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HOUSE MEMORIAL 24

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO STUDY, ASSESS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE STAFFING LEVELS OF SUPPORT AND RELATED SERVICES STAFF NECESSARY TO MEET THE LEARNING, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH NEEDS OF NEW MEXICO STUDENTS.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has some of the highest rates of children suffering from adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, the more adverse childhood experiences each child suffers, the more likely the trauma will lead to negative impacts on well-being and health that can follow a child for life and contribute to chronic health issues and problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences can cause toxic stress, which can interrupt normal physical and mental

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1 development and can even change the brain's architecture; and

2 WHEREAS, the 2019 New Mexico kids count profile shows that
3 New Mexico ranks fiftieth in indicators of child well-being;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, public school educators are often the first
6 responders in students' lives to issues such as relationship
7 disappointments or conflicts; family issues such as death,
8 divorce, parent-child issues, parent substance use or mental
9 health problems; test or performance anxiety; general academic
10 stress; procrastination; panic attacks; social isolation; mild
11 to severe depression; cutting and other forms of self-injury
12 and suicidal thoughts, plans or actions; and

13 WHEREAS, teachers and students depend on school nurses,
14 counselors, social workers and school psychologists to ensure
15 that the ever-increasing complexity of students' needs is met;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, years of disinvestment in public education have
18 led to schools that are inadequately staffed to meet the needs
19 of students; and

20 WHEREAS, New Mexico can make a significant positive impact
21 on students' learning and well-being by working toward
22 following national recommendations for staffing in the
23 following areas:

24 A. the national association of school nurses and
25 the national association of state school nurse consultants

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1 recommends a school nurse in every school to provide direct
2 care and oversight to the student population in keeping healthy
3 children well and further recommends the following nurse-to-
4 student ratios:

5 (1) no more than one nurse to every seven
6 hundred fifty students in a healthy student population;

7 (2) one nurse to every two hundred twenty-five
8 students in populations requiring daily professional nursing
9 services; and

10 (3) one nurse to every one hundred twenty-five
11 students in populations with complex health care needs;

12 B. the national association of social workers
13 recommends a ratio of one school social worker to each school
14 building serving up to two hundred fifty general education
15 students, and when a school social worker is providing services
16 to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio, such as one
17 social worker to every fifty students, is suggested;

18 C. the national association for college admission
19 counseling and the American school counselor association state
20 that school counselors in public schools often have
21 unmanageable caseloads with high national student-to-counselor
22 ratios of one school counselor to four hundred eighty-two
23 students. States, which design and fund the bulk of public
24 school education, must increase their investment to ensure the
25 full benefit of school counseling programs to the American

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1 school counselor association recommendation of a two hundred
2 fifty to one student-to-counselor ratio;

3 D. the American association of school librarians
4 considers a well-funded and fully staffed school library with a
5 state-certified school librarian as an integral component of a
6 student's education; and

7 E. special-education-related services include
8 supportive services required to assist a child with a
9 disability to benefit from special education, including
10 speech-language pathology and audiology services; interpreting
11 services; psychological services; physical and occupational
12 therapy; recreation, including therapeutic recreation; early
13 identification and assessment of disabilities in children;
14 counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling;
15 orientation and mobility services; and medical services for
16 diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also
17 include school health services, school nurse services and
18 social work services in schools. New Mexico can make a
19 significant positive impact specifically for special education
20 students' learning and well-being by establishing staffing
21 recommendations for the following related services personnel:

- 22 (1) sign language interpreters;
- 23 (2) speech-language pathologists;
- 24 (3) occupational therapists;
- 25 (4) physical therapists;

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- 1 (5) audiologists;
- 2 (6) orientation and mobility specialists;
- 3 (7) transition specialists and vocational
- 4 rehabilitation counselors;
- 5 (8) diagnosticians; and
- 6 (9) school psychologists; and

7 WHEREAS, in New Mexico, the legislature is responsible for
8 the public school funding needed to adequately and
9 appropriately staff schools for the learning, social,
10 emotional, mental and physical health needs of all students;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
12 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public
13 education department be requested to convene a task force to
14 study, assess and make recommendations to address the staffing
15 levels of support and related services staff necessary to meet
16 the learning, social, emotional, mental and physical health
17 needs of New Mexico students; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of public
19 education appoint task force members and that no less than
20 seventy percent of the task force members be current school
21 nurses, social workers, counselors, librarians and special-
22 education-related services staff in public schools representing
23 geographically diverse locations; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to
25 report its findings and recommendations to the office of the

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1 governor and the legislative education study committee by
2 November 1, 2021; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
4 transmitted to the governor, the secretary of public education
5 and the chair of the legislative education study committee.

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