

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SANTA FE COUNTY**

Introduced by:
Commissioner Rudy N. Garcia

RESOLUTION NO. 2021 - 101

**A RESOLUTION
TO SUPPORT SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ADDRESSING THE SANTA FE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS STAFFING CRISIS**

WHEREAS, a report by SOAR: Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation & Policy Center, presented at a Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) hearing in September 2021, found all teacher vacancies in New Mexico have increased from 644 in 2019 to 1,048 in 2021; and

WHEREAS, SOAR found that consistently high teacher vacancies are occurring in elementary (279), special education (291), math (84), science (77) and English Language Arts (56); and

WHEREAS, SOAR found that Health/Physical Education, Music, Social Studies, and Spanish are other challenging areas; and

WHEREAS, SOAR found that numerous needs are also being experienced by districts with high Native American populations; and

WHEREAS, SOAR found that other key areas are also experiencing increased vacancies, with vacancies for Educational Assistants growing from 258 in 2019 to 456 in 2021, Counselor vacancies growing from 37 to 59, and Speech Language Pathologist vacancies growing from 42 to 52 in the same period; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Rachel Boren, director of SOAR, called New Mexico's teacher vacancies a "staggering number" in a hearing before the LFC, as reported in a September 21, 2021 article in the *Albuquerque Journal*, which noted that New Mexico has between 21,000 and 22,000 teachers; and

WHEREAS, Danny Espinoza, a research and policy associate at the Learning Policy Institute, advised the LFC: "Teachers, for example, appear to get better over the course of their careers...making retention an important strategy for helping students. But New Mexico teachers leave the profession at a much higher rate than the national average"; and

WHEREAS, in a policy brief in June 2021, New Mexico VOICES for Children said "...New Mexico teachers earn a weekly wage that is almost 30% lower than what other comparable college-educated workers earn"; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico VOICES for Children recommends a continued increase in state investments in our students, our schools and our teachers, with particular focus on investments designed to promote tribal, bilingual and multicultural education, as well as pathways for teachers and school staff who reflect our student population; and

WHEREAS, Santa Fe rental prices are consistently at least \$150 higher than the rest of New Mexico. In 2019, average monthly rents were \$791 in New Mexico compared to \$1,038 in Santa Fe; and

WHEREAS, the teacher's union, National Education Association (NEA)-Santa Fe, conducted a survey of 400 SFPS educators in August 2021 and found that buying or renting a home or apartment in Santa Fe has become more difficult; access to child care is a barrier to recruit and retain a highly qualified and diverse education work force; and standardized testing has been reduced but still impacts the freedom that educators have in the classroom; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) Board of Education (the "Board") met in regular session (a virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic) on November 4, 2021, at 5:30p.m., and stated its belief that it is vital to advocate for action leading to hiring a teacher for every classroom in order to address one of the greatest needs for our students to have a high-quality education.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Fe County hereby support the following measures:

1. That the state legislature dramatically increase educator's salaries, as current levels are inadequate to retain quality educators, especially when considering the education and licensure requirements for the profession; educators' value and importance to society; the high cost of living in Santa Fe County, particularly housing, with rental prices in Albuquerque 26% lower than in Santa Fe; and the accelerating need to attract qualified individuals to the profession;
2. That the City and County of Santa Fe work together in partnership and active effort to aggressively invest in, and remedy the urgent need for, housing educators can afford;
3. That the Board, NEA-Santa Fe, SFPS and community housing partners, including the Santa Fe Housing Action Coalition, form a task force to develop and recommend creative solutions to address affordable housing for SFPS employees in the short, medium and long term;
4. That the SFPS Superintendent investigate providing and improving both child care options for SFPS staff and volunteer and community support; and also investigate other needs as identified by staff members and in partnership with NEA-Santa Fe;
5. That SFPS invest in staffing and system upgrades for the Human Resources Department to expedite employment applications; and
6. That the County Manager's Office send this resolution to the Board and communicate to the Board all requests made to key partners and contacts, including, but not limited to, the

