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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
53rd Legislature, 2nd Session, 2018

Bill Number HB264 **Sponsor** Romero
Tracking Number .209742.1 **Committee Referrals** HLELC/HFAC
Short Title Support Schools for National History Day
Analyst Force **Original Date** 2/1/18
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 264 (HB264) appropriates \$100 thousand dollars to the Library Services program of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to support schools participating in the National History Day (NHD) program.

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill appropriates \$100 thousand from the general fund to DCA for expenditure in FY19. The appropriation is recurring. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY19 shall revert to the general fund.

The NHD program is funded through the Humanities Council under DCA. Language in the General Appropriation Act of 2017 granted the contractual services line of the Library Services Program of the Cultural Affairs Department \$75 thousand to support the NHD program; ultimately, however, it was vetoed. Additionally, the contractual services line of the Library Service Program was decreased by approximately \$800 thousand, making the future of the program uncertain.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

In November 2017, LESC held a hearing on NHD. According to Ellen Dornan, State NHD Director and Program Officer with the New Mexico Humanities Council, the council sponsors NHD students with as much support as possible, including free equipment, hosting contest judges, classroom outreach, free teacher materials, and classroom stipends for travel. Sometimes, local communities help out with expenses, particularly with transportation to regional, state, and national competitions. It costs the Humanities Council approximately \$55 thousand to subsidize the trip to the national finals, but without state funding, they have been drawing down federal funding from the National Council for the Humanities (NCH). Unfortunately, there is uncertainty regarding the future of funding to NCH as well, raising the possibility that sufficient funding to support the program may be unavailable in future years.

According to Brandon Johnson, Executive Director for the New Mexico Humanities Council, while they hope for continued support from the state, they are currently seeking other sponsorships for the program. Others noted some local school districts no longer have funds for student travel, and hold fundraisers such as bingos to help raise funds. Moreover, between 50 percent and 75 percent of students in the program qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and their families have few resources to help support their children's participation.

New Mexico Participation in National History Day. First begun in 1974, National History Day activities and competitions have grown to include participation from 600 thousand students worldwide. Competition categories include the production of documentaries, display of exhibits, writing papers, performance, and website design. Students may compete as individuals or as part of a team of up to five members, and must include an extensive annotated bibliography with their work. Competitions take place at the regional, state, and national levels; in New Mexico, the regional competitions take place in Farmington, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque. Students in the regional competition must place in the top three to progress to the state competition, whose top two contestants advance to the national competition. Before 2007, New Mexico had received only one national medal. Since then, New Mexico has sent competitors to national finals every year with a total of 30 national-level entries, and has claimed 14 national medals.

In 2015, the national graduation rate was 83 percent, while New Mexico's was 69 percent; NHD students in New Mexico graduated at a rate of 95 percent, with 92 percent of those students continuing to college or the military. A 2012 study, *History Day Works, Findings from the National Program Evaluation*, indicates that participating students outperform their peers in science, math, language arts, and social studies. Among key findings of the study: NHD participants have college-level research skills, and are better writers and analysts than students who do not participate; participants are more civically engaged and have a more mature perspective on current events; and NHD-related skills transfer to other academic disciplines.

At the November 2017 hearing, LESC also heard from a number of high school and college students who had participated in NHD activities. According to the students, work on projects can last from nine to 11 months. Students reported increased public speaking abilities, reading comprehension, composition, and research skills, which they credited with helping them with their college work, and with passing Advanced Placement course examinations. Projects these students worked on included: documentaries on conflicts between President Kennedy and his advisors and the inclusion of African-American students on the 1966 Texas Western Miners basketball team; and performances about the Chiricahua Apache Indian chiefs, Nana and Victorio, and Sophie Schull, a German World War II college student and anti-Nazi activist, who was later executed for her activities.

RELATED BILLS

SB156, Support Schools for National History Day, identical to HB264

SM41, "National History Day," which declares February 5, 2018 to be National History Day in the Senate.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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