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## **K-20 Education Priorities identified by The Lincy Institute's Education Collaborative Advisory Board**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lincy Institute at UNLV conducts and supports research and policy analysis that focuses on improving Nevada's health, education, and social services. This research and policy analysis are used to build capacity for service providers, inform public policy and public discourse and enhance efforts to draw state and federal resources to the greater southern Nevada region.

The Education Collaborative Advisory Board (ECAB) was established in April 2014 as part of The Lincy Institute Education Programs. A call for nominations was made in October 2013, and 12 applicants were selected to serve as ECAB board members. The purpose of ECAB is to provide suggestions based on the needs of the community in order to inform the work of The Lincy Institute Education Programs. The ECAB is composed of key local leaders from different education organizations. The organizations include Communities in Schools - Nevada, Nevada Succeeds, Nevada State Education Association, Andre Agassi Foundation for Education, Nevada Partners, Teach for America - Las Vegas Valley, Nevada PTA, Clark County School District, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, College of Southern Nevada, and Nevada State College.

In August 2014, ECAB members began to identify important education issues. To identify and prioritize common issues, Dr. Magdalena Martinez created a survey that asked members to rank education concerns by short-, intermediate-, and long-term issues. In October 2014, the survey results were distributed to the ECAB members during a quarterly meeting. The results helped determine the immediacy of specific education issues, while other concerns are better suited to be addressed or monitored in the long term. The following sections identify the education issues that will be addressed and revisited by the ECAB board and The Lincy Institute Education Programs researchers in the next two years.

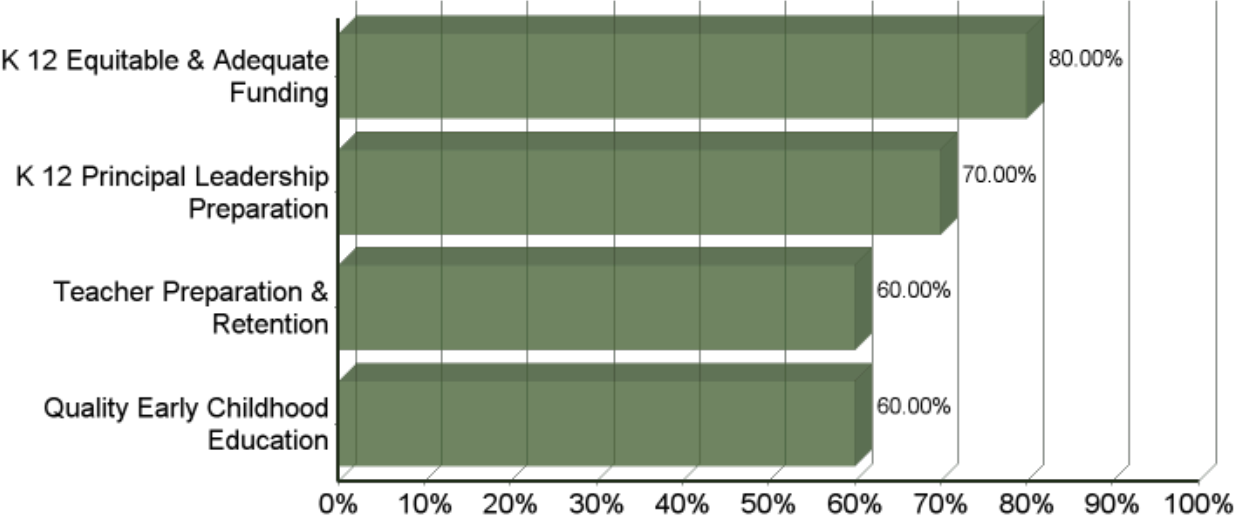
### **PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY THE ECAB MEMBERS**

As part of survey members were asked to identify the intended audience of The Lincy Institute Education Programs work. Over half of the members identified local and state policy makers as the primary audience followed by leadership at social service and public organizations. Members identified at least 17 education concerns or issues which were prioritized further by short-, intermediate- and long-term priorities.

The first version of this brief was presented at an ECAB meeting on January 12, 2015. At the meeting, ECAB members provided additional insight and guidance on deliverables associated with short term education issues. In the following sections the priorities are identified followed by examples of research and work The Lincy Institute Education Programs is or was contributing, engaged or supporting in some meaningful way.

