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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 DAWN STARRETT**

9 I, Dawn Starrett, hereby declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

10 1. I am the parent of a former student with Nevada Connections Academy (“NCA”).

11 I make this declaration in support of NCA relative to closure proceedings before the State Public  
12 Charter School Authority held on May 25, 26, and 27, 2017, and continued to an unspecified  
13 date in 2017.

14 2. The matters set forth in this declaration are based on my own personal knowledge.  
15 If called upon to testify, I am competent to testify to the matters set forth herein.

16 3. During her senior year, my daughter, C. Fletcher, had difficulties with the public  
17 school she had been in. My daughter is battling an eating disorder and had been in treatment and  
18 had returned two weeks late into the semester. Being behind added to the stress of a traditional  
19 school and only made her condition worse. She was failing all but one of her classes, missing  
20 school, and her health was steadily declining. I spoke to the school counselor who did not offer  
21 any viable solutions and instead told me that “failure was a great lesson.” Transfer to the CCSD  
22 online school would not have helped my daughter because still being within the same school  
23 system would have resulted in a punitive outcome for my daughter. I felt like no one within  
24 CCSD could offer a solution with a potential for a positive outcome.  
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1           4.       At that point, I believed that Nevada Connections Academy was our ONLY  
2 option. I value and admire our school district in Nevada, and my daughter’s twin remained at the  
3 school district when my daughter transferred to NCA. I have nothing against traditional schools  
4 within our zoned district, but I do believe based on my experience that the traditional schools  
5 within the district are not equipped to accommodate students with serious emotional needs. The  
6 traditional school environment is extremely rigid, significantly more bureaucratic, and naturally  
7 more punitive—leaving us with no opportunity to customize my daughter’s experience to  
8 account for the emotional issues she was facing and the anxiety she felt in the classroom.  
9 Education is not a one-size-fits-all mold—what works for one of my children did not work for  
10 the other. Those who do not thrive in the traditional classroom environment must have a place to  
11 learn that fits their needs, and NCA is that successful alternative. NCA allowed what a  
12 traditional school would not—the school maintained high standards for my daughter, and at the  
13 same time gave her the personalized encounters and increased access to teachers that she needed,  
14 and eliminated her anxiety of competing with other student in the classroom for teachers’  
15 attention. She became motivated to learn every day as a result of reducing this anxiety.

16           5.       My daughter’s decision to transfer to NCA cannot be considered taking the “easy  
17 road.” It was in fact more challenging than the course load she would have faced at her  
18 traditional zoned school for her senior year because NCA pushed her to take on more courses to  
19 recover credits so that she would have the chance to graduate in four years.

20           6.       Fast forward to graduation less than 8 months later – my daughter walked in June  
21 2016 with an Honors Diploma, 4.28 weighted GPA and 4th in her class of 204 students. My  
22 daughter decided to take a gap year to address her eating disorder, and is now taking classes at  
23 the College of Southern Nevada. NCA helped broaden her scope to consider an alternative  
24 college, because she was yet not ready to leave home, live in the dorms, etc. My daughter  
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1 aspires to become a psychologist or family therapist to assist others with the struggles she has  
2 faced.

3 7. I credit NCA with saving my daughter's life by being her only option to succeed  
4 in her education and in life. Just by being open and accepting students—with whatever issues  
5 they brought along with them—Nevada Connections Academy made the difference for her as  
6 she had a place to go to receive a quality education that worked for her, and truly saved her life.  
7 My daughter thrived at NCA and did better than she ever had before. She later told me, "I'm  
8 glad you made me walk at graduation. I did not think I was going to be alive today, much less  
9 graduating." I credit NCA with that and believe that closing NCA would irreparably harm our  
10 youth and our State by depriving Nevadans of this important school choice for our children.

11 8. I ask that the Authority stop the threatened closure proceedings and allow NCA to  
12 continue providing this important educational choice for Nevadans who, like my daughter, have  
13 no other viable option for their education. To penalize NCA for not graduating "enough"  
14 students is like penalizing a psychologist because they have not produced enough "successful  
15 individuals" or a high-risk obstetrician for the number of deaths it sees—of course the statistics  
16 are worse because these doctors see the most high-risk patients, just as NCA receives many high-  
17 risk students. I ask that the Authority consider this reality in making its decision.

18 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Nevada that the  
19 foregoing is true and correct and was executed this 10 day of June, 2017, in Las Vegas,  
20 Nevada.

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26 DAWN STARRETT