

State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Santa Fe

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor, State of New Mexico
State Capitol, Room 400
480 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Governor:

We have prefiled House Bill 132 and are writing to request a special message so the bill can be included in the public policy debate during the upcoming 30-day legislative session. The bill reinstates two key provisions that will assist school districts in decreasing the percentage of students that are chronically absent from school each year.

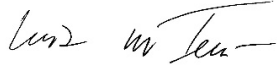
The state is facing epidemic levels of absenteeism with our public-school students. During the 2022-2023 school year, almost 40 percent of New Mexico's students missed at least 10 percent of the school year; this is almost 3 times the percentage of students that missed at least 10 percent of school during the 2016-2017 school year. Even more alarming are the attendance statistics for our most at-risk students, 15 percent of which missed more than 20 percent of instructional days during the 2022-2023 school year. This is the equivalent of missing more than a month of school each year. This is unacceptable.

Evidence shows attendance is critical to student progress, and excessive absences – no matter the reason behind the absences – are detrimental to student success. In addition to negatively impacting test scores, poor attendance has serious implications for future outcome, including dropping out of high school. We know this is also linked to poor labor market prospects, diminished health, and increased involvement in the criminal justice system. Over the course of an individual's life, this has significant financial implications, as well.

The changes we implemented with the Attendance for Success Act clearly are not working, and it is time we put the teeth back into the Act. Without the provisions in House Bill 132, schools and school districts will continue to struggle to improve student attendance. More concerning is the fact that our students will continue to miss out on their education. With less than 40 percent of our students able to read on grade level and only 25 percent able to do math on grade level, every instructional day counts.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for a special message for House Bill 132.

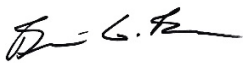
Sincerely,



Luis Terrazas
State Representative District 39



James Townsend
State Representative District 54



Brian Baca
State Representative District 8



Tanya Mirabal Moya
State Representative District 7