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HANM Testimony to NM Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee (RHMC) 8.21.23

The Trinity nuclear test in July of 1945 represents a major failure of government concern with public safety and protecting the public's health. After almost eight decades this has been further documented with the [recent findings](#) that this experiment resulted in an unanticipated impact to over 46 states and 500,000 persons. Furthermore, new NM soil [studies](#) prove that plutonium is still in NM areas across the state. By not being included in Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) funding and reparations, New Mexico has paid double the price of health impacts to its "downwinder" citizens by picking up the tab for this lack of government oversight and prioritizing public health in the Trinity nuclear testing and uranium mining.

Local residents Bernice Zamora Gutierrez and Paul Lopez Pino's wrote in [an opinion](#) published in the Hill in 2020:

"For 75 years the government's false narrative states that no one in New Mexico was harmed as a result of the Trinity test. However, statistics reveal that infant mortality rates skyrocketed during the months following the test. As one example of human suffering endured by New Mexicans, the [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#) published an article by Kathleen Tucker and Robert Alvarez entitled "Trinity: The Most Significant Hazard of the Entire Manhattan Project." In that article Tucker and Alvarez report: "Infant mortality for the months August, September, and October after the explosion indicated that New Mexican infants had a 56 percent increased risk of dying, with less than a 0.0001 percent chance that this was due to natural fluctuation." Radiation poisoning is cumulative and increases across generations.

Without access to federal compensation and healthcare afforded to families of the Nevada nuclear testing, the burden of healthcare and economic loss to an unknown number of affected families when they could access care in rural NM or Indian Country fell to the healthcare system in NM.

Besides the justice issue of compensation and healthcare for affected families in NM, one can raise the legitimate question of what has been the broader overall impact to

NM's healthcare system and the continued impoverishment of NM's citizens. Over eight decades, NM's healthcare system especially Medicaid and HIS, have been forced to provide the additional healthcare to residents whose healthcare needs were caused federal nuclear testing and uranium mining imposed without understanding or study of the health impact to the affected humans and environment.

NM has the highest percentage of its population on Medicaid in the country, is among the poorest states in the country, has some of the lowest health status and outcomes in the country and has some of the [country's highest medical debt](#). Given NM's long legacy of its indigenous populations being ignored as legitimate residents on their lands, denial or failure to study health impacts of extraction and nuclear waste storage on nearby residents and given of the state's economic history of extraction industries and nuclear testing impoverishing its people, current initiatives of continued reliance on extraction industries and most importantly, federal and state consideration of NM as the logical depository of under-and-above ground storage for nuclear waste storage, pipelines and transportation across the state, it is essential that this committee find the situation of Trinity nuclear testing instructive for current situations facing our state and this committee. The committee must not only fully support NM's inclusion in RECA funding and but insist on recommendations that carefully study with funding and enforcement the health impacts of these proposed initiatives on the people of New Mexico. Our collective failure to do so not only strains the resilience of our citizens, healthcare system, environment and repeats shortsighted decisions that instead of addressing long-term solutions will find us in another 80 years facing an even more degraded healthcare system, an environmental disaster and more New Mexicans who have paid the price of shortsighted decisions with their health and economic opportunity.