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HOUSE MEMORIAL

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

INTRODUCED BY

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL FOR USING COMMUNITY HEALTH SPECIALISTS TO MEET UNMET HEALTH NEEDS IN THE STATE.

WHEREAS, there are many individuals currently residing in New Mexico who have professional health care credentials from another jurisdiction, such as a foreign country, but who do not have licensure or other authorization to apply their health care skills in the state; and

WHEREAS, many of these individuals are highly trained and in their home countries practiced as doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and other health care professionals; and

WHEREAS, some of these individuals' potential is greatly underutilized, as without their health care credentials they

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1 may be employed as restaurant workers, taxi drivers or domestic  
2 help or in other services that do not involve health care; and

3 WHEREAS, New Mexico has a current and worsening shortage  
4 of health care professionals; and

5 WHEREAS, in this diverse state, there are many individuals  
6 who speak languages other than English and whose language and  
7 cultural profiles present challenges to their access to health  
8 care that is culturally and linguistically competent; and

9 WHEREAS, many of the health care professionals from other  
10 jurisdictions speak Spanish or other languages that are spoken  
11 in New Mexico; and

12 WHEREAS, the presence in the state of highly trained  
13 international health care professionals represents a greatly  
14 underutilized cache of cultural, linguistic and professional  
15 competence in the state; and

16 WHEREAS, internationally trained health care professionals  
17 may afford the state access to linguistic, cultural and health  
18 care competence that is greatly needed in the state, especially  
19 among underserved Hispanic communities; and

20 WHEREAS, a group of community health experts in New Mexico  
21 has sought to build a bridge between this pool of  
22 internationally trained health care professionals living in New  
23 Mexico and the need for linguistically competent health  
24 services in underserved communities; and

25 WHEREAS, these community health experts propose a new

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1 profession to employ internationally trained health  
2 professionals, known as community health specialists, who could  
3 be employed:

4           A. for health education and promotion focused on  
5 primary prevention;

6           B. health literacy and advocacy; and

7           C. culturally and linguistically appropriate  
8 approaches to chronic disease management; and

9           WHEREAS, the outcomes for New Mexico that are anticipated  
10 through the creation of the community health specialist role  
11 are:

12           A. healthier and health-literate communities;

13           B. a decrease in health disparities;

14           C. an increase in chronic disease management;

15           D. a decrease in health care spending;

16           E. training cost savings resulting from the use of  
17 a health care work force that already has expertise in health  
18 care;

19           F. an efficient, effective and rapid way of  
20 increasing the health care work force;

21           G. a means of building community capacity in health  
22 promotion and disease prevention; and

23           H. increased access to health care for underserved  
24 communities;

25           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF

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1 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the chancellor  
2 for health sciences at the university of New Mexico be  
3 requested to convene a task force made up of experts in health  
4 professional education, regulation and licensing, public  
5 health, health care service utilization, health care economics,  
6 health care disparities, employment law, immigration law, state  
7 government and community health care as well as stakeholders  
8 from underserved communities and health professionals licensed  
9 in other jurisdictions to study the possibilities for creating  
10 community health specialist positions in New Mexico; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to  
12 undertake the educational, fiscal, public health, health care  
13 economics and legal systems analyses necessary for evaluating  
14 the utility and challenges that community health specialist  
15 positions represent; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to  
17 present its recommendations to the legislative health and human  
18 services committee by November 1, 2014; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
20 transmitted to the governor, the chair of the legislative  
21 health and human services committee and the chancellor for  
22 health sciences at the university of New Mexico.