

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SJM 26

52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015

Tracking Number: .200369.2

Short Title: School Equalization Guarantee for Some Adults

Sponsor(s): Senator Sue Wilson Beffort

Analyst: James Ball

Date: March 18, 2015

Bill Summary:

SJM 26 resolves that the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), working with the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), the Higher Education Department (HED), and the Public Education Department (PED), establish a work group to study the feasibility of amending statute:

- to clarify the:
 - definition of the term “school-age person”; and
 - the effect of that clarification on the unit value in the public school funding formula; and
- to provide sufficient funding to support the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program.

The joint memorial further resolves that the membership of the work group include representatives of:

- the New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools;
- directors of various adult education associations and community-based adult organizations;
- HED;
- PED;
- the New Mexico Coalition of School Leaders; and
- directors of institutional research at the University of New Mexico and two-year institutions.

Finally, SJM 26 resolves that the results of the work group’s study be presented to the LESC, the LFC, and the Governor before the Second Session of the 52nd Legislature.

Fiscal Impact:

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

Substantive Issues:

According to testimony received by the LESC during the 2013 interim:

- more than 400,000 New Mexico adults cannot fully participate in family, work, and community opportunities due to lack of education or English language skills; and
- over 240,000 New Mexico adults have not finished high school.

According to a fact sheet produced by HED for school year 2012-2013:

- 19,364 ABE students were served at 26 adult education centers;
- over 1,300 students eligible for services were placed on wait lists at existing programs due to lack of capacity; and
- more than 24 communities or community organizations requested ABE services, but they could not be accommodated.

In 2003, the New Mexico Legislature amended current law to transfer the responsibility of the state level ABE program from the former State Board of Education (now PED) to the Commission on Higher Education (now HED).

ABE programs through HED provide the following services:

- ABE (grades 1-8 and adult literacy);
- adult secondary education (grades 9-12 and GED certificate preparation);
- English as a second language;
- workplace literacy;
- work-based learning; and
- English literacy/civics education.

Background:

HM 99, *Adult Education Program Funding Formula* (2014), requested that HED, in cooperation with the LESC and the LFC, form a work group to study the feasibility of fully funding the formula for adult education programs. In November 2014, the LESC received the report of this work group.

- This report explains that the purpose of the ABE Division at HED is to support free adult education and literacy services in order to:
 - help adults become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills they need for employment and self-sufficiency;
 - help adult parents obtain the educational skills they need to participate in the educational development of their children; and
 - assist adults in the completion of the equivalent of a secondary school education.
- With these objectives in mind, the report continues, the ABE Division supports New Mexico's 26 ABE programs serving approximately 20,000 students per year statewide through:
 - distributing and monitoring approximately \$9.6 million in federal and state funding each year;
 - monitoring the compliance and performance of sub-grantees;
 - providing technical assistance and professional development; and
 - reporting to federal and state agencies.

- The report further states that learners who are 16 or more years of age and are not enrolled in high school are eligible for ABE services if they:
 - lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society;
 - have not earned a secondary school diploma or its equivalent; or
 - are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.
- Finally, among its findings and recommendations, the work group noted that state funding levels for adult education have been reduced by approximately 20 percent since FY 09. To help address this situation, the work group recommended that the Legislature appropriate core funds up to the FY 09 level of \$6,735,000, which would require an increase over the current funding level of approximately \$1.4 million.

Committee Referrals:

SRC/SEC

Related Bills:

CS/HB 2 & 4, as amended *General Appropriation Act of 2015*

HB 5 *General Appropriation Act of 2015*

HB 469 *LESC Study Public & Post-Secondary Education*

SB 210 *General Appropriation Act of 2015*

SB 637 *Adult Basic Education Programs*