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2 **BEFORE THE STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY**  
3 **STATE OF NEVADA**

4 In Re:

5 Nevada Connections Academy Notice of  
6 Closure or Possible Board Reconstitution  
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8 **DECLARATION OF JOE THOMAS**

9 I, Joe Thomas, hereby declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

10 1. I am a Nevada Connections Academy ("NCA") employee. I make this  
11 declaration in support of NCA relative to closure proceedings before the State Public Charter  
12 School Authority held on May 25, 26, and 27, 2017, and continued to an unspecified date in  
13 2017.  
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15 2. The matters set forth in this declaration are based on my own personal knowledge.  
16 If called upon to testify, I am competent to testify to the matters set forth herein.  
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18 3. I currently serve as NCA high school principal. I've been employed at NCA for 9  
19 years and have worked in a variety of roles. I started out as a social studies teacher. After 3 years,  
20 I took over the social studies department and became a teacher manager. During my 5<sup>th</sup> year  
21 (2012-2013) at NCA, I became the secondary assistant principal and testing director. During my  
22 time in administration, we immediately started to look at a number of metrics. Graduation rate,  
23 credit accrual by our students (when they entered and while they were at NCA) and successful  
24 course completion results by every single high school course offered at NCA. We discussed  
25 ways to improve these metrics over a series of policy changes, staffing needs and additional  
26 positions within the high school level to provide more support to our students and staff.  
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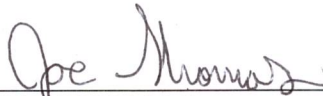
1           4.       We introduced the Grad Point program during the 2015-2016 school year to help  
2 support the vast number of credit-deficient students enrolling at NCA. During the first year of  
3 Grad Point implementation, we only had 100 seats available to allow us to develop a working  
4 program for credit recovery. We wanted to make sure we had a working system before we rolled  
5 out our credit recovery program on the full scale. We have since expanded that program to over  
6 500 students at the high school level. We are continuing to expand the Grad Point program and  
7 now have two full-time, highly qualified teachers, one for English and one for math dedicated  
8 solely to credit recovery. We aim to do the same for science and social studies as our numbers  
9 increase. Right now, the science and social studies credit recovery courses are managed by full-  
10 time teachers, but they are also teaching sections of standard science and social studies courses.

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12           5.       To further add support for our credit-deficient students, we created what we call  
13 the Every Student Succeeds Academy. In order to do this, we have changed our advisory  
14 program by adding success coaches. A success coach's main job is to work with off-cohort  
15 students to ensure they are staying on track, redeeming failed credits, and graduating. Success  
16 coaches monitor their students' performance daily through gradebook checks and bi-weekly  
17 calls. In my capacity as principal, I send student performance reports to each student's success  
18 coach and to their teachers. The reports include attendance and participation metrics, overall  
19 number of contacts with each student, and the student's standing in each of their courses. Our  
20 teachers and success coaches work together in their professional learning communities (PLCs) to  
21 ensure that each student has an individual plan moving forward that will help ensure their  
22 success. In addition, NCA counselors complete two transcript checks a year with every student  
23 to make any necessary changes to course placements and ensure students are staying on track to  
24 graduate. We have seen significant success with this program thus far and have developed  
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1 changes to be implemented in the 2017-2018 school year to make it an even more valuable asset  
2 for our students and to further improve our graduation rate.

3 6. Over the course of the last several years, I have worked directly with the NCA  
4 board. I have presented high school metrics to our board on several occasions during board  
5 meetings. During my presentations, the board is constantly asking follow-up questions regarding  
6 our student metrics to ensure we have a plan in place to provide necessary support. They are  
7 constantly asking the leadership team questions and providing suggestions and support in order  
8 to hold us accountable for our efforts. I have found our board to be very knowledgeable about  
9 our school's metrics and have been pleasantly surprised by the board's thorough understanding  
10 of NCA's day-to-day operations.  
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12 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Nevada that the  
13 foregoing is true and corrected and was executed this 12 day of June, 2017, in Reno,  
14 Nevada.  
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18 JOE THOMAS