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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/2609

SPONSOR Lujan, A LAST UPDATED _____ HJM 65

SHORT TITLE Study Social Worker Demand & Education SB _____

ANALYST Hanika-Ortiz

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY09	FY10	FY11	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
Total		\$0.1	\$0.1		Recurring	Various

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates SJM 55

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

NM Higher Education Department (NMHED)
 Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD)
 Human Services Department (HSD)
 Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS)
 State Personnel Office (SPO)
 Department of Health (DOH)
 Health Policy Commission (HPC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Joint Memorial 65 requests DOH conduct a study to determine the need for social workers, the cost of graduate social work education, and the need for student loan forgiveness for social workers.

The Memorial provides for the following:

- loan forgiveness programs encourage future professionals to pursue certain fields of study by offsetting incurred loan debt with payments for certain work-related requirements that must be fulfilled by the student borrower;
- according to the board of social work examiners, New Mexico had only three thousand five hundred social workers licensed at the master's level in 2008;

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- according to WSD, a beginning master's level social worker earns an average of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per year, but graduates with an average debt of twenty-six thousand seven hundred dollars (\$26,700);
- in FY08, an estimated eighty thousand two hundred fifty-four consumers were served with mental health services, according to the annual report of the interagency behavioral health purchasing collaborative;
- as a group, social workers are traditionally the largest provider of mental health services;
- the HPC manages a Geographic Access Data System that collects and reports information on the distribution of selected health professionals in rural and underserved areas to inform policy decisions regarding the need for health professionals in those areas; and
- data regarding the availability or need for social workers is not included in the Geographic Access Data System.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

DOH reports that the bill may require staff time to convene the taskforce and prepare a report, which can be accommodated within existing resources.

HPC reports that more social worker data breakout in the Geographic Access Data System would require additional staff and resources. HPC further reports that it is a small agency operating at capacity.

Members of the task force may be eligible for per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act.

Any additional fiscal impact would be dependent upon what recommendations made by the task force were ultimately implemented.

The study would develop criteria for awarding student loan forgiveness to social work students. NMHED reports it has 70 participants in the HPLRP. Approximately ten percent of those participants are social workers. Of just the social work participants, the average award is \$23,300 for a two-year service commitment. From FY08 to FY09 the average award for HPLRP was increased from \$21,635 to \$36,600 in response to an increase in HPLRP applications from 92 to 230 during that period.

Children, Youth & Families Department has a stipend program for social workers who agree to work for a specified period of time during and following graduation.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Joint Memorial requires DOH to conduct a study to determine the need for social workers, the cost of graduate social work education, and the need for student loan forgiveness for social workers. The Joint Memorial also requires the study to identify current shortages of social workers, particularly in rural areas. DOH should collaborate with HPC to identify the steps necessary to include social workers in the geographic access data system and in developing criteria for awarding student loan forgiveness to social work students. DOH would consult with the New Mexico Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and an Association representing social work students in conducting the study. The findings and recommendations of

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the study must then be presented to the interim legislative Health and Human Services Committee by October 1, 2009.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

SPO reports that the classified system currently has over 623 social worker positions with an approximate 11% vacancy rate.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HSD notes that social workers are a vital part of the behavioral health provider network in New Mexico. DOH further notes that the Las Vegas Behavioral Health Institute is a significant employer of social workers providing mental health services.

ALTSD notes that it has been difficult to recruit and retain social worker professions into positions with the Adult Protective Services Division of ALTSD. APS investigates 5,700 cases of adult abuse and neglect annually. A social worker's education and public health background provide the necessary foundation for the effective investigation of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

DUPLICATION

HJM 65 is a duplicate of SJM 55

TECHNICAL ISSUES

SPO notes that The Children, Youth and Families Department should be included in the Joint Memorial as they employ the majority of social workers in state government and already have a similar program (stipend) for social workers who agree to work at CYFD for a specified period of time during and following graduation.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

NMHED reports that across the country, loan repayment programs are becoming a cost-effective method of workforce based financial aid. From FY03 to FY08 NMHED awarded nearly \$18 million in loan programs to address state workforce needs. In 2008, NMHED stated in its annual report that nearly one third of the graduate degrees awarded in New Mexico are in education.

ALTERNATIVES

The State of New Mexico can utilize the current Health Professional Loan Repayment Program to assist individuals in professional shortage areas such as social work.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

A study to determine the need for social workers, the cost of graduate social work education, and the need for student loan forgiveness for social workers will not take place through this Joint Memorial.

AHO/mt