

HOUSE BILL 363

**54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020**

INTRODUCED BY

D. Wonda Johnson and Anthony Allison

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION; REQUIRING THE FOUR CORNERS REGIONAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE TO EMPLOY NAVAJO EDUCATION LIAISONS TO WORK WITH MEMBER SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO DELIVER CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION TO NAVAJO STUDENTS AND TO SERVE AS OMBUDSPERSONS; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

**SECTION 1.** A new section of the Regional Cooperative Education Act is enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] FOUR CORNERS REGIONAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE--NAVAJO EDUCATION LIAISONS.--

A. The four corners regional education cooperative shall appoint one or more Navajo education liaisons to work with its member school districts in developing and implementing

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1 culturally and linguistically relevant education to Navajo  
2 students.

3 B. Navajo education liaisons shall:

4 (1) be knowledgeable about the educational,  
5 cultural, linguistic and psychosocial supports needed by Navajo  
6 students;

7 (2) be appointed after consultation with the  
8 Navajo Nation department of Diné education and tribal colleges  
9 in New Mexico;

10 (3) work closely with school districts, tribal  
11 government, the Indian education division of the public  
12 education department, the Indian affairs department, tribal  
13 colleges and public post-secondary educational institutions in  
14 New Mexico to ensure that public schools are delivering a  
15 culturally and linguistically relevant, comprehensive public  
16 school education that results in post-secondary academic or  
17 vocational-technical success for Navajo students;

18 (4) serve as the regional education  
19 cooperative's Navajo ombudsperson for complaints from Navajo  
20 students or their families, public schools, tribal government  
21 and others that pertain to Indian education; and

22 (5) perform other duties as assigned by the  
23 executive director, so long as those assignments do not  
24 interfere with the performance of the primary functions of the  
25 position.

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1           C. As the Navajo ombudsperson, the Navajo education  
2 liaison shall receive and investigate complaints and either  
3 resolve those complaints informally or refer them to the  
4 appropriate person or agency for resolution. The Navajo  
5 ombudsperson shall not function as a formal mediator, and the  
6 ombudsperson does not have formal decision-making authority or  
7 disciplinary responsibilities. The ombudsperson does not have  
8 the power to bind public schools, school districts or the four  
9 corners regional education cooperative or other parties.

10           D. Each January 1, the Navajo education liaison  
11 shall provide an annual report to four corners regional  
12 education cooperative members, the Indian education division,  
13 the department of Diné education, the president of the Navajo  
14 Nation, the governor, the legislature and the public on the  
15 liaison's activities of the past year and any findings and  
16 recommendations the liaison has to improve public education and  
17 post-secondary education for Navajo students and to improve  
18 communications among state, local and tribal governments."

19           **SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION.**--One hundred fifty thousand  
20 dollars (\$150,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the  
21 four corners regional education cooperative for expenditure in  
22 fiscal year 2021 to appoint one or more Navajo education  
23 liaisons and pay other expenses of the position, including  
24 furniture, supplies and equipment. Any unexpended or  
25 unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2021

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1 shall revert to the general fund.

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