

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE, IN
3 COLLABORATION WITH THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, TO
4 CONVENE A TASK FORCE, INCLUDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND
5 DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL; MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS; PUBLIC
6 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS;
7 SCHOOL UNION REPRESENTATIVES; COMMUNITY GROUPS; AND OTHER
8 INTERESTED PERSONS, TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR
9 PROVIDING MENTAL WELLNESS SPACES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

10
11 WHEREAS, various public health measures have been
12 implemented throughout New Mexico to reduce illness and
13 mortality during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic,
14 including flattening the curve with measures such as social
15 distancing, quarantining and closing schools; and

16 WHEREAS, less has been done to implement mental health
17 measures to reduce anxiety, depression and behavioral
18 disorders in the general population and public schools; and

19 WHEREAS, school districts and charter schools across the
20 state are now coming out of lockdown with cautious optimism,
21 but the pandemic is not yet over and the challenges related
22 to the impact on students' mental health remain largely
23 unknown; and

24 WHEREAS, recent studies have revealed that students may
25 experience anxiety, depression and behavioral problems during

1 the pandemic and its aftermath; and

2 WHEREAS, studies have also shown that the impact on
3 learning during the pandemic has been unprecedented and has
4 left school districts and charter schools across the state
5 grappling with uncertainties on how best to address the
6 challenges facing their personnel and students; and

7 WHEREAS, educational researchers have advocated that
8 public schools and education policymakers address mental
9 health as a key approach to helping students regain lost
10 academic ground and social-emotional equilibrium during the
11 pandemic and its aftermath; and

12 WHEREAS, while coronavirus disease 2019 changed the ways
13 in which public schools provide daily lessons and
14 opportunities for learning for students, and those changes
15 affected many students' mental health, the pandemic is not
16 the only stressor students must contend with; and

17 WHEREAS, bullying, racial tension and childhood trauma
18 are significant contributors to stress and declining mental
19 health, and those stressors have been exacerbated by the
20 pandemic; and

21 WHEREAS, according to research from the federal centers
22 for disease control and prevention, there is a direct
23 relationship between a student's mental health and academic
24 achievement; and

25 WHEREAS, overall, child mental health statistics,

1 including the following, are alarming:

2 A. one in five students struggle with mental
3 health;

4 B. approximately one in five students who could
5 benefit from additional mental health support do not receive
6 it;

7 C. one-half of all mental health conditions start
8 before age fourteen; and

9 D. behavioral problems, anxiety and depression are
10 the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in school-aged
11 children; and

12 WHEREAS, young people spend a majority of their time in
13 various educational environments that play a crucial role in
14 their psychological, physical and social development; and

15 WHEREAS, public schools have the opportunity to address
16 the mental health of students and support a framework in
17 which students can thrive by offering resources that support
18 their mental health, such as providing a mental wellness
19 space where students can go during the regular school day to
20 have direct access to mental health counselors or simply a
21 space where students are comfortable and can discuss the
22 concerns they are facing; and

23 WHEREAS, such spaces are not currently being provided to
24 address the mental health needs of students;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF

1 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the
2 legislative education study committee, in collaboration with
3 the public education department, be requested to convene a
4 task force that includes committee members and department
5 personnel; mental health care providers; school teachers,
6 counselors and administrators; school union representatives;
7 community groups; and other interested persons to develop a
8 comprehensive plan to enhance student learning and student
9 welfare by providing mental wellness spaces in middle schools
10 and high schools as a strategy for addressing and supporting
11 the mental health of public middle school and high school
12 students; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force gather data
14 and information, including data and information from other
15 states that have instituted mental wellness spaces, to
16 determine the efficacy of mental health spaces and develop
17 standards for mental wellness spaces and their use; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force consider
19 whether a pilot project creating mental wellness spaces in a
20 limited number of public schools and studying the effects of
21 the spaces on mental health and academic achievement is
22 warranted and, if so, the size and term of a pilot project;
23 and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and
25 recommendations of the task force be reported to the

1 legislature and the governor by November 1, 2022; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
3 transmitted to the chair of the legislative education study
4 committee and the secretary of public education for
5 distribution to school districts and charter schools. _____

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