WHEREAS, millions of students need access to the internet to complete assignments, but studies estimate that one in five students lack internet access in their homes; and

WHEREAS, this gap especially impacts low-income, rural and tribal students who must find other ways to get online to complete their homework, often working out of school parking lots late into the night or walking miles to find a reliable signal; and

WHEREAS, dubbed "the homework gap" by researchers, students without the use of reliable internet access at home find it harder to complete and submit homework assignments,
further expanding the inequity already present in low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, the average school bus ride is twenty minutes each way, or forty minutes per day, and over the course of a year, students spend on average the equivalent of twenty instructional days riding buses back and forth from school to home; and

WHEREAS, students in rural school districts often face over three hours of travel time every single day; and

WHEREAS, additional time is spent on buses for extracurricular activities and field trips; and

WHEREAS, by having access to broadband on school buses carrying students to school or school-related activities, students could take advantage of otherwise lost hours on school buses each day; and

WHEREAS, by providing internet access on school buses, buses can become an extension of the classroom; and

WHEREAS, as students focus on schoolwork, disruptions on buses also decrease, and fewer disciplinary referrals by bus drivers translates to quieter school buses where drivers can focus on driving safely; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico children who ride school buses deserve the tools they need to succeed, and internet access on buses would help to ensure that no student is left behind in a digital world;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department be requested to study the feasibility of a public-private partnership to provide internet access on school buses to bridge the digital divide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education department report its findings and conclusions to the legislative education study committee and the appropriate interim legislative committee by November 1, 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the chair of the legislative education study committee and the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative council.