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HOUSE MEMORIAL 43

55TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2022

INTRODUCED BY

Pamelya Herndon and Christine Trujillo

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE, IN
COLLABORATION WITH THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, TO CONVENE
A TASK FORCE, INCLUDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DEPARTMENT
PERSONNEL; MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS; PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOL TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS; SCHOOL UNION
REPRESENTATIVES; COMMUNITY GROUPS; AND OTHER INTERESTED
PERSONS, TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PROVIDING MENTAL
WELLNESS SPACES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

WHEREAS, various public health measures have been
implemented throughout New Mexico to reduce illness and
mortality during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic,
including flattening the curve with measures such as social
distancing, quarantining and closing schools; and

WHEREAS, less has been done to implement mental health

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1 measures to reduce anxiety, depression and behavioral disorders
2 in the general population and public schools; and

3 WHEREAS, school districts and charter schools across the
4 state are now coming out of lockdown with cautious optimism,
5 but the pandemic is not yet over and the challenges related to
6 the impact on students' mental health remain largely unknown;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, recent studies have revealed that students may
9 experience anxiety, depression and behavioral problems during
10 the pandemic and its aftermath; and

11 WHEREAS, studies have also shown that the impact on
12 learning during the pandemic has been unprecedented and has
13 left school districts and charter schools across the state
14 grappling with uncertainties on how best to address the
15 challenges facing their personnel and students; and

16 WHEREAS, educational researchers have advocated that
17 public schools and education policymakers address mental health
18 as a key approach to helping students regain lost academic
19 ground and social-emotional equilibrium during the pandemic and
20 its aftermath; and

21 WHEREAS, while coronavirus disease 2019 changed the ways
22 in which public schools provide daily lessons and opportunities
23 for learning for students, and those changes affected many
24 students' mental health, the pandemic is not the only stressor
25 students must contend with; and

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1 WHEREAS, bullying, racial tension and childhood trauma are
2 significant contributors to stress and declining mental health,
3 and those stressors have been exacerbated by the pandemic; and

4 WHEREAS, according to research from the federal centers
5 for disease control and prevention, there is a direct
6 relationship between a student's mental health and academic
7 achievement; and

8 WHEREAS, overall, child mental health statistics,
9 including the following, are alarming:

10 A. one in five students struggle with mental
11 health;

12 B. approximately one in five students who could
13 benefit from additional mental health support do not receive
14 it;

15 C. one-half of all mental health conditions start
16 before age fourteen; and

17 D. behavioral problems, anxiety and depression are
18 the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in school-aged
19 children; and

20 WHEREAS, young people spend a majority of their time in
21 various educational environments that play a crucial role in
22 their psychological, physical and social development; and

23 WHEREAS, public schools have the opportunity to address
24 the mental health of students and support a framework in which
25 students can thrive by offering resources that support their

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1 mental health, such as providing a mental wellness space where
2 students can go during the regular school day to have direct
3 access to mental health counselors or simply a space where
4 students are comfortable and can discuss the concerns they are
5 facing; and

6 WHEREAS, such spaces are not currently being provided to
7 address the mental health needs of students;

8 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
9 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the legislative
10 education study committee, in collaboration with the public
11 education department, be requested to convene a task force that
12 includes committee members and department personnel; mental
13 health care providers; school teachers, counselors and
14 administrators; school union representatives; community groups;
15 and other interested persons to develop a comprehensive plan to
16 enhance student learning and student welfare by providing
17 mental wellness spaces in middle schools and high schools as a
18 strategy for addressing and supporting the mental health of
19 public middle school and high school students; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force gather data and
21 information, including data and information from other states
22 that have instituted mental wellness spaces, to determine the
23 efficacy of mental health spaces and develop standards for
24 mental wellness spaces and their use; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force consider

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1 whether a pilot project creating mental wellness spaces in a
2 limited number of public schools and studying the effects of
3 the spaces on mental health and academic achievement is
4 warranted and, if so, the size and term of a pilot project; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and
6 recommendations of the task force be reported to the
7 legislature and the governor by November 1, 2022; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
9 transmitted to the chair of the legislative education study
10 committee and the secretary of public education for
11 distribution to school districts and charter schools.