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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019

Bill Number	<u>HB476</u>	Sponsor	<u>Sariñana/Pratt/Garratt/Ferrary/ Armstrong, D.</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.213238.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HHHC</u>
Short Title	<u>School Nurse in Every School</u>		
Analyst	<u>Ochoa</u>	Original Date	<u>2/15/19</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 476 (HB476) would require school districts and charter schools to include a full-time, department-licensed, registered school nurse per school in their budget to obtain budget approval from the Public Education Department (PED). Waivers would only be granted to rural schools with less than 250 students if a school can meet the requirements of HB476 by hiring a part-time, department-licensed registered school nurse, or the school can document its inability to hire or contract with a qualified school nurse due to a lack of nurses in the school district's geographic area.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not carry an appropriation, however school districts and charter schools would incur costs related to funding the additional school nurses required to meet the provisions of HB476. Currently, there are 305 schools in New Mexico who do not have one FTE registered nurse. Full-time school nurses in the state earn an average salary of \$46,379 annually. The total cost to fund a full-time, registered nurse for every school that does not currently have one would be \$14.1 million excluding the cost of benefits. Without state-appropriated funds, school districts and charter schools would incur the costs of implementing the provisions of HB476.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

HB476 would require school districts and charter schools to provide one FTE registered nurse per school. Only rural schools would be able to qualify for a waiver if they have less than 250 students and can hire a part-time registered nurse; or have less than 250 students and can provide documentation demonstrating they have not been successful in hiring a registered nurse.

Many rural school districts use cooperative or other alternative methods to provide school nurses for students due to a lack of registered nurses in their geographic area. Some school districts contract nursing services through Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs), sharing full-time

school nurse positions with other small school districts. According to PED data, school districts and charter schools employ supervised licensed practical nurses, health assistants, contracted nurses, and school-based health centers in addition to (or in lieu of) registered nurses. Analysis from RECs notes it would be beneficial to have a full-time nurse in each school, however without an appropriation, the bill would have an immediate negative impact on school budgets.

The Department of Health (DOH) defines the essential functions of a school nurse as “verifying immunizations for students, doing required vision and hearing screenings, giving needed medication during the school day, providing medical procedures for students with specialized medical needs, and responding to health related urgent and emergent situations.” DOH notes schools that do not have school nursing services fall within federally designated health professional shortage areas leading to an increase in the need to contract for nursing services at a higher cost.

According to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) there is evidence to support a recommended ratio of one nurse for every 750 students, however NASN recognizes nurse staffing is not a “one-size-fits-all” determination and individual schools should decide how to meet the health needs of their students.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would be responsible for approving budgets that meet the requirements set forth in HB476 as well as promulgating rules relating to the waiver process. DOH analysis notes a collaboration between PED and DOH may benefit the rulemaking process to implement the provisions of HB476.

RELATED BILLS

HB121, Social Services as a Basic Sufficient Education
HB510, School Bus Attendants for Disabled Students
SB48, Student Diabetes Management Act

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Regional Education Cooperatives (REC)

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