SENATE MEMORIAL 1

55TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2021

INTRODUCED BY

Siah Correa Hemphill

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK FORCE TO PROMOTE THE USE OF OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS IN NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS AND REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR TO DECLARE AN "OUTDOOR LEARNING DAY" IN 2021.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is rich in diverse natural resources and wildlife and features outstanding natural areas that provide residents with a wide variety of outdoor opportunities; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of research and literature indicates that being in nature is increasingly important for children, benefiting their emotional, mental and physical well-being; as one student put it, "Having fresh air and movement is essential."; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that students who learn outdoors develop a sense of self, independence, confidence,
creativity and decision-making skills; in the words of another student, "It helps students know that learning can occur anywhere, not just inside a classroom."; and

WHEREAS, studies have also shown that outdoor classrooms can lead to better test scores, behavior and attendance; as another student said, "Children don't want to be stuck at one desk in a small classroom."; and

WHEREAS, outdoor classrooms are more important than ever and are being successfully used across the country during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, outdoor classrooms can be a solution to having a safe and distanced classroom in every school, giving students the ability to learn in person while in a healthy environment; another student summed it up in saying, "They help germs disperse."; and

WHEREAS, outdoor classrooms can be applicable and advantageous to all students, no matter their age, learning ability or skills, and they are practical and affordable; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that outdoor classrooms encourage community and family involvement and can increase enthusiasm for school; they can "give kids something to look forward to when coming to school", as another student said; and

WHEREAS, outdoor classrooms can help students learn to be good stewards of the natural environment; one student got to the point by saying, "Being outdoors a lot teaches the kids how
amazing nature is and can eventually help them become good citizens and want to take care of the environment."; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico legislature unanimously passed the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights in 2012 (Senate Memorial 10 and House Memorial 3), encouraging state agencies to develop outdoor learning opportunities for New Mexico's youth, which many have done; and

WHEREAS, these state agencies and other organizations have expressed interest in establishing and expanding outdoor classrooms for schools;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, using existing resources, the New Mexico outdoor recreation division of the economic development department and the state parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department be requested to convene a task force to develop and recommend actions to establish and expand the use of outdoor classrooms for schools and build career paths for New Mexico's youth by coordinating existing efforts on outdoor recreation and education and youth career development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the two divisions be requested to include among the task force membership representatives from the wild friends program, environmental education of New Mexico and the following state agencies: the public education department; the forestry division of the energy, minerals and
natural resources department; the early childhood education and
care department; the state land office; the department of game
and fish; the cultural affairs department; and the tourism
department; and

   BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to
submit a report to the appropriate interim legislative
committees by October 31, 2021 that details the task force's
recommendations, including strategies to promote outdoor
classrooms in all schools in New Mexico; and

   BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the governor be requested to
declare an "Outdoor Learning Day" in 2021; and

   BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
transmitted to the governor, the New Mexico outdoor recreation
division of the economic development department and the state
parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
department for dissemination to task force invitees; the wild
friends program; and environmental education of New Mexico.

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