

NMICC

NEW MEXICO INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Central New Mexico Community College • Clovis Community College • Luna Community College
Mesalands Community College • New Mexico Junior College • New Mexico Military Institute
Northern New Mexico College • San Juan College • Santa Fe Community College • Western New Mexico University

February 4, 2022

Senator George Munoz
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
NM State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Re: SB140 – Opportunity Scholarship Act
DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Dear Senator Muñoz:

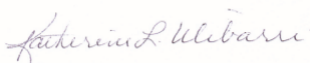
Thank you and the Legislature's continued support for the Opportunity Scholarship Program. We are grateful that appropriations for the Opportunity Scholarship are included in HB2, the General Appropriation Act of 2022..

On behalf of the New Mexico Independent Community Colleges (NMICC), I am writing to request your support for SB140, the Opportunity Scholarship Act. This is important because:

- Surveys of college students in New Mexico and throughout the country consistently cite lack of financial resources as the number one reason students fail to complete their education. A car that breaks down, a broken pair of eyeglasses, or an unexpected medical bill can derail a student's progress toward college completion. The Opportunity Scholarship supports students by more fully covering educational expenses so the student's personal budget is better able to absorb unexpected financial challenges.
- About 70% of New Mexico's community college students are adults who work and attend college part-time, often raising children of their own. Yet most scholarship programs, including the Legislative Lottery Scholarship, are designed to support traditional students who go to college shortly after high school and who attend college full time. The Opportunity Scholarship supports non-traditional students who attend at least half-time so they can get the training they need to advance in their careers and to better support their families.
- As New Mexico strives to diversify and grow our economy, it is critical that we rapidly and purposefully develop a highly skilled workforce. This means we must not only prepare recent high school graduates for careers, but we must train and retrain adults for new jobs or for advancement in their current career path. The Opportunity Scholarship makes it possible for New Mexico to move rapidly in preparing a workforce for an evolving economy.
- SB140 provides statutory language, aside from HB2/GAA language, to define the scholarship. This is needed to make the scholarship permanent. This allows institutions to provide assurance to students that so long as appropriations are available, those deemed eligible according to statute will continue to qualify. Reliance only on language in the Appropriations Act can change from year to year, thus making it more difficult to help students plan for financing their education beyond the current year.

Again, we appreciate your support for the appropriation in HB2 funding the Opportunity Scholarship Program and your consideration of SB140, the Opportunity Scholarship Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Katherine L. Ulibarri, Executive Director
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