

**FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF SANTA FE
STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

**LOUISE MARTINEZ, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS
NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR CHILDREN AN.
MARTINEZ, AA. MARTINEZ, AR. MARTINEZ
AND AD. MARTINEZ; BLAENDER AVILES,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER
MINOR CHILDREN IR. AVILES, I. AVILES AND
IS. AVILES; ESPERANZA BRIONES,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER
MINOR CHILDREN D. BRIONES AND L.
BRIONES; YOLANDA GARCIA, INDIVIDUALLY
AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR
CHILDREN D. GARCIA, P. GARCIA AND K.
GARCIA; ISMAEL RAMIREZ, INDIVIDUALLY
AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HIS MINOR
CHILDREN J. RAMIREZ AND R. RAMIREZ;
CHRISTINA AISPURO, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS
NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR CHILDREN D.
AISPURO AND J. AISPURO; GISELA ALDERETE,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER
MINOR CHILDREN R. ALDERETE, L. ALDERETE
AND M. ALDERETE; ISRAEL MARTINEZ,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HIS
MINOR CHILDREN S. MARTINEZ, E. MARTINEZ
AND A. MARTINEZ; LILIANA GARCIA,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER
MINOR PLAINTIFF CHILD A. RUIZ; BARBARA
BACA, INDIVIDUALLY AND NEXT FRIEND OF
HER MINOR PLAINTIFF CHILD A. BACA;
ROBERTO SANCHEZ, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS
NEXT FRIEND OF HIS MINOR CHILDREN R.
SANCHEZ, C. SANCHEZ AND A. SANCHEZ;
RAYOS BURCIAGA, INDIVIDUALLY AND NEXT
FRIEND OF HER MINOR PLAINTIFF CHILD L.
VALENZUELA; JODI EDAKIE, INDIVIDUALLY
AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR
CHILDREN A. CACHINI AND R. CACHINI; DION**

SELECION, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR CHILDREN D. SELECION AND K. SELECION; MARIBEL CASTILLO, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR CHILDREN J. ARRAZ, C. ARRAZ; AND LUZHILDA ESCARCEGA, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF HER MINOR CHILD I. CAMPOS.

Plaintiffs,

vs.

No. _____

**THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO;
HANNA SKANDERA, IN HER OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS SECRETARY DESIGNATE OF THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT; AND THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.**

Defendants.

COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

Plaintiffs, by their counsel, bring this Complaint against Defendants, and allege as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiff children attend public schools across New Mexico and are identified economically disadvantaged and/or as English Language Learner (“ELL”) students or former ELLs. Plaintiff children are among the most vulnerable student populations in the State and find themselves trapped in a desperate situation with few educational opportunities to succeed in the classroom, resulting from a school funding system that pays little regard for their actual needs, an education system that ignores the longstanding

bilingual and multicultural history of this State, and arbitrary school accountability and teacher evaluation systems that bring no relief but instead aim to drive teachers away from the most needy students.

2. Accordingly, Plaintiffs bring this action for declaratory and injunctive relief to enforce Plaintiffs' rights to a uniform and sufficient education under article XII, section 1 of the New Mexico Constitution ("the Education Clause"). Plaintiff economically disadvantaged and ELL students further allege that their equal protection and due process rights have been violated.
3. A sufficient education is a fundamental right under the New Mexico Constitution and qualitatively requires, at a minimum, an education that is "founded on the sound principle that every child can learn and succeed" and is sufficient to "meet the needs of all children" through a "multicultural education system" with "quality and diverse teachers" "proper assess[ment], place[ment] and monitor[ing]" and a "rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares them to succeed in college and the workplace." NMSA 1978 § 22-1-1.2(A), (B) (2007); NMSA 1978 § 22-23-1.1(C) (2004).
4. The quantitative insufficiency of the school finance system is principally grounded in the arbitrary and inadequate funding for at-risk students that irrationally excludes the learning needs of economically disadvantaged students as a group; the arbitrary and insufficient bilingual multicultural funding for ELL students; the arbitrary and insufficient funding for Native American students; and Defendants' failure to ensure resources allocated for at-risk students reach those students in need. The system of

public school finance for these students is not designed or supported to fulfill the qualitative mandate of New Mexico's Education Clause.

5. Further contributing to the constitutional violations are the State's educational "reform" efforts, including the irrational, non-transparent, and ill-conceived school and district grading system and the irrational and punitive teacher evaluation system, both of which impede the State's implicit duty of providing effective monitoring of schools, districts, and teachers to ensure students access a sufficient education.
6. Further contributing to the deprivation of Plaintiffs' constitutional rights is Defendants' failure to ensure the appropriate implementation of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act, the Hispanic Education Act, the Indian Education Act, the Children of Spanish Descent Clause requiring "perfect equality" (N.M. Const., art. XII, § 10) and the Spanish Teacher Training Clause under article XII, section 8 of the New Mexico Constitution.
7. The constitutional violations bear out in deplorable student achievement results across grade levels and on college entrance exams, especially for economically disadvantaged and ELL students. Less than one-half of fourth graders achieved proficiency in reading and math. Three-quarters of ELL eighth grade students failed to reach proficiency in reading in 2012-13, and approximately 85% failed to reach proficiency in math, compared to approximately 40% and 60% failure of all eighth grade students the same year.
8. Further, stark achievement gaps exist and persist between Caucasian students and their Latino, Native American, and African American peers, between economically

disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students, and between ELL and non-ELL students.

9. In the 2012-13 school year, approximately 67% of Caucasian students achieved “proficient” or above in reading on the NMSBA, while only 45.9% of Latino students, 34.7% of Native American students, and 48.6% of African American students reached the same level. During the same school year, the State’s graduation rate for Latino, Native American students, and African American students was approximately ten percentage points lower than the rate for Caucasian students.
10. By virtually any measure, the students who are most at-risk in New Mexico are languishing without the educational opportunities they need to achieve their full potential and instead are being pushed out of the very system meant to educate them. For those fortunate to graduate and go on to college, approximately fifty percent require remediation.
11. The consequences for failing to educate appropriately Plaintiff children and other students like them will not only be felt by those students unable to fulfill their dreams and their full potential, but also greater New Mexico which continues to bear the brunt of past failures. As more fully set forth herein, Defendants fall woefully short of their constitutional obligations to provide Plaintiff children a sufficient education.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

12. The Court has original jurisdiction to hear these claims under Article VI, Section 13 of the New Mexico Constitution, NMSA 1978 § 44-6-2 (1975), and NMSA 1978 § 44-6-13 (1975).
13. Venue is proper under NMSA 1978 § 38-3-1(G) (1988).

PARTIES

Plaintiffs

14. Plaintiff Louise Martinez is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children An. Martinez, Aa. Martinez, Ar. Martinez and Ad. Martinez. Plaintiff children An. Martinez, Aa. Martinez, Ar. Martinez and Ad. Martinez attend public schools in Albuquerque Public Schools.
15. Plaintiff Blaender Aviles is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children Ir. Aviles, I. Aviles and Is. Aviles. Plaintiff children Ir. Aviles, I. Aviles and Is. Aviles attend public schools in Albuquerque Public Schools.
16. Plaintiff Esperanza Briones is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children D. Briones and L. Briones. Plaintiff children D. Briones and L. Briones attend public schools in Gadsden Independent School District.
17. Plaintiff Yolanda Garcia is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children D. Garcia, P. Garcia and K. Garcia. Plaintiff children D. Garcia, P. Garcia and K. Garcia attend public schools in Gadsden Independent School District.

