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

Bill Number	<u>SB132</u>	Sponsor	<u>Stefanics</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.216088.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Nurses in Public School</u>		
Analyst	<u>Alexander</u>	Original Date	<u>1/27/2020</u>
		Last Updated	<u>2/12/2020</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 132 (SB132) would appropriate \$5 million to the Public Education Department (PED) to employ and place nurses in public schools statewide.

FISCAL IMPACT

SB132 would appropriate \$5 million to PED for expenditure in FY21 and subsequent fiscal years. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund.

There are approximately 300 schools in New Mexico that do not have a full-time (FTE) registered nurse. Full-time school nurses in the state earn an average salary of \$46,379 annually. The total cost to fund a full-time registered nurse for every school that does not currently have one would be \$14.1 million excluding the cost of benefits.

The \$5 million appropriation proposed by SB132 would not cover the placement and employment of nurses on this scale, but could still assist with costs for a significant number of school districts. Some school districts, particularly in rural regions, employ 0.5 FTE nurses that are shared between campuses, a strategy which could help offset costs for small districts.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Shortage of Health Care Providers. New Mexico is currently experiencing a shortage of school nurses, reflective of a larger shortage of nurses and health care providers throughout the state. Analysis by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2016 found that New Mexico employed 774 registered nurses per 100,000 population, making it one of 10 states with the lowest ratios of employed nurses in the country. According to 2019 analysis by the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, New Mexico faces significant health care provider shortages, particularly in rural and frontier counties. The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) *State of Health in New Mexico 2018*

report similarly highlighted that 32 of the state’s 33 counties have been designated as "primary care health professional shortage areas" by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

PED analysis from 2018 indicated a student-to-nurse ratio of 700:1 in New Mexico, which aligns with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommended student-to-nurse ratio of 750:1; however, NASN recognizes nurse staffing is not a “one-size-fits-all” determination and individual schools should decide how to meet the health needs of their students. This may be particularly true in New Mexico, where many school districts have a student population significantly smaller than 750 students.

Benefits of School Nurses. A 2016 NASN analysis found that school nurses improve student and school district outcomes, including the improved general health of students and school staff, improved attendance and productivity, reduced chronic absenteeism, reduced drop-out rates, saved time for school staff and administrators, and increased compliance with federal and state laws.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Section 24-1-4 NMSA 1978 states that DOH staff such as Regional Health Officers must provide medical oversight and support to school nurses through consultations, trainings, receiving and responding to reports, direction regarding medical protocol, assistance obtaining medical supplies, and other tasks. The Legislative Finance Committee analysis notes that increasing the number of school nurses statewide may therefore also increase the need for additional DOH staff.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

PED may have multiple options for employing and placing nurses statewide. Some school districts contract nursing services through Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs) and share full-time nurses with other small school districts due to a lack of registered nurses in their geographic area. According to PED data, school districts and charter schools also employ supervised licensed practical nurses, health assistants, contracted nurses, and partner with school-based health centers (SBHCs) in addition to or in lieu of registered nurses. The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 includes \$1.1 million for RECs and \$1.4 million for SBHCs.

RELATED BILLS

Relates to HB65, School Based Health Clinics Funding, which appropriates \$2 million for the funding of existing and new school based health centers, including mobile clinic services.

Relates to HB53, Health Services as Part of Sufficient Education, which requires that nursing, school counseling, and behavioral health services be included in the definition of a basic sufficient education.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)
- Public Education Department (PED)