

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 35

**51st Legislature, 2nd Session, 2014**

**Tracking Number:** .195431.1

**Short Title:** NMSU Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Mary Kay Papen

**Analyst:** James Ball

**Date:** January 29, 2014

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 35 makes an appropriation to support the Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program (MHNPP) at New Mexico State University (NMSU).

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$171,200 is appropriated to the Board of Regents at NMSU from the General Fund for expenditure in FY 15 and subsequent fiscal years. Unexpended or unencumbered funds do not revert to the General Fund.

**Fiscal Issues:**

According to the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) Fiscal Impact Report (FIR), MHNPP received a recurring General Fund appropriation of \$252,800 in FY 14. For FY 15 NMSU requested an additional \$171,200 for a total program budget of \$424,000, representing a 68 percent increase over FY 14.

The Higher Education Department (HED) did not request additional funding for the program as part of its annual budget submission, and both the LFC and the Executive recommended the FY 14 General Fund level for the program.

**Substantive Issues:**

According to the Department of Health (DOH), there is a significant need to increase the number of mental health practitioners in New Mexico. The *Affordable Care Act* will surely increase the demand for highly qualified nurses as more people seek comprehensive services in primary and acute healthcare services, as well as management for chronic conditions. Increasing the number of mental health nurse practitioners in the state could also improve staffing shortages in DOH funded school-based health centers, which serve 56 school campuses in 30 counties throughout New Mexico. The expansion could also improve staffing patterns in public health clinics in critical shortage areas.

According to HED, MHNPP is intended to enhance the state's only educational program for training mental health advance practice nurse practitioners to address high rates of mental health disparities among the state's ethnically diverse population.

With the expansion NMSU also hopes to implement a six session curriculum workshop which would address:

- drug abuse;
- alcohol abuse;
- suicide prevention;
- sexual abuse;
- domestic violence; and
- mental health promotion.

**Background:**

DOH states that all New Mexico counties, with the exception of Los Alamos and parts of Bernalillo and Sandoval counties, are designated as mental health professional shortage areas based on criteria set by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. Lack of access to culturally appropriate and sensitive mental health services outside of Albuquerque continues to be a problem especially affecting Native American youth and their families. The lack of mental health providers and counseling services in rural, frontier, and tribal areas, as well as societal factors that are associated with suicide, poverty, unemployment, cultural isolation, and hopelessness, need to be systematically addressed by mental health providers.

**Committee Referrals:**

SCC/SEC/SFC

**Related Bills:**

SB 37 *NMSU Nurse Expansion Program*  
SB 119 *Expedited Nurse From Other State Licensure*  
HB 7 *General Appropriation Act of 2014*  
HB 59 *Expand Nurse Educators Fund Purpose*  
HB 142 *Expedited Nurse From Other State Licensure*