

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 267

52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015

Tracking Number: .199319.1

Short Title: ABQ School Black Student Union Program

Sponsor(s): Representative Sheryl M. Williams Stapleton and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 14, 2015

Bill Summary:

HB 267 makes an appropriation to fund the Black Student Union (BSU) program in the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS).

Fiscal Impact:

\$30,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Public Education Department (PED) for expenditure in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Substantive Issues:

According to PED, the presence of population-specific clubs within schools has the potential to:

- increase feelings of student safety;
- engage students in appropriate social and emotional learning;
- decrease drop-out rates; and
- increase academic success.

PED also notes that according to APS, more than 3,500 of the students in the district are African-American. APS currently has BSUs at 11 of its 13 high schools, although none are available at middle schools. HB 267 could support a modest expansion of the existing BSU program in APS.

Background:

PED states that President Obama signed an Executive Order on July 28, 2012 instructing schools nationwide to promote the academic success of African American students. One of the methods to promote wellbeing and graduation among these youth, according to the order, is to “enhance the educational and life opportunities of African-Americans by fostering positive family and community engagement in education.”

Analysis of a similar bill in FY 14 noted that at Highland High School, for example, a diverse group of approximately 40 students meets weekly to discuss issues facing students such as grades, graduation, and social responsibility. They monitor grades and find tutors, mentors, or other ways to help students in need.

The BSU advisors also serve as role models for their students. At Albuquerque High, for example, the sponsor is one of only two African-American teachers at the school. The faculty member gets to know the black students by talking through the issues of most importance to them in their lives.

Committee Referrals:

HEC/HAFC

Related Bills:

None as of February 14, 2015.