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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR:	Stewart	DATE TYPED:	1/28/00	HB	HJM 18
SHORT TITLE:	Recognize Sign Language for Language Credits			SB	
				ANALYST:	Baca

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY00	FY01	FY00	FY01		
	NFI				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

State Department of Education (SDE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Joint Memorial 18 requests that the SBE take the steps necessary to ensure that American Sign Language (ASL) is offered as a credit language course in New Mexico public high schools, especially those serving hearing-impaired students.

Significant Issues

The memorial requests that the credit language course offered include syntax, hand shapes and movement and the corresponding facial expressions that are so important in the use of the language.

Section 22-8-8.4, NMSA 1978 allows the use of ASL as an elective course that can be counted toward meeting graduation requirements. The meaning of the phrase "credit language course" is questioned in the SDE analysis and suggests that the intent may be to use ASL to satisfy the one required communications skills credit.

SDE reports there is currently a shortage of qualified interpreters in the state, and this suggests finding the instructors needed would be difficult.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None at the state level. The impact will occur at the local school district level if additional instructors must be hired - if certified instructors are available.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The SBE has no authority to mandate elective course offerings. It can recognize those that may be used toward meeting graduation requirements.

LB/prr:gm