

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THAT THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
3 CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
4 CONTINUING AND IMPROVING THE 520 NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE AND
5 CULTURAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM.

6
7 WHEREAS, the state recognizes the importance of
8 maintaining and promoting Native American languages and
9 cultures as integral components of education and community
10 identity; and

11 WHEREAS, systemic inequities, coupled with cultural and
12 linguistic barriers, contribute to the loss of cultural
13 identity among Native American students; and

14 WHEREAS, research indicates that learning one's
15 ancestral language fosters cognitive development, strengthens
16 academic performance and enhances overall well-being by
17 reinforcing cultural identity and community connections; and

18 WHEREAS, Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 established the
19 Native American language and culture certificates, allowing
20 the public education department to issue certificates to
21 individuals proficient in a Native American language and
22 culture of a New Mexico Indian nation, tribe or pueblo based
23 on criteria established through a memorandum of agreement
24 between the tribal governments and the public education
25 department; and

1 WHEREAS, this certification recognizes tribal
2 sovereignty and the importance of traditional knowledge and
3 values the linguistic proficiency 520 Native American
4 language and culture teachers gain outside of conventional
5 academic pathways; and

6 WHEREAS, from 2003 to 2014, sixteen Indian nations,
7 tribes and pueblos have entered into a memorandum of
8 agreement with the public education department granting
9 authority to certify their representatives as 520 Native
10 American language and culture teachers, ensuring that tribal
11 sovereignty and expertise guide the certification process;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, in 2022, the legislature amended
14 Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 to establish salary parity
15 between 520-certified Native American language and culture
16 instructors and level 1 licensed teachers, acknowledging the
17 significance of their instructional roles and ensuring
18 equitable compensation; and

19 WHEREAS, the public education department's
20 Indian education division awarded one million three hundred
21 twenty-five thousand dollars (\$1,325,000) in fiscal year 2025
22 to support 520 Native American language and culture
23 certificates; and

24 WHEREAS, according to the public education department's
25 2023-2024 tribal education status report, there were

1 one hundred thirty-three active 520-certified Native American
2 language and culture instructors, and ninety-nine students
3 earned state seals of bilingualism-biliteracy awards for
4 indigenous languages; and

5 WHEREAS, challenges remain regarding the organizational
6 structure, certification process, salary implementation,
7 pathways for advancement and integration into the broader
8 bilingual and multicultural education system, and a
9 comprehensive review of the 520 certification framework is
10 necessary;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
12 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that this legislative body hereby
13 acknowledge the significance of 520-certified Native American
14 language and culture instructors and request the legislative
15 education study committee to convene a working group to study
16 and make recommendations concerning the 520 Native American
17 language and culture certificates, including the
18 organizational structure and accountability, advancement and
19 professional development, data collection and transparency
20 and a long-term strategy for system improvement; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be
22 requested to include representatives from the Indian
23 education division and the licensure bureau of the public
24 education department, school districts and charter schools
25 specializing in Native American language and culture

1 education, organizations focused on 520 certification or
2 bilingual teacher certification, including those providing
3 professional development and training, bilingual and
4 multicultural education programs, higher education
5 institutions, technical assistance centers and 520-certified
6 educators; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be
8 requested to present its findings and recommendations to the
9 legislative education study committee, the legislature and
10 the Indian education division of the public education
11 department no later than December 31, 2025; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to the secretary of public education, the
14 assistant secretary of Indian education of the public
15 education department, the director of the legislative
16 education study committee and the respective governing bodies
17 of each New Mexico Indian nation, tribe and pueblo. _____