



June 17, 2020

Dear Esteemed Santa Fe Legislative Delegation:

I am writing to advocate for the children, staff and families of the Santa Fe Public Schools by imploring you to rethink the LFC's staff proposal given its impact on education and our district.

Please keep FY 21 education funding and employee raises intact. We cannot afford to go backwards in our efforts to move toward competitive salaries for school employees.

I further request that you be courageous and creative in finding new revenue by, for example, acting to send a ballot initiative to New Mexico's voters for a modest distribution from the Land Grant Permanent Fund, close loop-holes in the tax code and repeal tax cuts that our state cannot afford and that do not produce the expected results.

Using CARES Act funds to shore up the state's budget, as proposed by LFC staff, is a blatant misuse of these funds. The cost to educate students safely and effectively during this pandemic has been and will continue to be expensive. CARES Act funding is intended to help mitigate the impact on LEAs' budgets and, ultimately, students. Its loss will have a significant negative impact on our budget and the safety and well-being of students, staff and campus visitors.

In a nutshell, under the LFC staff's proposal, SFPS will see a reduction of \$1.3 million from the \$44 million credit from the CARES Act to the SEG. CARES Act funds were intended to help LEAs (districts) mitigate impacts to their budgets due to COVID-19 pandemic expenses. The additional 2% shave (cut) further negatively impacts our budget by about \$2.2 million.

We started our budget-building with a \$7 million shortfall due to how the units fell out for SFPS and lost E-Rate revenue and worked very hard to keep cuts away from direct services to students and families. The combination of reduced CARES Act funding and the 2% shave (cut) will result in a \$3.5 million deficit for the district.

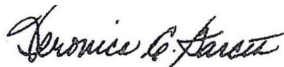
Providing a sufficient education under normal circumstances has been a challenge. It took schools almost a decade to recover from the 2008 recession, but even then Judge Singleton's ruling upheld that schools were not sufficiently funded. New Mexico continues to rank 50th in child well-being and education, and, now, the pandemic has had a disproportionate negative impact on poor children, children of color and their families, increasing the opportunity gap for success.

Until the pandemic, I was encouraged by the state's actions to move education in the right direction. We applauded the average 4% salary increase, believing it is an incentive to retain and recruit teachers. Cutting this will have a negative impact on these efforts. As about 300 of my employees are over the age of 60, there is a high probability that a salary reduction along with the pandemic will increase retirements and separations, precisely what we do not need.

I appreciate your hard work and leadership on behalf of your constituents. I thank you for your forward thinking and the many benefits you have provided to our students and families. They are the benefactors of our proven educational programs.

Please let me know if there's any way that I can be of assistance to you.

Respectfully,



Veronica C. García, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

cc: The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor of New Mexico
SFPS Board of Education
Dr. Ryan Stewart, Secretary, New Mexico Public Education Department
David Abbey, Director, Legislative Finance Committee
SFPS Cabinet
Grace Mayer, President, NEA-Santa Fe
David Holguin, President, Santa Fe Federation of School Employees
Linda Siegle, Lobbyist, SFPS