18. Plaintiff Ismael Ramirez is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children J. Ramirez and R. Ramirez. Plaintiff children J. Ramirez and R. Ramirez attend public schools in Gadsden Independent School District.
19. Plaintiff Christina Aispuro is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children D. Aispuro and J. Aispuro. Plaintiff children D. Aispuro and J. Aispuro attend public schools in Las Cruces Public Schools.
20. Plaintiff Gisela Alderete is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children R. Alderete, L. Alderete and M. Alderete. Plaintiff children R. Alderete, L. Alderete and M. Alderete attend public schools in Las Cruces Public Schools.
21. Plaintiff Israel Martinez is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children S. Martinez, E. Martinez and A. Martinez. Plaintiff children S. Martinez, E. Martinez and A. Martinez attend public schools in Las Cruces Public Schools.
22. Plaintiff Liliana Garcia is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff child A. Ruiz. Plaintiff child A. Ruiz attends public schools in Las Cruces Public Schools.
23. Plaintiff Barbara Baca is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff child A. Baca. Plaintiff child A. Baca attends public schools in Magdalena Municipal School District.

24. Plaintiff Roberto Sanchez is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children R. Sanchez, C. Sanchez and A. Sanchez. Plaintiff children R. Sanchez, C. Sanchez and A. Sanchez attend public schools in Santa Fe Independent School District.
25. Plaintiff Rayos Burciaga is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff child L. Valenzuela. Plaintiff child L. Valenzuela attends public schools in Santa Fe Independent School District.
26. Plaintiff Jodi Edaakie is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children A. Cachini and R. Cachini. Plaintiff children A. Cachini and R. Cachini attend public schools in Zuni Public Schools.
27. Plaintiff Dion Seleccion is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children D. Seleccion and K. Seleccion. Plaintiff children D. Seleccion and K. Seleccion attend public schools in Zuni Public Schools.
28. Plaintiff Maribel Castillo is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff children J. Arraz and C. Arraz. Plaintiff children J. Arraz and C. Arraz attend public schools in Española Public School District.
29. Plaintiff Luzhilda Escarcega is an individual and parent and/or natural guardian of minor plaintiff child I. Campos. Plaintiff child I. Campos attends public school in Española Public School District.
30. All Plaintiffs and Plaintiff children reside and attend public schools in New Mexico. Each individual plaintiff child is identified as an economically disadvantaged student (based on

eligibility for the National School Lunch Program under the National School Lunch Act), an English Language Learner (“ELL”) student pursuant to state law as determined by the New Mexico English Language Proficiency Assessment (NMELPA), or a former ELL student. Plaintiff children also include Native American and Latino/Hispano school children. Each individual child plaintiff has been harmed by the denial of a sufficient education as further described below in the paragraphs below.

Defendants

31. Defendant State of New Mexico is responsible for enacting laws that together form the New Mexico public school system.
32. Defendant New Mexico Public Education Department (“PED”), under article XII, section 6 of the New Mexico Constitution and legislation enacted thereunder, supervises schools and school officials and “determine[s] policy for the operation of all public schools.” The New Mexico Public Education Department holds its principal place of business in the Jerry Apodaca Education Building, 300 Don Gaspar, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501.
33. Hanna Skandera, in her official capacity as the Secretary-Designate of Public Education (“Secretary-Designate”), is the chief state school officer and executive officer of the PED. The Secretary is the “governing authority and shall have control, management, direction of all public schools,” and her principal place of business is the Jerry Apodaca Education Building, 300 Don Gaspar, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501.

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

New Mexico Constitutional and Statutory Provisions Related to the Fundamental Right to a Sufficient Education

34. The New Mexico Constitution both explicitly and implicitly recognizes a sufficient education as a fundamental right. Adopted in 1911, article XII, section 1 of the New Mexico Constitution (“the Education Clause”) requires that the State maintain “a uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the State shall be established and maintained.”
35. The importance of the fundamental right to a sufficient education in New Mexico cannot be understated. New Mexico’s Constitution requires that all students of school age attend school. There are severe penalties written in statute for the failure to attend. A series of education statutes and regulations govern who may graduate, and who may be suspended or expelled. A series of education statutes and regulations also govern, albeit ineffectively, school and district accountability, teacher evaluations, teacher pay and due process rights, among many other areas.
36. Furthermore, the level of education often informs several democratic ideals and values, with higher levels of education finding a correlation to voter registration and participation; fewer public welfare services; lower rates of criminal activity and imprisonment; higher rates of home ownership; and economic freedom and empowerment. Education has the potential of leveling the playing field between the “haves” and the “have-nots” and opening doors of opportunity.

37. Two additional constitutional clauses, art. XII, § 10 Children of Spanish Descent Clause and art. XII, § 8 Teacher Training Clause, also create constitutional protections for student languages and cultures in the State.
38. The New Mexico Constitution’s Children of Spanish Descent Clause provides that “[c]hildren of Spanish descent in the State of New Mexico shall never be denied the right and privilege of admission and attendance in the public schools. . . and they shall never be classed in separate schools, but shall forever enjoy perfect equality with other children in all public schools and educational institutions in the state.” N.M. Const. art. XII, § 10.
39. The Spanish Teacher Training Clause states that “[t]he legislature shall provide for the training of teachers . . . so that they may become proficient in both the English and Spanish languages, to qualify them to teach Spanish-speaking pupils.” N.M. Const. art. XII, § 8.
40. New Mexico’s educational goals, which can aid courts in interpreting the State’s constitutional duties under the qualitative component of the education clause, are codified in the Public School Code. The “Legislative findings and purpose” state that “no education system can be sufficient for the education of all children unless it is founded on the sound principle that every child can learn and succeed and that the system must meet the needs of all children by recognizing that student success for every child is the fundamental goal.”¹

¹ NMSA 1978 § 22-1-1.2 (2007).

41. The Legislature further states “that the key to student success in New Mexico is to have a multicultural education system,” which includes, among other things, “attract[ing] and retain[ing] quality and diverse teachers,” “integrat[ing] the cultural strengths of its diverse student population into the curriculum with high expectations,” and “rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares them to succeed in college and the workplace.”²
42. Reflective of the State’s constitutional protections for non-Caucasian and non-English speaking children, New Mexico codifies in statute the State’s goals for bilingualism and multiculturalism, and enacts specific educational program goals through the Hispanic Education Act, the Indian Education Act, and the Bilingual and Multicultural Education Act. These statutes, among others, and the above-identified constitutional provisions further inform the interpretation of the qualitative meaning of the education clause.
43. The legislative purpose of the Hispanic Education Act (“HEA”) is to implement systems that “affect the success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates,” encourage parental involvement, and “provide mechanisms for parents, community and business organizations, public schools, school districts, charter schools . . . [etc.] to improve educational opportunities for Hispanic students for the purpose of closing the achievement gap.” NMSA 1978 § 22-23B-4 (2010). To achieve the State’s legislative goals, the HEA creates a Hispanic Education Liaison and an advisory council

² *Id.*

to advise the Secretary of Education on Hispanic education issues, and a yearly status report on progress towards goals. NMSA 1978 § 22-23B-4(B)(5), (6) (2010).

44. The purpose of the Indian Education Act (“IEA”) is to “A. ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional material for American Indian students enrolled in public schools; B. ensure maintenance of native languages” NMSA 1978 § 22-23A-2(A), (B) (2003). The IEA was intended to address longstanding inequities in the educational system for Native American students, and the maintenance of language and culture are specifically identified as being critical to Native American student education. Another purpose is to “ensure that the [PED] partners with tribes to increase tribal involvement and control over schools and the education of students located in tribal communities.” NMSA 1978 § 22-23A-2(D) (2003).
45. For Native American students enrolled in public schools, equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials are required to satisfy the goals of the IEA. NMSA 1978 § 22-23-1.1(K) (2004).
46. The IEA creates an Act-specific funding source, requires annual education status reports, and creates the Indian education division and Indian education advisory council in furtherance of these objectives. NMSA 1978 § 22-23A-5 to -8 (2007).
47. The Bilingual and Multicultural Education Act (“BMEA”) sets forth the “state’s bilingual multicultural education goals for all students, including that English Language Learners

[are to] (1) become bilingual and biliterate . . . and (2) meet state academic content standards and benchmarks.” The BMEA is meant to “ensure equal educational opportunities for students,” and is grounded in a bilingual teacher training constitutional mandate and legislative recognition that “districts do not fully understand how to properly assess, place, and monitor students,” demands that state and local education agencies provide accountability measures, professional development, parent program choice and English training, bilingual curriculum, and culturally relevant learning environments and materials. NMSA 1978 § 22-23-1.1 (2004).

