



LFC Requester: Liu

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2026 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: February 17 2026

Bill No: HM61

Committee Referrals: HEC

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28		
None	None	N/A	NFA

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28	FY29		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY27	FY28	FY29	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act:
None as of 2/17/2026.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: House Memorial 61 (HM61) requests the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) study compensation for classified public school and school district employees, assessing cost of living and housing availability and options to improve compensation.

The LESC would collaborate with the Public Education Department (PED), the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), local school districts, charter schools, and public school employees' unions. A final report must be submitted to the Governor and legislature by October 31, 2026.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

HM61 does not contain an appropriation.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

While school staffing shortages in New Mexico have improved modestly since [2024](#), vacancies remain high. There were 1,115 educator vacancies in the state as of [September 2025](#), and 604 of these vacancies were for teachers. Vacancies for special education teachers remain particularly high, with 216 open positions accounting for 36 percent of all teacher vacancies in New Mexico. Educational assistants also remain in high demand, despite a reduction in vacancies from last year:

Southwest Outreach Academic Research (SOAR) Evaluation and Policy Center: New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report		
Position	Number of Vacancies	
	2024	2025
Teachers	737	604
Educational Assistants	356	289
<i>Total Vacancies</i>	1,259	1,115

While the SOAR report does not record vacancies for education support professionals (ESPs) in New Mexico, a [survey](#) from National Center for Education Statistics found that 69 percent of public schools in the United States reported difficulties filling vacant non-teaching positions in SY24-25. An [analysis](#) from the Economic Policy Institute indicates employment levels in most support occupations remain depressed compared to pre-pandemic levels, particularly for custodians:

Economic Policy Institute: Percent change in employment by elementary and secondary school occupation group, August 2019–August 2025	
Administrative staff	-3.0%
School bus drivers	-9.5%
Custodians	-12.4%
Food service workers	-4.3%
Paraprofessionals*	16.5%
Teachers	-4.3%
All K-12 employment	1.4%

* Including teaching assistants and childcare workers

Almost one third of ESPs in the United States [earn less than \\$25,000 annually](#), and the average wage for ESPs is below the living wage in all 50 states. ESP salaries in New Mexico ranked 45th in the nation in SY22-23 and SY23-24, likely contributing to [prolonged bus driver shortages](#) in recent years. The Economic Policy Institute attributes a modest 1.1 percent increase in bus driver employment from 2024 to 2025 to rising wages, though the figure remains 9.5 percent lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Salaries are a [crucial factor](#) in educator recruitment and retention; however, increased compensation alone will be insufficient in improving teacher supply and retention. Since 2020, Hawai'i has implemented a statewide bonus policy for special education teachers (\$10,000) and teachers at historically hard-to-staff schools (\$8,000). While the policy [reduced special education teacher vacancies](#), the impacts were driven by general education teachers moving into open special education positions. Although the policy decreased the proportion of positions filled by unlicensed teachers, it did not have significant effects on teacher retention.

Stagnant wages contribute to the [declining attractiveness](#) of education professions, but [challenging working conditions](#) exacerbate shortages and turnover. The supply of qualified teachers is also shrinking: interest in entering the teaching profession has declined to [the lowest level in 50 years](#), and the number of graduates earning a teaching license declined by over 100,000 per year between 2006 and 2021.

Addressing school staffing shortages appears to require a [multifaceted approach](#). Policies and programs implemented in [other states](#) show early signs of success: Texas, California, and Mississippi created or expanded teacher residency programs with financial support, and New York has invested in mentoring and educator diversity programs. Substantial pay raises in Mississippi have already increased teacher preparation program enrollment. Programs that alleviate student debt in exchange for service commitments have been successful in high-needs areas in California, Mississippi, and New York. New Mexico can look to these policies to improve or expand its own [teacher residency](#) and [teacher preparation scholarship](#) programs, while building upon previous years' [compensation increases](#) and employee [insurance cost reductions](#).

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED may be asked to support the LESC study by providing information, participating in discussions, and offering subject matter expertise related to teacher compensation, retention, and turnover.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to:

- [HB30](#), Teacher Residency Act Changes, would remove the stipend amount of \$35,000 for teaching residents and replace it with a stipend calculated as a percentage of the statutory minimum salary for a level one teacher. (Duplicates [SB125](#))
- [HB47](#), School Employee Insurance Programs, would require school districts and charter schools to pay at least 80 percent of employee group insurance costs, replacing the existing

salary-tiered employer contribution schedule.

- [HM47](#), Study Teacher Workloads, requests the LESC conduct a study examining statutory requirements and current practices related to teacher workload.
- [SB188](#), Paid Parental Leave for School Employees, would provide a qualified employee in a school district or charter school with up to twelve weeks of paid parental leave.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

None.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

None.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

None.