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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Lopez **LAST UPDATED** _____
ORIGINAL DATE 2/27/25
BILL
SHORT TITLE Repeal Obsolete School Provision **NUMBER** Senate Bill 426
ANALYST Liu

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT*

(dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	No fiscal impact					General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

Agency Analysis Received From

New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI)

Commission for the Blind (CFB)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Bill 426

Senate Bill 426 repeals Section 22-14-20 NMSA 1978, which transferred adult services and assets from the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped (currently New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI)) to the blind administrative unit (currently Commission for the Blind (CFB)) of the vocational rehabilitation division (currently Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)) of the department of education (currently the Public Education Department (PED)) in 1971. This provision is outdated and no longer relevant to current operations.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill does not contain an appropriation and removes a provision of law that is no longer implemented.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Section 22-14-20 NMSA 1978 likely refers to the Adult Orientation Center in Alamogordo, which was originally opened in 1949 and operated as a part of the New Mexico School for the Blind. In 1954, the school changed its name to the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped and then changed its name again in 2004 to NMSBVI. The orientation center was one of the largest sheltered workshops in the state, which employed adults who were blind or visually impaired to construct brooms and cane products in a space isolated from non-disabled colleagues. In 1968, NMSBVI transferred the center to DVR under PED.

According to archives from the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), a national advocacy organization for the blind, state advocates for the blind were strongly opposed to the New Mexico Legislature's introduction of House Bill 367 in 1971, which legislatively transferred the Services for the Blind Section to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education—later enacted and now the section of statute considered for repeal in this bill. At NFB's 1971 annual convening in Albuquerque, the convention passed 13 resolutions:

- Raising the amount of reader service money available for college students;
- Requesting a survey of the education for blind children in New Mexico;
- Requesting tenure for the teachers at the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped;
- Demanding steps to end teacher discrimination in New Mexico public schools;
- Requesting a revision of the advisory committee to Services for the Blind to make it more representative of the views of the blind;
- Requesting introduction of a Commission for the Blind bill;
- Requesting improvements in the vending stand program;
- Working to get State funding for the State library for the blind;
- Requesting better tape and Braille transcription service;
- Demanding elimination of the economic need determination in providing rehabilitation service to blind adults; and
- Making social security benefits available to shop workers and giving them the same rights as other workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

In response to this transfer of services, advocates began pushing for the establishment of a Commission for the Blind (CFB). In 1975, Governor Jerry Apodaca vetoed the first bill to establish CFB, opining that larger umbrella agencies would be better at increasing government efficiencies. In 1985, NFB noted the responsiveness of the state had worsened from the transfer to DVR 15 years earlier, given it was “a small part of a giant state agency concerned with everything from the rehabilitation of other handicapped groups to the running of state public schools.” In 1986, the state established the Commission for the Blind (CFB), which now operates the Adult Orientation Center. The center is a certified and accredited residential program designed to equip blind individuals with the skills needed to become employed.