

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 537

51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013

Tracking Number: .192877.1

Short Title: Bernalillo GED Educational Training

Sponsor(s): Representative Antonio “Moe” Maestas and Others

Analyst: Travis Dulany

Date: February 19, 2013

Bill Summary:

HB 537 makes an appropriation to provide educational training for persons in Bernalillo County pursuing a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Fiscal Impact:

\$100,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY 14 shall revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to DFA:

- if HB 537 is enacted, LGD “will enter into a grant agreement with Bernalillo County and ensure that all expenditures are in compliance with the state procurement code”; and
- “Bernalillo County may issue a request for proposal to any organization that has interest in administering educational training for persons attempting to attain their general educational development certificate.”

Substantive Issues:

The Higher Education Department (HED) reports that:

- approximately 320,000 New Mexico adults do not have a high school diploma, 120,000 of whom reside in Bernalillo County;
- the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Division of HED serves approximately 20,000 students annually at 26 ABE centers throughout the state;
- there are nine ABE sites that either are underserved or place students requesting service on waitlists;
- there are 11 communities that currently do not have an ABE center, but have requested ABE services; and
- HED-supported adult education centers in Bernalillo County include:
 - Albuquerque GED, Inc.;
 - Central New Mexico Community College;

- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute; and
- Catholic Charities.

According to the Public Education Department (PED), there are five GED testing centers in Bernalillo County:

- Albuquerque Jobs Corps;
- Central New Mexico Community College;
- Foothill High School Children, Youth and Families Department Juvenile Justice;
- the University of New Mexico-Main Campus; and
- Youth Development, Inc.

Background:

History of ABE

In August 1998, the US Congress enacted the federal *Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA)*, which rewrote federal statutes governing programs of job training, adult education, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation, in an effort to replace them with what the sponsors thought to be streamlined and more flexible components of workforce development systems. Previous versions of the act include the *Jobs Training Partnership Act of 1982* and the *Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973*. Title II of the WIA is the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)*, which defines adult education as services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals:

- who have attained 16 years of age;
- who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law; and
- who:
 - lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
 - do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
 - are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

The AEFLA's purpose is to:

- assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
- assist adults who are parents to obtain educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and
- assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.

The New Mexico Legislature took action in 2003 that amended law to transfer the responsibility of the state level ABE program from the former State Board of Education (now PED) to the Commission on Higher Education (now HED). The transfer of the state ABE program to HED occurred in April 2005.

ABE programs provide the following services:

- Adult Basic Education (grades 1-8 and adult literacy);
- Adult Secondary Education (grades 9-12 and GED preparation);
- English as a Second Language;
- Workplace Literacy;
- Work-based Learning; and
- English Literacy/Civics Education.

Recurring state funding for ABE has declined over recent years, while federal funding from the AEFLA has increased:

Fiscal Year	Federal Funds	Legislative Appropriation
FY 09	\$ 3,384,569	\$6,531,900
FY 10	\$3,571,629	\$6,212,100
FY 11	\$3,815,227	\$5,670,259
FY 12	\$3,910,247	\$5,386,786
FY 13	\$4,163,128	\$5,186,786 ¹

Current Practices in ABE

ABE covers a broad array of learning topics, from basic English communication skills to college preparation. The diverse nature of ABE requires flexibility in teaching and diversity in course offerings. In fact, in preparing this bill analysis, nearly all literature on the topic emphasized the notion that there is no one type of ABE student, but rather an eclectic mix of cultures, backgrounds, professions, and ethnicities. Nonetheless, HED has attempted to focus the ABE program in New Mexico toward helping students obtain a professional certificate and at least one year of college.

In 2008, an HED consultant advised the department on a variety of methods for addressing and improving career pathways, most notably, the I-BEST, or Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training, model. According to HED, the department has begun implementing a pilot program for the model. The reason for the pilot program and movement toward the I-BEST model revolves around the enhanced return on investment for both the student and the State of New Mexico for ABE through the model.

According to 2010 census data:

- persons working full-time who have “some college” have median annual earnings of \$40,556;
- individuals who earned a high school diploma received median annual earnings of \$34,197; and
- those who did not complete high school were reported to have median earnings of \$27,470.

¹ Additional, nonrecurring appropriations of \$200,000 (supplemental) and \$85,000 (special) were made for FY 13 to satisfy the state’s maintenance of effort requirements.