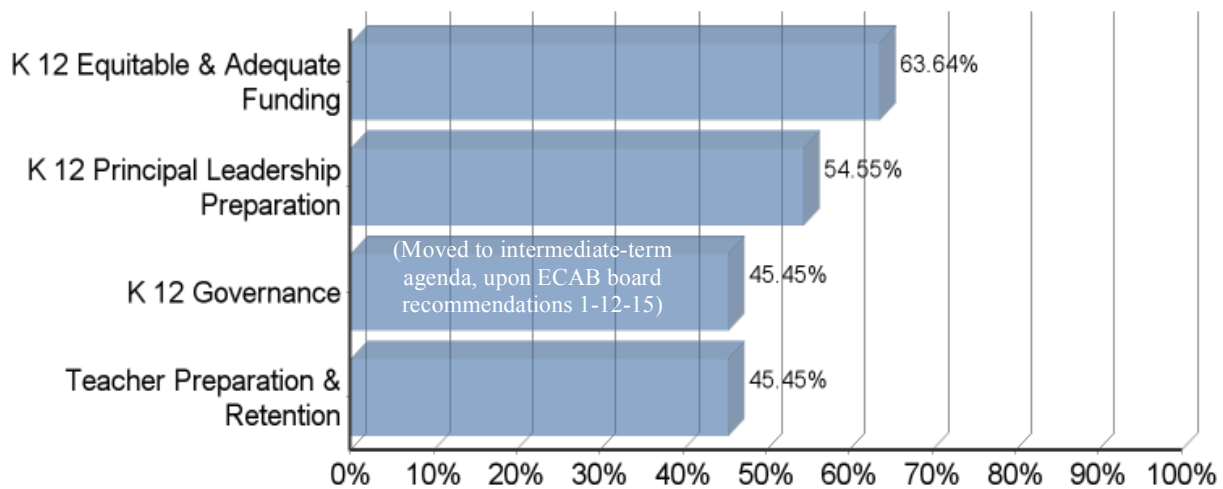
### **MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE LAS VEGAS COMMUNITY**

The survey asked ECAB members to rank the importance of each education issue to the Southern Nevada community. The survey results revealed four education issues that should be considered “most important,” and therefore prioritized in the next two years. Members identified *K-12 Equitable and Adequate Funding* (short-term issue) as the most important issue for our community followed by *K-12 Principal Leadership Preparation*, *Quality Early Childhood Education*, and *Teacher Preparation and Retention*. Each of these priorities is discussed in the context of short-, intermediate- and long-term issues in the following sections.



### **SHORT-TERM ISSUES – 6 TO 18 MONTHS**

Based on survey responses, members identified *K-12 equitable and adequate funding* and *K-12 principal leadership preparation* as the two most important short-term education issues. Members also indicated that *K-12 governance* and *teacher preparation and retention* should be considered short-term issues. At the January 12, 2015 ECAB meeting, members suggested that *K-12 Governance* be moved to the intermediate-term agenda. In its place, members felt that *Charter Schools* was more immediately important, and should be moved to the short-term agenda.



### Short-Term Issues: Contributions, Engagement or Support

#### *K-12 Equitable & Adequate Funding*

Equitable and adequate K-12 funding was ranked as the top short-term issue. In 2014, The Lincy Institute commissioned two adequacy studies to update the 2006 Augenblick, Palaich and Associates study. In addition, independent quantitative researchers from UNLV and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis were commissioned to conduct a separate cost-function analysis of Nevada education adequacy.

At the October 2014 ECAB meeting, researchers Dr. Anna Lukemeyer from UNLV and Carrie Sampson presented their preliminary findings on their study. The results or progress of both studies were presented at a community forum titled, *Investing in Our Children's Future: Adequacy Studies and K-12 Education in Nevada* in January 2015.

#### *K-12 Principal Leadership Preparation*

UNLV launched a new academic program in Spring 2015 to help prepare the next generation of principals. The Urban Leadership Program is considered a revival and enhancement of the educational leadership degree that was eliminated at UNLV during recession-related budget cuts. The Urban Leadership Program is designed for teachers and school professionals, and will be a master's program that can be completed in 18 months. Planning director for the UNLV Urban Leadership Program, Patti Chance, notes that this new degree program fosters community partnership through the inclusion of a year-long school improvement project that involves cooperative mentorship from CCSD and UNLV faculty. Lincy scholars and researchers are engaged in conversations with program planners and will continue to explore possible partnerships to ensure the success of the Urban Leadership Program.

