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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
53rd Legislature, 1st Session, 2017

Bill Number	<u>HB439</u>	Sponsor	<u>Williams Stapleton</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.207256.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HAFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Fund ABQ Black Student Union Program</u>		
Analyst	<u>Bedeaux</u>	Original Date	<u>2/24/17</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 439 (HB439) appropriates \$35 thousand to the Public Education Department (PED) to fund Black Student Unions (BSU) in Albuquerque Public Schools (APS).

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$35 thousand from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY18. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY18 shall revert to the general fund.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

On July 28, 2012, President Obama signed an executive order instructing schools nationwide to promote the academic success of African-American students. One of the methods to promote well-being 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.”

In 2013, APS posted an article on the district’s website about BSU, a volunteer organization that promotes education, culture, and community among African-American students in APS schools. BSU works to monitor grades, connect students with tutors when needed, and introduce students to peer mentors. Additionally, BSU advisors serve as mentors and role models for students. The organization emphasizes the importance of college readiness, and sponsors trips to historically black colleges. Recent articles share how the organization encourages school-based awareness and activism against racism and prejudice. Any student may participate in BSU.

In 2014, HB166 sought a \$150 thousand appropriation to fund BSU in APS. The bill died and was not rolled into the general appropriation act (GAA) for FY15. In 2015, HB267 sought a \$30 thousand appropriation to fund BSU in APS. This bill was rolled into the GAA for FY16 as an appropriation for “black student unions in Albuquerque public schools.” The Governor vetoed

the word “Albuquerque,” effectively extending the funding to every school district. However, in practice, \$28.4 thousand of this funding was distributed to APS. The remaining \$1.6 thousand was reauthorized for use in FY17. As of February 23, 2017, the \$1.6 thousand remaining balance has not been encumbered.

In 2016, 2,434 (2.7 percent) of the students enrolled at APS were African-American. BSU serves students at Albuquerque High, Atrisco Heritage Academy, Cibola, Del Norte, Eldorado, Highland, Manzano, and Sandia high schools. APS reported that in 2012, BSU helped raise the graduation rate for African-American students from 55.5 percent to 62.7 percent. This rose again to 65.6 percent in 2013. Still, the graduation rate of African-American students in Albuquerque is generally lower than the statewide average. In recent years, the graduation rate of African-American students has fallen below 60 percent.

Four-Year Graduation Rate of African-American Students – APS vs. Statewide

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
APS	44.3%	61.4%	58.7%	55.5%	62.7%	65.6%	56.9%	51.3%	54.0%
Statewide	52.0%	61.4%	62.1%	60.1%	69.3%	68.7%	64.3%	61.0%	61.0%
Difference	-7.7%	0.0%	-3.4%	-4.6%	-6.6%	-3.1%	-7.4%	-9.7%	-7.0%

Source: LESC Files

Albuquerque is home to one-third of the statewide African-American student population. Because it allocates funding specifically to BSU in APS, HB439 may be ignoring programs for the remaining two-thirds of African-American students in other areas of the state. It is unclear how many other districts have black student union programs.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- APS

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