

# The LATINO EDUCATION TASK FORCE

January 27, 2022 VIA Electronic Mail

Hon. Representative Patricia A. Lundstrom  
**Chair, HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS & FINANCE**  
**And Honorable Members**  
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Hon. Representative Joy Garratt  
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Hon. Stephanie Rodríguez  
Secretary, Higher Education Department  
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Hon. Senator Liz Stefanics  
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Re: Latino Education Task Force Letter in Support of Senate Bill 140, Opportunity Scholarship Act

Dear Representative Lundstrom, Representative Garratt, Senator Stefanics, Secretary Rodríguez and Deputy Secretary Trujillo:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Latino Education Task Force. As a non-profit community organization, we worked closely with our communities statewide and across ethnic groups to organize forums on the education of our children and youth in 2009. We used what we learned to create the Hispanic Education Act in 2010 with former Representative Rick Miera and former Senator Bernadette Sánchez. Then in 2011, we started organizing the *Martínez v. New Mexico* lawsuit, working closely with the courageous 51 plaintiffs who were children and their parents and with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). I write today in support of Senate Bill 140. Our organization is fully dedicated to public education PreK-20 in New Mexico.

When Judge Sarah Singleton declared that the *Martínez* lawsuit had merit, she also granted the plaintiffs' first request making public education in New Mexico a fundamental right. After an 8-week trial, the Court ruled that our state had failed to provide a sufficient education and prepare our children to be college and career-ready. It has become very clear that our state needs the kind of support you are proposing for our students. We agree fully with you that supporting students to succeed now is an investment for the future of our families, communities and state. Research clearly shows that:

- The higher the level of completion of higher education for our students, the higher their income. Median earnings for associate degree holders working full time are 24% higher, and for

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bachelor's degree holders are 61% higher than individuals with only a high school diploma. (See Hispanic Education Status Report 2010)

- Naturally, this also translates into tax and revenue consequences for our state;
- The greatest hindrance and barrier for students of color to post-secondary education is lack of funds for tuition, fees and other costs involved.
  - Please see attachments at the end of this letter from university students struggling to complete their degrees and teacher licensure due to financial reasons.
- New Mexico often ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation in public education.
  - The opportunity scholarships in your bill would give our students and families what education researcher Dr. Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade calls “**Audacious Hope**”.

The options you are incorporating in SB 140 provide flexibility to the many lifestyles, goals and needs of our diverse communities. We appreciate the ways you are considering students who lost their lottery scholarship, often due to unforeseen circumstances. We appreciate the many situations you have considered, knowing the needs of our students and placing their needs in the center. Your bill helps us as New Mexicans do our part to support the success of scholarship students. We thank you and fully support your bill.

In my job as a person who prepares teachers and who is speaking here as a public citizen, I need to let you know that my students are in **dire need of financial support**. It is their Number One stressor, when they should be focusing on learning to become a teacher. It is hard for them to find money to pay for groceries and life expenses or time to work extra jobs. They are picking up odd jobs late at night delivering food or as Uber drivers. This takes from their sleep and health as they tend to work multiple jobs on top of student teaching and taking classes. They need funds now that they won't have to repay in the form of student loans. Where can we find support for them this semester? How will we recruit teachers and other majors without the type of support provided in this bill?

Sincerely,



Diane Torres-Velásquez Ph.D.

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Interim Chair, Fuerzas Unidas Caucus  
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cc: Ernest Herrera, lead MALDEF attorney, *Martínez v. New Mexico*

Representative Nathan P. Small  
Representative Anthony Allison  
Representative Phelps Anderson  
Representative Gail Armstrong  
Representative Cathrynn N. Brown

Representative Raymundo Lara  
Representative Debra M. Sariñana  
Representative Candie G. Sweetser  
Representative Christine Trujillo

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Representative Ambrose Castellano  
Representative Jack Chatfield  
Representative Randall S. Crowder  
Representative Meredith A. Dixon  
Representative Candy Spence Ezzell  
Representative Harry García  
Representative Dayan Hochman-Vigil  
Representative T. Ryan Lane

## ATTACHMENTS

Last night in class, with no prompt on this issue and without knowing about this bill, my students brought up extreme financial burden as being at the top of their stressors. Some were able to write letters. Many work multiple jobs so that they can student-teach all day every day. Below are a couple of letters from the many students currently in need:

### **Student 1**

This semester started off very stressful. At this time, I am a single parent, recently single after fourteen years of being a stay-at-home parent. I have had to learn how to pay my bills, budget, co-parent three children with different schedules and work for free as a Student Teacher in a classroom. The district offers support for Education Assistants who are in need of a degree but if you have a degree there is no monetary support unless you apply a year before school starts. Currently, I am worried about paying for my car payment, parking for in person class and daycare.

### **Student 2**

As a student teacher it is nearly impossible to balance the full-time hours, time we spend planning and grading, classes we must take along with student teaching and the work that goes into those, as well as keep a job of any kind. For many of us that means dwindling bank accounts and growing debt. I am fortunate enough to have a fiancé who can financially support us, but I also have a part time job that I work on weekends, and I don't have kids. This means I have no days off and I am exhausted, and still unable to independently support myself. I applied for the student teacher scholarship and was denied, so I'm also paying tuition out of pocket, with help from my parents. I have a lot of support, which makes what I'm doing possible, however many people don't have that. If we want more teachers we need support for those who are trying to become them. New Mexico needs a better program for future teachers, please make this happen!

### **Student 3.**

To Whom it May Concern,

I am a current university senior. I am majoring in Secondary Education with a concentration in Spanish. I am a full-time student, as well as doing my student teaching practice full time at local High School in a Spanish 1 classroom. Juggling school and student teaching is tough. On top of that, having to care for my own financial needs, it is hard to find time to work. Given that we have a lot of planning to do, grading, homework assignments, etc. working is difficult. That causes a lot of financial stress, even if it is simply to pay for my own groceries, phone, insurance, gas; everyday basic needs. If any extra funds are available, anything is a huge blessing as well as a great help. Thank you for your time!