#### *K-12 Governance*

Nationally, there are over 13,500 local school boards composed of local leaders who are responsible for ensuring education policies are aligned with their communities' priorities, values and goals. School governance affects everyone: children, families, teachers, communities and business. In the mid-1950s Nevada public school governance was

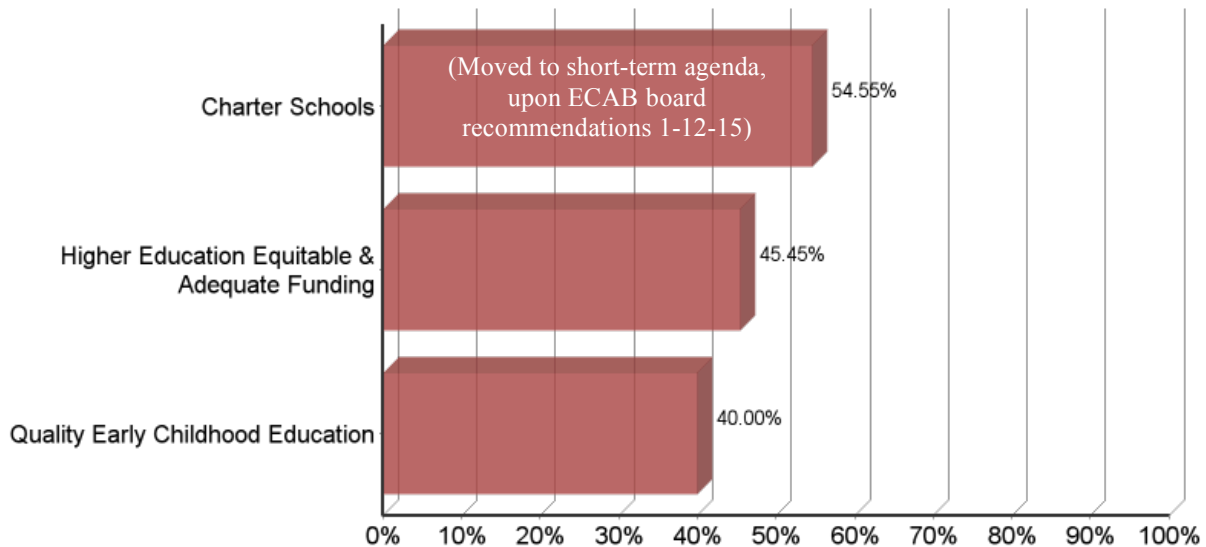
reformed and the state legislature consolidated over 200 local school districts into 17 districts. Today Clark County School District is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the nation and its single governing board serves over 300,000 students. The second largest Nevada public school district is Washoe County School District which serves a little over 60,000 students. In April 2015, Lincy researchers Drs. Magdalena Martinez and David Damore examined this topic in a brief titled, *Modernizing Nevada's Education Structures: Opportunities for the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the Nevada Legislature*. Under the guidance of ECAB members, The Lincy Institute will continue to explore possible research and policy analysis on Nevada public school governance.

### *Teacher Preparation and Retention*

Quality teacher preparation and retention programs and policies contribute to successful outcomes. Dr. Martinez, along with several ECAB members, is currently engaged in The Nevada Consortium for the Teacher Pipeline. As of March 2015, the Consortium convened four times and, in a short period, close to 100 individuals participated and represented a wide range of organizations and constituent groups. For instance, participants represent CCSD, The Public Education Foundation, colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs, United Way of Southern Nevada, Nevada State Education Association (NSEA), Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA), Honoring Our Public Education (HOPE), Nevada Succeeds, Teach for America – Las Vegas, The New Teacher Project (TNTP), Nevada Department of Education, Clark County Black Caucus and the Latino Leadership Council. The strategies from the Consortium participants are intended to address both immediate and long-term aspects of the teacher pipeline in Nevada. The Consortium is in the process of exploring a position paper which will identify policy and practice priorities. In addition, the Consortium as identified legislative priorities for the 78th Session of the Nevada Legislature and has submitted a letter of support for six legislative bills. The Lincy Institute will continue to be a key partner and help facilitate on-going dialogues.