48. In 1989, New Mexico was one of the first, and is currently one of the only, states to adopt an "English Plus" resolution, officially endorsing multilingualism, “promot[ing] the concept that all members of our society have full access to opportunities to effectively learn English plus develop proficiency in a second or multiple languages” and “survival in the twenty-first century our country needs both the preservation of the cultures and languages among us and the fostering of proficiency in other languages on the part of its citizens.” 1989 H.J.M. 16.

49. As more fully set forth below, the mandates of the Children of Spanish Descent Clause, the Spanish Teacher Training Clause, the HEA, the IEA, and the BMEA remain largely aspirational and unfulfilled.

New Mexico Student Population

50. During the 2013-14 school year, New Mexico enrolled 336,980 public school students (including charter schools) in 89 districts and 855 schools (including charter schools).

51. New Mexico has an exceptionally challenging student population that is predominantly minority, and is becoming increasingly impoverished.
52. Latinos comprise approximately 60% of all enrolled students, followed by Caucasians at 25%, Native Americans at 10%, African Americans at 2%, and Asian/Pacific Islanders at 1%.
53. The number of economically disadvantaged students has increased considerably over the years and now accounts for 68% of all New Mexico public school children, an increase of over ten percent in the last decade. The school districts attended by Plaintiff children contain comparable or higher rates of low income enrollment, from approximately 65% in Las Cruces to almost 90% in Zuni in the 2012-13 school year.
54. Identified ELL students now represent approximately 16%, or 1 out of every 6, public school students in New Mexico.

New Mexico School Finance Structure

Education Program Funding

55. The 1974 Public School Finance Act (the “Public School Finance Act” or “PSFA”), codified in NMSA 1978 § 22-8-1 to -48 (2013), provides the majority of funding received by New Mexico public schools, through the Public School Fund.
56. Revenues for New Mexico’s schools consist of approximately 66% state funds, 17% local funds, and 17% federal funds. Nearly all state-level school district operational funds are distributed through the Public School Fund, which derives its revenue from three sources: the General Fund, the Current School Fund, and the Federal Mineral

Leasing Revenue. From the Public School Fund, PED distributes the State Equalization Guarantee Distribution (SEG), transportation distribution, and supplemental distribution. NMSA 1978 § 22-8-14 (2007). PED controls and supervises budgets for all public schools. NMSA 1978 § 22-8-4 (1988).

57. The SEG is the school funding formula, and the primary way that New Mexico distributes state funding to school districts. It represents the amount of money the State guarantees to provide the district to defray its program costs, and comprises 90% school districts' operational revenue.
58. To calculate the SEG, the PED determines a school district's program costs, which is the amount of money assumed under the State's formula to be necessary for a particular district to provide its particular student population with educational services. The formula starts with a certain amount of base funding for each district, then provides additional funding for factors intended to address other costs, such as size, geographic location, and specific student characteristics. The computation results in a total number of "program units" for each district. The average SEG is approximately \$3,673.
59. In the Program Cost Calculation, the State acknowledges that program costs "include[] the cost of early childhood, special, bilingual multicultural, fine arts and vocational education and other remedial or enrichment programs." NMSA § 22-8-18 (1974, as amended through 2014).
60. With twenty-four factors, New Mexico's funding formula has the second most formula components of the states that employ a foundation or base funding formula. Despite

having been amended more than eighty times since its inception, the formula has never been based on actual student need and costs and fails to sufficiently allocate resources for students who are most at risk and more expensive to educate.

61. In addition, Defendants do not ensure that funds targeted by special populations are actually expended on those populations. A sufficient education requires that Defendants ensure that those additional resources are used to provide educational opportunities for those students. A brief discussion of some of the relevant formula components and other funding sources follows.

At-Risk Funding

62. Students from economically disadvantaged families often lack educational capital in the home and in the community and therefore require additional educational programs and resources in order to access a quality education, meet the rising performance standards, and achieve their full potential. Plaintiff children lack access to such compensatory and accelerated programs, which include but are not limited to research-based, high quality preschool, tutoring, summer school, class size reduction, and extended day programs.

63. The New Mexico legislature recognizes that supplemental funding is necessary for students who are "at-risk" of performing poorly in school or dropping out of school, and included an at-risk index in the school funding formula. The at-risk index is .0915. NMSA§ 22-8-23.3 (2002). Essentially, the at-risk index adds only 0.0915 units to a districts total program units, which pales in comparison to many other states. This index is expected to increase to .106 in July 2015, but that increase is inconsequential when

compared to the gravity of the educational needs identified in Plaintiffs' claims. *See* 2014 N.M. Laws, ch. 55 (H.B. No.19), § 1.

64. Moreover, unlike several other states, New Mexico does not base its at-risk funding on the number of students eligible for free-and-reduced priced meals under the National School Lunch Act, even though well-established research demonstrates that those students are at high risk for school failure and require greater per-pupil funding. Instead, the index is calculated using a three-year average of three different school district characteristics: the percentage of membership used to determine its Title I allocation, the percentage of ELL students, and the percentage of student mobility in the district. *See id.*
65. A 2011 joint study of the school finance formula by the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) and the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) (the "2011 LFC Study") concluded that the current at-risk formula failed to address adequately the cost difference for educating at-risk students, was too complex and imprecise, and resulted in the unfair allocation of at-risk funding among school districts serving those students. The 2011 Study recommended that the at-risk index should pay a cost differential of at least .15 for the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch—although that recommended figure was unrelated to the sufficiency mandate of the Education Clause.
66. Similarly, the LFC in its report to the Fifty-First Legislature Second Session in 2014 (the "2014 LFC Report") noted that only 3% of total public education formula funding is directed to students at-risk of failing, despite the large percentage of these students in the

State. The LFC again recommended increasing the amount of funding directed toward serving at-risk students.

67. Despite the repeated recommendations of the LFC and contrary to the practices of the majority of other states, the State uses an at-risk measure that is imprecise, and underfunds and excludes economically disadvantaged students.
68. In addition to the underperformance and insufficiency of the at-risk index, revenues delegated to the discretion of the PED further highlight the need to fund the education of at-risk students. Often referred to as “below the line” funding, this revenue is used to create special grant programs by the Secretary of Education, and is available by grant application only.
69. These grant programs sometimes target at-risk students, including economically disadvantaged students, but only benefit certain at-risk students attending certain schools in certain districts that are fortunate enough to be selected by the PED. Meanwhile, other at-risk students’ needs—including those of several Plaintiff children—remain unmet.
70. Finally, state programs targeted toward at-risk students are underfunded. For example, approximately sixty-three thousand students are eligible for Kindergarten Three Plus, a state-funded extended school year program for low income students enrolled in kindergarten through the third-grade. However, funding for the program has decreased drastically in recent years and current funds only support approximately thirteen thousand students.

