HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 18

44TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2000

INTRODUCED BY

Mimi Stewart

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO RECOGNIZE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE CREDITS IN NEW MEXICO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS.

WHEREAS, American sign language is recognized in forty-five states as a standard, independent language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage, and American sign language is widely used by deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing persons in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the deaf community is a distinct group that has a separate identity based on its history, language and culture; and

WHEREAS, the general hearing population's lack of knowledge of the language and culture of deaf people hampers communications between the two groups, which the widespread use of American sign language could eliminate; and

.130123.2

 WHEREAS, American sign language is the fourth most used language in the United States, the interest shown in American sign language by the hearing population has increased dramatically in the past several years and its popularity continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, in a state as culturally diverse and sensitive as New Mexico, our public schools should be in the vanguard of teaching American sign language;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the state board of education do whatever is necessary to ensure that American sign language is offered as a credit language course in New Mexico public high schools, especially those servicing hearing impaired students, including syntax, hand shapes and movement and the corresponding facial expressions that are so important in the use of the language; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the state board of education, the commission for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, the New Mexico school for the deaf and the chairman of the legislative education study committee.

- 2 -