### **INTERMEDIATE-TERM ISSUES – 18 TO 24 MONTHS**

Members also identified the top three intermediate-term issues: *charter schools*, *higher education equitable and adequate funding*, and *quality early childhood education*. Again, ECAB members determined that *Charter Schools* should be prioritized as a short-term issue.



## Intermediate Issues: Contributions, Engagement or Support

### *Charter Schools*

In November 2014, Brookings scholars Matthew M. Chingos and Martin R. West published a brief titled, *Mixed Results for Arizona's Charter Schools*. In this report, Chingos and West find that charter schools in Arizona situated in urban areas have better outcomes than charter schools in suburban areas. In suburban areas, they found charter schools as a whole do no better, and sometimes worse, than the traditional public schools. The Lincy Institute has conducted preliminary research on charter schools in North Las Vegas. Lincy researchers assessed performance differences between charter and non-charter schools. Consistent with findings in the Brookings report, preliminary research shows mixed performance outcomes between charter and non-charter schools in North Las Vegas. The Lincy Institute may continue to explore charter school performance in Southern Nevada under the guidance of the ECAB.

### *Higher Education: Equitable and Adequate Funding*

In October 2014, The Lincy Institute published a brief titled *Held Harmless: Higher Education Funding and the 77th Session of the Nevada Legislature*. In this report, Dr. David Damore discusses the higher education funding formula by reviewing the 2013 legislative session when Nevada's higher education funding structure was reformed. Prior to his study, no research had comprehensively analyzed the impact of these higher education funding policy changes. Dr. Damore provides a review of the higher education formula and non-formula appropriations for 2014 and 2015, in order to assess what the higher education funding reforms did and did not accomplish. The report also assesses capital differences between UNR and UNLV and to more fully evaluate what occurred in 2013, details on how revenue from student fees and tuition were accounted for under the old funding framework and during the transition to the new funding formula. The Lincy

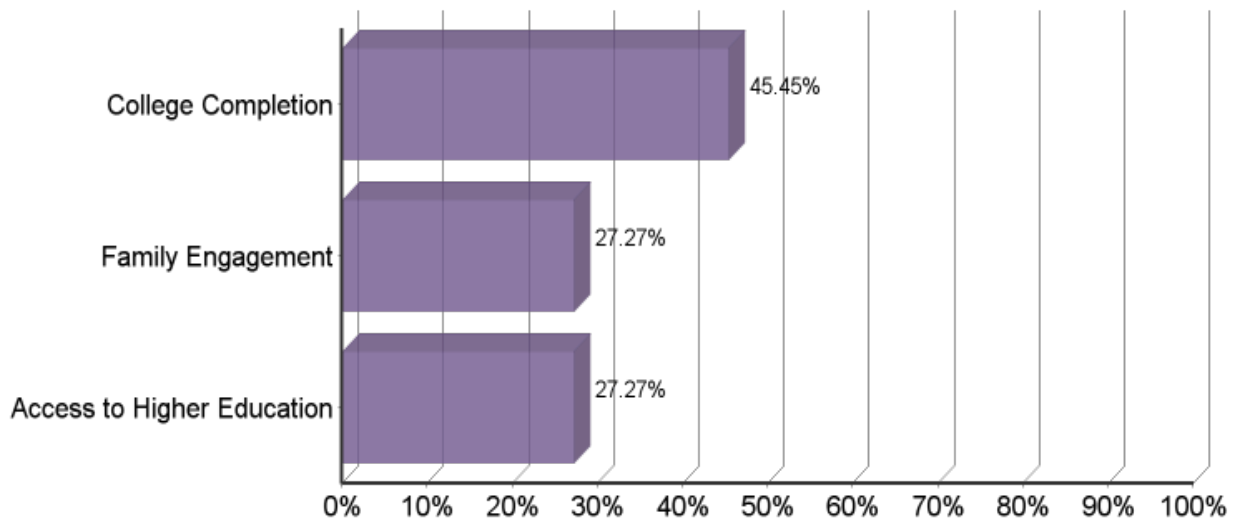
Institute may continue to explore policy implications as it relates to equitable and adequate funding for public higher education.

