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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/05/08

SPONSOR Campos LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Commission for the Blind Rehab Teaching Programs SB 335

ANALYST Hanika-Ortiz

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY08	FY09		
	\$150.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 335 appropriates \$150 thousand from the General Fund to the Commission for the Blind for expenditure in FY09 to expand rehabilitation teaching programs.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$150 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY09 shall revert to the General Fund.

DVR reports that for funds that are either non-recurring or reverting to the General Fund, this could result in a “maintenance of effort” situation with federal funds appropriated under Title I or Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The “maintenance of effort” issue may impact all such funds received by the State of New Mexico, which will impact both the New Mexico Commission for the Blind and New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The bill may enable the State to reduce reliance on D&E, PCO, and nursing home services. Because persons are remaining longer in the workforce, it will also help the Commission to provide initial training to some individuals who will transition to their vocational rehabilitation

program, and thereby continue in the workforce. By continuing in the workforce, these persons will help provide a critically needed skilled workforce, will pay taxes, and will avoid going on SSI and Medicaid, or SSDI and Medicare.

The New Mexico Commission for the Blind is a non-reverting agency. The language in SB335 indicates that any unexpended or unencumbered balance at the end of the fiscal year shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

DVR notes that SB 335 will enable the Commission to better serve a population of blind persons that is projected to double over the next 15 years. There are currently an estimated 11.4 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired, with 3.5% of the population of persons over 65 being legally blind. The primary cause is age-related Macular degeneration, with 13 million Americans having some signs of macular degeneration. It is estimated that 6.3 million Americans will develop AMD by 2030, compared to 1.7 million in 1995. Glaucoma is another major cause of blindness, with 3 million Americans having Glaucoma, accounting for 9% to 12% of blindness in the US. Diabetic Retinopathy is another leading cause of blindness, with 7 million Americans having some level of diabetic retinopathy, accounting for 25,000 new cases of blindness each year.

DVR further notes that SB 335 will provide for Rehab Teaching for this population. The Commission for the Blind intends to use it to staff a Senior Skills Center in Albuquerque, and to staff a Rehab Teacher in the southern part of the state. This will enable the Commission to provide independent living services that will help these seniors to continue to live independently in their homes and communities.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Commission for the Blind will be required to hire staff to provide rehabilitation teaching services to persons who become blind.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

DVR reflects that failure to make additional funding available to the New Mexico Commission for the Blind to provide independent living services to this growing population only defers the inevitable and will result in the need for larger appropriations to “catch-up” with the need.

AMENDMENTS

Recommended amendment: on line 20 insert the word “not” between “shall” and “revert.”

AHO/bb