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Testimony before the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
By Sheri S. Williams, Ed.D.
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Honorable Commissioners:

My name is Sheri Williams. I serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Carlsbad Municipal Schools, a district with 5800 K-12 students. I am here to talk with you about our children, our future, and how they fit into your deliberations.

First, our community welcomes the idea of a possible nuclear waste facility in Carlsbad. Carlsbad's teachers, parents and community leaders have a long-standing trust in the technical expertise that resides right here in Carlsbad and our surrounding communities. We know the safety record of the industry. We have a skilled and talented pool of community leaders who know how to engage the public in important policy questions about our nuclear future.

Second, from my perspective as the Superintendent of Public Schools, I can tell you that Carlsbad is uniquely positioned to become part of the solution for the nation's nuclear repository needs. Many of our school-aged youth have parents in the waste isolation and mining industries. Our students are primed to be the next generation of engineers who are enthusiastic about a future in STEM careers, in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In fact, over the course of the past several years, our students have gained attention for their outstanding presentations at International Science and Engineering Fairs in Reno and Atlanta. They have also been invited to present their research ideas at the National Geological Society in Denver and Austin. This kind of early recognition for high school students is made possible because our students have access to technical experts here in our community. Our students have the opportunity to interact with and be exposed to world-class scientists. Our hope is to motivate and inspire even more students, particularly female and minority students, to be a player in developing solutions for a safe nuclear future.

Third, it is not only our school children that benefit from the partnership with our local nuclear industry. Our teachers have been awarded grants from the American Nuclear Society, Project Lead the Way and the Advanced Programs Initiative. Grant projects like these give our teachers an opportunity to network and interact with local professionals in the field and to bring the ideas back into the classroom. As a result, our science and math classrooms are project-based and grounded in real-world applications that will lead to careers in technology and engineering.

Finally, we are proud to say that our school partnership with the industry is poised to "grow the next generation of engineers" who will be ready to help find solutions for expanded and safe disposal of high-level waste. We have a tremendous future capability, right here in Carlsbad, to find safe and effective ways to store the nation's huge volume of commercial spent fuel. Our classrooms are filled with students of high potential and teachers of high energy who welcome the challenge. We urge you to consider Carlsbad as the right place for a future nuclear waste facility and the right choice for our children's future aspirations.