

Educational Access for Students who are System Involved

Senate Bill 213 (Kernan)

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is this legislation for?

Students who change schools during a school year as the result of homelessness, placement by the child welfare system, mental health system or juvenile justice system. It is estimated that at any given time there 18,000 homeless children in New Mexico, 14,000 children in contact with the juvenile justice system and 4,000 children in foster care. Many of these students change schools often multiple times during a school year, negatively impacting their educational attainment.

What does the bill do?

The proposed legislation ensures student records follow students in a timely manner. In recognition of differing graduation requirements among districts, the bill requires districts to grant diplomas to eligible students as long as they meet or exceed the state requirements for graduation. In addition, the legislation will bring State Law into compliance with the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act by mandating that students who change schools have equal access to extracurricular activities including sports, career and technical or other special programs, and timely advice and assistance from counselors to improve college readiness. Finally, the legislation seeks to ensure students who change schools receive the special education services to which they are entitled.

Why do we need it?

This is a group of young people with vast potential and capacity, who face traumatic changes in their home lives, and are repeatedly asked to adapt to new teachers, new classrooms, and new peers. Research shows that high school mobility has negative effects on academic achievement and is associated with school drop out. This disruption often results in a loss of school credits, a delay in earning a high school diploma and too often a failure to graduate. Studies show high school students who change schools even once are less than 50 percent as likely to graduate as those who don't change schools. Other studies also suggest that every school move will account for 6 months of delayed academic achievement and growth.

Who will administer it?

As with current practice, school districts will administer this to ensure that these students are served in accordance with the legislation. This legislation clarifies current transfer policies for districts and helps districts assist these specific students in graduating.

What will it cost?

Because this legislation will be administered at the local level, there are no state costs associated with its implementation. Further, the actual impact is spread out among the state's 146 school districts and the number of students who change schools will not be so large as to impose a significant burden on districts. Districts have existing staff and resources to assist with school transfers, enrollment, and graduation support who can perform the responsibilities outlined in this legislation. This legislation seeks to provide clarification to these processes for this highly vulnerable student population. There will be potential cost savings, due to more streamlined processes. In effect, this legislation will reduce the high percentage of dropouts for this population and reduce the long-term cost burden associated with high school dropout such as unemployment, homelessness and other negative social impacts.

