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SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 14

46TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2004

INTRODUCED BY

Gay G. Kernan

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

**REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE CHILD
DEVELOPMENT BOARD TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF STATEWIDE PRE-
KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS.**

**WHEREAS, the early years of a child's life are almost
universally recognized as the optimum period of brain
development in a child and, therefore, the optimum period for
learning; and**

**WHEREAS, research attributes substantial economic benefits
to high-quality early care and education; and**

**WHEREAS, many children in New Mexico enter kindergarten
classes unprepared to begin learning the skills taught in
kindergarten; and**

**WHEREAS, New Mexico offers a limited number of programs
for the general population of four-year-old children to help**

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1 prepare them for kindergarten; and

2 WHEREAS, most of those programs, such as head start and
3 child care, have income-based eligibility requirements, serve
4 children of mixed ages and rely upon federal funding; and

5 WHEREAS, New Mexico's recently implemented kindergarten
6 plus pilot program has already shown encouraging results, with
7 teachers reporting that children are generally exceeding
8 expectations; and

9 WHEREAS, beginning in January 2004, one of these programs
10 will serve four-year-old children to help prepare them for
11 kindergarten; and

12 WHEREAS, approximately forty-three states and the District
13 of Columbia fund pre-kindergarten programs, whether half-day or
14 full-day, whether for specific or general populations; and

15 WHEREAS, a primary motivation for many of these programs
16 was the high number of children in the respective states
17 identified as failing in the early grades, together with the
18 prospect of their continued poor school performance and
19 subsequent dependence on social programs during later years;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, those states that have implemented universal,
22 state-supported pre-kindergarten programs for all four-year-
23 olds have found them to be effective and successful, producing
24 dramatic gains in cognitive skills among poor children and
25 minority children; and

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1 WHEREAS, New Mexico will benefit from more widely
2 available high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, in the short
3 term through the enhanced recruitment and retention of parent
4 employees whose children attend high-quality programs, and in
5 the long term through a better-educated and more productive
6 workforce;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
8 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department, in
9 collaboration with the child development board, be requested to
10 study the programs currently offered by licensed preschools to
11 four-year-old children and amend and align the standards of
12 these programs as needed to ensure that the children served
13 will be prepared for kindergarten; and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
15 department, in collaboration with the child development board,
16 be requested to study the feasibility of phasing in a state-
17 funded voluntary statewide pre-kindergarten program to help
18 prepare all four-year-old children for kindergarten, beginning
19 with programs to serve four-year-old children most in need
20 based upon indicators in the at-risk index; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study include a review of
22 the methods and results of the kindergarten plus pilot program
23 for possible implementation throughout the state; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
25 department and the child development board report their

1 findings and recommendations to the legislative education study
2 committee by November 2004; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
4 transmitted to the secretary of public education, to the
5 chairperson of the child development board and to the director
6 of the legislative education study committee for appropriate
7 distribution.

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