

# “SCHOOL BUS MODERNIZATION ACT”

By Charles Goodmacher, Do Good LLC, on behalf of NMVC Action Fund and others, for the  
Science Technology and Telecommunications Committee,  
8/31/2023 Santa Rosa, New Mexico

**WHY THIS BILL?** *To Provide Needed Support For New Mexico schools\* to make the switch from Diesel to Electric buses as quickly as possible. Three core priorities of the New Mexico legislature are advanced with this bill: (1) Improved and more equitable physical and mental health for New Mexico students; (2) Increased funds available for classroom instruction through reduced transportation and energy costs; (3) Help meet our state greenhouse gas reduction goals and an increased number of public charging stations in rural communities.*

*New Mexico experience shows our districts need help to access and utilize primary funding from the U.S. E.P.A.’s Clean School Bus Program (<https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>).*

Prime Sponsor: Representative Sarinana.

## Major Conceptual Components:

- (1) **Provide in-state expertise for districts to apply and implement.** Provide a special supplemental appropriation of \$50,000 to the Public Education Department Transportation unit to build their capacity for sharing electric bus and infrastructure expertise with local schools and districts including assistance with grant applications and hosting a “grant bank.”
- (2) **Establish Electric School Bus Storage to Grid Provisions.** Electric buses in many districts double as back-up batteries for community emergency shelters and for other necessary uses when the grid is down. Electric battery life is extended when they are off-loaded into storage or the grid, rather than leaving the electricity stored in the battery.
- (3) **Fund a statewide design and engineering study to assess school district readiness and implementation needs to make the switch from diesel to electric buses.** Are new transformers or other additional infrastructure needed for the installation of charging equipment appropriate for buses and other electric vehicles of each district? What else is needed? What would be the statewide cost of preparing districts across our state to electrify their fleets?
- (4) **Amend the state’s public school capital outlay process to include infrastructure for building and school bus and other vehicle electrification in the eligibility list for matching funds.** The language does not presently allow this use of capital outlay. SB9 language could be amended to specifically include “to and from” buses. NMSA 22-25-2.
- (5) **Eliminate the financial shortage between the actual costs of implementing new Electric buses and the funds provided by the EPA for that purpose.** Modify existing Rules, appropriately, to allow funds currently provided by the state for the purchase of Diesel school buses to be allocated up to, but not exceeding, an equal amount of dollars needed to close the funding gap to hold the districts harmless for the move to Electric school buses.