A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CREATION OF A TASK FORCE TO OVERSEE AND
IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE CONVENED TO
ASSESS AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT AND
PRENATAL CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS.

WHEREAS, the first session of the forty-ninth legislature
passed Senate Memorial 19, which requested the governor's
women's health council to create a statewide task force to
develop a comprehensive plan for the state to address the needs
of pregnant and postpartum women with substance abuse problems
and address the well-being of the children and families of
those women; and

WHEREAS, the office of the governor's council on women's
health submitted its recommendations for a comprehensive plan
to the legislative health and human services committee in
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November 2010, which recommendations included reducing unnecessary referrals to the children, youth and families department and increasing home visitation; increasing access to quality substance abuse treatment, prenatal care and family planning for women; increasing access to supportive services; increasing treatment over incarceration for non-violent drug-related crimes; changing attitudes about substance abuse; increasing research and data collection; and creating a task force to oversee and implement the council's recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Family Preservation Act affirms the state's policy of support for the family and emphasizes the responsibilities of parents and the state in the healthy development of children and the family as an institution; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has a commitment to strengthen families in crisis and at risk of losing their children so that children can remain safely in their own homes; and

WHEREAS, prenatal medical care is recommended for women before and during pregnancy to improve pregnancy outcomes through prevention and detection of, and early intervention in, problems; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico legislature has supported prenatal care and protected the confidentiality of the practitioner-patient relationship; and

WHEREAS, substance abuse treatment is a proven public.
safety and health measure; and

WHEREAS, the state is keenly aware that pregnant,
substance-using women and their children suffer from the
adverse effects of addiction, and the state is dedicated to
enhancing and mobilizing the health and human services programs
that these individuals need; and

WHEREAS, pregnant women with substance abuse problems may
not seek prenatal care because of stigma and fear; and

WHEREAS, one of the best opportunities to approach and
intervene with women with substance abuse problems is during
pregnancy, when motivation is high to seek treatment for
addiction; and

WHEREAS, early intervention efforts during the prenatal
period increase the likelihood that women will successfully
recover from alcohol and other drug abuse; and

WHEREAS, a continuum of prenatal and postnatal services is
needed to help women successfully parent their children,
maintain recovery from substance abuse and address complex
social needs; and

WHEREAS, the social and financial costs to incarcerate a
woman with substance abuse problems far outweigh the costs of
providing specialized prenatal and family-oriented substance
abuse treatment; and

WHEREAS, prominent public health and medical organizations
agree that a punitive approach to drug use during pregnancy has
been shown to erode women's willingness to seek health care or
to confide in their health care providers if they do seek such
care; and

WHEREAS, these organizations include the New Mexico
section of the American college of obstetricians and
gynecologists, the New Mexico public health association, the
New Mexico nurses association, the American college of
physicians, the national association of social workers, the
national association of social workers-New Mexico, the American
academy of pediatrics, the march of dimes, the national
association of public child welfare administrators, the
national council on alcoholism and drug dependence, the
American nurses association, the American public health
association, the American academy of addiction psychiatry and
the national perinatal association; and

WHEREAS, threats of arrest and prosecution will deter many
pregnant women from seeking prenatal care and drug and alcohol
treatment; and

WHEREAS, the United States has experienced a seven hundred
percent increase in the incarceration of women, with drug law
violations accounting for one-third of the increase; and

WHEREAS, incarceration is not an effective method of
treatment for women struggling with substance abuse;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the university
of New Mexico health sciences center be requested to create a
task force to oversee and implement the recommendations of the
office of the governor's council on women's health submitted to
the legislative health and human services committee in November
2010, pursuant to Senate Memorial 19, passed by the first
session of the forty-ninth legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be composed of
experts in the fields of ethics, law, perinatal medicine,
behavioral health treatment and social services;
representatives from the department of health, the interagency
behavioral health purchasing collaborative, the drug policy
alliance and the women's justice project; and at least one
woman who has recovered from perinatal substance abuse; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force provide an
interim report on the progress of the task force to the
legislative health and human services committee by November 1,
2011 and present a final report to the legislative health and
human services committee by November 1, 2012; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
transmitted to the university of New Mexico health sciences
center, the director of the office of the governor's council on
women's health, the secretary of health, the interagency
behavioral health purchasing collaborative, the drug policy
alliance and the women's justice project.

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