### *Quality Early Childhood Education*

In April 2012, The Lincy Institute published a policy brief titled, *Ready for School, Ready for Life* by Dr. Sonya Douglas Horsford. Dr. Horsford explored the importance of school readiness in the state of Nevada. This brief investigates the notion that "all children should arrive at school ready for the first day. This has important implications not only for parents, early childhood educators, and K-12 schoolteachers, but also policy makers, business owners, and our local and state economies." The brief provides a definition of school readiness, presents the most recent conceptualization of school readiness in the state of Nevada, and examines the challenges inherent in building bridges between the separate and distinct domains of early childhood and K-12 education. The brief concludes with a summary of selected policy recommendations for advancing school readiness in Nevada as part of the state's broader goals of increasing educational opportunity, equity, and achievement among its children and youth. The Lincy Institute may continue to track the progress of these policy recommendations.

### **LONG-TERM ISSUES – 24 MONTHS AND BEYOND**

Members indicated that *college completion* should be prioritized as a long-term issue as well as *family engagement*, and *access to higher education*.



### Long-Term Issues: Contributions, Engagement or Support

#### *College Completion*

The Lincy Institute is involved in at least two college completion research initiatives. Researchers are currently gathering preliminary data on Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates for Nevada high schools. Previous researchers

have found that students who have access to, and receive financial aid are more likely to enroll in higher education and complete a baccalaureate degree. Current data reports the completion rates for each public high school in Nevada. Under the guidance of ECAB, The Lincy Institute may explore policy and practice implications for Nevada FAFSA completion rates. Additionally, the United Way of Southern Nevada was recently awarded a planning grant by the Lumina Foundation for Education. This grant will be used to help develop a plan to increase postsecondary degree attainment and completion in Southern Nevada. The Lincy Institute is involved in the planning group and will continue to provide input as a key stakeholder.

### *Family Engagement*

In August 2012, The Lincy Institute published a policy brief titled *Parent and Family Engagement: The Missing Piece in Urban Education Reform*. Dr. Sonya Douglas Horsford and Tonia Holmes-Sutton reveal the importance of parent and family engagement in the educational lives of children and youth. According to their research, family engagement positively influences student learning and achievement. While this connection may seem obvious, varying ideals of parent engagement limit the ways in which school communities understand, encourage, and benefit from meaningful school-home-community interactions. This is frequently the case in culturally diverse, urban communities where education reform has focused heavily on high stakes testing, teacher accountability, and school choice, but less on the fragile connections that often exist between schools and the families they serve. Their brief provides a review of selected research on parent involvement and expands existing understandings of parent and family engagement in ways that are culturally relevant and responsive to the diverse strengths and needs of families in urban communities. It concludes with specific recommendations for strengthening parent and family engagement. Under the guidance of ECAB, The Lincy Institute may explore policy and practice implications.

