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**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>HM58</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Garratt/Dow/Trujillo, C./Figueroa/Lara</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.213866.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>HEC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Study Adults in Public Schools</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Terrazas</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/21/19</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

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**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Memorial

House Memorial 58 (HM58) requests the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED) to study the issues pertaining to adults in public schools and the availability and competence of adult basic education and other equivalency programs. PED and HED would be required to present their findings and recommendations to the governor and LESC by December 1, 2019.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Memorials do not contain appropriations.

**SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

New Mexico spends millions of dollars annually on adults who attend public high schools, many of whom never graduate. Current law does not establish an upper age limit for public education students who do not receive special education services, while those receiving special education services must be under age 22. In FY17, there were 772 adults between the ages of 23 years and 90 years in public schools in New Mexico — a decrease of 41 percent from the prior year's total of 1,322 adult students — at an estimated cost of \$6.4 million. It should be noted, a recent Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) program evaluation found completion rates for adult students enrolled in charter schools is close to the completion rate for adult basic education (ABE) students, at 15 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

Three schools served the majority of adult students enrolled in charter schools in FY17. Gordon Bernell Charter School, designed to accommodate adult students, including incarcerated adult students, enrolled 296 adult students. New America Charter School in Albuquerque enrolled 77 adult students. New America Charter School in Las Cruces, focused on serving immigrants, English learners, and academically underserved students, enrolled 127 students. Considering these schools' enrollment, per-student funding allocations, and graduation rates, the estimated cost per

four-year graduate for the three schools is between two and seven times as much as the graduation cost of a non-adult student.

By contrast, in FY17, state expenditures for a student in ABE, which may better serve adult students, was \$408 per student. ABE programs are free of charge to adult students; participating students pay no tuition and all necessary books and materials are provided by HED's Adult Basic Education Division. HED indicates ABE is meant for students 16 years old and older who have not completed high school, giving them the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency credential with opportunities for job placement and progression to postsecondary education.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, although high school graduates and those who earn a high school equivalency credential are considered to have "equivalent" credentials, they face disparate outcomes. For example, high school equivalency earners are less healthy than those who have high school diplomas and have health profiles that are generally indistinguishable, if not worse than, those of students who drop out of high school. Further, those who obtain a high school equivalency credential earn less than high school graduates, which may be because most high school graduates tend to complete at least some postsecondary education compared with those who earn a high school equivalency credential.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

PED and HED would be required to present their findings and recommendations pertaining to adult education issues to the governor and LESC by December 1, 2019.

## **RELATED BILLS**

SB391/SECS, High School G.E.D. External Diploma, would require PED to authorize an external diploma program for adults who have not graduated from high school, but want to enroll in a program that documents their educational experience through college and career readiness standards; assesses high school-level skills in applied life and work contexts; and prepares them to enter college or the workforce, upgrade skills, advance to a better job, or move from one work field to another.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files

**DT/mc/mhg**