

## State Sen. Mo Denis, a Las Vegas Democrat, brings the ‘free’ college push to Nevada

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Mo Denis, a Las Vegas Democrat serving in the state Senate, proposes that taxpayers pay for two years of tuition at a community college or trade school for Nevada residents.

It’s a baby step toward socialist Bernie Sanders’ “free college for all” proposal that gained traction on the left during the recent presidential campaign.

Sen. Denis plans to introduce legislation to such an effect during the 2017 legislative session, which kicked off Monday. His plan is modeled after a program Tennessee implemented two years ago.

It’s worth noting that Sen. Denis — like most of his Democratic colleagues — has steadfastly opposed virtually every effort to impose increased accountability on the public school system by providing Nevada parents with more educational options for their children. In fact, he also backs legislation to kill a small pilot program that allows the state to convert a small number of failing Clark County schools into charter campuses in an effort to boost subterranean achievement levels.

Meanwhile, some 58 percent of 2015 Nevada high school graduates who went on to attend a state institution of higher learning required remedial classes in math or English. In addition, ACT scores in 2016 reveal that just 9 percent of Clark County high school juniors have the math, reading, English and science skills to succeed in college.

Yet Sen. Denis, while fighting to euthanize reform efforts designed to boost student performance in the lower grades, pushes for “free” college. If you saw a child flailing away in Lake Mead, struggling to keep his head above water, would you toss him a life preserver or promise him free swimming lessons if he survives?

Sen. Denis apparently favors the latter.

The concept of “free” college is as absurd as it sounds. It’s a cynical ploy to win votes with millennials by yoking taxpayers to another budget-busting entitlement. But it makes even less sense when so many Nevada kids handed their high school diplomas aren’t academically equipped to move on to the next level in the first place.

The Review-Journal’s Natalie Bruzda attended a panel discussion last week in Philadelphia hosted by the Education Writers Association. Rising college tuition costs were a contentious

topic, she reported. But the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey provided a refreshing dose of common sense on the subject.

"Before we start saying let's get more people into college," he said, "we maybe need to make sure they can do college."

Give that man a gold star.