

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 23

2 **50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2012**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

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

14
15 WHEREAS, the legislature seeks to ensure that all New
16 Mexico students have access to a quality education; and

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

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

21 WHEREAS, forty-three percent of teen mothers nationwide
22 who gave birth under the age of eighteen failed to earn either
23 a high school diploma or a general education development
24 certificate by the age of twenty-two as compared to only six
25 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.