

A MEMORIAL

PROCLAIMING MARCH 8, 2005 TO BE "OPEN HANDS DAY AT THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES" AND EXPRESSING RECOGNITION FOR OPEN HANDS' PROGRAMS AND STAFF THAT HAVE PROVIDED COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES TO THE FRAIL ELDERLY, DISABLED AND LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS OF NORTHERN NEW MEXICO SINCE 1977.

WHEREAS, Open Hands, incorporated, a nonprofit corporation, is dedicated to providing essential services to assist the frail elderly, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged to live with dignity and independence; and

WHEREAS, Open Hands, as one of eight designated community action agencies in the state of New Mexico, is dedicated to helping all people move out of poverty toward self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, more than two hundred twelve thousand New Mexicans are sixty-five years of age or older and the number of people in this population is expected to double in the next twenty-five years; and

WHEREAS, of all fifty states, New Mexico has the fourth fastest-growing percentage of population that is sixty-five and older, with thirty and one-tenth percent of its residents now in that age bracket; and

WHEREAS, more than one-fourth of New Mexicans over the age of sixty-five struggle with simple daily activities like

shopping, cooking and housework; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico ranks among the top ten states in terms of having an elderly population living in poverty, with twelve and eight-tenths percent of its sixty-five-and-older population living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's poverty rate is third in the nation, with eighteen and four-tenths percent of its residents living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, more than three hundred forty thousand New Mexicans live with a disability; and

WHEREAS, the frail elderly and the disabled and their families have increasingly expressed a desire to receive community-based and community-integrated services as an alternative to institutional care; and

WHEREAS, the frail elderly and the disabled want to continue living independently in their own homes or with their families for as long as possible; and

WHEREAS, the cost of institutionalized care ranges from twenty-seven thousand dollars (\$27,000) to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) per year, paid for by the state or the family; and

WHEREAS, Open Hands' high-quality programs for the frail elderly and the disabled give the loved ones and caregivers of those people the freedom to continue working to support their families and to contribute to the local economy; and

WHEREAS, nearly twelve thousand frail elderly, disabled and low-income people received services from Open Hands last year; and

WHEREAS, Open Hands' home safety modifications, medical equipment loan bank, adult daycare services, thrift store, medication management, case management emergency financial assistance and home visitor programs all help people to live with dignity and independence; and

WHEREAS, Open Hands is committed to enhancing the quality of all of its programs, while building community awareness and involvement; and

WHEREAS, Open Hands is committed to improving the quality of life for the frail elderly and the disabled and relieving their caretakers and families of the stress of providing around-the-clock care;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that March 8, 2005 be designated as "Open Hands Day at the House of Representatives"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that recognition and appreciation be extended to Open Hands for its twenty-eight years of exemplary service to the citizens of northern New Mexico, especially for its service to the frail elderly, disabled and low-income residents of the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be

transmitted to the Open Hands board of directors.