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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/27/21

SPONSOR Ortiz y Pino LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Social Worker Need and Availability Assessment SB 117

ANALYST Chilton

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY21	FY22		
	\$40.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Aging and Long Term Services (ALTSO)

Department of Health (DOH)

Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 117, Social Worker Need and Availability Assessment, appropriates \$40 thousand from the general fund to the Department of Health for the purpose of contracting for a study of availability and need for social workers throughout New Mexico.

There is no effective date of this bill. It is assumed that the effective date is 90 days following adjournment of the Legislature. The consultant's report would be used by DOH and would be presented to the legislative interim Health and Human Services Committee and Legislative Finance Committee.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$40 thousand contained in this bill is a nonrecurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2021 shall revert to the general fund.

DOH would be required to select the contractor and review its report, but that is not expected to impose further fiscal impact on the department.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The importance of social workers is generally accepted in working with the medical and non-medical needs of the population. DOH provided a thoughtful summary of need for social workers in New Mexico, beginning with the statement that New Mexico has long had a shortage of social workers. A summary of other points made in their analysis need includes the following:

- Social workers [often] specialize in a given area, such as school social work, working with people experiencing homelessness or substance abuse, disabilities, life-threatening disease or hospice care.
- There are insufficient social workers to fill available positions in the state and the number of positions is inadequate to meet needs.
- Barriers to an adequate supply of social workers might include
 - Lack of adequate pay and supervision
 - Need for scholarships to increase the diversity of the social work workforce
 - Need for paying practicums for social work students
 - Need for promotion of the value of the profession.
- The pandemic has further revealed need for social workers.
- Families of and children and youth with special needs require input and help from multiple agencies; social workers are needed to help coordinate their care, which is otherwise subject to fragmentation.
- Care coordination results in improvement in duration of hospital stay, reduction in emergency room visits, and improved care and patient satisfaction.
- School social workers can help detect and ameliorate family problems spanning multiple generations and address the school-related consequences of adverse childhood experiences, including such problems as truancy, aggressiveness, and substance use.
- Social workers in the mental health field are adept in detecting and treating mental health and substance use disorders.is shown to imp
- SB117 could help to increase diversity among the social work workforce; working with a social worker from one’s own racial/ethnic group is shown to improve outcomes.

SB117 could potentially increase diversity among social workers state-wide, which may improve customer service. Because SB117 includes a requirement to report findings to two legislative committees, these findings could provide a basis for future policy developments

ALTSD indicates that it “serves thousands of seniors and adults with disabilities across the state of New Mexico. The Adult Protective Services Division sees many people who could benefit from state social work services and who wish to remain living in the community. Additionally, social workers could be easily integrated into the work of the state’s roughly 200 senior centers across the state.”