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SENATE MEMORIAL 50

**51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014**

INTRODUCED BY

Mary Kay Papen

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO TRACK AND REPORT ON NEW MEXICO SAFETY NET DATA ON PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES AND ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY, TO APPLY FOR ANY FEDERAL WAIVERS THAT INCREASE ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS AND TO CONDUCT OUTREACH TO INFORM POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE NEW MEXICANS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS AND ENGAGE COMMUNITY LEADERS AND STAKEHOLDERS OF BARRIERS TO ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC-BENEFIT PROGRAMS.

WHEREAS, one-fifth of all New Mexicans live at or below the federal poverty level, while nearly one-half of all New Mexicans live below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level, an even more accurate measure of poverty; and

WHEREAS, fourteen percent of New Mexico's children live in extreme poverty, which is measured as fifty percent of the

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1 federal poverty level; and

2 WHEREAS, New Mexico ranks second in the nation in the  
3 proportion of residents experiencing food insecurity, first in  
4 the nation for children experiencing food insecurity and last  
5 in the nation for overall child welfare; and

6 WHEREAS, nineteen percent of New Mexicans who are eligible  
7 for the supplemental nutrition assistance program are not  
8 receiving assistance; and

9 WHEREAS, the temporary assistance for needy families  
10 program, which is designed to assist New Mexico's lowest income  
11 families, has seen a thirty-five percent decline in  
12 participation since 2011; and

13 WHEREAS, last year the human services department reduced  
14 eligibility for the temporary assistance for needy families  
15 program cash benefits and also reduced the amount of cash  
16 benefits by fifteen percent; and

17 WHEREAS, the human services department has increased work  
18 participation requirements to meet eligibility for the  
19 temporary assistance for needy families program, making those  
20 previously exempt from the requirements engage in work  
21 activities or be subject to benefit sanctions for  
22 noncompliance; and

23 WHEREAS, forty-two percent of temporary assistance for  
24 needy families cases have been sanctioned for noncompliance;  
25 and

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1           WHEREAS, the federal government cut supplemental nutrition  
2 assistance program benefits by five and one-half percent in  
3 November 2013; and

4           WHEREAS, seven New Mexico counties have unemployment rates  
5 above the national average rate of seven percent; and

6           WHEREAS, the human services department did not implement a  
7 statewide federal waiver from work requirements for New  
8 Mexico's childless adults, a waiver option that New Mexico  
9 qualifies for because of the state's high unemployment rate;  
10 and

11           WHEREAS, the human services department has changed the  
12 application and eligibility procedures to make a determination  
13 of eligibility for public benefits, including a new automated  
14 eligibility screening and determination system for public  
15 benefits; a new paper application form; and a new online  
16 application system; and

17           WHEREAS, case managers and advocates for the poor report  
18 that the current application procedures for public benefits are  
19 burdensome and discourage eligible New Mexicans from receiving  
20 the benefits to which they are entitled;

21           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
22 OF NEW MEXICO that the human services department be requested  
23 to:

24           A. publicize the number of eligible, but not  
25 enrolled, children and adults in each county for the

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1 supplemental nutrition assistance program and the temporary  
2 assistance for needy families program;

3 B. publicize data on sanctions placed on public  
4 benefit recipients, including how many cases receive sanctions,  
5 the reason for the sanctions and the number of children  
6 affected by sanctions; and

7 C. publicize the number of applications for all  
8 public benefits received per month, the number processed and  
9 the number approved; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
11 be requested to report to the legislative health and human  
12 services committee and the legislative finance committee during  
13 the 2014 interim on the impact of:

14 A. implementation of work requirements for all  
15 childless adults in the supplemental nutrition assistance  
16 program, including the number of supplemental nutrition  
17 assistance program recipients that have been affected; the cost  
18 to the state for the implementation and administration of work  
19 requirements verification; and how much federal supplemental  
20 nutrition assistance program funding New Mexico has lost and  
21 will continue to lose; and

22 B. temporary assistance for needy families program  
23 and supplemental nutrition assistance program benefit cuts on  
24 vulnerable children in New Mexico, including the number of  
25 children who lost temporary assistance for needy families

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1 program benefits due to the 2011 benefit adjustments and the  
2 number of vulnerable children who would have been eligible for  
3 temporary assistance for needy families program benefits if the  
4 benefit amount were reinstated at 2011 levels; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
6 be requested to:

7 A. apply for all federal waivers for which New  
8 Mexico qualifies that increase access to public benefits in New  
9 Mexico and implement all qualifying federal waivers received  
10 statewide; and

11 B. seek and use, to the extent possible, all  
12 federal funds provided for the supplemental nutrition  
13 assistance program, the temporary assistance for needy families  
14 program and all other public benefit programs; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
16 be requested to:

17 A. conduct additional outreach so that New Mexicans  
18 who are potentially eligible for public benefits are made aware  
19 of existing programs and the steps they must take to apply for  
20 those programs; and

21 B. engage community members and other stakeholders  
22 to identify and remove barriers preventing the enrollment of  
23 eligible New Mexicans in public benefit programs; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
25 be requested to report on action taken in response to the

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1 requests in this memorial to the interim legislative health and  
2 human services committee and the legislative finance committee  
3 in the fall of 2014 and the fall of 2015; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
5 transmitted to the secretary of human services, the chair of  
6 the legislative finance committee, the chair of the legislative  
7 health and human services committee and the governor.