

SANTA FE – A transformational long-term investment in New Mexico's youngest children won House passage Feb. 12, moving the state one step closer to providing permanent and sustainable funds for early childhood programs. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and cabinet secretaries cheered the House action.

House Joint Resolution 1 – sponsored by Reps. Moe Maestas, Javier Martinez, Georgene Louis and Liz Thomson – would put a constitutional amendment on the ballot to earmark an additional small portion of the Land Grant Permanent Fund each year for essential early childhood care and education programs throughout New Mexico.

"Investing in early childhood development is one of the best things we can do to ensure our children's success, support working families and pave the way for New Mexico's economic development and future prosperity," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "It's an investment that needs and deserves permanent, sustainable funding. I appreciate the quick action of the legislature on this landmark, and long awaited, proposal."

If New Mexicans ultimately vote to pass the constitutional amendment, the state will expand and enhance access to high-quality early childhood education services for children from birth to kindergarten. Public support for using one percent of the Land Grant Permanent Fund for early childhood programs is both strong and bipartisan. According to a poll conducted last month by LD Insights, 75 percent of voters support using one percent of the LGPF annually to provide

more funds for early childhood programs (63 percent of Republicans and 79 percent of Democrats).

“Passage of HJR1 is an important step towards building an accessible, equitable, and coordinated early childhood system in every New Mexico community for all New Mexican families and young children,” Elizabeth Groginsky, secretary of the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, said.

Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Legislature created the ECECD in 2019 to strengthen and coordinate early childhood services previously spread across several state agencies. The agency officially launched on July 1, 2020.

“This is great news for New Mexico’s youngest learners. We know that quality care and early learning prepare children for success in school and in life, and this measure will assure steady funding for those vital programs,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

New Mexico has the highest number of per capita individuals who experienced more than four Adverse Childhood Experiences, which can lead to higher prevalence of adult alcoholism, suicide, and other serious health conditions.

“One effective way to prevent adverse childhood experiences and outcomes is by making a substantial investment in early childhood programs and early interventions,” Brian Blalock, cabinet secretary of the Children, Youth and Families Department, said. “This bill does just that and will help New Mexico move forward. That is our priority and approach at CYFD and why we stand in strong support.”

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