71. Because the amount of funds distributed through the at-risk index is too low and imprecise, and because “below the line” funding does not uniformly provide services for all at-risk students, state funding for economically disadvantaged students does not cover the cost of, and is unrelated to, a “uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of” economically disadvantaged students.
72. The arbitrary and insufficient funding for economically disadvantaged students often forces school districts to choose between shortchanging economically disadvantaged students or re-directing funds away from other necessary programs, thereby preventing districts from providing a sufficient education to the district’s other students. In Las Cruces Public Schools, for example, where the district has been very deliberate about implementing research-based programs targeting at-risk students that have proven benefits, it has not been able to expand those programs so that all eligible students in the district may benefit. Of course, simply re-directing an insufficient pool of resources from one group of students (for example, gifted and talented students who may not include significant numbers of low income students) to economically disadvantaged students would likely lead to the deprivation of a sufficient education for those gifted students who require those programs to succeed and achieve their full potential.
73. Economically disadvantaged students are, thus, denied the necessary quality compensatory education services they need to achieve their full potential and the state standards and expectations set for all students. For example, on information and belief, Zuni Public Schools is unable to hire additional teachers to reduce class sizes for its at-

risk students. Tutoring has been drastically reduced due to budget cuts, even though more and more students are struggling and need additional one-on-one assistance to avoid falling farther behind.

74. Due to lack of funding, Magdalena Municipal School District was forced to drastically reduce summer school and tutoring, cut teaching positions that increased class sizes, and eliminated almost all classroom aides, increasing teacher-student ratios.

75. In Albuquerque Public Schools, many teachers buy their own classroom supplies, textbooks for students are limited, and there is insufficient access to technology and computers for all students. Classrooms are also overcrowded and unsupported by current facilities.

76. In Santa Fe Independent School District, at-risk students have less access to qualified counselors because funding for counselors has been cut drastically and many counseling positions have been eliminated.

Bilingual, Multicultural Education and ELL Funding

77. Defendants define an ELL student as “a student whose first or heritage language is not English and who is unable to read, write, speak, or understand English at a level comparable to grade level English proficient peers and native English speakers.” NMSA 1978 § 22-23-2(E) (2007). ELL students require additional and/or modified educational services above and beyond the general education program in order to receive a sufficient education. For example, they require teachers who have received specialized training and professional development, appropriate materials and textbooks in the students’ native

language, proper assessments to monitor the academic learning of the English language, and summer school so that ELL students do not lose their English skills.

78. Defendants recognize that supplemental funding is necessary for ELL students to achieve proficiency in and learn academic English and, in turn, to access a quality education, meet the rising performance standards, and achieve their full potential. However, that funding was arbitrarily set and remains woefully inadequate to ensure ELL students acquire a sufficient education.

79. The State recognizes the unique needs of ELL students pertaining to their language development and makes funding available through Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs (“BMEPs”). BMEPs “shall be provided to meet the identified educational and linguistic needs of linguistically and culturally different students, including Native American children, and other students who may wish to participate, in grades K-12, with priority to be given to programs in grades K-3.” NMSA 1978 § 22-23-2 (2007); 6.29.1 NMAC. BMEPs use two languages, including English and a student’s home or heritage language, as a medium of instruction in the teaching and learning process.

80. In order to qualify for bilingual funding, school districts must submit for approval a BMEP plan with the PED. Districts have discretion to select one or multiple program models to meet their students’ educational needs from the following: dual language immersion, maintenance, enrichment, heritage, and transitional.

81. According to public documents, in the 2012-13 school year, 62 of 89 districts participated in BMEPs, serving 16.6% of the State’s student population. However, only 52.3% of the

State's ELLs were enrolled in BMEPs, a 4% decrease in enrollment from 2007-2008. In 2011–2012, the number of districts participating in BMEPs decreased slightly from the previous year, and has remained the same since that time. The PED attributed the decrease in the number of BMEP-participating districts to the lack of highly-qualified teachers with bilingual endorsements.

82. Defendants essentially provide bilingual funding to districts through weighted pupil mechanisms that add on 50% of the educational costs of a general education student through the funding formula, but only up to a maximum of four hours based on full-time equivalency.

83. The limitation in this distribution arbitrarily shortchanges district programs, defeating the purpose of the BMEA. For example, a district with a two-hour BMEP program only receives units added to its total program units based on 50% of one-third (two hours) of the full-time equivalency of six hours. In many cases, the cost of implementing BMEPs far exceeds the funds provided by the State, preventing districts from participating and/or forcing districts to shoulder all or most of the program costs.

84. The total BMEP funds allocated to districts and charters in 2012-13 was \$35.2 million, less than half of the \$74.2 million spent by districts and charters on total operational funds for BMEPs.

85. The limited availability of funds through the at-risk index and the BMEA, accompanied by unnecessary restrictions on funding, frustrate and impede educators' efforts to provide a uniform and sufficient education to their ELL students. For example, on information

and belief, Santa Fe Public Schools is unable to fill positions with certifications in bilingual and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (“TESOL”) teachers, as required by state law. As a result, classrooms serving ELL students are overcrowded or are taught by full-time substitute teachers. In addition, ELL students with special needs are not timely assessed because there is only one Spanish speaking diagnostician for the district. ELL students who qualify for special education do not receive instruction from bilingual or even TESOL-endorsed special education teachers. On information and belief, teachers in both Albuquerque Public Schools and Santa Fe Public schools frequently have to translate their own benchmark tests, and there is no special education curriculum in Spanish in Albuquerque Public Schools.

86. In Gadsden Independent School District, parental and community engagement is lacking, especially for families of ELL students, which is critical for student success.

87. On information and belief, many districts are unable to offer or implement programs to maintain native languages after a student is no longer classified as a “current” ELL.

Native American Funding

86. Native American children in the public school system generate funds for public education through various programs which districts may use to meet their educational needs, including the State New Mexico Indian Education Act. Native American students in twenty-three participating districts also benefit from Native American Bilingual and/or Educational Programs.

87. On information and belief, there are many restrictions on the use of these funds, preventing districts from providing sufficient compensatory and cultural programs to Native American students. The State also supplants state funding under the PSFA with federal funds, further limiting and restricting funds available to provide equal educational opportunities for Native American students.

88. Further, on information and belief, the State has misallocated monies intended to implement the IEA, hindering access to needed compensatory and cultural programs for Native American students.

Pre-Kindergarten Funding

89. Research has proven that high quality pre-kindergarten (“pre-K” or “preschool”) programs are critical to closing the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged, ELL and minority students, with some research showing pre-K programs to having closed the gap by 60%. Economically disadvantaged, ELL and minority students often begin school far behind their non-disadvantaged peers in terms of their cognitive, social, and emotional development, and require intensive preschool programs at an early age in order to accelerate their academic learning and prevent them from falling behind other students. High quality preschool programs are especially important in New Mexico where eleven percent of children ages 0 to 4 live in extreme poverty, or fifty percent below the Federal Poverty Line.

90. Defendants recognize that high quality preschool programs are essential for raising school performance and advancing governmental interests and school readiness.

Defendants created New Mexico's PreK Initiative in 2005. NMSA 1978 § 32A-23-8 (2005). New Mexico PreK serves four-year olds, and funding through the program is not available for three-year olds.

91. New Mexico PreK Initiative is funded by both PED and the Children, Youth, and Families Department ("CYFD"). 6.30.9 NMAC; 8.18.2 NMAC. According to the CYFD, in 2012-13 \$19,214,600 was appropriated to serve 5,331 four-year olds – purportedly less than the appropriation for 2008-09, despite the State's growing poverty rate among three and four year olds in the State.
92. Despite the need for quality preschool programs, services and funding through New Mexico Pre-K are limited. Program funding is awarded on a competitive basis. Eligibility is not directly based on the income level of a family, and not all economically disadvantaged students and ELL students have access to services. Under the state statute, services may only be provided by public schools or eligible providers on a per-child reimbursement rate in (1) communities with the highest percentage of public elementary schools that are designated as Title 1 schools *and* (2) that serve the highest percentage of public elementary students who are not meeting the proficiency component required for calculating adequate yearly progress.
93. Although recent action taken by the State of New Mexico indicates a small recent increase in pre-kindergarten ("pre-K") funding, both enrollment and funding for the program have decreased over time. Other state supported programs offering early

childhood education for at-risk students have also been virtually eliminated due to budget cuts.