Because of the substantial earning gap between those who did not complete high school and those with some college education, HED is gearing its ABE approach not only toward adult literacy and successful GED test completion, but also toward technical and career training.

Changes to the GED

According to GED Testing Service, effective January 2014 the following changes will be in effect for the GED:

- *Computer-based Testing*
 - the new GED will be available only on computers;
 - an internet connection will not be necessary at the time the person is taking the test; however, an internet connection will be required in order for the test to be graded;
 - once the student has completed the test (and an internet connection has been established), the tests are encrypted for security and submitted for scoring;
 - according to a PED official, technology upgrades may be necessary in order to prepare for CBT (computer-based testing), and testing centers will need to become “Pearson VUE Authorized Test Centers” in order to offer the CBT; and
 - test-takers will need to know “basic” computer, keyboarding, and typing skills, and have a familiarity with computer software tasks such as scrolling, using graphic user interfaces, and exhibiting windows.

- *Content Areas*
 - the new GED is aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as well as other college- and career-readiness standards of states that have not adopted CCSS (such as Texas and Virginia);
 - although the new GED test will have four content sections (further explained below) rather than the five currently offered on the 2002 Series GED Test, the full battery of tests will take the same amount of time as the current test, at approximately seven hours;
 - the test is intended to provide “an indicator of readiness to enter workforce training programs or postsecondary education,” and “actionable information about a candidate’s academic strengths and weaknesses”;
 - the newly developed test is said to be evidence-based, norm-referenced, designed to measure deep understanding of core skills needed for a variety of pathways, and based on empirical performance of a nationally representative sample of graduating high school seniors;
 - the new question types on the 2014 GED are intended to measure critical cognitive skills, that, according to GED Testing Service, are not possible on a paper-based test; and
 - the four content areas, along with their respective focuses, are:
 - **Literacy**, with a focus on integrated reading and writing tasks that require test-takers to read complex texts, analyze arguments, and use text-based evidence to support reasoning;
 - **Mathematics**, with a focus on deep mastery of a core set of quantitative reasoning skills relevant to a wide range of career and postsecondary pathways;

- **Science**, with a focus on reasoning skills drawn from both CCSS Mathematics and English/Language Arts, as well as nationally recognized science and social studies curricular standards; and
 - **Social Studies**, with a focus on essential science and social studies content that is both relevant to the lives of adult test-takers and typical of what is taught in a high school course of study.
- *Cost*
 - the base price for the new GED test will be \$120/test-taker;
 - testing centers will be compensated approximately \$38/test-taker;
 - GED Testing Service representatives informed the Legislative Education Study Committee staff that states and testing centers may either add additional administrative fees on top of the \$120/test-taker base price or subsidize it through state funds.
- *Registration*
 - test-takers will register for the new GED test through GED Testing Service, either online or by a toll-free telephone number;
 - because the registration will be via internet or telephone, it appears as though a credit or debit card will be necessary to sign up for the new GED test; however, PED staff have indicated that test-takers may also obtain a prepaid card in order to register online or over the telephone.

History of the GED

According to GED Testing Service, LLC:

- the GED test was first developed in 1942 and was primarily administered to Armed Service members whose military service interrupted their ability to complete high school;
- the original series of GED tests reflected the needs of the industrial era;
- at the time in which the test was developed, 37 percent of test-takers indicated plans to seek additional education at the postsecondary level;
- the original series English test focused on correctness and effectiveness of expression, while the other portions – social studies, science, and literature – relied on the interpretation of reading material;
- the test was revised in 1978, and the changes, as quoted below, were characterized by a:
 - “shift in emphasis from science and social studies reading materials to a separate reading test; and
 - transition away from a recall of facts toward application of conceptual knowledge and evaluation of presented information”;
- the third series of the GED test, released in 1988, was based on the following recommendations from a panel of professionals and experts:
 - the addition of a direct writing sample;
 - increased emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
 - increased reflection of the diverse roles adults play in society;

- greater emphasis on understanding the sources of societal change; and
- an increase in contextual settings relevant to adults;

- in the 1988 series, the reason candidates took the test shifted, with over 65 percent saying they were taking the test in order to enroll in a postsecondary institution; and
- the fourth series, released in 2002, and also the current GED test, is based on content standards at the national and jurisdictional level, and will expire December 31, 2013.

Committee Referrals:

HEC/HAFC

Related Bills:

HB 321 Adult Education Programs & GED Test

SB 183 Replace GED Terms with Equivalency Diploma

SB 263 Bernalillo GED Educational Training (Identical)