



# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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New Mexico Senate  
Senate Finance Committee  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
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Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Pueblo of Acoma, its students, and my community, I wish to express our full support for Senate Bill 140, the Opportunity Scholarship Act. This important piece of forward-thinking legislation will support Native American students in pursuing career pathways that will provide sustainable family incomes and strengthen the Tribal workforce in our respective communities.

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Executive budget recommendation invests \$85.5 million for a comprehensive free college package. This crucial financial aid program will not only benefit recent high school graduates, but first-generation and non-traditional adult learners who may not be eligible for other scholarships. Currently, the Pueblo of Acoma Pueblo has 80 students enrolled in public higher education institutions and Tribal colleges in New Mexico. We are certain there are many more who wished they had the chance to attend and finish college. But now the Opportunity Scholarship Act would simplify the financial aid process and support thousands of Native American students across New Mexico, including those here at Acoma, making it possible for them to have that opportunity.

Of importance in the legislation is the six-credit hour minimum which will create greater access to state financial aid for students, especially for those who are working, or who have family and cultural responsibilities, or other diverse needs. This credit hour reduction is critical to increasing access to higher education opportunities for students who previously had to decide between higher education and personal circumstances and responsibilities. Now, they will no longer have to choose. Native American students will have access, whether they are enrolling immediately after high school or returning as an adult learner.

We applaud the Governor's leadership on this important legislative initiative and ask that you support the decision to invest in New Mexico's students, especially its Native students. This landmark legislation will have lasting benefits for students, families, and communities, and for generations yet to come. We appreciate your time and consideration as you continue to fulfill your legislative commitment to the State as a member of the New Mexico Senate. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Randall Vicente, Governor  
Pueblo of Acoma