Prepare or cause to be prepared a written summary of the results of the verification, stating the number of signatures on the petition that have been verified as valid.
- 2. The board of trustees shall make a written determination concerning the sufficiency of the petition and cause a copy of the determination, with the written summary of the results of the verification required by subsection 1, to be mailed to the petitioner designated in the petition pursuant to subsection 3 of section 3 of





this act as the representative of the petitioners. A petition that contains the required number of verified signatures and otherwise complies with the requirements of section 3 of this act must be determined to be sufficient and must be approved as provided in subsection 4.

- If the board of trustees determines that the petition is not sufficient, the petition shall be deemed withdrawn unless the petitioners, not later than 20 calendar days after the date of the determination, collect the required number of valid signatures or otherwise correct any deficiencies in the petition and resubmit the petition to the board of trustees. The board of trustees shall review the resubmitted petition and give notice of its determination as required by subsections 1 and 2, except that the determination must be made and notice must be given within 10 calendar days after the resubmitted petition is received. If, after receipt of the resubmitted petition, the board of trustees determines that the petition is still not sufficient and gives notice of its determination, no further action may be taken with respect to the petition. The board of trustees shall also notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board in writing of the disposition of the petition.
- 4. If the board of trustees determines that the petition is sufficient, the board of trustees shall:
- (a) Adopt a resolution approving the petition at a public hearing held not later than 15 calendar days after the date of the determination, and in any case on or before February 1;
- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of NRS 386.720 and notwithstanding whether the school district otherwise participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools, immediately begin the process of converting the underperforming public school to an empowerment school in accordance with the provisions of NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive, and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act so that the school may begin to operate as an empowerment school at the beginning of the next succeeding school year; and
- (c) Notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board in writing of the actions taken by the board of trustees.
- Sec. 5. Any provision of NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive, and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act which is otherwise applicable only if a school district participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools is applicable to the school district, its board of trustees and employees with respect to any underperforming public school in the school district if a petition for conversion of the school is submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act.





Sec. 6. 1. The parents or legal guardians of pupils enrolled in a public school which is converted to an empowerment school pursuant to a petition submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act may thereafter submit a written petition to the board of trustees of the school district to reverse the conversion. Any such petition must comply with and is subject to all the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of this act applicable to a petition for conversion.

2. If the petition is determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, the board of trustees shall adopt a resolution revoking the empowerment plan previously approved for the public school pursuant to NRS 386.745, effective at the beginning

of the next succeeding school year.

**Sec. 7.** NRS 386.700 is hereby amended to read as follows:

386.700 As used in NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive, *and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act,* unless the context otherwise requires [, "empowerment]:

1. "Empowerment school" means a public school operating under an empowerment plan developed pursuant to NRS 386.740 and approved pursuant to NRS 386.745 or 386.750, as applicable.

- 2. "Underperforming public school" means a public school which has been rated as underperforming by the Department pursuant to the statewide system of accountability for public schools. The term does not include:
  - (a) A charter school; or
- (b) Any other public school which is excluded from eligibility for conversion pursuant to section 2 of this act.
  - **Sec. 8.** NRS 386.720 is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 386.720 1. There is hereby established a Program of Empowerment Schools for public schools within this State. The Program does not include a university school for profoundly gifted pupils.
- 2. [The] Except as otherwise required pursuant to a petition submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, the board of trustees of a school district which is located:
- (a) In a county whose population is less than 100,000 may approve public schools located within the school district to operate as empowerment schools.
  - (b) In a county whose population is 100,000 or more shall approve not less than 5 percent of the schools located within the school district to operate as empowerment schools.
  - 3. The board of trustees of a school district which participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools shall, on or before September 1 of each year, provide notice to the Department of the





number of schools within the school district that are approved to operate as empowerment schools for that school year.

- 4. The board of trustees of a school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools may create a design team for the school district. If such a design team is created, the membership of the design team must consist of the following persons appointed by the board of trustees:
  - (a) At least one representative of the board of trustees;
- (b) The superintendent of the school district, or the superintendent's designee;
- (c) Parents and legal guardians of pupils enrolled in public schools in the school district:
- (d) Teachers and other educational personnel employed by the school district, including, without limitation, school administrators;
- (e) Representatives of organizations that represent teachers and other educational personnel;
- (f) Representatives of the community in which the school district is located and representatives of businesses within the community; and
- (g) Such other members as the board of trustees determines are necessary.
- 5. If a design team is created for a school district, the design team shall:
- (a) Recommend policies and procedures relating to empowerment schools to the board of trustees of the school district; and
- (b) Advise the board of trustees on issues relating to empowerment schools.
- 6. The board of trustees of a school district may accept gifts, grants and donations from any source for the support of the empowerment schools within the school district.
  - Sec. 9. NRS 386.725 is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 386.725 1. The board of trustees of a school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools may establish policies and procedures for public schools within the school district that wish to *or are required to* convert to empowerment schools , which may provide for:
- (a) The process by which a public school may convert *or be converted* to an empowerment school, including, without limitation, the development of an empowerment plan for the school in accordance with NRS 386.740;
- (b) Autonomy for the principal of each empowerment school to decide issues relating to the operation of the school, including, without limitation, the school schedule, governance, incentives for employees, staffing, budgeting and the provision of instruction;





