



Office of the Governor

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Governor touts legislation to reduce educator healthcare costs as bill passes first committee *Measure aims to retain and attract more public school staff*

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Wednesday announced the introduction and progress of legislation that will reduce the burden of healthcare costs borne by New Mexico educators. Sponsored by Representative Ray Lara, House Bill 102 was approved by the House Education Committee on Wednesday.

HB 102 requires and funds employer coverage of health insurance premiums for all educators covered by the New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority. Accompanied by \$100 million in Gov. Lujan Grisham's executive budget recommendation, the legislation would require relevant employers to cover one hundred percent of the first \$10,000 of insurance costs for all employees and at least 60% of the cost greater than \$10,000. The measure could save first-year teachers around \$4,000 on premium costs per year and reduce the annual employee cost for high-option family health insurance from 40% to around 25%.

"New Mexico now offers the most competitive teacher salaries in the Southwest, but we can do more to appropriately compensate them and show our appreciation for the amazing people who work in our schools," said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. "Taking care of our educators and increasing their overall compensation supports better outcomes and is in the best interest of New Mexico students and families."

"Covering health insurance costs for educators and school personnel will help us retain and recruit the best of the best, which is what our kids deserve," said **Rep. Lara**. "The benefits of having experienced and motivated educators in the classroom will give our kids the best opportunities to succeed."

"Our public school staff deserves to have a smaller health insurance burden, so they can focus on meeting the individual needs of their students and closing the achievement gap," said **Interim Public Education Department Secretary Mariana Padilla**. "This measure will go a long way toward attracting more New Mexicans to the profession and increasing the take-home pay of our valued educators."

Measures to better compensate educators are making a difference for teachers like Josh Acuna, a fifth-grade teacher at Ramirez Thomas Elementary School, husband, and father of three.

"In 2018, I was working as an education assistant in Santa Fe making less than \$20,000 year," **Acuna** said. "Today, my pay is more than double. Assistance paying health insurance premiums will really help my wife and me. It also will allow me focus on doing what I love the most – teaching New Mexico's future generations."

The New Mexico School Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) provides health insurance options for school district and charter school employees outside of Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), and for employees at nine state colleges and universities. Gov. Lujan Grisham's proposed budget for the 2023 legislative session includes \$100 million to cover the health insurance premiums for employees serviced by NMPSIA and APS, while significantly reducing the cost of two-party and family insurance options.

“Increasing coverage of educator premiums for faculty members at the nine colleges and universities participating in the New Mexico Public School Insurance Authority will go a long way toward improving overall compensation for talented educators who could otherwise join the workforce outside of higher education,” said **Higher Education Department Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez**.

Current NMPSIA premium costs for employees making more than \$25,000 are split, with the employer paying 60 percent of the premiums and the employee paying 40 percent. High-option individual health insurance premiums through NMPSIA cost on average \$9,510.80, making health insurance free to the employee.

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