A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO CENTER FOR
EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH APPOINT A TRUANCY AND DROPOUT
PREVENTION TASK FORCE AS AN INITIATIVE TO DEVELOP
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING TRUANCY AND EARLY WITHDRAWAL
FROM SCHOOL.

WHEREAS, during the 2011-2012 school year, fifty-one thousand thirty-four public school students in the state were habitually truant; and

WHEREAS, the state's racial and ethnic minority student population is overrepresented among truant youth, just as it is in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems; and

WHEREAS, truancy may increase students' chances of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and becoming part of a school-to-prison pipeline resulting in a lifetime of incarceration; and

WHEREAS, there is a strong correlation between truancy and:

A.   low reading and mathematics proficiency;

B.   suicidal thoughts and attempts; and

C.   illicit drug and alcohol abuse, sexual behavior and teen pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, substantial truancy is a strong predictor of dropping out of school; and

WHEREAS, financial outcomes for people who exhibit substantial truancy and drop out of school typically are poor; and

WHEREAS, the salary of a resident who dropped out of school averages sixteen thousand eight hundred dollars ($16,800) per year, which is forty-six percent less than the average high school graduate earns and one hundred fifty percent less than the average college graduate earns; and

WHEREAS, long-term outcomes for people who drop out of school typically are poor; and

WHEREAS, people who drop out of school are more likely than their peers who graduate to live in poverty, receive public assistance, be in poor health and become single parents with children who also drop out of school; and

WHEREAS, more than two-thirds of inmates at state prisons lack a high school diploma;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the university of New Mexico center for education policy research be requested to appoint a task force, to be chaired by the director of the university of New Mexico center for education policy research and to include members who represent local school districts, the public education department, the legislative education study committee, the legislative finance committee, the children, youth and families department, the children's court divisions

or probation services offices of district courts, district

attorneys' offices, local law enforcement agencies, the

corrections department and the workforce solutions

department; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force:

A. develop and recommend multi-agency coordinated

and cooperative strategies to keep students in school and to

prevent truancy and early withdrawal from school;

B. develop and recommend measures for schools and

school districts to use in identifying the primary sources of

a student's truancy problem and ways to address the sources;

C. develop and recommend best practices for

encouraging student engagement in school;

D. recommend and promote truancy and early

withdrawal prevention in ways that do not lead to arrest or

incarceration of students;

E. recommend professional development and training

for school personnel to engage with students at risk for

truancy and early withdrawal from school; and

F. recommend ways for schools, school districts

and the public education department to track, understand and

work toward reducing the incidents of truancy and dropouts,

including maintaining data to:

(1) track each student who:

(a) is in danger of becoming a habitual

truant due to multiple unexcused absences;

                (b) has become a habitual truant after accruing ten or more unexcused absences; or

                (c) is in danger of dropping out of school; and

            (2) aggregate demographic data for each school district's habitual truants, including:

                (a) race and ethnicity;

                (b) gender;

                (c) area of residency;

                (d) qualification for free and reduced-fee lunch;

                (e) reading proficiency scores; and

                (f) mathematics proficiency scores; and

    BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report its findings and recommendations to the legislative education study committee and the legislative finance committee no later than November 30, 2014; and

    BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be transmitted to the university of New Mexico center for education policy research.