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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 MINDI DAGERMAN**

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10 I, Mindi Dagerman, hereby declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

11 1. I currently serve as a Nevada Connections Academy (“NCA”) Board member,  
12 and have done so since 2008. I make this declaration in support of NCA relative to closure  
13 proceedings before the State Public Charter School Authority held on May 25, 26, and 27, 2017,  
14 and continued to an unspecified date in 2017.

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.

17 3. I am passionate about having choices for education in the state of Nevada. I love  
18 it here. I was born and raised in Henderson, NV. After high school, I came up to Reno for  
19 college at the University of Nevada to earn my Bachelors of Science in Mechanical Engineering  
20 with minors in Chemistry and Mathematics. I fell in love with the Reno area, and I wanted to  
21 raise a family here. I starting working for Southwest Gas as an Engineer, and I have worked my  
22 way up to the Engineering Supervisor over Compliance. I have been with Southwest Gas for  
23 over ten years. I earned my Master’s in Business Administration from the University of Nevada  
24 in 2011, and I am a registered Professional Engineer in the state. Given my background, I have  
25 served as the business member of the board. I am dedicated to NCA, its students, and staff.  
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1           4.       I am proud of what NCA has provided to K-12 students in Nevada. They have  
2 built a great school with qualified teachers that are helping to build foundations for Nevada  
3 students. Prior to each board meeting, I will review the entire board package to prepare for the  
4 meeting. If I have questions on the material, I will make notes of them to bring up during the  
5 meeting. I review the school operating metrics and the budget actuals and forecast reports. I do  
6 my best to attend all board meetings. Occasionally, I will have a conflict, but I will make sure  
7 that the board has quorum for the meeting ahead of time. This board is engaged. We are not  
8 afraid to ask questions, if we don't understand or are unsure. We have a good balance between  
9 business/financial and educational experience on the board. The board has great discussion. I  
10 rely on my fellow board members for the educational industry lingo and codes, and they rely on  
11 me for the business world point of view. This difference in perspective has been beneficial.

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14           5.       As a board, we have been actively monitoring NCA's graduation rate to verify  
15 that the data was accurate, and instead have found that the graduation rate calculation is  
16 significantly flawed. It included students that had left the school but didn't provide the proper  
17 paperwork to transfer to a new location, so they were still included in our graduation rate. To  
18 address this, we hired a private investigator to find these students. Our staff also spent hours  
19 researching where to find where these transplanted students.

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21           6.       During this research, it was also determined that NCA was seeing an increase in  
22 the number of students enrolling already credit-deficient. These students were being counted in  
23 the cohort calculation, despite not being with the school for any significant portion of time. We  
24 reviewed this information as a school and a board, and brainstormed approaches to address the  
25 issue. For example, we approved scholarships for student credit recovery. An implementation  
26 priority matrix was created to make a transparent awarding structure for these scholarships. The  
27 highest priority was for high school students that were credit deficient and the least priority was  
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1 for student enrichment. After the summer school session, we asked for updates on the  
2 effectiveness of this scholarship program. The budget for this item was increased throughout the  
3 years to provide support to more students. Recently, the board also approved the use of a new  
4 credit recovery program called Grad Point. So far, the feedback on the program has been  
5 positive. These two programs are helping get these students back on track. We are doing our  
6 best to adapt the school to the changing population while still supporting the current students.  
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8 7. I have witnessed additional positive changes within NCA in that the school now  
9 provides more orientation activities for students, parents, and learning coaches to provide a better  
10 foundation for the expectations for the students enrolled in the school. One of my most favorite  
11 things that I have seen implemented at the school is more opportunities for tutoring and face to  
12 face support. In the larger Nevada cities, the teachers are hosting face to face tutoring sessions to  
13 help students that need additional assistance. They are also offering these electronically in a  
14 similar setting to the virtual classroom environment.  
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16 8. NCA is dedicated to trying new and innovative applications, software and  
17 curriculum to see what works better for its students. Math has been a traditionally weaker area  
18 for the school, for example. NCA did research to find more innovative ways to teach math  
19 concepts and have the students master them. This is one of my interests, and I typically will stay  
20 after a board meeting, when I am there in person, and talk with the school administration about  
21 the curriculum, applications, and the successes/weaknesses of these items. I see that passion and  
22 energy for teaching (not just in STEM subjects) in each of the NCA teachers and administrators  
23 that I have spoken with. They love what they do, and they care about every student in their  
24 school.  
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26 9. NCA has fostered a sense of community with the families it serves. On occasion,  
27 I have run into NCA families while out with my family. They notice our NCA backpack, or I  
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1 over hear them talking about the school. It always sparks as an ice breaker. The feedback that I  
2 have received has been generally positive, and the families have wonderful stories about their  
3 experience with the school. If I hear a concern or recommendation for change, I make sure to get  
4 them in touch with the correct person at the school. I also follow to make sure that it was  
5 addressed or reviewed.  
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7 10. More recently, the school, with board guidance, developed a Graduation Rate  
8 Improvement Plan (also known as 'the cure'). The school took the lead on the development of  
9 this plan. It was presented to the board for review. The board agreed with most of the plan and  
10 expressed concerns in particular areas. We suggested changes and accepted the plan. One of the  
11 struggles of the plan is working to reconstitute the NCA board quickly. It is hard for us to find  
12 qualified candidates that want to volunteer on the NCA Board. I know that NCA board president  
13 Jafeth Sanchez has reached out to the Authority for assistance with finding board members, and  
14 she hasn't had much, if any, response. I talk with people who I think are qualified for the board,  
15 but I have struggled finding potential members during the current Notice of Closure filed against  
16 the school. People have not been interested in coming into this situation. We have also  
17 previously found it difficult to find new board members in the middle of the school year. Once  
18 we have a potential candidate, we have multiple board members conduct individual interviews.  
19 These are then discussed with the Board with the potential candidate's resume. We try to make  
20 sure that the new member will be dedicated to the Board, engaged, and knowledgeable, just as I  
21 have found each current Board member to be.  
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24 11. I should also say that I feel strongly that every child should be given the  
25 opportunity to succeed, earn their high school diploma, and go on to their next chapter (work,  
26 vocational school, college, etc.). To that end, we want to work with the Authority to find a  
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1 solution that will be effective in addressing the Authority's concerns. We want the school to be  
2 successful. Most of all, we want the students to succeed and make the world a little brighter.

3 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Nevada that the  
4 foregoing is true and corrected and was executed this 8<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2017, in Las Vegas  
5 Nevada.  
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9 MINDI DAGERMAN