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SENATE MEMORIAL 59

**54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019**

INTRODUCED BY

Gay G. Kernan

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO CONVENE A REGIONAL DENTAL SCHOOL STUDY GROUP TO INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEW MEXICO AND THE TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY WOODY L. HUNT SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE IN EL PASO, TEXAS.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has no dental school, despite being the thirtieth-largest state by population and the fifth-largest state by area; and

WHEREAS, every dentist in New Mexico received dental education outside of the state; and

WHEREAS, most New Mexico students attend dental school through the western interstate commission for higher education or other contract program schools in cities such as Omaha, Kansas City, Denver, Phoenix and Dallas, and their individual

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1 student debt is typically at or about the national average of  
2 two hundred eighty-seven thousand dollars (\$287,000) upon  
3 graduation, which discourages their return to locations with  
4 less lucrative practices in rural New Mexico; and

5 WHEREAS, New Mexico has a world-class medical school at  
6 the university of New Mexico, which encourages the diversity of  
7 physicians and their ability to serve the unique cultures of  
8 New Mexico using programs like the successful bachelor of arts  
9 and doctor of medicine program; and

10 WHEREAS, the university of New Mexico has shown success in  
11 oral health education, including both an advanced general  
12 dental residency program and a graduate-level dental hygiene  
13 program; and

14 WHEREAS, while New Mexico as a whole does not have a  
15 shortage of dental providers, it does have a significant  
16 challenge attracting dental providers to southern and eastern  
17 parts of the state, consistent with a general regional shortage  
18 in the Permian basin area; and

19 WHEREAS, cultural, gender and ethnic diversity in the  
20 dental workforce should reflect the populations that it serves,  
21 and New Mexico has the second-highest percentage of Hispanic  
22 dentists in the nation at twelve and six-tenths percent; and

23 WHEREAS, the number of Hispanic, Native American and  
24 female dentists in the state falls short of their relative  
25 distribution in the state's population; and

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1           WHEREAS, Texas tech university is opening a dental school  
2 with its successful medical school located in El Paso, Texas,  
3 with a class of sixty in 2021 and plans for future expansion;  
4 and

5           WHEREAS, schools in Texas have among the lowest rates of  
6 tuition among American dental schools and corresponding lower  
7 rates of student indebtedness; and

8           WHEREAS, creating a dental school in New Mexico is cost-  
9 prohibitive and difficult to justify based on the state's  
10 current need, and investment in a regional program whose  
11 mission includes serving the state's goals is practical and  
12 attainable; and

13           WHEREAS, creating a relationship between New Mexico and  
14 the Texas tech university's upcoming dental school has the  
15 potential to not only improve the diversity and distribution of  
16 New Mexico dental school graduates but might also allow  
17 cooperation between the existing dental programs to provide  
18 enhanced services and practice opportunities in New Mexico;

19           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
20 OF NEW MEXICO that the higher education department be requested  
21 to convene a regional dental school study group to investigate  
22 the feasibility of creating a relationship between New Mexico  
23 and the Texas tech university Woody L. Hunt school of dental  
24 medicine located in El Paso, Texas; and

25           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of higher

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1 education be requested to invite to join the regional dental  
2 school study group representatives from the New Mexico board of  
3 dental health care, the New Mexico dental association, the  
4 university of New Mexico dental programs and the university of  
5 New Mexico health sciences center administration to provide  
6 insight into dental education, licensing and existing programs  
7 to expand the diversity of New Mexico's health care workforce;  
8 and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study include an  
10 assessment of barriers to dental workforce diversity and rural  
11 care, the efficacy of the Texas tech university Woody L. Hunt  
12 school of dental medicine to address these barriers and the  
13 financial requirements of creating a regional dental school  
14 relationship; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the regional dental school  
16 study group be requested to develop as part of its report a  
17 program to pursue an appropriate relationship with the Texas  
18 tech university Woody L. Hunt school of dental medicine to  
19 educate qualified New Mexico students to serve New Mexico  
20 communities and populations that are currently underserved; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the higher education  
22 department and regional dental school study group be requested  
23 to present their findings to the legislative finance committee  
24 and other appropriate interim legislative committees by  
25 December 1, 2019; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of higher education and the chair of the legislative finance committee.