

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 59

51st Legislature, 2nd Session, 2014

Tracking Number: .194839.1

Short Title: Expand Nurse Educators Fund Purpose

Sponsor(s): Representative Terry H. McMillan

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 3, 2014

Bill Summary:

HB 59 amends statute to expand the purpose of the Nurse Educators Fund (NEF) to allow other registered nurses, not just college and university employed nurse educators, to obtain bachelor of science, master of science, doctorate of nursing practice and doctor of philosophy in nursing degrees to qualify them to be employed as nursing educators in New Mexico colleges and universities.

HB 59 also moves the NEF from the Higher Education Department (HED) to the State Treasury, to be administered by HED.

Fiscal Impact:

HB 59 does not carry an appropriation.

Technical Issues:

Language in the existing statute as well as the amendment appears to allow registered nurses to obtain college degrees. Clearly no such state authorization is needed since those would be individual decisions by nurses themselves. Although it might be assumed that the intent of the statute and amendment is to allow all registered nurses to apply for loans from the NEF so that they can complete higher degrees and then be employed as nurse educators, no such loan program is ever mentioned. Although there is a reference to nurses "who use the fund," the statute does not specify what that means. HED has developed rules regarding the NEF, but the authorization in the statute deals solely with continued employment and pay-back provisions. The statute would benefit from at least some mention of a loan program.

Substantive Issues:

According to HED, New Mexico has a shortage of nurses, particularly in rural areas. There is also a shortage of nursing instructors. Most nurses in New Mexico have only an Associate-level degree and are not qualified to teach in nurse educator programs at colleges and universities. Expanding eligibility to assist practicing nurses to obtain higher degrees could help increase the number of nursing instructors and contribute to increasing the number of nurses in New Mexico.

Background:

HED states in its analysis of HB 59 that the NEF statute was adopted in 2005 and has never been amended. The stated purpose of the fund is to enhance the ability of college and university-employed nurses to further their education. The fund has been administered by HED since inception. Eligible candidates have been provided loan-for-service funds for their nursing education through a competitive process.

Committee Referrals:

HHGIC/HEC/HAFC

Related Bills:

HB 142 *Expedited Nurse from Other State Licensure*
HJM 9 *Advanced Practice Nurse & Midwife Task Force*
HM 46 *Advanced Practice Nurse & Midwife Task Force*
SB 37 *NMSU Nurse Expansion Program*
SB 119 *Expedited Nurse from Other State Licensure*