

LFC Requester:

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AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS - 2026 REGULAR SESSION

WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, UPLOAD ANALYSIS TO

AgencyAnalysis.nmlegis.gov and email to billanalysis@dfa.nm.gov*(Analysis must be uploaded as a PDF)***SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION***{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}*Date Prepared: 1/29/2026

Check all that apply:

Bill Number: SB158Original Correction Amendment Substitute

		Agency Name and Code	University of New Mexico-952
Sponsor:	<u>Sen. Pope</u>	Number:	<u></u>
Short Title:	<u>PED Micro-Credentialing Pilot Project</u>	Person Writing	<u>Kristopher Goodrich</u>
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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT**APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
	\$3 million	Nonrecurring	General Fund

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		

(Parenthesis () indicate revenue decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total						

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: SB 159 proposes to expand and formalize the role of micro-credentials in educator professional advancement, specifically related to the Martinez-Yazzie decision. The bill authorizes the Public Education Department (PED) to develop micro-credentials for licensure advancement and requires them to establish criteria for their review and approval. Additionally, the bill appropriates \$3 million dollars to PED for expenditure in fiscal years 2027 through 2031 to implement and administer the micro-credential pilot project.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill centralizes all responsibility for developing, validating, and administering micro-credentials within the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED). This structure may create several fiscal implications for the department.

NMPED may incur costs related to:

- curriculum development and design of new micro-credential content;
- contracting with external experts or consultants to ensure rigor, research alignment, and Martinez–Yazzie-related competencies;
- developing or enhancing systems for assessing educator competency and tracking completion;
- establishing quality-assurance and review processes;
- administering the ongoing evaluation and revision of micro-credentials.

These fiscal impacts could be significant depending on the scope of micro-credential development and the degree to which NMPED has existing internal capacity for research-based curriculum development, culturally responsive pedagogy, and advanced educator competency assessment.

The bill does not provide a formal mechanism for collaboration with higher education institutions, which already maintain:

- faculty expertise in curriculum design,
- existing research and programmatic alignment with Martinez–Yazzie requirements,
- assessment and accreditation systems, and
- existing infrastructure for educator preparation.

Without leveraging higher education capacity, NMPED may face higher costs—including the need to contract out work to other consulting organizations that might have a larger cost than higher education institutions.

In addition, the absence of alignment with higher education institutions reduces opportunities for cost-sharing, system efficiencies, and coordinated statewide educator workforce development efforts.

Some costs may be absorbed within NMPED's existing professional development units, but the development of rigorous, nationally aligned micro-credentials that meaningfully advance educator preparation—particularly in areas related to Martinez–Yazzie—will likely require additional staffing, contract support, or reallocation of existing resources.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The UNM College of Education and Human Sciences (COEHS) appreciates the bill's intention to strengthen the micro-credential framework used for educator advancement. However, COEHS has received consistent feedback from teachers and administrators that the *current* NMPED-developed micro-credentials do not consistently align with national research, best practices in educator professional learning, or expectations for rigorous competency-based advancement.

Educators regularly report that existing micro-credentials tend to be remedial and duplicative of content found in undergraduate teacher preparation programs, rather than opportunities to develop advanced skills or meaningfully progress toward graduate degrees. This misalignment reduces the perceived usefulness of the current system.

This concern is especially significant in the context of the Martinez–Yazzie decision, which requires the state to ensure that educators are prepared to meet the instructional, linguistic, cultural, and community needs of Native American students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. Strengthening educator preparation and professional learning is a critical element of meeting the state's ongoing obligations under Martinez–Yazzie.

Under the bill, authority for developing micro-credentials remains solely with NMPED. While PED oversight is essential, the absence of a formal connection to higher education institutions is problematic for several reasons:

- Higher education institutions house the state's primary expertise in educator preparation, research, curriculum development, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy — all areas central to the Martinez–Yazzie findings.
- Without higher education involvement, micro-credentials may continue to lack the rigor, research foundation, and advanced skill development expected in national models.
- Micro-credentials developed independently by NMPED risk continuing to replicate undergraduate content rather than advancing educator practice.
- Opportunities to create stackable pathways that articulate into degrees — a key national benefit of micro-credentials — would remain limited if higher education institutions are not formally involved in the design and approval process.

For New Mexico to meet both national standards for micro-credential quality *and* its legal and moral obligations under Martinez–Yazzie, the UNM COEHS strongly recommends establishing a more explicit, integrated role for higher education institutions in the development, review, and implementation of micro-credentials.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

There are two competing performance issues that I see:

1. High-quality, university-developed micro-credentials may contribute to:
 - improved educator capacity to meet the instructional, cultural, and linguistic needs of students named in the Martinez–Yazzie decision;
 - increased rigor and relevance of professional learning opportunities;
 - enhanced educator pathways toward graduate education and advanced licensure;
 - better alignment between professional development and student outcome goals.
2. If low-quality micro-credentials continue to be used by the State, educators will not have the same opportunities to professionally advance, the capacity to meet the needs of the Yazzie-Martinez decision will be limited, and the larger educational system will continue to stagnate.

In addition to the above, Institutions may need systems to track micro-credential completion and demonstration of competency in a comprehensive and holistic way.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Since the bill places micro-credential development solely within NMPED, the department will bear responsibility for:

- designing, validating, and assessing micro-credentials aligned with educator competencies;
- ensuring that micro-credentials support the skills required to meet Martinez–Yazzie obligations;
- engaging external experts or partners as needed; and
- maintaining quality assurance and consistency across offerings.

