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SENATE MEMORIAL 9

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025

INTRODUCED BY

Shannon D. Pinto

A MEMORIAL

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

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

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

WHEREAS, research indicates that learning one's ancestral
language fosters cognitive development, strengthens academic
performance and enhances overall well-being by reinforcing

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1 cultural identity and community connections; and

2 WHEREAS, Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 established the
3 Native American language and culture certificates, allowing the
4 public education department to issue certificates to
5 individuals proficient in a Native American language and
6 culture of a New Mexico Indian nation, tribe or pueblo based on
7 criteria established through a memorandum of agreement between
8 the tribal governments and the public education department; and

9 WHEREAS, this certification recognizes tribal sovereignty
10 and the importance of traditional knowledge and values the
11 linguistic proficiency 520 Native American language and culture
12 teachers gain outside of conventional academic pathways; and

13 WHEREAS, from 2003 to 2014, sixteen Indian nations, tribes
14 and pueblos have entered into a memorandum of agreement with
15 the public education department granting authority to certify
16 their representatives as 520 Native American language and
17 culture teachers, ensuring that tribal sovereignty and
18 expertise guide the certification process; and

19 WHEREAS, in 2022, the legislature amended Section
20 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 to establish salary parity between 520-
21 certified Native American language and culture instructors and
22 level 1 licensed teachers, acknowledging the significance of
23 their instructional roles and ensuring equitable compensation;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, the public education department's Indian

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1 education division awarded one million three hundred twenty-
2 five thousand dollars (\$1,325,000) in fiscal year 2025 to
3 support 520 Native American language and culture certificates;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, according to the public education department's
6 2023-2024 tribal education status report, there were one
7 hundred thirty-three active 520-certified Native American
8 language and culture instructors, and ninety-nine students
9 earned state seals of bilingualism-biliteracy awards for
10 indigenous languages; and

11 WHEREAS, challenges remain regarding the organizational
12 structure, certification process, salary implementation,
13 pathways for advancement and integration into the broader
14 bilingual and multicultural education system, and a
15 comprehensive review of the 520 certification framework is
16 necessary;

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

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1 system improvement; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be requested
3 to include representatives from the Indian education division
4 and the licensure bureau of the public education department,
5 school districts and charter schools specializing in Native
6 American language and culture education, organizations focused
7 on 520 certification or bilingual teacher certification,
8 including those providing professional development and
9 training, bilingual and multicultural education programs,
10 higher education institutions, technical assistance centers and
11 520-certified educators; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be requested
13 to present its findings and recommendations to the legislative
14 education study committee, the legislature and the Indian
15 education division of the public education department no later
16 than December 31, 2025; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
18 transmitted to the secretary of public education, the assistant
19 secretary of Indian education of the public education
20 department, the director of the legislative education study
21 committee and the respective governing bodies of each New
22 Mexico Indian nation, tribe and pueblo.