94. As a result of insufficient funding for preschool programs, the quality of preschool programs suffer and school districts cannot provide quality preschool programs to three- and four-year old students requiring such (including all ELL and economically disadvantaged students) because they are far behind other students when entering school. In 2012, only 16% of the State's total population of 4-year old children enrolled in New Mexico Pre-K. According to a report released by New Mexico Voices for Children, New Mexico ranks 44th nationally in preschool enrollment for 3 and 4-year olds.
95. There are also insufficient funds for districts to provide multicultural preschool programs and conduct parental engagement, for example, to address historical concerns in Native American families about taking children out of the home at younger ages.

Multicultural Programs and Spanish-Speaking Provisions

96. New Mexico has a unique, long-standing multilingual, multicultural tradition, and as a result, the framers of New Mexico's constitution intended to protect the languages and cultures of the state in the Children of Spanish Descent Clause and the Teacher Training Clause.
97. The PED has recognized in its annual Hispanic education status reports that New Mexico has a "unique responsibility to its Spanish-speaking students" as the only state in the union whose state constitution addresses the needs of Spanish-speaking students.

98. However, there are no state funding provisions or grants available to districts to obtain language training or bilingual certification without spending additional money from their general funds to fulfill these constitutional mandates. On information and belief, many Spanish-speaking students attend class with teachers not proficient in the Spanish language and are unable to communicate effectively with their teachers. Defendants do next-to-nothing to ensure teachers are proficient in the Spanish language as required under Spanish Teacher Training Clause, much less to ensure “perfect equality” under the Children of Spanish descent clause. The State as a whole does a poor job in recruiting, training and retaining teachers able to speak Spanish and the other native languages other than English.

99. The New Mexico legislature passed the BMEA to defray program costs and provide monitoring and training to ensure the implementation of multicultural programs. The PED has acknowledged that “culturally responsive teaching” is “especially important” to “bridge the achievement gap [and] increase graduation rates.” However, the limited resources for BMEPs (discussed further above) often constrain district’s services to helping students transition to English without any concern of the bicultural element of BMEP or students’ retention of the native language.

100. For Native American children, cultural programs are vital to the continuance of the tribes’ governance structure and cultural traditions. In fact, equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials are required to satisfy the goals of the IEA. NMSA § 22-23-

1.1(K). The PED recognizes that cultural competency is a goal of its efforts under the IEA in its annual report.

101. On information and belief, the Zuni School District's language and cultural programs are not geared toward preserving cultural language and learning for Latinos/Hispanos and Native Americans, and instead focus on standardized testing and textbooks that drive the curriculum.

102. The limited availability of funds through the at-risk index and the BMEA and restrictions on funding also frustrate and impede school districts' efforts to provide a uniform and sufficient multicultural education to their Native American and Latino students. In Zuni Public Schools, for example, on information and belief, there are insufficient technologies and materials to teach Zuni to students everyday to give them the continuity required for fluency.

103. Likewise, for Latino/Hispano plaintiff students, they are often denied access to bicultural programs. The lack of a culturally relevant curriculum deprives many Latino/Hispano students of the essential resources needed to succeed in the classroom and on state standardized tests. Ultimately, Latino/Hispano students are denied the "perfect equality" guaranteed under the New Mexico Constitution.

104. The lack of a culturally sensitive environment, a culturally relevant curriculum, and the lack of resources to provide such deprives minority students of a sufficient education. Resultantly, New Mexican schools disproportionately send many African

American, Latino/Hispano, and Native American students to disciplinary programs, and eventually push those students out of school at grossly disproportionate rates.

105. Administrative reorganizations and budget reductions in the Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau and the Indian Education Bureau, and their respective advisory committees, and other Defendant administrative actions and omissions have prevented Defendants from carrying out state statutory requirements to provide sufficient monitoring, supervision, and accountability for effective implementation cultural and language program administered through the BMEA, the HEA, and the IEA.

State of New Mexico Education Funding Historically and Compared Nationally

106. Overall low funding for public education in New Mexico further exacerbates the denial of a sufficient education for Plaintiff children. Plaintiffs often lack the political power to influence local policy and when school districts have limited funds, districts are forced to fund certain programs for one group of students while denying necessary educational services that would benefit Plaintiff students.

107. But while Plaintiff children and other ELL and economically disadvantaged children bear the brunt of an insufficient, low-quality education, the diversion of limited funds from other students and other programs would only worsen the problem. As stated earlier, such action would likely result in non-ELL and non-economically disadvantaged students being denied a sufficient education. “Robbing Peter to pay Paul” is not the remedy sought by Plaintiffs.

108. In the 2014 legislative session, the New Mexico legislature appropriated approximately \$2.74 billion for public education, or 44% of the total state budget. Despite rising costs and growing enrollment of at-risk student populations, this level of funding merely brings the State near its 2008 education funding level. That year, a state-sponsored adequacy study conducted by the American Institutes for Research concluded that New Mexico underfunded its schools by approximately \$334 million.
109. New Mexico is one of only thirteen states that cut per-student funding by more than 10%. In spending per pupil, New Mexico ranks 37th in per-student funding, with only \$9,070 on average annually expended per student.
110. New Mexico also lags behind other states when it comes to teacher pay. In 2011-2012, the National Average Starting Teacher Salary was \$36,141, but in New Mexico first year teachers made only \$31,960, a decrease from the previous year and making New Mexico 38th among the States for starting teacher pay. New Mexico ranked 47th for average teacher salary in 2012-2013 (\$45,727 compared to \$56,689 nationally).
111. The low teacher pay severely impacts the State's ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers in New Mexico and provide those teachers with high quality professional development needed to provide Plaintiff children with a sufficient education. For example, on information and belief, Gadsden Independent School District is not able to provide the same level of training for English as a Second Language ("ESL") training as in previous years, despite the fact that the ELL enrollment in the district has grown. Due

to uncompetitive pay, the district has an exceptionally difficult time recruiting qualified science and math teachers.

112. In addition, on information and belief, although requirements for teacher licensure require a year of mentoring for a teacher to advance from Level 1 to Level 2, the State eliminated all funding for teacher mentoring programs in 2008.

113. The slight raise in teacher salaries approved by the State legislature in 2014 (3%) will not impact significantly school districts' abilities to recruit and retain a high quality teaching workforce needed to provide economically disadvantaged, ELL and other children with a sufficient education, especially when other "reform" efforts described below make the New Mexican teaching environment far less attractive and less supportive.

Rising Curriculum and Testing Standards and Education "Reform" Efforts That Hinder Student Access to a Sufficient Education

113. A sufficient educational system under the New Mexico Constitution requires a rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum, a testing system to ensure students are learning, and a fair and effective monitoring and evaluation system of teachers and student performance.

114. Although Plaintiffs recognize that Defendants have latitude in devising a rigorous curriculum, testing and accountability system, so too must Defendants devise such in a manner that effectively provides the resources necessary to help all students succeed. Defendants have failed to provide a culturally relevant curriculum (as described above),

and a fair and effective monitoring and evaluation system of teacher and student performance.

115. The gravity of the problem cannot be understated. Despite the stark change in student demographics and high-need students, the State continues to ignore the educational needs of the growing populations of economically disadvantaged and ELL students, while increasing the rigor of testing and accountability requirements, among other “educational reform” efforts—paying no mind to the overall negative effect on its duty to provide a uniform and sufficient education.

The Common Core

116. The academic, testing and graduation requirements in New Mexico are only expected to become more rigorous with the integration of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which the State adopted in 2010. CCSS are rigorous, new English Language Arts and Mathematics standards formulated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, and are meant to “prepare students for the demands of the modern workplace,” making students “globally competitive,” and adapting to the “landmark shift in expectations and requirements” for education in the 21st century.

