



September 28, 2017

Jaime Gonzales, Policy Division

New Mexico Public Education Department, Room 101
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, NM 87501

On behalf of the nearly 2,000 members and supporters of the American Association of University Women of New Mexico (AAUW-NM), we write to urge you to reject the newly proposed 6.29.10 NMAC, New Mexico STEM-Ready Science Standards. To be competitive in the 21st century, New Mexico students require rigorous, highly-vetted, and academically-sound educational standards. The proposed 6.29.10 NMAC standards fall short of these requirements and, if adopted, would hinder New Mexico students' ability to compete in educational environments and the workforce.

AAUW-NM believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. We are committed to ensuring strong academic principles and bias-free public education that closes the achievement gap for all children. In particular, we advocate for programs that meet the needs of girls and women in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including strong promotion of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.

New Mexico science standards are overdue for an update. However, the newly proposed 6.29.10 NMAC standards include changes and omissions that are politicized, do not align with the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community, and have not been adequately evaluated. AAUW-NM strongly supported the adoption of the bipartisan Senate Bill 134, which would have put rigorous, well-vetted science standards into place. Unlike the standards in Senate Bill 134, the proposed 6.29.10 NMAC standards do not reflect the most modern, scientifically accurate approaches to science education, nor do they correspond with science standards in numerous other states. As a result, many existing textbooks could not be utilized by New Mexico teachers.

As we delay the adoption of strong science standards, occupations in the STEM fields are rapidly becoming the most in-demand and lucrative in the world. Despite this demand, the supply of new workers in these fields is struggling to keep up, and women remain severely underrepresented. Early education plays a critical role for girls' development, setting the stage for their level of interest, confidence, and achievements, particularly in STEM. Hampering the education of girls by teaching to weak science standards will hurt girls and boys alike, as well as the New Mexico economy.

New Mexico students deserve to be taught using academically sound and bias-free science standards. The newly proposed 6.29.10 NMAC standards fall short. We urge the Department to reject these standards and instead adopt those proposed by Senate Bill 134 to ensure that our students learn accurate information and acquire the skills needed for success in college and the workforce.

Sincerely,

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