

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO CHARGE THE  
3 LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE WITH HEARING  
4 TESTIMONY ON INJECTABLE OPIOID TREATMENT AS A FEASIBLE,  
5 EFFECTIVE AND COST-EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR REDUCING DRUG USE  
6 AND DRUG-RELATED HARM AMONG LONG-TERM HEROIN USERS FOR WHOM  
7 OTHER TREATMENT PROGRAMS HAVE FAILED.

8  
9 WHEREAS, New Mexico has long been concerned about the  
10 high rate of opioid misuse and dependency and the impact on  
11 the people of New Mexico; and

12 WHEREAS, the rate for New Mexico overdose-related deaths  
13 in 2016 was over twenty-five per one hundred thousand  
14 population, higher than the national average of almost twenty  
15 deaths per one hundred thousand population; and

16 WHEREAS, there are areas within New Mexico with drug  
17 overdose death rates as high as ninety per one hundred  
18 thousand; and

19 WHEREAS, drug overdose is the leading cause of  
20 accidental death in New Mexico, and overdose deaths in New  
21 Mexico outnumber traffic fatalities; and

22 WHEREAS, people who use opioids, including heroin and  
23 prescription medications, are at risk for health-related harm  
24 associated with their use, such as blood-borne infections  
25 like human immunodeficiency virus and hepatitis C, skin

1 infections at injection sites, venous damage and, ultimately,  
2 death due to overdose; and

3 WHEREAS, drug abuse and dependence is a complex issue  
4 that requires innovative approaches; and

5 WHEREAS, there is a need to enhance the existing health  
6 care system in New Mexico and explore additional  
7 comprehensive and innovative models to address problematic  
8 drug use; and

9 WHEREAS, for people who use drugs who have not found  
10 success with methadone, suboxone or other treatments, the  
11 most dramatic developments in drug substitution therapies  
12 have been in injectable opioid treatments; and

13 WHEREAS, "injectable opioid treatment" means the  
14 administering or dispensing of pharmaceutical-grade heroin,  
15 known as "diacetylmorphine", or another injectable opioid  
16 such as hydromorphone, by medical practitioners under strict  
17 controls in a clinical setting to select heroin-dependent  
18 persons; and

19 WHEREAS, injectable opioid treatment programs, as part  
20 of comprehensive treatment strategies, provide substantial  
21 benefits to long-term heroin users who have not been  
22 responsive to other types of treatment; and

23 WHEREAS, heroin use disorder can be understood by  
24 consulting the description of opioid use disorder in the  
25 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth

1 edition, published by the American psychiatric association,  
2 and is identified as including a maladaptive pattern of  
3 heroin use leading to clinically significant impairment or  
4 distress and a combination of several of the following signs  
5 and symptoms:

6 A. an increasing tolerance of heroin;

7 B. withdrawal signs and symptoms when there are  
8 attempts to reduce or control heroin use;

9 C. a desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or  
10 control heroin use;

11 D. a loss of social, occupational or recreational  
12 activities because of heroin use; and

13 E. continuing use of heroin despite consequences;  
14 and

15 WHEREAS, permanent heroin-assisted treatment programs  
16 have been established in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the  
17 Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, with additional trial  
18 programs having been completed or currently taking place in  
19 Spain, Belgium and Canada; and

20 WHEREAS, findings from randomized controlled studies in  
21 these countries have yielded unanimously positive results,  
22 including that:

23 A. heroin-assisted treatment reduces drug use;

24 B. retention rates in heroin-assisted treatment  
25 surpass those of conventional treatment;

1           C. heroin-assisted treatment can be a stepping  
2 stone to other treatments and even abstinence;

3           D. heroin-assisted treatment improves health,  
4 social functioning and quality of life;

5           E. heroin-assisted treatment does not pose  
6 nuisance or other neighborhood concerns;

7           F. heroin-assisted treatment reduces crime;

8           G. heroin-assisted treatment can reduce the black  
9 market for heroin; and

10          H. heroin-assisted treatment is cost effective, in  
11 that the cost-savings from the benefits attributable to  
12 heroin-assisted treatment far outweigh the cost of program  
13 operation over the long run; and

14          WHEREAS, retention rates in heroin-assisted treatment  
15 programs dwarf those of conventional treatments; and

16          WHEREAS, further, because participants in  
17 heroin-assisted treatment programs are much less likely to  
18 commit acquisitive crimes and other offenses, not including  
19 drug-related offenses, such programs have also been shown to  
20 decrease crime in areas where they are situated, which also  
21 leads to cost savings;

22          NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
23 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New  
24 Mexico legislative council be requested to charge the  
25 legislative health and human services committee with hearing

1 testimony related to injectable opioid treatment as a  
2 feasible, effective and cost-effective strategy for reducing  
3 drug use and drug-related harm among long-term heroin users  
4 in New Mexico for whom other treatment programs have failed;  
5 and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
7 transmitted to the governor; the co-chairs of the New Mexico  
8 legislative council; the chair and vice chair of the  
9 legislative health and human services committee; the secretary  
10 of health; the secretary of human services; the secretary of  
11 children, youth and families; the secretary of corrections;  
12 the secretary of public safety; the chancellor for health  
13 sciences of the university of New Mexico; the president of New  
14 Mexico state university; and the executive director of the New  
15 Mexico association of counties. \_\_\_\_\_

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