October 12th, 2017
Ms. Jamie Gonzales
Policy Division
NM Public Education Department, Room 101
300 Don Gaspar Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87501

      RE: LANL Foundation comment on NM STEM –Ready standards

Dear Ms. Gonzales:

      The Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation (LACDC)respectfully submits to the Public Education Department (PED) feedback and comment on the proposed repeal of 6.29.10 NMAC- Science, to be replaced by 6.29.10 NMAC- New Mexico Stem-Ready Science Standards.

      While we applaud the PED for proposing new science standards to replace the current 2003 science standards, we do not support the NM STEM Ready Standards (NMSRS) as proposed. Instead, we support the adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) without any changes.

      LACDC is a private not-for-profit economic and community development organization in Los Alamos County. Our work is focused on improving the economy and the quality of life for our local businesses and residents. Oftentimes, the relationship between economic development and primary education is overlooked. However, the two are closely linked, especially in the case of STEM education.

      We see three results from adopting the proposed standards that would have severe negative effects on the economy of Los Alamos County and the State as a whole.

      First, the ability to recruit new companies to both Los Alamos and the State is already a difficult task. The new standards as proposed will make the State even less attractive to technology-based companies looking to expand or relocate to New Mexico. A state in which the adopted public education system science standards fail to acknowledge foundational scientific knowledge will make recruiting companies to grow jobs extremely difficult as we will not be competitive in developing the future desired workforce when compared to states that have adopted the Next Generation Science Standards with no modifications.

Second, the proposed changes will make recruiting of the best and brightest talent to our existing businesses much more difficult. Technology companies and research institutions based in Los Alamos and New Mexico rely on recruiting top tier talent to drive business growth and perform world class research. Much of this talent is younger and many have families with school aged children. These workers have built their career around strong scientific and engineering education and expect the same for their children. Employment options exist in many other locations and we compete for these highly skilled workers. Adoption of the standards as proposed will do serious harm to our ability to continue to attract and retain top talent.

Third, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is tasked with national security related mission work that requires the best minds in the world to be successful. This work must be done to the highest of standards. If LANL is unable to recruit and retain the best scientists and engineers, this essential work might be moved out of Los Alamos County and out of New Mexico to other facilities in states that support the highest standards in STEM education. The same holds true for other federal research institutions such as Sandia National Laboratory and the Air Force Research Laboratory.

The LACDC stands ready to work with the PED to further develop Scientific Education Standards that prepare our children to be competitive in the workforce, make New Mexico a leader in developing the next generation of top scientists and engineers, and place New Mexico at the front of the line as a desirable location for growing science and technology based companies.
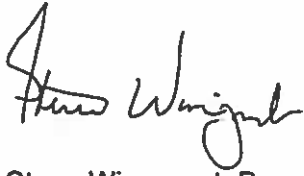
Sincerely,

Patrick Sullivan, Executive Director

John Gulas, Board Chair

Steve Winegeart, Board Treasurer

Bill Wadt, Board Member

Laura Crucet, Board Member

Pete Sheehey, Board Member

Liddie Martinez, Board Member

David Jolly, Board Member

Stephanie Garcia Richard, Board Member

David Horpedhal, Board Member

Harry Burgess, Board Member

Steven J. Buelow

Steve Buelow, Board Member