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SENATE MEMORIAL 72

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2013

INTRODUCED BY

Gay G. Kernan

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO CENTER FOR
EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH APPOINT A TRUANCY AND DROPOUT
PREVENTION TASK FORCE AS AN INITIATIVE TO DEVELOP
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING TRUANCY AND EARLY WITHDRAWAL
FROM SCHOOL.

WHEREAS, during the 2011-2012 school year, fifty-one
thousand thirty-four public school students in the state were
habitually truant; and

WHEREAS, the state's racial and ethnic minority student
population is overrepresented among truant youth, just as it is
in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems; and

WHEREAS, truancy may increase students' chances of
becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and becoming
part of a school-to-prison pipeline resulting in a lifetime of

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1 incarceration; and

2 WHEREAS, there is a strong correlation between truancy
3 and:

- 4 A. low reading and mathematics proficiency;
- 5 B. suicidal thoughts and attempts; and
- 6 C. illicit drug and alcohol abuse, sexual behavior
7 and teen pregnancy; and

8 WHEREAS, substantial truancy is a strong predictor of
9 dropping out of school; and

10 WHEREAS, financial outcomes for people who exhibit
11 substantial truancy and drop out of school typically are poor;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, the salary of a resident who dropped out of
14 school averages sixteen thousand eight hundred dollars
15 (\$16,800) per year, which is forty-six percent less than the
16 average high school graduate earns and one hundred fifty
17 percent less than the average college graduate earns; and

18 WHEREAS, long-term outcomes for people who drop out of
19 school typically are poor; and

20 WHEREAS, people who drop out of school are more likely
21 than their peers who graduate to live in poverty, receive
22 public assistance, be in poor health and become single parents
23 with children who also drop out of school; and

24 WHEREAS, more than two-thirds of inmates at state prisons
25 lack a high school diploma;

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1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
2 OF NEW MEXICO that the university of New Mexico center for
3 education policy research be requested to appoint a task force,
4 to be chaired by the director of the university of New Mexico
5 center for education policy research and to include members who
6 represent local school districts, the public education
7 department, the legislative education study committee, the
8 legislative finance committee, the children, youth and families
9 department, the children's court divisions or probation
10 services offices of district courts, district attorneys'
11 offices, local law enforcement agencies, the corrections
12 department and the workforce solutions department; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force:

14 A. develop and recommend multi-agency coordinated
15 and cooperative strategies to keep students in school and to
16 prevent truancy and early withdrawal from school;

17 B. develop and recommend measures for schools and
18 school districts to use in identifying the primary sources of a
19 student's truancy problem and ways to address the sources;

20 C. develop and recommend best practices for
21 encouraging student engagement in school;

22 D. recommend and promote truancy and early
23 withdrawal prevention in ways that do not lead to arrest or
24 incarceration of students;

25 E. recommend professional development and training

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1 for school personnel to engage with students at risk for
2 truancy and early withdrawal from school; and

3 F. recommend ways for schools, school districts and
4 the public education department to track, understand and work
5 toward reducing the incidents of truancy and dropouts,
6 including maintaining data to:

7 (1) track each student who:

8 (a) is in danger of becoming a habitual
9 truant due to multiple unexcused absences;

10 (b) has become a habitual truant after
11 accruing ten or more unexcused absences; or

12 (c) is in danger of dropping out of
13 school; and

14 (2) aggregate demographic data for each school
15 district's habitual truants, including:

16 (a) race and ethnicity;

17 (b) gender;

18 (c) area of residency;

19 (d) qualification for free and reduced-
20 fee lunch;

21 (e) reading proficiency scores; and

22 (f) mathematics proficiency scores; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report its
24 findings and recommendations to the legislative education study
25 committee and the legislative finance committee no later than

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1 November 30, 2014; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
3 transmitted to the university of New Mexico center for
4 education policy research.

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