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HOUSE MEMORIAL 97

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING A TASK FORCE TO EVALUATE EXISTING DEAF EDUCATION AND
STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF CONVERTING THE NEW MEXICO SCHOOL FOR
THE DEAF TO A LEARNING INSTITUTION OFFERING A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE
CURRICULUM AND A PARALLEL FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE PREPARATORY HIGH
SCHOOL CURRICULUM TO PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING.

WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf is a land
grant institution whose operation is provided for in the
constitution of New Mexico through its designation, along with
multiple public post-secondary educational institutions, as
"the New Mexico school for the deaf, at Santa Fe, formerly
known as the New Mexico asylum for the deaf and dumb", to be
governed by a five-member board of regents; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf operates a
thirty-acre campus that was granted by congress in the late
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1 1800s; and

2 WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf provides
3 educational and support services on campus through programs for
4 deaf and hard-of-hearing children in kindergarten through grade
5 twelve; and

6 WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf also provides
7 educational and support services at satellite locations in
8 other parts of the state for preschool-age and younger
9 children; and

10 WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf offers on-
11 campus housing for some students who are sent to the campus for
12 full-time instruction by families who live too far away to
13 commute; and

14 WHEREAS, at the time the New Mexico school for the deaf
15 was established, the practice of families sending their
16 children with special educational needs out of their
17 communities to live at school was considered routine; and

18 WHEREAS, at the time the New Mexico school for the deaf
19 was established, the quality of being deaf or hard-of-hearing
20 was deemed to be a medical pathology, and the centralization of
21 services in one location in the state was the only means for
22 many families to ensure an education for their deaf or hard-of-
23 hearing children; and

24 WHEREAS, keeping a child at home with family members is
25 now understood to be, in many cases, a critical component of

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1 the child's well-being and success in education, particularly
2 for younger children; and

3 WHEREAS, family and community are vital components in the
4 educational process of deaf and hard-of-hearing students to
5 promote a sense of belonging and to feel connected to the world
6 around them; and

7 WHEREAS, real-world exposure and experiential learning
8 opportunities are key to the development of real-world skills
9 that result in future success and access to opportunity; and

10 WHEREAS, a high-level, effective education requires
11 systemic approaches that address social and emotional needs to
12 promote academic rigor and produce measurable outcomes; and

13 WHEREAS, in 2003, the education of the deaf and
14 hard-of-hearing task force, a collaboration between the New
15 Mexico school for the deaf and the New Mexico state department
16 of public education, issued a report that identified what it
17 called a "fundamental human rights issue: the right and
18 necessity to develop communication and language which is the
19 foundation for any educational growth"; and

20 WHEREAS, that task force stated in its 2003 report that
21 New Mexico's deaf children and youth were not developing
22 effective communication and language skills, resulting in
23 isolation and a lack of "essential skills required to fully
24 participate in society"; and

25 WHEREAS, while the New Mexico school for the deaf has been

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1 providing vital services to students for nearly one and one-
2 third centuries, the provision of up-to-date current
3 educational materials, instruction and technologies is required
4 for measurable gains; and

5 WHEREAS, many who have graduated from the New Mexico
6 school for the deaf may wish to attend a college that offers
7 courses in both American sign language and English, yet the
8 only post-secondary educational institution that offers such a
9 bilingual education is Gallaudet university in Washington,
10 D.C.; and

11 WHEREAS, many students in New Mexico may prefer to remain
12 geographically close to their families; and

13 WHEREAS, other students living in the west may have
14 similar feelings about moving to the other side of the country
15 for a bilingual post-secondary education; and

16 WHEREAS, many students may prefer to attend a post-
17 secondary educational institution in a less densely populated
18 area than Washington, D.C.; and

19 WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf has the campus
20 and resources to become a post-secondary educational
21 institution and thus provide greater educational impact for
22 deaf and hard-of-hearing students; and

23 WHEREAS, the New Mexico school for the deaf has a history
24 of providing services to the deaf and hard-of-hearing
25 communities, has community support and has become a regional

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1 needs-based institution to elementary and middle school
2 students and a world-class institution at the Santa Fe campus
3 to high school and college students; and

4 WHEREAS, the establishment of a post-secondary educational
5 institution for deaf and hard-of-hearing students on the campus
6 of the New Mexico school for the deaf could cultivate the
7 untapped potential of the institution and its students by
8 allowing more young students to be educated regionally and
9 allowing older students in grades nine through twelve and
10 beyond to learn in a focused environment on campus; and

11 WHEREAS, the conversion to or addition of a public post-
12 secondary educational curriculum would allow the New Mexico
13 school for the deaf to provide greater overall impact for deaf
14 and hard-of-hearing students and communities;

15 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
16 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that a task force
17 consisting of qualified staff from the public education
18 department, with assistance from the legislative education
19 study committee, and the higher education department, with
20 assistance from the legislative finance committee, be convened
21 to:

22 A. study the educational needs of students who are
23 deaf or hard-of-hearing from birth through middle school and
24 evaluate the necessity for updating and modernizing the current
25 educational system to cultivate optimal educational

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1 fulfillment;

2 B. study the educational needs of students who are
3 deaf or hard-of-hearing from high school through college and
4 evaluate the feasibility of converting to or adding a public
5 post-secondary educational curriculum at the New Mexico school
6 for the deaf;

7 C. evaluate the best ways to use existing
8 facilities, assets and resources at the New Mexico school for
9 the deaf; and

10 D. identify ways to improve and potential resources
11 for amplifying the educational experiences of current and
12 prospective students at the New Mexico school for the deaf; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force study the
14 example of Gallaudet university for determining the feasibility
15 of establishing a bilingual public post-secondary educational
16 institution for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in New
17 Mexico; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force study the
19 example of the state land grant institution, the New Mexico
20 military institute, for determining the feasibility of
21 establishing a learning institution composed of a four-year
22 college preparatory high school and a parallel four-year
23 college; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
25 transmitted to the secretary of public education, the public

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1 education commission, the legislative education study
2 committee, the secretary of higher education and the
3 legislative finance committee.

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