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

Bill Number	<u>SB659/SPACS</u>	Sponsor	<u>SPAC</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.214743.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SPAC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Expand Pre-K</u>		
Analyst	<u>Rogne</u>	Original Date	<u>3/11/2019</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

The Senate Public Affairs Committee Substitute for SB659 (SB659/SPACS) would appropriate \$71 million to expand prekindergarten administered by the Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) in FY19 and subsequent fiscal years. The appropriation would be split evenly between PED and CYFD.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$71 million from the general fund to PED and CYFD for expenditure in FY19 and subsequent fiscal years. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY20 shall not revert to the general fund.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

SB659/SRCS would appropriate \$35.5 million to PED and \$35.5 million to CYFD to expand prekindergarten, recognizing the vital importance of preparing children for elementary school, particularly disadvantaged children. Current law stipulates that prekindergarten appropriations be divided equally between PED and CYFD pursuant to Section 32A-23-9 NMSA 1978. However, Senate Bill 22 (SB22), which would establish the Early Childhood Education and Care Department that would oversee prekindergarten services, recently passed both houses. Should SB22 become law, this language would need to be changed.

Early Childhood Issues. Substantial evidence demonstrates experiences in early childhood are critical for brain development, and children who participate in high-quality early learning programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than students who do not participate. Recent advances in neuroscience have shown early childhood years also provide the foundation for literacy skills. The U.S. Department of Education suggests effective early learning programs, including high-quality prekindergarten, provide a return on investment of \$8.60 for every \$1 spent. New Mexico has focused on expanding early childhood education programs over

the last 10 years, despite two economic downturns; however, improving access to high-quality early childhood education programs remains a critical policy issue.

The National Conference of State Legislatures international study of world-class educational systems, *No Time to Lose*, identified four common elements for educational success, the first of which is students come to school ready to learn, with extra support given to struggling students so all students have the opportunity to achieve high standards. High-performing countries also feature coordinated early childhood education systems that emphasize program quality.

The first three years of a child's life are critical for brain development; during this time the brain creates 1 million connections every second that will establish pathways for future development, according to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. When children have adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or do not have adequate opportunities to create these connections, their future educational achievement and life outcomes are negatively impacted. According to Child Trends, a nonpartisan research center, 18 percent of children in New Mexico experienced three or more ACEs, outpacing the national average of 11 percent. However, early childhood education can reduce the impact of ACEs by providing children with rich social experiences needed to succeed in school and families with supports and resources.

Although several bills proposing to expand early childhood education in New Mexico have been introduced in the 2019 Legislative session, New Mexico has already demonstrated a significant investment in early childhood education programs by growing funding from \$136 million in FY12 to \$309.1 million in FY19, an increase of 125 percent. According to the Legislative Finance Committee, New Mexico's 4-year-old service capacity, when taking into account both care and education services, is at nearly 90 percent. See **Attachment, Early Childhood Service Capacity**. Oversaturation of early childhood services can have several negative effects, including the return of federal Head Start dollars as a result of student migration from Head Start to other state-funded programs, such as prekindergarten.

Other barriers to early childhood service expansion remain. New Mexico has a limited workforce qualified in early childhood education, and expansion may also be hampered by available classroom space that is appropriate for 3- and 4-year-olds, particularly in public school programs.

RELATED BILLS

HB197, Early Childhood Shared Service Integration, would require CYFD to establish a shared service integration model that improves the effectiveness of and minimizes duplication of early childhood education programs statewide.

HB173, Child & Family Databank Act, would create a child and family statewide integrated data system.

HJR1, Permanent Funds for Early Childhood, CA, would amend the Constitution of the State of New Mexico to increase annual distributions from the Land Grant Permanent Fund by 1 percent for early childhood services.

SB22, Early Childhood Education & Care Dept., would create the Early Childhood Education and Care Department to administer early childhood programs for children from birth to age five or, depending on context, to age eight or 13.

SB202, Child & Family Databank Act, a duplicate of HB173.

SB671/SRCS, Permanent Fund for Pre-K, would provide for an additional 0.5 percent distribution from the permanent school fund for prekindergarten.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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Early Childhood Service Capacity