The bill does *not* establish a formal structure for collaboration with higher education institutions. This is a missed opportunity, as university involvement could support rigor, research alignment, culturally responsive practices, and pathways that connect micro-credentials to degrees or endorsements.

Higher education institutions may still need to interface with NMPED informally to ensure that micro-credentials do not conflict with or duplicate preparation program requirements, but no formal authority or responsibility is created by the bill.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Please see the above.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The bill may benefit from further clarification regarding:

- expectations for alignment with national micro-credential frameworks;
- how performance-based competency demonstrations must be structured;
- requirements ensuring micro-credentials explicitly support educator capacity in areas relevant to Martinez–Yazzie;
- articulation with (and funding towards) graduate degree programs so that they can stack; and
- consistency in review and approval across institutions.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Elevating the rigor and relevance of micro-credentials is essential for New Mexico’s long-term ability to meet its obligations under the Martinez–Yazzie ruling. Micro-credentials developed through higher education institutions can help ensure educators receive advanced training in culturally responsive pedagogy, asset-based approaches to multilingual learners, trauma-informed practice, and community-engaged schooling—all areas highlighted as critical in the lawsuit.

Integrating micro-credentials into higher education structures also supports statewide workforce development, strengthens educator retention, and provides clear pathways for career advancement.

ALTERNATIVES

The Legislature may wish to consider several alternatives that address the concerns raised by educators, administrators, and higher education institutions regarding the quality, rigor, and alignment of micro-credentials:

1. Establish a formal partnership model between NMPED and higher education institutions.

This alternative would create a structured collaboration for micro-credential development, review, and assessment. Higher education institutions possess expertise in curriculum design, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, research-based best practices, and assessment of educator competency—all essential for meeting Martinez–Yazzie obligations. NMPED staff currently lack capacity to do this in a comprehensive way.

2. Create a statewide Micro-credential Advisory Council.

A council composed of representatives from NMPED, universities, tribal education departments, school districts, educator preparation programs, and community organizations could ensure that micro-credentials reflect:

- national standards,
- local community needs, and
- competencies required under the Martinez–Yazzie decision.

This would improve quality while distributing the workload more efficiently.

3. Require micro-credentials to articulate into higher education pathways.

Even if NMPED retains sole authority for development, an alternative would be to mandate that micro-credentials be designed to:

- be stackable,
- count toward degree programs where appropriate, and
- reflect advanced competencies rather than undergraduate-level content.

This approach would increase educator participation and strengthen workforce development. However, this would need to provide funding for higher education institutions for the tuition monies lost, as all our colleges and universities across the state are highly tuition dependent especially at the graduate level.

4. Pilot micro-credential development with higher education partners before statewide rollout.

A pilot model would allow New Mexico to:

- test quality assurance processes,
- ensure alignment with Martinez–Yazzie-related competencies, and
- refine micro-credential content prior to scaling statewide.

This approach reduces risk while improving overall quality.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

If the bill is not enacted, several consequences may occur:

1. Continued misalignment of micro-credentials with national best practices.

Educators have reported that existing NMPED-developed micro-credentials are often remedial, duplicative of undergraduate preparation, and do not contribute meaningfully to advanced skill development. Without legislative intervention, these concerns are likely to persist.

2. Ongoing challenges in meeting Martinez–Yazzie obligations.

The Martinez–Yazzie decision requires the state to ensure that educators are prepared to meet the needs of Native American students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. If micro-credentials remain misaligned with cultural and linguistic responsiveness, advanced instructional strategies, and community-based approaches, the state may struggle to demonstrate progress toward meeting these obligations.

3. Limited advancement pathways for educators.

Without updated standards or structures, educators will continue to rely on micro-credentials that:

- do not advance their practice,
- do not articulate into degrees,
- do not reflect advanced competencies, and
- may not support meaningful career progression.

This may negatively affect educator motivation, recruitment, and retention.

4. Missed opportunities for coordinated workforce development.

Because the bill maintains micro-credential development solely within NMPED, failure to enact it may limit opportunities to reconsider whether higher education should play a formal role in development and implementation. Without such reconsideration, the state may continue to miss opportunities for:

- stronger alignment across K–12 and higher education,
- cost-sharing,
- coherent pathways to degrees or endorsements, and
- statewide consistency.

5. Continued strain on NMPED resources.

Without the structural changes contemplated in the bill or potential amendments, NMPED will continue to bear full responsibility for micro-credential development without the benefit of higher education partnership. This may result in:

- increased workload,
- higher costs to develop and maintain high-quality micro-credentials, and
- limited capacity to design offerings aligned with national standards.

AMENDMENTS

The Legislature may wish to consider amendments that:

- **create a formal partnership structure** requiring NMPED to collaborate with New Mexico's public higher education institutions in the development, review, and approval of micro-credentials;
- ensure that micro-credentials incorporate competencies central to fulfilling Martinez–Yazzie, including culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and community-based knowledge;
- align micro-credentials with research-based national frameworks and performance-based assessments;
- require the design of stackable micro-credentials that articulate into advanced certification or degree pathways; and
- clarify expectations for rigor, evidence of competency, and ongoing evaluation.