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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>HB487</u>	Sponsor	<u>Torres-Velásquez/López/Roybal Caballero/Gurrola/Mirabal Moya</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.231019.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HGEIC</u>
Short Title	<u>Protection of Hispanic Education</u>		
Analyst	<u>Davalos</u>	Original Date	<u>2/27/2025</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 487 (HB487) would amend the Hispanic Education Act (Section 22-23B NMSA 1978) to refine its purpose by replacing "educational success" with "academic success," removing references to closing the achievement gap, and incorporating a focus on ensuring lifelong success for Hispanic students. The bill would also expand the purpose of the Hispanic Education Act by adding protecting and preserving New Mexico's heritage Spanish language and culture.

The bill would enhance collaboration by formally integrating community-based organizations and the Higher Education Department (HED) into statewide initiatives to improve graduation rates, promote lifelong success, and increase postsecondary enrollment, retention, and completion.

HB487 also introduces changes to the Hispanic Education Advisory Council, requiring the council to convene at least twice annually during the biannual Hispanic education summit. Furthermore, the bill would allow council members to receive per diem and mileage reimbursement following the provisions outlined for non-salaried public officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB487 does not contain an appropriation.

Funding for the Hispanic Education Act has been variable in recent years, with the Legislature appropriating \$500 thousand in FY22, \$1 million in FY23, and \$500 thousand for FY24 to the Public Education Department (PED) for implementation of the act. The current House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS) includes \$500 thousand for the Hispanic Education Act.

PED [reports](#) there is a lack of parity for the Hispanic Education Advisory Council to allow for mileage, per diem, and stipends for the council members compared with other education acts, which limits its ability to support statewide initiatives.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Hispanic Student Outcomes. HB487 could improve outcomes for Hispanic students in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) by expanding the Hispanic Education Act’s focus beyond closing achievement gaps to promoting lifelong success. However, persistent academic disparities remain a significant challenge for Hispanic students. The [Hispanic Education Status Report 2023-2024](#) illustrates ongoing achievement gaps in core subjects, with proficiency rates consistently trailing behind the state average. According to PED’s [NM Vistas](#) Accountability Dashboard, in SY24 proficiency rates for Hispanic students were as follows:

- In math, 18.8 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient compared with the state average of 23.1 percent;
- In reading, 34.7 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient compared with the state average of 38.9 percent; and
- In science, 32.6 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient compared with the state average of 37.7 percent.

Protecting and Preserving New Mexico’s Heritage Spanish Language and Culture. New Mexico has a unique dialect of Spanish, also referred to as Traditional New Mexican, that has been around for more than 400 years. A journalist from Northern New Mexico [reported](#) the language has been surviving through oral traditions, poetry, music, and everyday communication within Hispanic communities. However, most speakers are now in their 50s or older, signaling a generational decline in transmission. Adding to the decline, in rural communities where the language has been historically nurtured face significant economic, cultural, and environmental challenges, threatening both the survival of these settlements and the continuity of the language.

HB487 could help preserve the Traditional New Mexican language and improve student outcomes by expanding the Hispanic Education Act’s scope to protect and preserve New Mexico’s heritage Spanish language and culture. [Research](#) has consistently shown bilingual education supports cognitive development, enhances academic performance, and strengthens students’ connection to their cultural heritage. The integration of Spanish language preservation aligns with the state’s longstanding commitment to linguistic and cultural diversity, as demonstrated by the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act.

Community Connections in K-12 Education. HB487 could strengthen educational outcomes for Hispanic students by integrating community organizations into statewide efforts. Research shows that well-connected schools benefit from higher student attendance, improved academic performance, increased motivation, and stronger social skills. Schools that engage communities in decision-making often see greater student engagement and fewer disciplinary issues. Under HB487, schools would collaborate with local businesses, civic organizations, and families to provide students with real-world learning experiences, career exploration, and mentorship opportunities that support academic and personal growth. These partnerships can also expand resources—such as funding, technology, and extracurricular programs—while addressing critical student needs, including food insecurity, mental health support, and housing instability.

The Status of the Hispanic Education Advisory Council. [The Hispanic Education Advisory Council](#) (Section 22-23B-5 NMSA 1978) is a 23-member advisory body to the secretary of education tasked with guiding policies to improve public education for Hispanic students. Its responsibilities include recommending strategies to improve academic outcomes, increase parental

involvement, foster community engagement, and support students' postsecondary and professional success.

The council meets as needed but must convene at least twice annually. HB487 would require these meetings to align with the biannual Hispanic Education Summit. The council is a consultative body, advising the secretary on policies and programs affecting Hispanic students in New Mexico. However, members serve voluntarily and do not receive per diem, mileage reimbursement, or other compensation. HB487 would amend the statute to allow members to receive per diem and mileage reimbursement under the non-salaried public officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Hispanic Education Act currently requires the state to provide mechanisms to parents, communities, business organizations, public schools, school districts, charter schools, public postsecondary education institutions, PED, and state and local policymakers to collaboratively improve educational opportunities for Hispanic students. HB487 would require these mechanisms are also provided to community-based organizations and HED.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* Education Sufficiency Lawsuit. In 2019, the 1st Judicial Court issued a final judgement and order in the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* education sufficiency lawsuit, finding New Mexico's public education system failed to provide a constitutionally sufficient and adequate education for at-risk students, defined as English learners, Native American students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. The court pointed to low high school graduation rates, low student test scores, and high college remediation rates as indicators of how the state failed to meet its constitutional obligation to ensure all students are college, career, and civic ready. While Hispanic students at large were not specifically named as a struggling student subgroup in the lawsuit, many Hispanic students are categorized as low-income students, English learners, or students with disabilities.

RELATED BILLS

Relates to House Bill 488, Use of Language for Bilingual Education, which would amend the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act to require bilingual programs to use students' home or heritage language as the primary medium of instruction. The bill would also emphasize the cultural and historical aspects of students' heritage languages and require parent advisory committees for program development and evaluation.

Relates to Senate Bill 396, Hispanic Student Education and Reporting, which would amend the Hispanic Education Act to expand collaboration efforts, improve data reporting, increase efforts to maintain the Spanish language, and require school districts and charter schools to construct systemic frameworks to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic students.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED)