

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release

Contact: Arnold Vigil, (505) 986-4263

www.nmsenate.com

SENATE BILL PROVIDES FUNDS TO HIRE TEACHERS SPECIFICALLY FOR STUDENTS STRUGGLING AT MATH OR READING

A bill introduced in the Senate on Friday by Senator Linda Lopez (Bernalillo, District 11) would provide nearly \$68 million to provide for intervention teachers to help identify and serve students from kindergarten through the eighth grade who are struggling academically in reading or mathematics.

Senate Bill 474, which sharply contrasts with Governor Susana Martinez's and Public Education Department cabinet-secretary-designee Hanna Skandera's initiative to retain third graders not reading at proficiency without their parents' approval, would provide for more parental and educator collaboration and place teachers in schools statewide to intervene at all elementary levels through middle school.

The proposal is similar to last year's Senate Bill 50, also sponsored by Senator Lopez, which passed in the Senate on a vote of 29-13, but later died in the House Education Committee. Last year's bill did not have any funding requirements attached to it. This year's Senate Bill 474 is co-sponsored by Democratic representatives Mimi Stewart (Bernalillo, District 21), House Education Committee Chairman, and Rick Miera (Bernalillo District 11), the House Majority Floor Leader.

"This bill would help schools identify students struggling at reading or math at more levels and give them the monetary support they need to hire qualified teachers," said Senator Lopez. "Studies have shown that Skandera's and Martinez's Florida model does not work in the long run. It's time to invest in supporting our teachers and children.

"This bill puts more money into the classroom where it's needed, and not into a system that polices teachers and schools and doesn't provide support."

The bill also specifies that schools develop a plan for students whose home language is not English and provides realistic and appropriate assessments for them at their grade level. Schools would be required to involve a student's family in any academic plan to get the student back on track and the bill would provide funds for teaching staff to carry out the plan.