

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT A TASK FORCE BE CONVENED TO STUDY AND RECOMMEND POLICY CHANGES TO EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE FOR GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN.

WHEREAS, more than thirty-three thousand children in New Mexico are living with a grandparent who is responsible for their well-being; and

WHEREAS, grandparents acting as primary caregivers for their grandchildren often face financial hardship due to the lack of resources and support services for grandparents raising grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, many grandparents, despite acting as primary caregivers for their grandchildren, lack the legal status that would allow them to apply for benefits that their grandchildren are eligible to receive; and

WHEREAS, in response to the passage of Senate Joint Memorial 14 during the 2014 legislative session, the children, youth and families department published a study on the availability of resources to grandparents raising grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the study reveals a dearth of public services and resources available to grandparents raising grandchildren and, in particular, to grandparents who lack legal custody of

their grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the financial resources available to foster care providers are available only to grandparents who have been licensed by the protective services division of the children, youth and families department and who are caring for grandchildren involved with the child protective services system; and

WHEREAS, the children, youth and families department reports that the number of grandparents acting as kinship foster care providers for their grandchildren is very small compared to the total number of grandparents caring for their grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, a focused approach to policymaking that incorporates input from stakeholders, advocates, community leaders and members of the public will help to ensure that grandparents raising grandchildren have access to the tools and resources necessary to nurture and provide a stable environment for their grandchildren;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that a task force be formed to include members who represent New Mexico voices for children, Pegasus legal services for children, the New Mexico coalition of educational leaders, court appointed special advocates for children, the New Mexico parent-teacher association, parents reaching out, the American association of

retired persons and Las Cumbres community services, inc.; one representative each from the human services department, the children, youth and families department, the children's court, the public education department, the aging and long-term services department and the office of the attorney general; and two members from the general public; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force study and recommend concrete policy changes that could be implemented in order to expand the availability of resources and assistance to grandparents raising grandchildren, including financial resources; legal services; food and housing assistance; and programs relating to medical care, child care, transportation and education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department, the children, youth and families department and the aging and long-term services department be requested to coordinate and provide staff support to the task force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report its findings and recommendations to the legislative health and human services committee and the legislative finance committee no later than November 2015; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the human services department, the children, youth and families department and the aging and long-term services department.

