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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 3/4/15
LAST UPDATED 3/7/15 **HB** 310/HECS

SPONSOR HEC

SHORT TITLE Science Early Education Program Pilot **SB** _____

ANALYST Chavez

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY14	FY15	FY16	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		See Fiscal Implications				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SB 161

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

Economic Development Department (EDD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Committee Substitute

The House Education Committee Substitute for House Bill 310 creates the Science Early Education Program as a five year pilot project for physics education for students in sixth through eighth grades at high poverty schools. The bill also creates the Science Early Education Fund. The bill declares an emergency.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This bill creates the Science Early Education Fund, which consists of appropriations, gifts, grants, donations and income from investment of the fund. The department will administer the fund, and money from the fund is appropriated to PED to carry out the purposes of the program. HB 310 requires PED to administer the program, and allows (but does not require) the department to seek public and private grants and donations for the program.

This bill does not contain an appropriation. It is not clear how the program will be funded if PED

does not find public and private grants and donations to fund the program as permitted by the bill. PED analysis states the provisions of this bill create a recurring cost to school districts and charter schools.

A school which receives a grant from PED for the science early education program will be required to provide half of the funding for the program. As the program has not been developed and the level of awards to be given to schools has not been established by PED, it is difficult to predict what the impact would be on the operating budgets of schools selected to participate in the program. PED analysis states this requirement and the lack of appropriation creates a significant unfunded mandate.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

HB 310 adds a new section to the Public School Code to establish the Science Early Education Program as a five-year pilot project to incorporate hands-on, age-appropriate physics education into the sixth through eighth grade curricula. PED must administer the program and contract with an organization to provide professional development and teaching materials. PED analysis states hands-on physics education requires additional equipment and curriculum materials. These materials are costly and vary greatly depending on the size of the school and population of students. Many of the materials will be consumable in nature and will need to be replenished. Additionally, it is important to note that some activities may require additional safety measures not currently in place.

No more than 10 schools may be selected to participate in the pilot.

The bill provides school districts may apply, on behalf of their schools, to PED for a grant from the Science Early Education Fund. PED must select and award grants to no more than 10 schools in regions that are distinct in location, population density, and concentration of poverty. Selected schools must provide half of the funding for the program. Additionally, participating students must undergo evaluations at the beginning of the program and progress will be measured through standardized assessments.

However, PED notes that currently the NM Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) in science is only administered in grades four, seven and eleven. New assessments would need to be created and put in place to evaluate the progress in grades six and eight as required, as well as tests for the beginning of the program that are not currently mandated or adopted by PED. PED analysis also notes this bill would add to testing time for assessment measures not currently mandated or adopted by PED.

Additionally, PED indicates that the term “physics” is undefined as used in the bill, and that physics is often associated with complex math procedures, and excludes chemistry from the proposed program. PED also states that it is important to ensure the program is aligned to the common core math standards for grades six through eight.

The Economic Development Department (EDD) analysis states New Mexico has recognized capability in research institutions and businesses due to long standing collaborations with the Air Force Research Laboratory, Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratories. EDD adds “universities have identified physics-based education and capability among New Mexico high school students as a significant weakness for students entering

engineering and science disciplines in college....Without this education, the state’s investments in building the university and industry capacity and capability will not be available to our region’s high school graduates.” This pilot may help to improve education outcomes in science for participating students.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

PED analysis states it is difficult to know at this time how the proposed program would align to the current NM science standards and the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to develop standardized tests for grades six and eight in order to meet the evaluation requirements of the bill. PED analysis states the provisions of this bill will strain existing PED staff resources and funding.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

PED notes on page 2 lines 19-22, the bill requires that students participating in the program be evaluated at the beginning of the program. However, the program is a five-year pilot that covers three student cohorts. It is unclear how the evaluation would be formatted and when students in each cohort would be evaluated.

DUPLICATION

Senate Bill 161 also establishes an science early education pilot program.

KC/aml