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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/05/13

SPONSOR Padilla LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Social Workers in High-Poverty Schools SB 235

ANALYST Gudgel

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY13	FY14		
	\$3,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY13	FY14	FY15	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		\$1,800.0	\$4,800.0	\$6,600.0	Recurring	School District and Charter School Operating Budgets

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From
Public Education Department

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 235 (SB 235) enacts a new section of the Public School Code, requiring “high-poverty public schools” to employ a licensed social worker. The bill defines “high-poverty public schools” as schools in which 85 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch. The bill phases the requirement in over the next three school years (2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016), and provides an exemption for small rural school districts with a MEM of 200 or less. The bill appropriates \$3 million to the PED to support this in one-third of the state’s public schools in FY14.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill makes a \$3 million appropriation to the Public Education Department to implement the requirements of this bill in one-third of the public school districts in the state. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2014 shall revert to the general fund.

The bill requires districts to phase-in the new positions over three years, however, the appropriation is limited to 2014, with all remaining funds reverting to the general fund at the end of fiscal year 2014.

Approximately 310 public elementary schools would be considered “high poverty” pursuant to the provisions of this bill. Currently 70 of these schools employ social workers, and another 18 would be exempt from the provision because of their size. Using an average school social worker salary of \$50,245 and benefits assumed at 30 percent (\$65,319), the total cost of implementation in FY14 would be approximately \$4.8 million. For FY15, implementation in two-thirds of high poverty schools would total \$9.7 million, and full implementation in FY16 would total \$14.5 million.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The assumptions above assume no “high poverty public school” currently employs a social worker. PED analysis indicates districts use the following alternative funding streams for school behavioral/mental health services provided by social workers and other behavioral health professionals:

- Medicaid reimbursement through HSD/Medicaid School-Based Health Services
- School-based health centers that receive DOH and federal funding
- Title I funding
- IDEA B funding for students who qualify for special education services
- Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS)-Schools can use 15% of their IDEA funds to provide academic and behavioral support, including behavioral health services, to at-risk students who do not receive special education services
- Rural Low-Income Schools (RLIS) Grant funds can be used for activities that are authorized under the Title IV (Safe and Drug-Free Schools) Program
- Indian Education Impact Aid funding

According to PED Analysis:

Currently, there are 662 non-expired social workers who are licensed in the PED licensure database. Although this is an adequate pool of social workers to hire a social worker in 310 high-poverty schools, the location, experience and qualifications of the social workers are currently unknown. Also, the needs and resources of school districts across the state are vastly different which may require a multiple strategy approach to address the behavioral health needs of students.

Additionally, school behavioral health services in New Mexico are provided in a variety of ways, including low cost options. Social workers or other behavioral health professionals can provide in-school services such as case management, individual/group counseling, referrals, and crisis

intervention to students. Some schools also have formal agreements with community health providers to provide behavioral/mental health services to students.

Some schools are linked to school-based health centers that provide integrated health and behavioral/mental health services, including prevention, health education and school tele-health. A few New Mexico schools offer integrated services through a full service community school approach that includes behavioral health care. Health education classes are another opportunity to provide prevention and education related to behavioral health.

Some schools provide a school-wide prevention approach such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, focused on universal and individualized strategies and interventions to teach appropriate student behaviors, prevent inappropriate behaviors, and create a positive school environment. Some schools also provide curriculum-based programs such as Second Step and Olweus Bullying Prevention, focused on social and emotional development.

Albuquerque Public Schools utilizes a collaborative health and mental health service model in which an interdisciplinary health/mental health team provides consultation and resources to each other and coordinates services for students.

Schools may have multiple opportunities through school-community partnerships to address student behavioral health and provide resources and services to students. Regional Education Cooperatives can often provide technical assistance and resources related to behavioral health support.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

SB 235 may relate to PED's strategic lever to ensure that students are ready for success.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB 235 requires:

- PED to verify that 310 high-poverty public schools in New Mexico have employed a licensed social worker.
- PED to develop exceptions to the requirement that every high-poverty public school shall employ a social worker for small rural public school districts with 200 or less student.
- PED to determine funding criteria, award sites and monitor funding.

RSG/svb