- (c) The opportunity for empowerment schools within the school district to offer an alternative schedule, including, without limitation, a longer school day or a longer school year, or both, and to offer school during the summer; and
  - (d) Other matters as deemed necessary by the board of trustees.
- 2. The board of trustees of a school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools shall adopt policies and procedures which provide for:
- (a) Accountability measures designed to ensure that pupils enrolled in an empowerment school are achieving certain goals and standards relating to academic achievement;
- (b) The process for the selection of empowerment schools and the approval of empowerment plans for those schools;
  - (c) The process for renewal of empowerment plans;
- (d) The criteria for revocation of an empowerment plan for a school and the procedure for revocation; and
- (e) The time period for which empowerment plans will be approved.
- 3. Any policies and procedures adopted by the board of trustees of a school district pursuant to subsection 1 or 2 must not be inconsistent with NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive, and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act.
- **4.** A school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools shall provide a process for a pupil who resides in the school district to attend:
- (a) An empowerment school regardless of the school which the pupil is otherwise zoned to attend.
- (b) A school that is not an empowerment school if the pupil is zoned to attend a school that converts to an empowerment school.
- → The board of trustees of a school district must comply with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq., when establishing provisions relating to school choice pursuant to this subsection.
  - [4.] 5. An empowerment school shall:
  - (a) Enroll first the pupils who are zoned to attend that school.
- (b) After the enrollment of pupils pursuant to paragraph (a), if the school has space available, enroll pupils who are not otherwise zoned to attend the school on the basis of a lottery system.
- [5.] 6. A school district is not required to provide transportation to a pupil who attends a public school which the pupil is not otherwise zoned to attend.
- [6.] 7. A school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools shall provide a procedure for an empowerment school to obtain a waiver from the requirements and





regulations of the board of trustees of the school district. The board of trustees may not waive:

- (a) The requirements of a state or federal law or regulation.
- (b) A policy or requirement relating to safety, including, without limitation, hiring security personnel and following procedures designed to ensure the safety of the school, the personnel employed at the school and the pupils.
  - **Sec. 10.** NRS 386.730 is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 386.730 1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, the principal of a public school within a school district that participates in the Program of Empowerment Schools who wishes to convert to an empowerment school, or who is the principal of an underperforming public school with respect to which a petition is submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, shall:
  - (a) Establish an empowerment team for the school; and
- (b) Develop an empowerment plan for the school in consultation with:
  - (1) The empowerment team; and
- (2) The school support team, if a school support team has been established for the school in accordance with the regulations of the State Board adopted pursuant to NRS 385.361.
- 2. The principal of a public school located in a county whose population is less than 100,000 may develop an empowerment plan for the school without establishing or consulting with an empowerment team. If a school support team has been established for the school, the principal shall develop the empowerment plan in consultation with the school support team. If an empowerment team has not been established pursuant to the exception provided in this subsection, the principal of the school shall carry out the responsibilities and duties otherwise assigned to an empowerment team pursuant to NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive [.], and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act.
- 3. An empowerment team for a school must consist of the following persons:
  - (a) The principal of the school;
- (b) At least two but not more than four teachers and other licensed educational personnel who are employed at the school, selected by a recognized employee organization that represents licensed educational personnel within the school district;
- (c) At least two but not more than four employees, other than teachers and other licensed educational personnel, who are employed at the school, selected by an organization that represents those employees;





- (d) At least two but not more than four parents and legal guardians of pupils enrolled in the school, selected by an association of parents established for the school;
- (e) At least two but not more than four representatives of the community or businesses within the community;
- (f) The facilitator of the school support team, if a school support team has been established for the school pursuant to regulations adopted by the State Board pursuant to NRS 385.361; and
- (g) Such other persons as may be necessary to meet the requirements set forth in subsection 4.
- For an underperforming public school with respect to which a petition is submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, the parents and legal guardians selected pursuant to paragraph (d) must have signed the petition.
- 4. Of the total number of members on an empowerment team for a school:
- (a) At least one member must have 5 years or more of experience in school finance;
- (b) At least one member must have 5 years or more of experience in school administration or human resources;
- (c) At least one member must have 5 years or more of experience in overseeing the academic programs and curriculum for a public school; and
- (d) At least one member must have 5 years or more of experience in the collection and analysis of data.
  - The provisions of this subsection do not require the appointment of four persons if one, two or three such persons satisfy the qualifications.
- 5. A charter school that wishes to participate in the Program of Empowerment Schools shall comply with the provisions of NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive [...], and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act. If a charter school is approved as an empowerment school, the charter school does not forfeit its status as a charter school.
  - **Sec. 11.** NRS 386.745 is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 386.745 1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, the empowerment team of a public school, other than a charter school that is sponsored by the State Public Charter School Authority or by a college or university within the Nevada System of Higher Education, that develops an empowerment plan pursuant to NRS 386.740 shall submit the proposed empowerment plan to the designee of the board of trustees appointed pursuant to this subsection for review and approval pursuant to this section. The board of trustees shall designate a person to review each proposed





empowerment plan and recommend the approval or denial of the plan to the board of trustees.