117. PED has promulgated aggressive regulations amending the current English Language Arts and Mathematics standards to integrate the CCSS. 6.29.13 NMAC (“English Language Arts Common Core”); 6.29.14 NMAC (“Mathematics Common Core”). In 2011, New Mexico joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for

College and Careers (PARCC) consortium, working alongside 23 other states to develop and deliver a new assessment system in 2014–2015.

118. In 2012-13, the PED required teachers to teach CCSS standards in grades K-3 and retained current state standards for the SBAs in all grades except grade 3, which used a “bridge assessment” aligned to both New Mexico’s state standards and the CCSS. In 2013-14, all grades are expected to implement CCSS standards, and all tested grades will implement a “bridge assessment.” Purely CCSS-aligned PARCC assessments will reach full scale implementation in 2014-2015 school year. The PED will require all districts to administer computer-based assessments.

119. On information and belief, the State has not provided sufficient funding for professional development and training to assist in transitioning to the highly rigorous CCSS and the training made available by the State is not effective. Students also do not have sufficient access to computers and other technology in order to prepare for and take the tests. For example, on information and belief, there are insufficient computers in Albuquerque Public Schools to help ELL fourth-graders become proficient in keyboarding for the test, much less to transition to take a standardized test by computer for the first time.

State Standardized Testing

120. All public school students, with few exceptions, must participate in the State’s standards-based assessment (SBA), which includes annual SBAs in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11, and “short-cycle assessments” in grades 9 and 10. N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-2C-

4; N.M. Admin. Code § 6.29.1. Students are rated as: “beginning step,” “nearing proficiency,” “proficient,” or “advanced.”

121. New Mexico schools must measure “higher education readiness” through a PED-created “readiness assessment system” that is aligned with state academic content and performance standards, college placement tests and entry-level career skill requirements. NMSA 1978 § 22-2C-4.1 (2008).

State Accountability

122. School district performance is measured and enforced through a public school accountability system approved by the legislature in 2011. The school accountability system is intended to measure student performance, as determined by student academic achievement on statewide SBAs, and supplemented by graduation rate and attendance data.
123. Since 2011-2012, the PED has assigned each public school a rating of A, B, C, D, or F. NMSA § 22-2E-3. A school’s grade depends upon current standing (percent proficient on SBA in math and reading), growth (growth of lowest 25% performers weighted equally with growth of highest 75%), opportunity to learn, graduation (calculated at four and five year), college and career readiness (participation and success on “college course,” “career prep curriculum,” or “college admission assessment”),³ and bonus points. Each calculation includes a “conditioning” component for the following

³ Eligible CCR indicators for “participation” points include PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, ACT, Concurrent Enrollment/Dual Credit, AP, Career Pathway, PLAN, ACCUPLACER, COMPASS, IB. Measures of success include, e.g., receiving a 3 or higher on an AP exam, of achieving the college readiness benchmarks set by the ACT.

factors, which “schools cannot reasonably be expected to control:” gender, race/ethnicity, free/reduced price lunch, disability status, language status, full academic year status, school size, and prior performance.

124. Under the current system, parents of a student in a school that for two years has been F-rated has a right to transfer their student to another non-F-rated public school. NMSA § 22-2E-4. In addition to the A-F system, accountability ratings based on two mechanisms (accreditation and program/budget review) and three indicators (community representation, local accountability indicators, and statewide accountability indicators) affect a district’s budget and accreditation. 6.29.1 NMAC.

125. Even if a school receives a D or F, that school can earn a passing grade through “School Grading Bonus Points” based upon student engagement, parent engagement, extracurricular activities, and truancy improvement. 6.19.8.9 NMAC.

126. The grading process, however, is highly technical, confusing, and results in inconsistent outcomes that ultimately harm students because it fails to convey clearly and effectively student proficiency, student growth, or school success. Indeed, a group of Los Alamos physicists, statisticians, and math experts reportedly encountered much difficulty in determining how one of the Los Alamos schools received a “C” under the state accountability system.⁴

⁴ See Robert Nott, “Los Alamos Scientists: School Grading System is Unclear,” The Santa Fe New Mexican, (Dec. 13, 2013), available at: http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/education/los-alamos-scientists-school-grading-system-is-unclear/article_0c2103fa-a7b9-538b-b401-e56317d6c310.html

127. In 2012-13, the vast majority of schools reportedly received a grade of “C” or less. Eighty-two schools received an A grade, two-hundred twenty-four received a B grade, two-hundred thirty received a C-grade, 218 received a D grade, and 85 received an F. These grades play a significant role in community perceptions and affect a school’s ability to recruit, develop, and retain quality teachers (especially when combined with the ineffective teacher evaluation system described below), to recruit, develop and retain effective leaders, and to retain students, thus undermining Defendants duty to provide a uniform and sufficient education.

128. Wide fluctuations in grades suggest that they are not aligned to actual school performance. The PED has not made data related to the calculation of grades available, making it difficult for school districts to make instructional policy decisions that benefit students. There has been no indication that failing schools under the new system receive the necessary resources, support, or supervision from the State to ensure students access a sufficient education.

Teacher Evaluation System

129. A sufficient education requires that all students have access to quality and diverse teachers. This requirement imposes upon Defendants the duty to ensure the State attracts and supports a quality and diverse teaching force, and a teacher evaluation system that fairly evaluates teachers with the end goal of providing a sufficient education to all students.

130. In New Mexico, teachers are evaluated and licensed pursuant to a three-tier licensure system, which was established in 2003. NMSA 1978 § 22-10A3 to -12. Until recently, teachers were rated as either meeting competency or not meeting competency under a statewide evaluation system based on teacher skills, training, and performance. 6.69.4 NMAC. On information and belief, this prior system was not applied in a manner to ensure a sufficient education and most schools rated most teachers as “meeting competency.”
131. In 2012, after failed attempts to achieve its objectives in the legislature, the Secretary-designate and PED adopted regulations to replace the previous binary system with a five-tier system that added the element of student achievement to the statewide evaluation system.
132. The new teacher evaluation system created by PED bases 50% of a teacher’s evaluation on student performance, defined primarily as on the SBA for those who teach subjects administered, and for those who do not, the school’s A-F grade. The remaining evaluation is also based on observations by school leaders, teacher attendance, and locally adopted, PED-approved measures.
133. The use of student performance in teacher evaluations remains a highly debatable topic due in substantial part to the lack of research demonstrating a strong correlation between student teaching and student test scores. From one year to the next, a teacher may move from the highest-ranked top ten percent to the bottom ten percent without

changing his or her teaching practices. Other teachers, who do not teach a subject for which a SBA exists, are rated based on the performance of other teachers in the school.

134. Although Plaintiffs do not complain of the mere use of student performance in teacher evaluations, the PED's evaluation system—including its 50% reliance on test scores—hinders Defendants' duty to provide a uniform and sufficient system for all students by unfairly evaluating good teachers and by not ensuring those teachers who need improvement have adequate support to improve their instruction.

135. The system also hinders school districts' teacher recruitment and retention efforts, especially in districts and campuses with higher populations of minority and at-risk students like those attended by Plaintiff children. On information and belief, quality teachers have requested transfers out of such schools, and they have refused transfers into such schools because of the punitive teacher evaluation system. Oftentimes, the most challenging students are left without experienced and well-trained teachers.

136. The new system further incorporates punitive measures and administrative burdens for teachers, taking away classroom learning and preparation time that would otherwise be used to help students succeed.

135. On information and belief, as a result of the teacher evaluation system, teachers in Albuquerque Public Schools often attend schools while sick and contagious to avoid being penalized on their evaluations. They spend disproportionate amounts of time completing paperwork required for evaluation instead of planning for their classes or assisting students who need additional learning time outside of class.

