

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

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November 13, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Frances Ramirez-Maestas

RE: SJM 23 (2012), EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS FOR PREGNANT TEENS

During the 2012 legislative session, SJM 23, *Educational Barriers for Pregnant Teens*, was introduced requesting the Public Education Department (PED) to create a task force to study the obstacles faced by teen parents in completing their education (see Attachment). Among its provisions, the joint memorial further requested the task force to issue a comprehensive report by November 1, 2012, with goals, both short-term and long-term, for eliminating obstacles teen parents face in completing their education, as well as recommendations to increase the graduation rate for pregnant and parenting teens.

Although SJM 23 did not pass, several organizations with an interest in examining this problem worked together in the interim to conduct research, compile a description of the problem, develop possible solutions, and release a report to the public by November 1, 2012. At the request of a Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) member, the report is included in the LESL 2012 interim workplan as an opportunity for the committee to review and discuss the issues and recommendations raised by the joint memorial.

Related Background

A 2010 Child Trends report, *Diploma Attainment among Teen Mothers*, found that among those surveyed:

- young women who had been teen mothers were 38 percent less likely than other young women to earn a high school diploma by age 22;
- teens who gave birth before the age of 18 were 22 percent less likely to receive a high school diploma than teens who gave birth after their 18th birthday;
- teens who gave birth before the age of 18 were 16 percent less likely to earn either a high school diploma or a general educational development (GED) certificate than teens who gave birth after their 18th birthday;
- Hispanic teen parents were less likely to receive a high school diploma or GED than Caucasian and African-American teen parents; and
- only one-half of women in the study sample who had been teen mothers had earned a high school diploma by the age of 22, compared with 89 percent of young women in the study sample who had not given birth as a teen.

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 23

50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2012

INTRODUCED BY

Cynthia Nava

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING A STATEWIDE TASK FORCE TO ASSESS AND ELIMINATE THE BARRIERS THAT PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENS FACE IN COMPLETING THEIR EDUCATIONS.

WHEREAS, the legislature seeks to ensure that all New Mexico students have access to a quality education; and

WHEREAS, the public education department seeks to increase graduation rates for New Mexico students; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has the second highest rate in the nation of children born to teen parents; and

WHEREAS, forty-three percent of teen mothers nationwide who gave birth under the age of eighteen failed to earn either a high school diploma or a general education development certificate by the age of twenty-two as compared to only six percent of teenage girls who did not have a child; and

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1 WHEREAS, only thirty-eight percent of teen mothers
2 nationwide who gave birth under the age of eighteen earned a
3 high school diploma by age twenty-two as compared to
4 eighty-nine percent of teenage girls who did not have a child;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, the 2009 median household income in New Mexico
7 was forty-two thousand eight hundred thirty dollars (\$42,830),
8 but the average income of high school dropouts was only eleven
9 thousand four hundred twenty-six dollars (\$11,426); and

10 WHEREAS, teen parents will have higher earning potential,
11 better career opportunities and less need for government aid
12 during their lives if they are able to graduate from high
13 school; and

14 WHEREAS, the children of teen parents will grow up in
15 households with higher income and greater stability if their
16 parents become high school graduates; and

17 WHEREAS, pregnant and parenting teens struggle to remain
18 in school due to narrowly interpreted school attendance
19 policies and the inability to make up missed school work;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
21 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department be
22 requested to create a task force to study the obstacles faced
23 by teen parents in completing their educations; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be composed of
25 experts in the fields of education, teen pregnancy, teen

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1 parenting, law, statistics and social services, including
2 representatives from the public education department, the New
3 Mexico GRADS program, New futures school, the Santa Fe teen
4 parent center, at least three different school districts from
5 different regions in New Mexico, the epidemiology and response
6 division of the department of health, the American civil
7 liberties union of New Mexico, young women united and the
8 southwest women's law center; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force issue a
10 comprehensive report regarding these obstacles and make
11 recommendations on how to eliminate these obstacles and
12 increase the number of pregnant and parenting teens who
13 graduate from high school; and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the report include specific
15 short-term and long-term goals to eliminate the barriers faced
16 by pregnant and parenting teens in completing their educations;
17 and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report by
19 November 1, 2012 to the secretary of public education,
20 appropriate legislative interim committees and all school
21 districts and charter schools in the state; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
23 transmitted to the public education department for appropriate
24 distribution.