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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2024

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| Bill Number | <u>HB136</u> | Sponsor | <u>Sariñana</u> |
| Tracking Number | <u>.226703.2</u> | Committee Referrals | <u>HEC/HAFC</u> |
| Short Title | <u>Pre-Service Computer Science Ed. Program</u> | | |
| Analyst | <u>Hathaway</u> | Original Date | <u>1/30/2024</u> |
| | | Last Updated | <u></u> |

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 136 (HB136) makes an appropriation to the Higher Education Department (HED) for grants to public postsecondary educational institutions to develop a pre-service teacher computer science education program.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$1 million from the general fund to HED for expenditure in FY25. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY25 shall revert to the general fund.

For FY25, the House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 does not appear to contain an appropriation that corresponds to the provisions of HB136.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Proposed Pre-Service Program. Pre-service is a general term used to describe education and training that occurs prior to a practitioner (in this case, an educator) obtaining a college degree and entering the workforce. This type of training is geared toward future teachers in preparation for their careers in education. HB136 makes an appropriation of \$1 million for grants to public postsecondary educational institutions statewide to develop such programs to address the state's computer science educator shortage.

Educator Workforce. Currently, there is no consistent report produced by a state agency that provides the data necessary to fully understand the complexity of New Mexico's teacher workforce. The most cited report tracking teacher vacancy is currently the [New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report](#) produced by the Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center (SOAR) at New Mexico State University (often called "the SOAR report"). According to the SOAR [report](#), it is estimated that New Mexico had 751 teacher vacancies at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. In these vacancies, computer science educators are not specifically

noted, so it is difficult to estimate the number of vacancies the state has in these roles, however, the report did find 59 vacancies in mathematics across all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and 54 vacancies in science across all grade levels. LESC staff analysis suggests computer science educators could be captured in either subject and the SOAR report does indicate workforce needs in both mathematics and science.

While the SOAR report is often cited, it should be noted that these estimations are produced using a methodology reliant on public job postings and as such, are imprecise.

State of Computer Science Education. According to Code.org, a national advocacy organization focused on expanding access to computer science, as of 2023, [New Mexico](#) offers a foundational computer science course in 50 percent of its public high schools, and 3 percent of high school students took a foundational computer science course in the 2022-2023 school year.

Code.org also suggests 10 policies to make computer science “foundational” in schools across the country. The 10 suggested policies are:

1. Create a statewide plan for kindergarten through 12th grade computer science.
2. Define computer science and establish standards for K-12 computer science.
3. Allocate funding for rigorous computer science teacher professional learning.
4. Implement clear certification pathways for computer science teachers at elementary and secondary levels.
5. Create university programs to encourage all preservice teachers to gain exposure to computer science.
6. Establish dedicated computer science positions in a state education agency.
7. Require that all schools offer computer science with appropriate implementation timelines.
8. Allow computer science to count toward a core graduation requirement.
9. Allow computer science to satisfy an admission requirement at higher education institutions.
10. Require that all students take computer science to earn a high school diploma.

Of these, Code.org notes New Mexico has [accomplished](#) items one, two, three, four, six, and eight. Code.org suggests New Mexico can increase computer science opportunities for students by requiring all high schools to offer at least one computer science course and to require all pre-service teachers to receive instruction in computer science education—the provisions in HB136 particularly align with Code.org’s latter assessment of New Mexico.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HED would be responsible for administering funds and making grants to public postsecondary institutions. Public postsecondary institutions, as recipients of proposed grants, would be responsible for identifying opportunities for partnership between school districts and public postsecondary institutions “to create direct pathways for computer science teachers in high-need schools.” It is unclear if there are pre-service programs and partnerships already in place at public postsecondary institutions or if these would need to be developed.

RELATED BILLS

Related to House Bill 277, Teacher License Computer Science Endorsement, which amends existing law to create a license endorsement in computer science for all teachers.

Related to House Bill 278, Computer Science Embedded in Schools, which requires computer science to be embedded in elementary and middle school subjects and offered as a standalone class in high school. The bill also proposes professional development for educators related to computer science.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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