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SENATE MEMORIAL 26

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2018

INTRODUCED BY

Mimi Stewart

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE, IN
CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, TO FORM A
VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL WORK GROUP.

WHEREAS, virtual education provides an opportunity for
increased flexibility to plan learning experiences around
unique schedules and to address the individual needs of
students; and

WHEREAS, virtual education provides a self-paced,
personalized learning experience where students work toward
mastery at their own pace; and

WHEREAS, virtual education provides an opportunity to
support blended learning environments where traditional,
in-person teaching and learning are supported by virtual
content and instruction; and

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1 WHEREAS, New Mexico law remains silent regarding the
2 funding, governance and accountability of virtual charter
3 schools, and at least two full-time virtual charter schools
4 will be in operation in fiscal year 2019; and

5 WHEREAS, virtual charter school enrollment in New Mexico
6 has more than quadrupled since 2012, and virtual charter
7 schools have the potential to enroll students from any local
8 school district in the state; and

9 WHEREAS, the average fourth through eighth grade virtual
10 charter school student in New Mexico generally experienced the
11 equivalent of between ninety-one and one hundred sixty-one
12 fewer days of learning than the average brick-and-mortar school
13 student from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016, and virtual
14 charter school students who changed schools between fiscal year
15 2015 and fiscal year 2016 experienced the equivalent of
16 approximately fifty fewer days of learning than virtual charter
17 school students who did not change schools; and

18 WHEREAS, the public school funding formula and other
19 education funding mechanisms treat virtual charter schools
20 identically to brick-and-mortar schools, despite spending about
21 one-third of the amount on instructional staff per student
22 compared with brick-and-mortar schools and one-fourth of the
23 amount per student spent on plant operations and maintenance;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, virtual charter schools paid more than fifty

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1 percent of their combined fifteen-million-dollar (\$15,000,000)
2 budgets to two out-of-state for-profit entities in fiscal year
3 2018, and virtual charter schools lack oversight when making
4 and executing contracts; and

5 WHEREAS, New Mexico is the fifth-largest state in the
6 country by area and comprises many rural communities, and
7 virtual education may provide additional opportunities and
8 choice for students and families throughout the state;

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
10 OF NEW MEXICO that the legislative education study committee,
11 in consultation with the public education department, be
12 requested to convene a virtual charter school work group to
13 meet during the 2018 interim to:

14 A. identify best practices from high-performing
15 virtual charter schools;

16 B. research innovative virtual charter school
17 models and how those models affect student and school
18 performance;

19 C. identify best practices from authorizers of
20 virtual charter schools;

21 D. provide recommendations regarding how to address
22 funding for virtual charter schools;

23 E. provide recommendations regarding how to define
24 virtual charter schools in law; and

25 F. provide other findings and recommendations

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1 identified as necessary by the work group; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the virtual charter school
3 work group consist of a representative from the New Mexico
4 coalition for charter schools; a representative from a national
5 organization that focuses on charter school best practices; a
6 representative from the public education department; a
7 representative from a local chartering authority; a member of
8 the public education commission; a superintendent of a school
9 district running its own virtual education program; a
10 superintendent of a school district overseeing a virtual
11 charter school; and a current and former teacher of a virtual
12 charter school or virtual education program; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the virtual charter school
14 work group present its findings and recommendations to the
15 legislative education study committee no later than December 1,
16 2018; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
18 transmitted to the legislative education study committee, the
19 legislative finance committee and the public education
20 department for appropriate distribution.