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**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS  
54th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2020**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>HB70</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	Ferrary/Trujillo, C.
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.215951.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>HEC/HAFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	Friendships Between Certain Students		
<b>Analyst</b>	Waite	<b>Original Date</b>	1/28/2020
		<b>Last Updated</b>	2/7/2020

**FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**

**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 70 (HB70) would make an appropriation from the general fund to the Public Education Department (PED) for programs in middle and high schools that foster friendships between students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and students without intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill appropriates \$300 thousand from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY21. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY21 shall revert to the general fund.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS) does not make an appropriation to PED specifically for programs that foster friendships between students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and students without intellectual and developmental disabilities. However, HB2/HAFCS includes a related recurring appropriation to PED of \$5.5 million for Indigenous, multilingual, multicultural, and special education. HB2/HAFCS also includes a \$750 thousand nonrecurring appropriation from the public education reform fund for a statewide special education convening.

**SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

Inclusion-focused programs can help to increase self-confidence, feelings of connectedness, and academic skill level among students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Friendship Circle International, Unified Sports (a Special Olympics initiative), and Best Buddies International are examples of non-profit organizations working to foster positive relationships between students with developmental and intellectual disabilities and those who do not have developmental and intellectual disabilities. According to Best Buddies' most recent annual survey, 86 percent of high

school participants with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) report that since joining Best Buddies, they feel better about themselves, more connected to their school community, and more confident speaking up for themselves. In addition, 73 percent of high school participants with IDD and 64 percent of high school participants without IDD report that Best Buddies has made their school more inclusive. In 2011, the Florida Legislature found that Best Buddies group participants outperformed a comparison group of students with similar exceptionalities by nine percentage points or more in reading at grade level (36% compared to 27%) and completing ninth-grade (66% compared to 56%).

Research demonstrates that being identified with a learning disability makes students vulnerable to experiences of stigmatization, which can be associated with negative academic and emotional effects. Additional studies show that even in inclusive academic settings, students with developmental and intellectual disabilities may experience loneliness and depression as a result of being more socially isolated. Moreover, students with disabilities are more likely to experience bullying than students without disabilities.

Positive social interaction and the feeling of belonging are two important factors for all students' social and emotional well-being. The quality of peer relationships can impact motivation to achieve and general level of achievement. Research also shows that students who have positive relationships with peers throughout childhood and adolescence tend to be more engaged and successful with academic tasks.

Currently, the New Mexico chapter of Best Buddies partners with four middle schools and 18 high schools in five counties across the state, serving 717 participants and supporting 109 one-to-one friendships. Best Buddies International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The New Mexico chapter receives financial support from corporations, individuals, foundations, and government entities. For example, the New Mexico chapter receives approximately \$92 thousand per year from PED through Regional Education Cooperative 7 for its transition-to-employment internship program.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

PED would be required to administer the funds appropriated by HB70. It is unclear what criteria the department will use to evaluate requests in order to distribute funds.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files

**JLW/tb/mc/sgs**