



# All Pueblo Council of Governors

Officers:  
Mark Mitchell, Chairman  
Jerome Lucero, Vice-Chairman  
Governor Val Panteah Sr., Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## New Mexico Legislature Passes Equal Pay for Native Language Teachers

*Albuquerque, NM* – On Tuesday evening, February 15, 2022, the New Mexico Senate unanimously passed House Bill 60, which guarantees equal pay for Native language and culture teachers. The bill, sponsored by Representative Derrick Lente (Sandia Pueblo) and introduced in the Senate by Senator Benny Shendo, Jr. (Jemez Pueblo), will now head to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to sign into law.

House Bill 60 requires school districts to pay Native language and culture teachers, also known as 520 certificate holders, the same minimum salary as level 1 licensed teachers. This will end the inequitable treatment of Native language teachers; whose current pay varies among districts and is often much lower than other teachers' pay. With the bipartisan approval of this legislation, lawmakers recognized the unique credentials of Native language teachers, gained through experience and traditional practices, and the critical role of these teachers in sustaining Native languages and cultures.

APCG Chairman Mark Mitchell applauds the final passage of House Bill 60 and said: “Since our emergence our Pueblos have come together to address the deepest and most impactful threats to culture and language. In this era of our Nations, that threat has been western education. Beginning over 130 years ago, the deliberate efforts to erase Native languages have brought our languages to a moment of critical urgency. The federal government’s policy of assimilation prohibited the speaking of Native languages in school and resulted in a dramatic language loss. The cultural survival of Tribes depends on the preservation and revitalization of tribal languages. Native languages sustain tribal communities, our governance systems, our institutions, and our identities. APCG welcomes this long overdue recognition of the value of Native languages and the distinguished individuals who teach our languages. We thank Rep. Lente, Senator Shendo, and Mr. Regis Pecos for all the valiant work. With the passage of HB 60, our languages have a chance to renew its strength.”

Representative Derrick Lente said: “The passage of HB60 is a historic moment. It is a triumph overcoming nearly 130 years of the intentional efforts of eradicating our languages. The passage of this legislation is another example of the perseverance of each generation doing their part to define the inheritance of the next generation. This triumph reverses the long history of systemic and institutional racism in the name of linguicide using education as the means. It will now be at the center of our vision for education.”

Acoma

Cochiti

Isleta

Jemez

Laguna

Nambe

Ohkay Owingeh

Picuris

Pojoaque

Sandia

San Felipe

San Ildefonso

Santa Ana

Santa Clara

Santo Domingo

Taos

Tesuque

Ysleta del Sur

Zia

Zuni



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**Acoma** There are eight Native languages spoken in New Mexico, all of which are recognized as endangered or vulnerable. New Mexico's Indian Education Act of 2003 requires the maintenance of Native languages. The passage of House Bill 60 will help get more Native language teachers into classrooms, which will improve Native students' access to a culturally and linguistically relevant education.

**Cochiti**

**Isleta**

**Jemez** Since 2003, state law provides for a certificate process that enables non-degreed individuals to teach the Native language and culture of specific New Mexico Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in public schools. Tribes retain full authority over developing standards for determining competency for certification and collaborate with the Public Education Department (PED) in the certification process. PED data shows there are currently 99 Native language teachers working as classroom instructors. Many of these certified teachers get paid at much lower rates than other teachers.

**Laguna**

**Nambe**

**Ohkay Owingeh** The effort to secure equal pay for Native language and culture teachers was supported by all of New Mexico's 23 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos. The legislation is part of the *Tribal Remedy Framework*, a comprehensive plan for meeting the educational needs of Native students that addresses the landmark 2018 *Yazzie/Martinez* court ruling. The court found that the State had failed to provide Native students with a culturally and linguistically relevant education.

**Picuris**

**Pojoaque** ###

**Sandia** More information on the Tribal Remedy Framework, including HB 60, can be found here: <https://nabpi.unm.edu/tribal-remedy-framework/index.html>

**San Felipe** For further information, contact Teran Villa, APCG Policy Coordinator, (505) 301- 9062, [tvilla@indianpueblo.org](mailto:tvilla@indianpueblo.org)

**San Ildefonso**

**Santa Ana**

**Santa Clara**

**Santo Domingo**

**Taos**

**Tesuque**

**Ysleta del Sur**

**Zia**

**Zuni**