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**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**55th Legislature, 1st Session, 2021**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>SB271</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Pope/Hemphill</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.218979.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Purple Star Public School Program</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Hoxie</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/12/2021</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

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**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 271 (SB271) adds a new section to the Public School Code providing for the development of a program to be known as the purple star public schools program. The program will provide a mechanism for schools to ease the transition of students of active duty military families into new schools by providing academic, social, and emotional support to students and families attending a public school not located near a military institution.

Schools designated as purple star public schools without active military students enrolled may participate in the program.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

SB271 does not contain an appropriation.

**SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

**Purple Start Program.** The Purple Star program is a discretionary program originally launched as a 2017 initiative in Ohio. Currently, 11 states have active Purple Star program initiatives. While there is variation among the programs, SB271 would implement the research driven components of the designation. Under SB271, a public school that has military-connected students from active-duty military families may apply to the department to be a Purple Star public school. In order to be eligible for the program, a public school with military-connected students must: designate a school staff member to act as a contact for students from military families and the military; provide professional development for the point-of-contact staff member; include a page on the school's website featuring resources and information for military families; clearly establish the academic, social, and emotional supports available to assist transitioning military students; and submit a resolution to the local school board supporting students from military families. Public schools have the option to apply to the Public Education Department (PED) to become a Purple Star public school.

**Schools with Non-Military Students.** Under SB271, a public school that does not have students from active military families may apply to the public education department to be a Purple Star public school by: “emphasizing the importance and honor of military service;” sponsoring events recognizing military service; celebrating students who commit to serve in the military; and submitting a resolution to the local school board supporting military families and the school’s application to become a purple star public school.

**Administrative and Academic Challenges Face by Military Families.** A report from the Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University - conducted on behalf of the Military Child Education Coalition, a nonprofit focused on supporting students from military families - noted the academic challenges faced by students of military families. According to the report, military families are three times more mobile than non-military families. As students transition between schools, students and their families must navigate the credit transfer process and are expected to adopt to a variety of academic calendars, course offerings, and graduation requirements. As is true for all students who frequently transfer between schools, mobility can exacerbate learning gaps, affecting a student’s academic achievement. Approximately 76 percent of military connected children attend public schools. According to PED, there are approximately 3360 military-connected students enrolled in New Mexico’s public schools.

In addition to academic challenges, military-connected students may experience social and emotional challenges. Some challenges noted in the report are applicable to any mobile population, including acclimating to a new school environment, connecting with peers, or complications joining extra-curricular activities. Other challenges noted are specific to students of military families, including the mental health considerations for children with a deployed parent.

**The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.** The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, an agreement signed by all 50 states, seeks to address transition issues encountered by military-connected students. The agreement provides national standards for how K-12 schools should address transition issues related to enrollment, placement, graduation requirements, and eligibility for extracurricular activities. Each state has a state council which acts as an advisory body for the state, working to ensure each state is compliant with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

SB271 requires (PED) to develop an application process for public schools to be designated Purple Star public schools.

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

The Office of the Attorney General notes in paragraph 5 of Subsection B of SB271 the term “students of military families” is changed to “military students.” Sponsors could consider changing the term to “student of military families” to be consistent with the remaining body of the bill.

SB271 requires Purple Star public schools to provide professional development for staff designated as the point-of-contact for military-related students. The bill does not specify any professional development requirements or goals. The sponsor may want to consider providing clarity to what constitutes “professional development” to ensure proper and consistent implementation.

Charter schools are not specifically named in the bill; the sponsor may want to consider specifying the eligibility for charter schools to become Purple Star public schools.

**RELATED BILLS**

Senate Bill 272 allows military families to enroll school-age children in public schools or charter schools prior to being physically present in the state.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- Office of the Attorney General

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