New Mexico Student Performance

136. Defendants' duty to provide a sufficient education for all students extends to ensuring all students are presented with the educational opportunities they need to succeed both in the classroom and on the SBAs, to graduate college and career ready and become effective in the global workforce, and to achieve their full potential. Not surprisingly in light of the rising state standards and the arbitrary accountability measures, the arbitrary and inadequate funding for economically disadvantaged and ELL students, and the lack of a multicultural learning environment, the performance of economically disadvantaged, ELL, and minority students statewide indicates a failing, insufficient system.

State Standardized Tests

137. In New Mexico, a passing score on the NMSBA is rated as "proficient." As reported in the 2014 LFC Report, statewide data from the NMSBA for the 2012-13 show decreases in proficiency overall.

138. In the 2012-13 school year, a bare majority, approximately 50.6%, of all students achieved "proficient" or above in reading, including 66.9% of Caucasian students, 45.9% of Latino students, 34.7% of Native American students, 48.6% of African American students, 42.8% of low income students, and 20.4% of ELL students.

139. In math, only 42% of all students achieved a rating of "proficient" or above, including 58% of Caucasian students, 36.8% of Latino students, 29.1% of Native

American students, 35% of African American students, 34.4% of low income students, and 18.6% of ELL students.

140. In science, 45.2% of all students achieved a rating of “proficient” or above, including 66.5% of Caucasian students, 39% of Latino students, 25.3% of Native American students, 40.5% of African American students, 36.3% of low income students, and 15.2% of ELL students.

141. The percentage of Native American students scoring “at or above proficient” never rose above 35% in reading, math, or science between 2009 and 2013. Between 2011 and 2013, the percentage of ELL students achieving proficiency in math decreased at every grade level, and never reached above 35% for any grade level – including only 12% of sixth and seventh grade ELL students reached proficiency in 2013.

142. Similar dismal results on the NMSBA are found in Plaintiffs’ school districts.

143. In Albuquerque Public Schools, 52% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in Reading, including 71.1% of Caucasian students, 45.9% of Latino students, 38.5% of Native American students, 47.4% of African American students, 41.4% of low income students, and 19.5% of ELL students.

144. In Gadsden Independent School District, 47.2% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 64.9% of Caucasian students, 46.6% of Latino students, 46.12% of Native American students, 47.8% of African American students, 47% of low income students, and 26.4% of ELL students.

145. In Las Cruces Public Schools, 52.4% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 69.5% of Caucasian students, 47% of Latino students, 53.4% of Native American students, 54.3% of African American students, 46.7% of low income students, and 20.3% of ELL students.
146. In Magdalena Municipal School District, 33.5% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 61.7% of Caucasian students, 53.1% of Latino students, 7.9% of Native American students, 33.5% of low income students, and 1.9% of ELL students.
147. In Santa Fe Independent School District, 46.1% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 65.7% of Caucasian students, 39.3% of Latino students, 42.8% of Native American students, 62.5% of African American students, 36.1% of low income students, and 20.2% of ELL students.
148. In Zuni Public Schools, 29.2% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 28.9% of Native American students, 28.3% of low income students, and 17.1% of ELL students.
149. In Española Public School District, 43.9% of all students met proficiency on the 2013 NMSBA in reading, including 50.6% of Caucasian students, 42.3% of Latino students, 56.6% of Native American students, 43% of low income students, and 25.5% of ELL students.

Graduation and Dropout Rates

142. Economically disadvantaged, ELL, and minority students in New Mexico are also graduating at low rates and being pushed out of school at high rates, especially when compared to their peers.
143. New Mexico's graduation requirements include academic credit attainment and successful performance on high-stakes standardized tests. Passing the 11th grade SBAs is mandatory for graduation. 6.29.1 NMAC. As of 2010-2011, New Mexico students cannot receive "a diploma of excellence" if they have not "demonstrated competence in the subject areas of mathematics, reading and language arts, writing, social studies and science, including a section on the constitution of the United States and the constitution of New Mexico, based on a standards-based assessment or assessments or a portfolio of standards-based indicators established by the department by rule." NMSA 1978 § 22-13-1.1 (2014).
144. For the class of 2012, 70.4% of students statewide reportedly graduated under the State's four-year cohort analysis, which likely overinflates graduation rates, including 77.5% of Caucasian students, 67.7% of Latino students, 65.3% of Native Americans, 69.3% of African Americans, 64.8% of low income students, and 65.8% of ELL students. In other words, *nearly one-third* of New Mexico's most challenging student populations *failed* to graduate.
145. For the same year, the U.S. Department of Education ("DOE") reports that New Mexico has the second lowest graduation cohort rate in the country at 63%, with

economically disadvantaged students, ELL students, and Native American students lagging behind the state rate by 7 percentage points.

146. Similarly, New Mexico's dropout rate is consistently higher than the national average, and the state has one of the highest dropout rates in the country at 6.9%, surpassed by only Arizona, Mississippi, and the District of Columbia.

147. New Mexico surpasses the national average with respect to Latino, Native American, and African American dropout rates as well. The national dropout rate for Latino students is 5%, compared to New Mexico's rate at 7.2%. New Mexico's dropout rate of 8.8% for Native American students is more than 2 points higher than the national rate of 6.7%. New Mexico's dropout rate for African Americans is almost twice the national average of 5.5%.

College Readiness Indicators

148. Since the 2008-2009 school year, New Mexico schools have been required to measure "higher education readiness," through a PED-created "readiness assessment system to measure the readiness of every New Mexico high school student for success in higher education or a career" that is aligned with state academic content and performance standards, college placement tests and entry-level career skill requirements. NMSA 1978 § 22-2C-4.1 (2008).

149. Of the approximate 70% of New Mexican students who are fortunate enough to graduate, many are not properly prepared to enter postsecondary education.

150. In 2013, the PED reported significant participation and performance gaps on the National ACT. Only 40% of students took the ACT, including 51.5% of Caucasian students and 36.3% of Latino students; 14.6% enrolled in AP coursework, including 21.8% of Caucasian students and 12.4% of Latino students; 22.5% participated in Dual Enrollment, including 28.1% of Caucasian students and 20.6% of Latino students; 34% took the PSAT, including 39.9% of Caucasian students and 32.4% of Latino students; and 4.5% took the SAT exam, including 9.1% of Caucasian students and 2.4% of Latino students.

151. New Mexico's average ACT scores lag behind the national average in every subject area tested by the ACT. New Mexico students earned an overall score of "17" on the ACT exam, compared to the national average of "25." The largest gap in students achieving college readiness benchmarks was in mathematics, where only 33% of New Mexico's Class of 2012 graduates achieved the standard compared to 46% nationally. Within New Mexico, there are striking achievement gaps. For example, on the English section of the ACT, 78% of New Mexico's Caucasian students met the college readiness benchmarks compared to 49% of Latino students, 28% of Native American students, and 53% of African American students.⁵

152. In 2012, only 12.3% of New Mexico high school graduates taking an AP exam scored a three or higher. Although 46% of graduates who had taken an AP exam in New

⁵ See *The Conditions of College and Career Readiness: New Mexico*, ACT 4, 7 (2012), available at <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2012/states/pdf/NewMexico.pdf>.

Mexico were economically disadvantaged, only 37.8% of students achieving a three or higher were economically disadvantaged. Of those students graduating high school who had taken an AP exam, 36.6% were Caucasian but Caucasians constituted 44.5% of graduates scoring a 3 or higher. In contrast, Latinos comprised 45.5% of those graduating who had taken an AP exam were Latino, but only 39.7% of those graduating with a score of 3 or higher. Of those graduating high school, 11% identified as “American Indian/Alaska Native,” but only 5.6% of students graduating having taken an AP exam identified as American Indian/Alaska Native; and only 2.4% of those students graduating scored a 3 or higher. *Id.*

153. According to the LFC’s 2014 January report, the percentage of New Mexico high school graduates taking remedial courses in college has historically has hovered around 50% without improvement, and current remedial rates are even higher for Native American students (59%), Hispanic students (68%), and economically disadvantaged students (79%). Schools with the higher poverty rates tend to have higher remediation rates.

