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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Lopez ORIGINAL DATE 2/3/06
LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____
SHORT TITLE NM Dental School Feasibility SB 588
ANALYST Lewis

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	250.0	Non-Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates HB 652.

Relates to SB 264 (Expand UNM Dental Residency Program).

Relates to SB 180 (Increase Dental Education Slots).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Health Policy Commission (HPC)

Department of Health (DOH)

Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 588 appropriates \$250,000 from the general fund to the New Mexico Health Policy Commission to conduct a study of the feasibility and effectiveness of opening a school to educate and prepare dentists for practice in New Mexico.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$250,000 contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2007 shall revert to the general fund.

As of 2/3/06, the General Appropriation Act (HAFC substitute for HB 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 78) includes \$100,000 to the Higher Education Department (HED) for a dental school feasibility study at the University of New Mexico (UNM).

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

According to the Higher Education Department (HED), this bill supports a key priority of the HED's legislative agenda and is included in HED's FY07 recommendation, as well as that of the Governor. This bill differs from the HED recommendation only in that:

- this appropriation is made to the Health Policy Commission (HPC) instead of to HED, and
- this bill does not specify that the dental school would be at UNM.

NMHED recommended funding for a Dental Feasibility Study in its FY07 budget request as a Research and Public Service Project (RPSP) in the hopes increasing the number of physical healthcare, allied professionals and oral health workers in New Mexico.

According to the Department of Health (DOH), this appropriation is not part of the DOH executive budget request, but is a recommendation from the Governor's Oral Health Council, established in August 2004 to address a variety of oral health issues, including professional shortages, access, reimbursement and dental education.

This bill would address the shortage of dentists in New Mexico (NM) through a feasibility study. The lack of dentists in New Mexico has resulted in limited access to assessment, prevention, restorative treatment and follow-up care which particularly affects the state's most vulnerable populations.

According to the Health Policy Commission (HPC), because the state does not have a dental school, residents of New Mexico who are interested in a dental career must attend an out-of-state dental school. The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) program (administered by the Higher Education Department) is the main mechanism for New Mexicans to attend dental school. This program is designed so that a New Mexico resident pays the equivalent of in-state tuition at an out-of-state dental school, and the state pays a negotiated amount to the dental school.

According to the HPC, during the 2003-2004 academic year 23 New Mexico students participated in dental programs at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; Texas A&M; Baylor College of Dentistry; Creighton University; the University of Missouri-Kansas City; and Oregon Health and Science University. Six dental students returned to New Mexico upon graduation in 2003. Of the six students, five took salaried positions in community health clinics, and the sixth went into private practice. These numbers cannot begin to address the critical shortage of dentists in New Mexico.

HPC cites a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) report showing that New Mexico ranks 49th among the states in the number of dentists per 1,000 of population. The average practicing New Mexico dentist is in his mid-50s. Over the next eight- to ten-year period, the "aging out" factor will further reduce the number of state dentists. Thirty of New Mexico's 33 counties, and all of the six counties with international border designation, are classified as Federal Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSAs). The shortage of dentists, the limited number of publicly funded oral health programs, and the regional and national shortages of oral health professionals all contribute to the overall disparities of oral health care in New Mexico.

In addition to having inadequate numbers of providers, the HPC indicates that New Mexico also suffers from a misdistribution of existing dentists throughout the state. Statistically, 49% of the state's licensed dentists are located in three primarily urban areas of the state, with 32 percent in Bernalillo County; 11 percent in Santa Fe County ; and six percent in Dona Ana County.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

As the lead agency, the HPC will be responsible for providing intensive staff support to facilitate meetings, follow up on task assignments, conduct research, as well as writing and distributing the final report.

ML/mt