- 2. The board of trustees shall approve or deny the empowerment plan. The approval or denial of an empowerment plan must be based solely upon the contents of the plan and may not consider the amount of money required to carry out the empowerment plan if the plan is within the limits of the total apportionment to the school pursuant to subsection 4 of NRS 386.740.
- 3. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, if the board of trustees approves an empowerment plan, the president of the board of trustees, the principal of the public school and the chair of the empowerment team, if the principal is not the chair, shall each sign the plan. The empowerment plan is effective for 3 years unless [the]:
- (a) The empowerment team determines that the school will no longer operate under the plan [or the];
  - (b) The board of trustees of the school district revokes the plan
  - (c) A petition for reversal of a conversion is filed with respect to the school pursuant to section 6 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act.
- 4. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, if the board of trustees denies an empowerment plan, the board of trustees shall:
- (a) Return the plan to the empowerment team with a written statement indicating the reason for the denial; and
  - (b) Provide the empowerment team with a reasonable opportunity to correct any deficiencies identified in the written statement and resubmit it for approval. [An] Except for an empowerment plan relating to a school with respect to which a petition is submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, an empowerment plan may be resubmitted not more than once in a school year.
  - 5. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, an empowerment plan for a public school is not effective and a public school shall not operate as an empowerment school unless the plan is signed by the president of the board of trustees of the school district, the principal of the public school and the chair of the empowerment team, if the principal is not the chair. If an empowerment plan includes a request for a waiver from a statute contained in this title or a regulation of the State Board or the Department, a public school may operate under the approved plan but the requested waivers from state law are not effective unless approved by the State Board pursuant to subsection 7.





- 6. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, the empowerment team may submit a written request to the board of trustees for an amendment to the empowerment plan approved pursuant to this section, including an explanation of the reason for the amendment. An amendment must be approved in the same manner as the empowerment plan was approved.
- 7. If the empowerment plan includes a request for a waiver from a statute or regulation, the board of trustees shall forward the approved empowerment plan to the State Board for review of the request for a waiver. The State Board shall review the empowerment plan and may approve or deny the request for a waiver from a statute or regulation unless the statute or regulation is required by federal law or is required to carry out federal law.
- 8. If the State Board approves the request for a waiver for a school, the Department shall provide written notice of the approval to the board of trustees of the school district that submitted the empowerment plan on behalf of the school.
- 9. If the State Board denies a request for a waiver, the State Board shall:
- (a) Return the request to the school district with a written statement indicating the reason for the denial; and
- (b) Except as otherwise provided in subsection 10, provide the empowerment team with a reasonable opportunity to correct any deficiencies identified in the written statement and resubmit it for approval. [A] Except for a request for a waiver relating to a school with respect to which a petition is submitted pursuant to section 3 of this act and determined to be sufficient pursuant to section 4 of this act, a request for a waiver may be resubmitted by the school district, after the empowerment team corrects any deficiencies, not more than once in a school year.
- 10. If an empowerment team has not been established pursuant to the exception provided in subsection 2 of NRS 386.730, the principal of the school shall carry out the responsibilities and duties assigned to the empowerment team pursuant to this section.
  - **Sec. 12.** NRS 386.780 is hereby amended to read as follows: 386.780 The State Board [may]:
- 1. Shall adopt regulations governing the form of a petition filed pursuant to section 3 or 6 of this act and the verification of the signatures on such a petition.
- 2. May adopt any other regulations to carry out the provisions of NRS 386.700 to 386.780, inclusive [.], and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act.
- **Sec. 13.** The provisions of this act do not apply during the current term of:





- 1. Any contract negotiated pursuant to chapter 288 of NRS which is effective before July 1, 2013, to the extent of any conflict between the contract and the provisions of this act, but do apply to any extension or renewal of such a contract or to any contract entered into on or after July 1, 2013.
- 2. Any written contract or notice of reemployment accepted and signed pursuant to NRS 391.120 before July 1, 2013, to the extent of any conflict between the contract or notice of reemployment and the provisions of this act, but do apply to any extension or renewal of such a contract or notice of reemployment or to any contract or notice entered into on or after July 1, 2013.

**Sec. 14.** This act becomes effective:

- 1. Upon passage and approval for the purposes of adopting regulations and performing any other preparatory administrative tasks that are necessary to carry out the provisions of this act; and
  - 2. On July 1, 2013, for all other purposes.





