



News Release

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New Mexico Governor Encouraged to Sign HB-0178; Bill Eases Regulatory Burden on Students Seeking Counseling Licensure

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – A bill that removes a major counseling and therapy licensure barrier for students who complete an Associate degree in Human Services is now on New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s desk awaiting her signature. The deadline for Gov. Lujan Grisham to take action on bills from the New Mexico Legislature’s regular session is April 9, 2021.

On March 18, 2021, HB-0178 Counseling and Therapy Licensure, received final passage in the New Mexico Senate by a vote of 37-0. The bill, introduced by Rep. Wonda Johnson (D-Gallup) amends the Counseling and Therapy Practice Act.

“I am thankful the New Mexico Legislature passed the measure,” said Rose Graham, director of the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance. “A small change in the law will greatly ease a regulatory burden on college graduates who wish to become licensed drug and alcohol counselors.

“Since 1986, applicants with a Human Services associate degree have been denied Licensed Substance Abuse Associate (LSAA) licensure. Currently, only applicants with a counseling-related degree that includes “human and family studies” or art therapy degrees can obtain a drug and alcohol counseling license,” Ms. Graham said. “As I have pointed out before, nowhere in New Mexico does a college offer a “human and family studies” associate degree.”

Applicants, who are issued administrative denials, are forced to appeal and wait months for the New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Licensing Board to meet and issue a decision.

“The extended wait time to become licensed drug and alcohol counselors places a huge burden on applicants,” Ms. Graham said. “In the meantime, communities throughout the Navajo Nation could benefit from their expertise.”

The Navajo Nation currently funds 87 students, including five graduate students, seeking counseling-related degrees at the University of New Mexico, UNM- Gallup Branch, Central New Mexico, New Mexico Highlands University and Eastern New Mexico University.

Ms. Graham said HB-0178 benefits all New Mexicans. Individuals wishing to express their support for HB-0178 are encouraged to call (505) 476-2200 and leave a message on the comment line or send an email to Gov. Lujan Grisham at <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/contact-the-governor/>