

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE INTERIM LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
3 COMMITTEE TO ESTABLISH A SUBCOMMITTEE TO IDENTIFY
4 OPPORTUNITIES AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN
5 COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP AN INFRASTRUCTURE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
6 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

7
8 WHEREAS, most people would agree that in order for a
9 community to do well, its children must do well; and

10 WHEREAS, although many children in New Mexico are doing
11 well, many others are struggling, having fallen behind during
12 their early childhood years; and

13 WHEREAS, children who live in poverty, or who live in
14 areas lacking resources and opportunities, often lag behind
15 other children and have a difficult time catching up; and

16 WHEREAS, according to the 2010 kids count data book,
17 about one-fourth of all New Mexicans live in poverty, and
18 close to one-half of their children live in extreme poverty;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, New Mexico is home to twenty-two tribes,
21 including nineteen pueblos, the Navajo Nation and two Apache
22 tribes, and to many Native Americans who live off-reservation
23 throughout the state; and

24 WHEREAS, twelve percent of all children in New Mexico
25 between the ages of birth and five years old are Native

1 American, and many of them live in isolated, rural areas of
2 the state; and

3 WHEREAS, these children are among those most in need of
4 high-quality, comprehensive, early childhood care and
5 education to ensure their readiness for kindergarten through
6 grade twelve; and

7 WHEREAS, according to a December 2009 report of the
8 children, youth and families department titled "New Mexico's
9 Early Learning Systems", the sovereign, self-governing
10 pueblos, tribes and nations of New Mexico vary considerably
11 from one another in language, government, judicial structure,
12 custom and traditions; and

13 WHEREAS, a disproportionate percentage of Native
14 American children face the challenges of poverty and school
15 failure; and

16 WHEREAS, according to the Indian education status report
17 for 2006-2007 prepared by the public education department,
18 only thirty-eight percent of Indian children are proficient
19 in reading and only twenty-seven percent are proficient in
20 math in third grade; and

21 WHEREAS, the status report also reveals that, despite
22 efforts to decrease the number of student dropouts, the
23 Native American drop-out rate increased over a three-year
24 period for grades seven and eight; and

25 WHEREAS, Native American children who face disadvantages

1 in early childhood and who live in poverty experience a
2 disproportionate level of health problems, including a higher
3 incidence of infant mortality, obesity, substance abuse and
4 suicide and a shorter life span than children in
5 better-supported areas of the state; and

6 WHEREAS, a widely shared objective is to ensure that
7 every child in New Mexico has an equal opportunity for
8 success in school and has access to an integrated and
9 high-quality system of early learning experiences; and

10 WHEREAS, New Mexico has a number of early childhood
11 programs and policies to support this objective, including
12 home visiting programs; child care assistance; the teacher
13 education and compensation helps (T.E.A.C.H.) early childhood
14 program; pre-kindergarten, kindergarten plus and K-3 plus
15 programs; the family, infant and toddler program; and generous
16 medicaid and children's health insurance programs known as New
17 MexiKids; and

18 WHEREAS, despite the existence of these valuable
19 programs, and despite attempts to coordinate efforts through
20 the establishment of Native American advisory committees,
21 Native American liaison positions and other approaches, only
22 pockets of success have been achieved among New Mexico's
23 Native American populations; and

24 WHEREAS, although laudable, efforts to extend early
25 childhood programs and services to the pueblos, tribes and

1 nations of New Mexico have not resulted in a reliable and
2 comprehensive system of early programs and services; and

3 WHEREAS, there has been little attention paid, outside
4 of the pueblos, tribes and nations themselves, to develop the
5 necessary infrastructure to support such a comprehensive
6 system of early childhood programs and services;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
8 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the interim legislative health and
9 human services committee be requested to establish a
10 subcommittee to identify opportunities for Native American
11 communities to develop an infrastructure of early childhood
12 programs and services; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the subcommittee seek
14 testimony and recommendations from agencies and other entities
15 in New Mexico that have been engaged in addressing this
16 identified need, including the children, youth and families
17 department, the children's cabinet, the Indian affairs
18 department, the department of health's office of school and
19 adolescent health, the public education department, New Mexico
20 voices for children, the early childhood action network and
21 others with expertise in early childhood development and
22 education; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the subcommittee request
24 testimony regarding available federal and grant funding that
25 could be obtained to develop an infrastructure of early

1 childhood programs and services for Native Americans; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
3 transmitted to the chair of the interim legislative health
4 and human services committee. _____

SM 57
Page 5

5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25