



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nora Meyers Sackett
Press Secretary, Office of the Governor
nora.sackett@state.nm.us
(505) 690-7313

Contact: Judy Robinson
Deputy Communications Director, PED
judy.robinson@state.nm.us
505-469-5496

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Governor enacts Family Income Index

*Priority bill, using innovative strategy for education funds,
directs tens of millions to school communities where poverty is
most significant*

SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday signed legislation establishing the Family Income Index, an innovative strategy to direct additional funding to schools with concentrated poverty, which is known to contribute to low academic performance.

“The Family Income Index is rooted in our desire to give every New Mexico student, no matter their family’s income status, an equal opportunity to the resources essential for a quality education,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “We know that when a school has many students in need, extra resources are needed for all. With this measure, we can meet that need with pinpoint accuracy.”

The measure, Senate Bill 17, allows the Public Education Department to use data from two other agencies and census data to identify the household income of every New Mexico public school student in order to identify schools with the highest concentrations of poverty. Additional funding then will be directed to those schools.

The bill passed the Senate 35-6 on March 13 and passed the House 52-18 on March 19.

The New Mexico Public Education Department first proposed a Family Income Index in December as a partnership with the Taxation and Revenue and Human Services departments. Senate Pro Tem Mimi Stewart of Albuquerque championed the idea and introduced it as Senate Bill 17. Rep. G. Andres Romero and Rep. Patricia Lundstrom marshaled the bill through the House.

“I would like to commend Secretary Stewart and thank Governor Lujan Grisham for bringing forth the innovative idea that led to Senate Bill 17,” said Sen. Stewart. “Getting additional funding directly to schools serving low-income populations will help boost reading, math, and other important educational programs, and I look forward to seeing the results of this pilot program. I was proud to sponsor this bill and thank the governor for signing it into law today.”

“The need is great, and resources are limited. That’s why it’s critical to target extra funding to the schools where it is most needed. We are grateful to Senator Stewart, Representative Romero, and to the full Legislature for passing the Family Income Index,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

Research has shown that concentrated poverty complicates teaching and learning and creates and sustains disparities in academic outcomes.

“Schools with many economically disadvantaged families have students who are less likely than their peers to score well on tests, earn high grades, graduate from high school and succeed in college,” the education secretary said. “This innovative new tool will level the playing field for so many students who deserve the opportunity to succeed.”

The Family Income Index begins with the Public Education Department determining the household income of every public school student based on data from the Taxation and Revenue and the Human Services departments as well as the census.

The agency then will calculate for every school the percentage of students in five income categories ranging from above average to extremely low, resulting in a ranked list of schools with the highest populations of low-income students. Per the legislation, "very low income" means a household income greater than 75 percent but less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that equates to a maximum income of about \$34,000 per year.

For fiscal year 2022, which begins July 1, the Family Income Index for each public school would be the sum of the percentages of the school’s students in the extremely low and very low income categories during the preceding fiscal year. After that, two- and then three-year averages would be used.

The Legislature appropriated \$15 million for the Family Income Index for each of the next two years, and that amount will be divided among eligible schools.

The funding is to be used for reading and math interventions as well as other student supports such as hiring school counselors and social workers; creating family information and resource centers; adopting culturally and linguistically diverse classroom texts; offering innovative professional learning opportunities for educators and after-school enrichment programs.

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