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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Pinto **LAST UPDATED** _____
ORIGINAL DATE 3/2/25
BILL
SHORT TITLE Continue & Improve 520 Language **NUMBER** Senate Memorial 9
ANALYST Mabe

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					

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Bills 194, 488 and Senate Bills 13, 163, 234

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From
Public Education Department (PED)
Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Memorial 9

Senate Memorial 9 (SM9) requests the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) to convene a working group to study and improve the 520 Native American Language and Cultural Certification Program. The memorial proposes a comprehensive review of the certification program to address challenges and strengthen its impact.

The workgroup is to be made up of representatives from:

- Indian Education Division and licensure bureau of PED,
- School districts and charter schools specializing in Native American language and culture education,
- Organizations focused on 520 certification or bilingual teacher certification, including those focused on professional development and training,
- Bilingual and multicultural education programs,
- Higher education institutions,

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- Technical assistance centers, and
- 520-certified educators.

The workgroup will tackle the following issues:

- Organizational structure and accountability,
- Advancement and professional development,
- Data collection and transparency, and
- A long-term strategy for system improvement.

The work group will present their findings by December 31, 2025, to:

- LESC,
- The Legislature, and
- Indian Education Division of PED

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Memorials do not contain an appropriation nor are enforceable as state law. The costs here are connected to the time of working group members and could be considered a normal part of doing business.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The memorial lays out the importance of maintaining and promoting Native American languages and cultures as key parts of education and community identity and highlights systemic inequities and cultural and linguistic barriers that contribute to cultural loss among Native American students. Research shows that learning one's ancestral language boosts cognitive development, improves academic performance, and enhances well-being by reinforcing cultural identity and community connections.

The memorial also gives background on the 520-certification program (Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978), which allows individuals proficient in a Native American language and culture to become certified educators through a memorandum of agreement between the Public Education Department (PED) and tribal governments. Since 2003, 16 nations, tribes, and pueblos have participated in the program, ensuring tribal sovereignty and expertise guide the certification process. A 2022 amendment established salary parity between 520-certified instructors and level 1 licensed teachers at \$50 thousand.

In FY25, PED's Indian Education Division awarded \$1.325 million to support the 520 program. According to PED's 2024-2024 tribal education status report, there were 133 active 520-certified instructors statewide and 99 students received state seals of bilingualism-biliteracy awards for indigenous languages.

To study the challenges of organizational structure, certification process, salary implementation, pathways for advancement, and integration into the broader bilingual and multicultural education system, the memorial requests a comprehensive review of the 520-certification framework by an LESC-led workgroup.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and American Educational Research Association (AERA) finds bilingual education, particularly in a student’s ancestral language, can improve literacy skills, problem-solving abilities, and cognitive flexibility. Research shows Native students in immersion language programs have better attendance, higher graduation rates, and perform as well or better than peers in English only education on standardized tests (“Reclaiming Indigenous Languages: A Reconsideration of the Roles and responsibilities of Schools”). Additionally, a 2019 study in the Journal of American Indian Education found students in culturally relevant programs reported higher self-esteem and lower rates of anxiety and depression.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SM9 requires many groups and agencies to give their time to the working group. IAD notes compliance would mean diverting time resources away from normal duties.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to House Bill 194 on protecting Native American students' right to culturally express themselves at graduation ceremonies and House Bill 488, which amends New Mexico's Bilingual Multicultural Education Act.

It also relates to Senate Bill 13 on tribal education compact schools, Senate Bill 163 on tribal regalia at school events, and Senate Bill 234, which creates a tribal education trust fund.

RM/sl/hg