



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
STATE CAPITOL
Santa Fe

ALONZO BALDONADO

R - Valencia
District 8

Box 370
Los Lunas, NM 87031
Phone: (505) 363-6214
Email: alonzo.baldonado@nmlegis.gov

July 24, 2019

The Honorable Christine Trujillo
Chair
Legislative Education Study Committee
325 Don Gaspar Ave #101
Santa Fe, NM 87501

HAND DELIVERED

COMMITTEES:
Commerce & Economic Development
Education

INTERIM COMMITTEES:
Legislative Education Study
New Mexico Finance Authority Oversight
Economic & Rural Development
Criminal Justice Reform Subcommittee
Mortgage Finance Authority Act Oversight

Advisory:
Courts, Corrections & Justice
Transportation Infrastructure Revenue Subcommittee

Dear Madam Chair,

The abrupt dismissal of Karen Trujillo as New Mexico's Secretary of the Public Education Department (PED) has caused confusion and concern across much of our state. With weeks to go before hundreds of thousands of students return to the classroom, there is no permanent leadership at PED and no promise of when a new leader will be in place.

As the chairwoman is aware, leaders in our school districts rely on PED for support throughout the year. Stability at PED is key to ensuring our local education leaders are receiving satisfactory assistance from the department and providing the best possible instruction for our children.

The sudden dismissal of Secretary Trujillo comes at a critical time. PED is in the midst of several transitions, including replacement of the A-F school scoring system with a new dashboard reporting interface, development of a new teacher evaluation process, and vendor solicitation for a new statewide standardized student assessment. In addition, Secretary Trujillo's abrupt dismissal could potentially affect PED's efforts to comply with the Yazzie-Martinez court ruling.

The impact of this startling decision to replace the PED secretary at this crucial juncture will reverberate across New Mexico's school districts. It is imperative that we have strong leadership in place to guide PED through these transitions. Instead, PED will be operating with an interim leader during these pivotal first months of the school year.

Furthermore, media reports indicate additional staff is resigning at PED in light of the Governor's decision. These are troubling developments not only because they occur just before the start of

the school year, but they also happen less than a month into the new fiscal year when PED will need to administer a significant funding infusion to its budget.

As direct representatives of the citizens of New Mexico as well as the body responsible for allocating funds to our state's school districts, we believe Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and her staff must provide more substantiation to the Legislature on the reasons behind this drastic decision. The Legislature deserves detailed information in the following areas:

- The reason for Secretary Trujillo's abrupt dismissal just months after her unanimous confirmation, including the specific initiatives that were not being implemented to the Governor's satisfaction, the benchmarks used to determine Secretary Trujillo was not meeting expectations, and the specific deficiencies in communications and leadership alluded to by the Governor's spokesperson as grounds for dismissal.
- The communications used by the Governor's office to inform Secretary Trujillo about the Governor's concerns regarding her performance and failure to meet benchmarks and expectations, including the method used to communicate these concerns and the dates when these concerns were conveyed.
- The plan for how PED is going to be able to serve the state's school districts during this critical period while the department is without permanent leadership.
- The process the administration is undertaking to find a permanent replacement, including the expected timeline for when the new PED Secretary will be selected and assume duties.

The people of New Mexico deserve to have these answers. I hereby request a hearing be held by the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) to gain this information. Since the current meeting of the LESC is the last gathering we will have before the start of the school year, we recommend that time be set aside during the next few days to invite the appropriate personnel to apprise the Legislature on this matter.

The Governor clearly believed that the situation was of such urgency that it warranted this shocking and precipitous decision. This action cannot go unexamined or unexplained. We deserve to know what performance deficiencies prompted the decision and the Governor's plan to mitigate the impacts on our educational system as students and teachers across the state are preparing to return to school next month.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns,



Alonzo Baldonado
State Representative, HD 8