

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT CONSISTENTLY
PROCESS PUBLIC BENEFITS APPLICATIONS.

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

WHEREAS, New Mexico rates first in the nation for food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, one-third of all New Mexicans who are eligible for food stamps are not receiving food stamps; and

WHEREAS, one-third of all New Mexicans who live below the federal poverty level are without health insurance, and one-third of those who earn between one hundred percent and one hundred eighty-five percent of the federal poverty level are uninsured; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has the nation's second-highest percentage of people living without health insurance coverage; and

WHEREAS, almost one-third of New Mexican children who are eligible for medicaid are not enrolled; and

WHEREAS, health care providers and advocates for the poor report that the current application procedures for public benefits are burdensome and prevent eligible New Mexicans from

receiving the benefits to which they are entitled;

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

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

B. use uniform and simple application procedures and policies in all field offices, so that eligible applicants are not incorrectly denied benefits;

C. ensure that applicants receive a receipt for their application so that they can provide the date and place they applied;

D. assist all applicants in both filling out the application and obtaining the verifications necessary to receive benefits;

E. ensure that anyone who applies for a benefits program be screened for all programs for which the person may be eligible;

F. ensure that applicants do not have to wait more than one hour to see a caseworker to receive assistance with benefits programs;

G. translate all forms into Spanish and, upon request, other languages used by the clients; and

H. identify applicants needing special assistance with the application procedures and give them that assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department be requested to track the use of the outlined procedures and report to the interim legislative welfare reform oversight committee concerning its progress in the fall of 2007 and the fall of 2008; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of human services and the governor.