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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Swisstack ORIGINAL DATE 2/06/07
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 523
SHORT TITLE Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Project SB _____
ANALYST Lucero

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

| Appropriation | | Recurring or Non-Rec | Fund Affected |
|---------------|---------|-------------------------|------------------|
| FY07 | FY08 | | |
| | \$350.0 | Recurring | General Fund |
| | | | |

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)

Public Education Department (PED)

Department of Health (DOH)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 523 appropriates three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) from the general fund to Children, Youth and Families Department for expenditure in 2008 to contract with a nonprofit organization for a fetal alcohol syndrome awareness pilot project. The project shall use the media and associated awareness initiatives in public schools and target health areas throughout the state.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2008 shall revert to the general fund.

The appropriation in this bill is not part of Children Youth and Families Department's request and is not included in the Executive recommendation of Children Youth and Families Department.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

HB 523 identifies one entity to develop a pilot project that will target health areas throughout the state and in public schools. It may be more efficient to contract with several nonprofit organizations to avoid excessive travel costs.

Concerning awareness initiatives in the Public Education Department (PED), PED must first preview any materials created in order to ensure age-appropriateness. PED has specific health standards and benchmarks for teaching all students about health issues. This pilot program would need to align with those standards.

According to the New Mexico Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) Active Case Ascertainment Study:

- FAS is a chronic yet preventable condition
- Children with FAS are frequently involved in Child Protective Services and special education

81% of women in New Mexico reported some knowledge of FAS, yet 19% feel that one, two or more drinks a day will not harm a developing fetus.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

HB 523 relates to the Governor's policy initiative Healthy New Mexico Goal 2: Improve Health Outcomes and Family Support for New Mexicans.

DOH suggests performance measures could include the number of public awareness presentations on FAS, the percent of positive response by the public, and the percent of mothers who drink during pregnancy.

The expected outcomes, numbers of youth, numbers of participating communities, or changes in behavior (increase or decrease) are not identified.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Although CYFD is the administrative agency for this bill, PED staff would have to preview any materials created.

If passed, the bill will have a slight administrative impact on children, youth and families department that the bill does not address.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

None at this time.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The phrase “target health areas” is not defined.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Department of Health provided the following data:

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a brain malformation of a developing fetus caused by the mother’s use of alcohol during pregnancy; there are no known “safe” amounts of alcohol during pregnancy. FAS is a condition characterized by abnormal facial features, growth retardation, and central nervous system problems. One of every 1,000 children born in New Mexico has FAS. The incidence of alcohol related birth defects in New Mexico is 1 in 100 births.

(http://casaa.unm.edu/PreventFAS/NM_Data.htm)

FAS is the only completely preventable birth defect. Use of alcohol just before pregnancy may be a problem because women might not be aware of a pregnancy in the earliest weeks. In the period 2000-2003 - during the three months before pregnancy - an estimated 19% of lower income mothers drank frequently compared to 16% of those not at lower income. In the last 3 months of pregnancy, 4.2% of lower income mothers drank any amount compared to 5.3% of mothers not at lower income. Less than 1% of mothers who drank frequently or binge drank had access to and used a program to quit drinking.

www.health.state.nm.us/phd/prams/home.html

The DOH Office of Disability and Health has funded an FAS prevention project at the University of New Mexico (UNM) Center for Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Addictions (CASAA) since 1996. In 2003, the project, in conjunction with the UNM School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, produced the 30-minute FAS awareness and prevention video *I Don’t Want My Daughter to Hate Me*. The project has distributed more than 10,000 copies of the video in New Mexico and the country and has bought airtime on network and cable channels in New Mexico. Other projects include teen peer education, a school-based program for parenting teens (GRADS), FAS information in county marriage license packets, FAS conferences, and videos and other education programs in the schools. To minimize duplication, the program proposed in HB523 would need to coordinate with already existing programs.

FAS affects 1 per 1000 births in New Mexico. The rate increases among Native American tribes from 1.8 to 3.09 per 1000 births. (http://casaa.unm.edu/PreventFAS/NM_Data.htm)

ALTERNATIVES

\$350 thousand dollars for a statewide awareness pilot project might not be sufficient. The bill also states that CYFD is to contract with a nonprofit organization. It may be more efficient to contract with several nonprofit organizations spread throughout the state to avoid excessive travel and administrative costs.