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

Bill Number	<u>SM69</u>	Sponsor	<u>Stewart</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.209985.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SRC/SEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Study Early Childhood Educator Incentives</u>		
Analyst	<u>McCorquodale</u>	Original Date	<u>2/2/18</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Memorial 69 (SM69) requests the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) to study funding sources to finance coursework and a bachelor's or associate's degree specializing in early childhood education as an incentive to expand New Mexico's highly qualified early learning workforce. The memorial requests the Higher Education Department (HED), Public Education Department (PED), Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), Department of Health (DOH), and Human Services Department (HSD) to collaborate with LESC as needed to provide early childhood workforce qualification data.

FISCAL IMPACT

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The National Conference of State Legislatures' international study of successful school systems, *No Time to Lose*, found strong early learning educational systems with extra support for struggling students have rigorous requirements for an early education workforce. Early educators in high performing countries are required to have a bachelor's degree and in some cases, a master's degree in early childhood education, and assistants who work with these teachers are required to have certification in early childhood development. These successful school systems have a world-class teaching profession that supports a world-class instructional system birth through high school, where every student has access to highly effective teachers and is expected to succeed. Additionally, top performing countries raised the rigor, expectations, structure and status of the teaching profession, and compensated those who were willing to meet the challenge.

The 2016 Early Childhood Workforce Index states that nationally, the educational attainment of early childhood workforce varies from bachelor's degrees to limited formal schooling. According to the report, the learning and development of infants, toddlers, and preschool children requires knowledge and skills as complex as those qualifications needed for teaching older children, yet

low qualification requirements for early childhood educators exist. Training and professional development of early educators is the primary indicator of program quality and is the most significant predictor of children's learning and development.

While New Mexico met eight out of 10 quality standard benchmarks in *The State of Preschool 2016 – National Institute for Early Education*, the state did not meet the benchmarks for teacher degree attainment or assistant teacher degree or certification attainment. Currently, teachers in PED-funded prekindergarten are required to have a bachelor's degree in Early Learning and teacher assistants must have an associate's degree in early learning or working toward that credential. CYFD-funded prekindergarten requires lead teachers to have a bachelor's degree in Early Learning but if a lead teacher does not have one, they must be taking credit-bearing college coursework toward a bachelor's in Early Learning. Teacher's assistants working in a CYFD-funded prekindergarten must be licensed or working toward credit bearing college coursework toward an associate's degree.

Incentives for Recruitment and Retention. CYFD has managed professional development programs for early childhood educators in New Mexico for over 10 years. CYFD's Early Care and Education Professional Development System, started in 2010, includes training, technical assistance, consultation, coaching, and scholarships for higher education. In the past 10 years, CYFD indicated it increased the quality of early care and education for children prenatal to age 5 through professional development through private and public partnerships.

The Legislative Finance Committee noted in their analysis that in FY17, 699 early childhood educators received scholarships and 171 participated in incentive wage supplements statewide:

- 5,537 total credits were earned at New Mexico public higher educational institutions;
- 57 percent of early childhood educators who received scholarships had previously only received a high school diploma; and
- 48 percent of early childhood educators who received scholarships were first generation college students.

According to HED, the department budgeted \$80 thousand in FY18 for the Teacher Loan for Service Program (\$20 thousand) and the Teacher Loan Repayment Program (\$60 thousand). HED indicated the interest in and applicants received for the two programs far exceeds the funding amounts for each program. For the Teacher Loan Repayment Program, 173 applicants applied and only nine were funded. For the Teacher Loan for Service Program, not as many applied as the repayment program, but only four applicants were funded. HED noted they are encouraging applicants to apply for the Teacher Loan Repayment Program due to the fact that the Teacher Loan for Service Program has become a burden for teachers who did not fulfill the service requirements and were required to pay HED the money back they received through the program plus interest. HED noted there is not a teacher scholarship program specifically for early childhood education (ECE) teachers; however, teacher candidates with a license in ECE birth through third grade or ECE prekindergarten through third grade may participate in either program.

Wages of Early Childhood Educators. The 2016 Early Childhood Workforce Index notes across all early childhood education programs, teaching staff who work with children younger than age 3 earn about 70 percent of the income earned by those who work with children ages 3 to 5. Infant and toddler educators have limited opportunity to work in the higher paying early learning programs; 91 percent of jobs in school sponsored programs are for early educators who work with children age 3 to 5. Despite education levels, infant and toddler educators earn less than those

working with preschool-age children. The U.S. Department of Education and Health and Human Services indicate the national median annual wage for preschool teachers is \$29 thousand compared to kindergarten teachers at \$52 thousand. Child care workers make \$20 thousand annually. While education and training requirements have increased for early educators, workforce pay has not caught up. In New Mexico, preschool teachers make an average of \$26 thousand annually and childcare workers make \$19 thousand, below the national average.

Early Childhood Issues. While New Mexico has increased its focus on early childhood programs, the state is among one of the lowest-ranked states in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s annual Kids Count Data Book, which ranks states according to 16 child well-being measures. Ranked 49th in 2017, New Mexico is challenged by the consequences of poverty on its children.

Children who experience toxic stress – whether it is the result of poverty, instability, abuse or neglect, or other adverse childhood experiences – can experience impaired brain development, especially in the areas of the brain dedicated to higher-order skills. High-quality early childhood education can reduce the toxic developmental effects of poverty and childhood trauma by providing children with rich social experiences needed to succeed in school. According to the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, high quality early childhood programs that incorporate highly socialized interactions between the care provider and the child will support children’s learning and language development.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

On page 3, line 6, the memorial includes HED as a department that administers early childhood services. Only CYFD, DOH, HSD, and PED administer early childhood services. The sponsor may consider striking HED.

RELATED BILLS

SB100, Early Childhood Educator Development Program, appropriates \$100 thousand from the general fund to CYFD for workforce and professional development.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Legislative Finance Committee

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