TRAINING:
An Action Relating to Health, Education and Human Services and Naabik’íyáti’ Committees; Recommending that the State of New Mexico Public Education Department to Delay Plans and Decisions to Reopen Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year

Date posted: July 16, 2020 at 7:36PM

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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY SHEET

Tracking No. __0159-20__

DATE: July 1, 2020

TITLE OF RESOLUTION: AN ACTION RELATING TO HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES AND NAAKÍYÁTI COMMITTEES; RECOMMENDING THAT THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO DELAY PLANS AND DECISIONS TO REOPEN SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

PURPOSE: This resolution, if adopted, would recommend that the State of New Mexico Public Education Department to delay plans and decisions to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 School Year.

This written summary does not address recommended amendments as may be provided by the standing committees. The Office of Legislative Counsel requests each Council Delegate to review each proposed resolution in detail.
PROPOSED STANDING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL – Second Year, 2020

INTRODUCED BY

[Signature]

(Prime Sponsor)

TRACKING NO. 0159-20

AN ACTION

RELATING TO HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES AND NAABIK’ÍYÁTI’ COMMITTEES; RECOMMENDING THAT THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO DELAY PLANS AND DECISIONS TO REOPEN SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

WHEREAS:

A. The Health, Education and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) is a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council. It has the authority to review and recommend resolutions regarding certain matters, including health, education and social services. 2 N.N.C. §§ 164 (A)(9), 400 (A), 401 (B)(6)(a) (2012); see also CO-45-12.

B. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee is a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council. It has the authority to "review and continually monitor the programs and activities of federal and state departments and to assist development of such programs designed to serve the Navajo People and the Navajo Nation through intergovernmental relationships between the Navajo Nation and such departments." 2 N.N.C. §701(A)(7).

C. The Navajo Nation has children attending public schools in the state of New Mexico, including schools in McKinley and San Juan Counties.

D. Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, through executive order, closed New Mexico public schools for the period March 16, 2020 – April 3, 2020. See, newmexico.gov. On March 27, 2020, with 136 confirmed cases for COVID-
19 in the state, the March/April school closure was extended for the remaining school year. Gov. Luhan Grisham stated, “we’re working very hard to contain the virus, and we have to continue to take aggressive steps to mitigate spread and protect New Mexicans of every age all across the state. It is more important than ever that we make sure all New Mexicans are heeding the imperative to stay home.” She also stated, “keeping schools closed is one of the most important tools we have to support the social distancing that can help us reduce and mitigate the spread of the virus.” See, newmexico.gov. (March 27, 2020). Schools were directed to develop “continuous learning plans.” Id.

E. On June 20, 2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), through its written Reentry Guidance, announced plans to reopen schools (K-12) beginning in August for school year 2020-2021. See, newmexico.gov and Exhibit A (an excerpt from June 20, 2020 NM PED Reentry Guidance)

E. COVID-19 cases continue to increase across the country at an alarming rate. For New Mexico, as of July 1, 2020, over 12,000 cases of Coronavirus were reported. Nearly 500 deaths were reported as well. See, cv.nmhealth.org (NM Department of Health). And within the Navajo Nation, health officials have reported the highest per capita rate of infection for COVID-19 in the United States.

F. Statistics also provide that New Mexico “ranks second among states in percent of positive cases that are under 20 years of age. In New Mexico, 12% of positive cases have been children and adolescents; the national average is 3%.” See, cv.nmhealth.org (FAQ).

G. Navajo children must be protected. In midst of the continuous rising cases of COVID-19 throughout the country, it is too early to reopen schools in the manner proposed by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Navajo Nation strongly recommends that the state of New Mexico Public Education Department delay plans and decisions to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 school year as proposed in its June 20, 2020 Reentry Guidance.