Respect New Mexico Educators Holds Rally at Roundhouse to Highlight State Educator Vacancy Crisis

Educators from all Corners of New Mexico Seek Relief from Effects of Staffing Crisis by Advocating for Respect for Educational Profession, Recruitment of More Educators, and Retention of Veteran Educators

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(SANTA FE) – Members of The National Education Association - New Mexico (NEA-NM) from all corners of New Mexico gathered outside in the Roundhouse on a brisk Sunday afternoon to seek relief from effects of statewide staffing crisis. Educators advocated for respect for educational profession, the recruitment of more educators, and the retention of veteran educators. Educators focused on six priorities to address the current education crisis: Better Wages, Affordable Health Insurance, Smaller Class Sizes, Improved Staffing, More Access to Prep Time, Child Care and Affordable Housing.

The Respect for New Mexico Educators campaign arises from the fact that New Mexico Public Schools are at a critical juncture. According to the campaign’s Statement of Values, “There are more than 1,000 vacant licensed positions and over 800 vacant education support professional positions across our State, and teacher vacancies are only the tip of the iceberg. These 1,000 vacancies alone represent over 20,000 of New Mexico’s students without a high-quality, well-trained, permanent classroom teacher.”

National Education Association President Becky Pringle addressed to the crowd,

“It is an honor to be in New Mexico in solidarity with the educators, students, and families of this beautiful state representing the three million members of the largest education association in the country. This is a challenging time for our nation – we are faced with multiple crises. The historic threat of the ongoing pandemic is layered onto a society and a political system that is utterly divided. And yet, here in the land of enchantment, I see hope - hope that New Mexico can come together behind a vision that recognizes the potential of our children to be the light that will lead us forward through these dark and challenging times.”

National Education Association- New Mexico President Parr-Sanchez states that, “This moment is a crossroads for our states’ decisionmakers. We have the potential to harness the unprecedented resources available to our state and invest them in our future – in our students. Right now, tens of thousands of New Mexico students don’t have access to a trained educator. We must respect, recruit, and retain educators in our state by closing the salary gap between educators and other professions, fixing the inequitable levels of healthcare coverage, and providing a livable wage to our lowest paid education employees.

We must act to fix the educator shortage crisis – but we cannot stop there. We know from the Yazzie-Martinez court ruling that we need a paradigm shift in the way our schools operate. Too many children are slipping through the cracks in our system. The overreliance on standardized tests and unfunded mandates drives educators out and deprive children from the education they deserve. We must invest in proven strategies for improving our schools, such as the community school model and early childhood education.
High-functioning education systems provide educators with planning time to collaborate and reasonable class sizes that allow for individual student attention. We have the resources in New Mexico to do this – to build the schools our students deserve while respecting the unique needs and cultures of our diverse communities. But do we have the will?

Our students cannot wait – we must act now. This is why educators from every corner of our state have travelled today to Sant Fe to stand in solidarity with our students, families, and communities and demand the resources we need.”

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