

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 385

**52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015**

**Tracking Number:** .199404.1

**Short Title:** Health Undergrads in Underserved Areas

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino

**Analyst:** James Ball

**Date:** March 3, 2015

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 385 makes an appropriation to establish a demonstration and research program to prepare undergraduate students from small universities for successful entry into medical school or other related health fields, including:

- a focused undergraduate curriculum;
- summer science academies;
- remote learning;
- medical school entrance examination preparation; and
- mentoring by rural physicians and physicians associated with the New Mexico Hispanic Medical Association.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$100,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) for expenditure in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

**Fiscal Issues:**

The Higher Education Department (HED) reports that this request was not submitted by NMHU to HED as part of the formal budget review process for FY 16 appropriations.

**Substantive Issues:**

Under the heading, *Undergraduate Preprofessional for Medicine and Biomedical Research*, the NMHU website outlines recommendations for students interested in careers in medicine, including plans to attend medical, veterinary or dental school, including: a major in biology and minor in chemistry or a double major in biology and chemistry; and an average grade point of at least 3.0. A sample pre-professional program of study for a biology major with a chemistry minor is also included on the website which outlines recommended courses by semester.

According to HED, workforce shortages in the health professions are exacerbated in rural areas where communities struggle to attract and keep well-trained providers. The training program outlined in SB 385 could help address the rural health professional shortage as students who

come from rural areas may be more likely to practice in those areas after completing their education.

HED also notes that there is a great need for pre-medical and other healthcare education for Hispanics. NMHU enrolls a large percentage of Hispanics and other minority students who could benefit from support in continuing their education in medical school or in other health field post-baccalaureate degree programs.

**Background:**

An internet search of strategies offered by colleges and universities to support undergraduates in entering medical school or other post-baccalaureate programs in health professions reveals that the typical approach is simply more coursework. The strategy outlined in SB 385 appears to be genuinely innovative.

The website of the New Mexico Hispanic Medical Association (NMHMA) states that it is a private not-for-profit organization that has been in existence since 1989. NMHMA's mission is to make healthcare accessible and affordable to all New Mexicans by, among other things:

- encouraging and assisting students interested in pursuing careers in healthcare; and
- providing scholarships to students that have made a commitment to provide healthcare in New Mexico.

**Committee Referrals:**

SEC/SFC

**Related Bills:**

None as of March 3, 2015.