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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019

Bill Number	<u>SB31</u>	Sponsor	<u>Padilla</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.211157.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Social Workers in All High-Poverty Schools</u>		
Analyst	<u>Terrazas</u>	Original Date	<u>1/22/19</u>
		Last Updated	<u>3/6/19</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 31 (SB31) would require every high-poverty public school, defined as having 85 percent or more of students eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, to employ a licensed social worker for each school year, phased in over a three-year period. One-third of New Mexico's high-poverty schools would be required to employ a social worker by FY20, two-thirds of the state's high-poverty schools would have to employ a social worker by FY21, and all of the state's high-poverty schools would need to employ a social worker by FY22. The bill makes an exception for school districts with 200 or fewer students that work with an existing regional education cooperative authorized by the secretary of the Public Education Department (PED) pursuant to the Regional Cooperative Education Act. SB31 would appropriate \$3 million to PED to implement the bill's provisions.

The bill defines "MEM" as the average full-time school district or charter school membership, including early childhood education full-time equivalent membership, and special education membership, as calculated on the second and third reporting dates of the prior school year pursuant to Section 22-8-13 NMSA 1978.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$3 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY20. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY20 shall revert to the general fund.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for HB2 includes \$113.2 million for at-risk students, which could be used toward employing social workers.

PED indicates the fiscal impact on the department will be minimal.

Based on the bill's criteria, 354 public schools, including charter schools, qualify as high-poverty schools. Of these schools, 118 high-poverty schools must have a social worker by FY20 and 236

high-poverty schools must have a social worker by FY21. All 354 schools must have a social worker by FY22. According to PED, there were 1,060.31 FTE guidance counselors and social workers across all school districts during the 2017-2018 school year, but it is unclear how many high-poverty schools have social workers. Further, social workers funded with federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act fund can only work with students receiving special education services, limiting the number of students a social worker can help in a high-poverty school. PED reported the average salary for guidance counselors and social workers as \$53,179 during the 2017-2018 school year. Using PED's estimated cost of employee benefits for new employees, it would cost about \$73,000 to employ a new social worker, which means the \$3 million appropriation in SB31 would cover only 41.11 FTE. Additionally, PED indicates four of 145 Title I schools set aside school district funds for a social worker. To receive federal Title I funds, 85 percent of a school district's students must be eligible for free or reduced-fee meals.

Approximately 260 public schools in FY19

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The National Association of Social Workers indicates social workers working within school systems have a wide range of job functions that enhance a student's emotional well-being and academic performance. School social workers help students, families, and teachers address barriers to learning, including truancy, social withdrawal, overaggressive behaviors, and the effects of physical, emotional, or economic problems. Social workers typically provide crisis management services, including assessing a student's safety, and case management services, including referrals to community resources. Social workers conduct home visits, provide trainings and workshops for teachers, school staff, and parents, and advocate for student services and students' best interests. Often, social workers provide direct therapeutic services, such as individual, family, or group therapy sessions regarding specific issues.

In New Mexico there are three kinds of social work licenses, Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW), Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), and Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW). To obtain an LBSW, a licensure applicant must have earned a bachelor of social work or master of social work. To obtain an LMSW or LISW, a licensure applicant must have earned a master of social work or doctorate of social work. Before obtaining a license, an applicant must pass an exam by the Association of Social Work Boards and the New Mexico jurisprudence exam and complete a three-hour course on New Mexican cultures. In addition, to obtain an LISW, an applicant must show verification of 3,600 hours of supervised professional social work within a two-year period.

It is unclear if there are an adequate number of social workers licensed in the state to meet the needs of the bill.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB31 would require PED to issue rules to annually verify schools are complying with the bill's provisions.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)

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