154. Pursuant to the Declaratory Judgment Act, Plaintiffs assert the following causes of action.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

DENIAL OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO A SUFFICIENT EDUCATION UNDER ARTICLE XII, SECTION 1 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

154. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs above as if fully set forth herein.
155. Defendants have failed to provide Plaintiff children a uniform and sufficient education, both qualitatively and quantitatively, as mandated by the Education Clause.
156. In the quantitative sense, the primary cause of this constitutional violation is the arbitrary and inadequate New Mexico public school finance system, including the PSFA, pre-K funding, funding for bilingual multicultural programs and ELL students, and funding targeted at economically disadvantaged, at-risk, and Native American students. This violation is compounded by Defendants' failure to monitor effectively the expenditure of targeted funds.
157. In conjunction with the inadequate and arbitrary funding of critical programs for Plaintiff students, Defendants' arbitrary, unfair and ineffective accountability and teacher evaluation systems further deprive Plaintiff children of a qualitative sufficient education.
158. Further compounding the violation for ELL, Native American and Latino/Hispano children is Defendants' failure to implement appropriately and support fully the obligations and duties owed under other constitutional provisions and the State's own statutes and pronouncements, which inform the interpretation of the qualitative meaning of the education clause, including the Bilingual and Multicultural Education Act,

Hispanic Education Act, the Indian Education Act, the Children of Spanish Descent Clause requiring “perfect equality” (N.M. Const. art. XII, § 10) and the Spanish Teacher Training Clause, N.M. Const. art. XII, § 8.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

DENIAL OF THE RIGHT TO EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER ARTICLE II, SECTION 18 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

159. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs above as if fully set forth herein.
160. New Mexico’s equal protection clause provides that “[n]o person shall be . . . denied equal protection of the laws. Equality of rights under law shall not be denied on account of the sex of any person.” N.M. Const. art. II, § 18.
161. A sufficient education is a fundamental right guaranteed by the New Mexico Constitution. A sufficient education is not only explicitly guaranteed under the Education Clause, but other constitutional provisions such as article XII, section 5 of the New Mexico Constitution reflect its fundamental significance by mandating that all students of school age attend school. With that fundamental right, comes a duty by Defendants to provide a system of education that enables all students to access the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.
162. The State of New Mexico identifies and classifies economically disadvantaged students as a specific class of students for reporting and accountability purposes. Plaintiff economically disadvantaged children are a class of students that is both disadvantaged

and politically powerless, and they, as children, are unable to change their classification. For years, economically disadvantaged students and advocates have fought for equal educational opportunities needed to secure their fundamental right to a sufficient education, but instead, they have encountered an educational system that is largely unresponsive.

163. Plaintiff economically disadvantaged children are similarly situated to the other classes of students recognized by Defendants for purposes of determining at-risk funding, such as highly mobile students who are not economically disadvantaged, because the economically disadvantaged students—as a result of their poverty levels—are also at risk of being retained in grade level and dropping out of school. However, Defendants have refused to base at-risk funding, in part, on the number of economically disadvantaged students for no reason except the political will to do otherwise. Accordingly, Plaintiffs challenge Defendants’ classification of at-risk students that fails to include economically disadvantaged students as a group through the at-risk index, despite their similar educational needs. Without those resources and accompanying educational opportunities, Plaintiffs are unable to acquire their fundamental right to a sufficient education. Defendants can offer no compelling reason or justification substantially related to an important government interest, much less a rational reason, for the exclusion.

164. Plaintiff ELL students are also classified as a specific class of students for reporting and accountability purposes. Like Plaintiff economically disadvantaged students, Plaintiff ELL students are a disadvantaged and politically powerless group, and

they are unable to change their classification without the very educational opportunities that they complain of here.

165. Plaintiffs allege that Defendants provide a system of education that is uniform and sufficient for other similarly situated school age children but not for ELL and economically disadvantaged students. Unlike other similarly situated school age children, ELL and economically disadvantaged students are denied the basic educational opportunities and resources they need to acquire a sufficient education.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

DENIAL OF THE RIGHT TO DUE PROCESS OF LAW UNDER ARTICLE II, SECTION 18 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

166. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs above as if fully set forth herein.

167. New Mexico's due process clause provides that "[n]o person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." N.M. Const. art. II, § 18.

168. Plaintiff students have a fundamental right to a sufficient education but they have been denied the due process in acquiring that right and the successive right to graduating with a high school diploma as established under state statutes.

169. Defendants have denied Plaintiff students' due process by a series of statutes and policies that irrationally and unreasonably deny economically disadvantaged and ELL students access to the basic educational opportunities they need to acquire a sufficient education. These statutes and policies include but are not limited to: the denial of quality

pre-K programs for all economically disadvantaged and ELL students; the implementation of an unfair and non-transparent teacher evaluation and school grading system that drives quality teachers and leaders away from the students' classrooms and schools and fails to ensure effective program implementation; and an arbitrary and inadequate school funding system that deprives ELL and economically disadvantaged students of the resources and opportunities they need to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to master Defendants' high-stakes standardized tests and fulfill graduation requirements to earn a high school diploma as set out in statute, including the enrollment and completion of at least one honors, dual-credit, distance learning, or Advanced Placement is a graduation requirement. *See* N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-13-1.1 (West 2012).

170. It is inconceivable and unconscionable that Defendants would irrationally deny such basic educational opportunities economically disadvantaged and ELL students need to graduate.

ATTORNEY'S FEES AND COSTS

171. Plaintiffs request an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs as authorized under law and equity.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs, and each of them, respectfully request that the Court:

A. Declare that a sufficient education is a fundamental right under the New Mexico Constitution;

- B. Declare the New Mexico school finance system for funding the education of economically disadvantaged and ELL students insufficient and in violation of the educational mandate of the New Mexico Constitution;
- C. Declare the New Mexico public education system's teacher evaluation and district and state accountability grading systems insufficient and in violation of the educational mandate of the New Mexico Constitution;
- D. Declare Defendants' failure to implement appropriately and support fully the obligations and duties owed to students under the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act, the Hispanic Education Act, the Indian Education Act, the Children of Spanish Descent Clause requiring "perfect equality" (N.M. Const. art. XII, § 10) and the Spanish Teacher Training Clause, N.M. Const. art. XII, § 8 insufficient and in violation of the educational mandate of the New Mexico Constitution;
- E. Declare the exclusion of economically disadvantaged students as a group from targeted funding for at-risk students in violation of article II, Section 18 of the New Mexico Constitution;
- F. Declare the deprivation of the fundamental right to a sufficient education and graduating with a high school diploma for ELL and economically disadvantaged students in violation of article II, Section 18 of the New Mexico Constitution;
- G. Enjoin Defendants from giving force and effect to any school finance system unless it satisfies the principles of sufficiency established under New Mexico law and

remedies the constitutional violations identified in the declaratory relief requested above;

- H. Enjoin Defendants from discriminating against economically disadvantaged and ELL students by failing to provide the students with the necessary opportunities and resources they need to acquire a sufficient education and graduate from high school;
- I. Retain jurisdiction until this Court is satisfied fully with the remedies enacted by Defendants;
- J. Grant Plaintiffs reasonable and necessary attorneys' fees and costs as provided by law and equity; and
- K. Grant such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DATED: April 1, 2014

Respectfully Submitted,

By: /s/ Ernest I. Herrera
Ernest I. Herrera

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