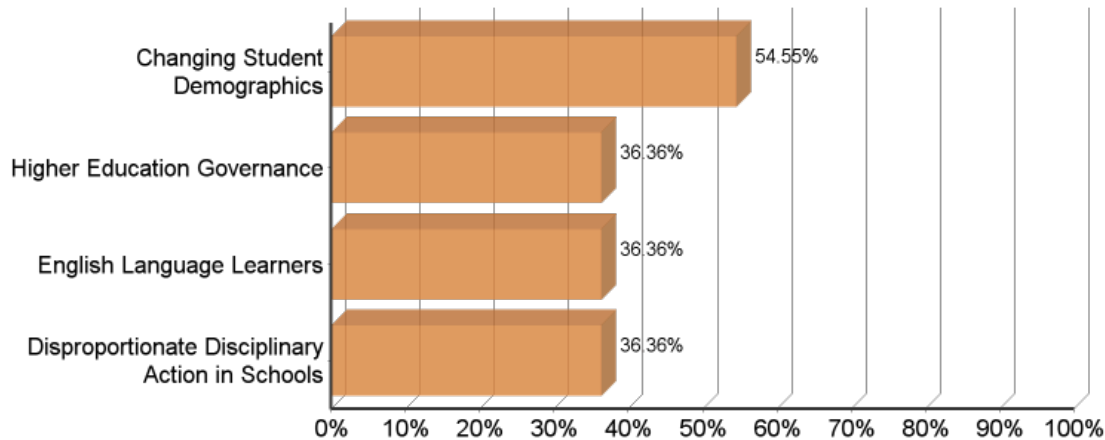
### *Access to Higher Education*

Lincy researchers are currently engaged in at least two research projects which examine college access. The first examines college access through a community-based college emersion program. The college emersion program, Latino Youth Leadership Program, brings recent high school students to a college campus for one week and explores multiple college success and career exploration topics. Lincy Institute researchers, along with other UNLV researchers, have collected program evaluation data and research artifacts to explore the outcomes of this program. The research will have policy and practice implications for community-based college access programs. The second research project explores college access through community college transfer. Community colleges are an important part of the current higher education landscape because they provide access to underrepresented and low-income student populations. In Southern Nevada, there is only one community college (College of Southern Nevada). Researchers are investigating the institutional, personal, and cultural barriers that hinder community college transfer success. The study will include interviews with transfer students, surveys to assess the experience of students, and institutional transfer policies. The study will also

examine policy and practice recommendations. The findings of both studies will be published as results are identified.

## ISSUES TO MONITOR

Members identified issues to monitor over time. Members selected *changing student demographics* as the most important issue to monitor. Additionally, *higher education governance*, *English language learners*, and *disproportionate disciplinary action in schools* were selected as important issues to monitor.



### Issues to Monitor: Contributions, Engagement or Support

#### *Student Demographics*

The Lincy Institute scholars are trained researchers who are experienced in multiple research methods, analysis and frameworks. A common thread through all research areas is the demographic reality of the state and region. Specifically, race, ethnicity and gender demographics are important lens used to analyze research, policy and practice priorities.

#### *Higher Education Governance*

In May 2014, The Lincy Institute published a policy brief entitled *The Case for a New College Governance Structure in Nevada: Integrating Higher Education with Economic Development*. The brief provides a governance model that integrates higher education with economic development. Specifically the authors, in response to a call for recommendations by the Committee to Study Community College Governance, identify governance models that are evidence-based and constitutionally sound to achieve Nevada's economic development goals. The proposal includes a two-tier structure that has legislative oversight and recognizes and empowers localities. The model does not propose to dismantle any existing public institution of higher education or to place colleges under the exclusive control of local governments. The Lincy Institute will continue to monitor policy implications to public higher education governance.



## *English Language Learners*

In March 2013, The Lincy Institute published a brief titled *Nevada's English Language Learner Population: A Review of Enrollment, Outcomes and Opportunities*. Lincy researchers reviewed the status of education for Nevada's English Language Learner (ELL) population with a focus on Clark County. Nevada is ranked first in the U.S. for having the highest growth rate of Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals and fifth in the nation for having the largest share of LEP residents (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). The Lincy Institute will continue to monitor English Language Learner policy in the state of Nevada. Lincy Institute researcher, Dr. Martinez, also serves on the English Mastery Council. The English Mastery Council is a legislatively created panel to assess English Language Learner policies statewide.

## *Disproportionate Disciplinary Action in Schools*

Dr. Tara Raines, Lincy Assistant Professor at UNLV, College of Education is currently exploring disproportionate disciplinary action in schools. Her research centers on universal screening for behavioral and emotional risk, as it relates to reducing the disproportionate referral of children of color for special education programs and disciplinary sanctions. She is focused on exploring appropriate behavioral and emotional interventions for use in multi-tiered systems and providing instruction to school personnel on intervention implementation practices. Dr. Raines is developing a group-based intervention protocol to better meet the needs of the low resource, high-risk students identified through universal screening. She has been piloting this group-based intervention program in Los Angeles Unified School District since Fall 2013 and using the pilot data to apply for additional external funding that would allow her to further explore the utility of this program. Additionally, Dr. Raines is working locally with the My Brother's Keeper initiative which is focused on improving educational outcomes and reducing juvenile justice interactions, specifically with boys of color.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Lincy Institute values the suggestions, insights and experiences of the Education Collaborative Advisory Board members and will continue to engage community leaders in order to achieve the mission of the The Lincy Institute at UNLV. The priorities identified in this brief will continue to be examined in order to improve the educational outcomes of all Nevadans.