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SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 22

45TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2001

INTRODUCED BY

Mary Jane Garcia

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABSENCE OF SEX EDUCATION IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE HIGH TEEN PREGNANCY RATE IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, New Mexico had the third highest birth rate in the United States for females aged fifteen to seventeen in 1995; and

WHEREAS, teen mothers are less likely to be employed, finish high school or attend college; and

WHEREAS, teen mothers are less likely to be able to obtain quality child care; and

WHEREAS, teen fathers earn two-thirds the income of males who delay parenting until after age twenty; and

WHEREAS, by age twenty-three only sixty-five percent of

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1 teen fathers have completed high school or earned a general
2 equivalency diploma; and

3 WHEREAS, teenage parents are often unaware of the severe
4 social and economic consequences of becoming parents at a
5 young age; and

6 WHEREAS, age-appropriate courses in sexuality are not
7 required in most school districts beyond sixth grade; and

8 WHEREAS, when health education is integrated into other
9 courses, current rules do not require instructors to be
10 certified in the health sciences; and

11 WHEREAS, community assessment surveys in Raton, Socorro,
12 Carlsbad and Santa Fe find that between seventy and ninety-two
13 percent of adults support comprehensive abstinence-based sex
14 education in their schools beginning by the sixth grade; and

15 WHEREAS, over eighty-one percent of students surveyed by
16 the mayor's youth advisory board in Las Cruces believe teen
17 pregnancy is a problem in Las Cruces; and

18 WHEREAS, there may be a correlation between what students
19 are taught in school and students' behavior; and

20 WHEREAS, states with low teen pregnancy rates may offer
21 examples of programs that can reduce the prevalence of teen
22 pregnancies;

23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
24 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health and the
25 state department of public education be requested to examine

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1 the relationship between the absence of sex education in
2 middle school and high school, and the high teen pregnancy
3 rate in New Mexico; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the secretary of health and the superintendent
6 of public instruction.

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