

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SJM 54

**51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013**

**Tracking Number:** .193594.1

**Short Title:** Study Dropout Rate & Substance Abuse

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Michael S. Sanchez

**Analyst:** James Ball

**Date:** March 8, 2013

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**Bill Summary:**

SJM 54 resolves that the Legislative Education Study Committee:

- address, during the interim, the correlation between school dropout rates and substance abuse by students in grades 9-12; and
- recommend legislative remedies that could be implemented in school districts to decrease rates of substance abuse and school dropout.

SJM 54 further resolves that legislation for viable remedies to address this issue be drafted for consideration by the Second Session of the 51<sup>st</sup> Legislature.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

**Substantive Issues:**

A good deal of research has been done already linking substance abuse and the school dropout rate. High school seniors who dropped out of school before graduating were more likely to drink, smoke cigarettes, and use marijuana and other illegal drugs, according to a new report from the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The SAMHSA study revealed that high school seniors who dropped out of school were more than twice as likely to be smokers, or have smoked in the past month, than students who stayed in school. The study also found that more than 31 percent of seniors who did not receive their diploma used drugs, compared with about 18 percent of students who had finished high school.

The researchers also noted that approximately 27 percent of high school dropouts smoked marijuana, while close to one in every 10 abused prescription drugs. Meanwhile, only approximately 15 percent of those who completed high school used marijuana and just 5.0 percent abused prescription drugs.

Dropouts were also more likely to drink. The study showed that nearly 42 percent of seniors who did not finish high school drank and approximately a third engaged in binge drinking.

**Background:**

For well over 20 years, school districts in New Mexico participated in the federal Safe and Drug-Free School and Communities program, which was effective in addressing some of the concerns of raised in SJM 54. According to the US Department of Education website, Congress eliminated this program in 2011 and moved some of its priorities into a new Office of Safe and Healthy Students within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. This move, however, emphasizes drug abuse in the context of a comprehensive school health program and does not necessarily address the school dropout issue.

**Committee Referrals:**

SRC/SEC

**Related Bills:**

SB 383 *Workforce Development & Dropout Prevention*

SM 72 *Truancy & Dropout Prevention Task Force*

HB 601 *Peer-to-Peer Substance Abuse Services*

HJM 12a *Peer-to-Peer Substance Abuse Approaches*