

**MINUTES
of the
THIRD MEETING
of the
LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**July 20-21, 2026
Bataan Hall
University of New Mexico-Taos
115 Civic Plaza Drive
Taos**

**July 22, 2026
Red River Conference Center
101 West River Street
Red River**

The third meeting of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee was called to order by Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, chair, on Monday, July 20, 2026, at 9:37 a.m. at the University of New Mexico (UNM)-Taos in Taos.

Present

Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, Chair
Sen. Linda M. López, Vice Chair
Sen. Jay C. Block (7/21)
Rep. Eleanor Chávez
Rep. Jenifer Jones
Sen. Larry R. Scott (7/20, 7/21)
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (7/20, 7/21)

Absent

Rep. Pamela Herndon

Advisory Members

Rep. Marianna Anaya
Rep. John Block (7/20, 7/21)
Rep. Kathleen Cates
Rep. Nicole Chavez (7/20, 7/21)
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Rep. Tara L. Lujan (7/22)
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto
Sen. Rex Wilson

Rep. Christine Chandler
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Sen. Katy Duhigg
Rep. Joanne J. Ferrary
Rep. Miguel P. García
Rep. Anita Gonzales
Sen. Martin Hickey
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Sen. Harold Pope
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. Elaine Sena Cortez
Rep. Sarah Silva
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. Reena Szczepanski
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

Staff

Zander Dawson, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

References to Webcast

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at www.nmlegis.gov, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Monday, July 20 — Taos**Welcome and Introductions (9:37 a.m.)**

Representative Thomson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members introduced themselves.

Welcome to UNM-Taos (9:41 a.m.)

Randi Archuleta, dean of instruction, UNM-Taos, welcomed committee members and summarized UNM-Taos's mission and goals.

UNM-Taos Health Care Workforce Programs (9:43 a.m.)

Dr. Archuleta; Dawn Kittner, director of nursing, UNM-Taos; Josh Wright, chair of health sciences, UNM-Taos; and Rasa O'Donnell, allied health coordinator, UNM-Taos, provided an update on health care workforce programs at UNM-Taos, which include programs for behavioral health, nursing and emergency medical services. They described several certificate and degree programs to help cultivate a wide range of health professionals to practice in the state. They summarized successes in retention, recruitment and helping students gain employment after finishing coursework. They also described challenges in preparing and encouraging students to practice in rural areas. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=1>.

Department of Health Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Update (10:56 a.m.)

Miranda Durham, M.D., chief medical officer, Department of Health, and Kevin Peine, executive director, Centers for Public Health, Department of Health, presented findings regarding maternal morbidity and mortality. They discussed the Department of Health's data collection regarding pregnancy-related deaths across six years. They presented data regarding

frequency and timing of pregnancy-related deaths and causes of death. They also presented broad recommendations for improving care coordination and screening. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=2>.

Public Comment (11:45 a.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Stability First — A Blueprint for New Mexico: Community Safety, Behavioral Health Supported Living Services, Senate Bill 3 (2025) (SB 3) Regional Planning and Workforce Development (1:00 p.m.)

Gerald Ortiz y Pino, M.S.W., former state senator, District 12, and Peter Cubra, attorney at law, presented about their work and experience in the behavioral health field and roles in creating alternative responses in mental health crises. Mr. Cubra summarized current response protocols and outlined four recommendations for legislative action, including community safety alternatives to police responses, the creation of a waiver program for people with mental health and brain-injury-based disabilities, targeted case management for individuals with serious mental illness and a focused workforce development strategy. Former Senator Ortiz y Pino presented his proposals for statewide behavioral health reform and provided an update on current issues regarding behavioral health that impede success. He presented about several suggestions for changes to the scheme enacted in SB 3, including reassessment of behavioral health districts, tribal consultation, workforce recruitment and retention, school-based health center supports and the need for a statewide strategic plan. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=3>.

Behavioral Health Investments Update (2:41 p.m.)

Allegra Hernandez, Ph.D., senior fiscal analyst, Legislative Finance Committee (LFC); Harry Rommel, fiscal analyst, LFC; Pamela Trujillo, Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act program manager, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC); and Nick Boukas, director, Behavioral Health Services Division, Health Care Authority (HCA), provided an update on legislative investments into the behavioral health system. Dr. Hernandez discussed recurring and nonrecurring investments into behavioral health regions across the state to address behavioral health issues, build capacity, increase access and expand the behavioral health workforce. Dr. Rommel presented about investments into the Behavioral Reform and Investment Act. Ms. Trujillo presented about workshops implemented into all 13 behavioral health regions and discussed each region's progress in developing treatment priorities. She also discussed appropriations received by the AOC for regional planning for behavioral health and outlined challenges in implementing SB 3 at the regional level. She said that some rural areas struggle to provide the infrastructure. Mr. Boukas presented about the HCA's progress carrying out the requirements of SB 3. Mr. Boukas presented updates about behavioral health regions,

including awards granted and reversions, time lines for regional plans assessment and approval and recommendations for next steps. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=4>.

Change as an Opportunity: Maximizing Existing Assets in Rural Health (3:37 p.m.)

Matthew Probst, P.A.-C., executive director, Semillas de Salud, presented about challenges faced by rural health care providers and the effects of recent changes in federal law. Mr. Probst presented about mentorship, recruitment and retention of medical professionals in the state and pathways to cultivate health professionals in rural areas beginning at early ages.

Approval of Minutes (4:12 p.m.)

Upon a motion made, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the June 16-18, 2026 meeting.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:13 p.m.

Tuesday, July 21 — Taos

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 10:06 a.m.

Holy Cross Medical Center Update (10:10 a.m.)

James Kiser, chief executive officer, Holy Cross Medical Center, provided an update regarding challenges that Holy Cross Medical Center faces as a rural health care facility serving northern New Mexico. Mr. Kiser presented about challenges based on reductions in Medicaid after passage of the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill and Holy Cross Medical Center's commitment to providing health care to all regardless of ability to pay. He also summarized recruitment and retention statistics and challenges in providing urgent care and primary care services.

Providing Behavioral Health Care in Rural Communities (10:55 a.m.)

Philip Huston, executive director, Carlsbad Lifehouse, Inc., presented about recovery facilities in rural communities in New Mexico. Mr. Huston presented on successes of and potential changes to the state's legal scheme regarding behavioral health. He discussed billing challenges and other challenges in providing recovery services in rural areas. He also discussed challenges regarding coverage denials from managed care organizations.

Public Comment (11:58 a.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act Regional Implementation: Region 8 (1:02 p.m.)

Sylvia Barela, M.B.A., chief executive officer, Via Positiva; Brent Jaramillo, county manager, Taos County; and Zachariah Cordova, director, Health Care Assistance Program, Taos County, presented the Behavioral Health Region 8 plan for behavioral health, which governs Taos, Colfax and Union counties. Ms. Barela summarized the planning process, challenges for implementing the plan, five regional behavioral health system priorities and proposals for next steps. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=8>.

Center for Excellence in Social Work Update (1:46 p.m.)

Syreyashi Chakravarty, Ph.D., co-investigator and assistant professor, Facundo Valdez School of Social Work (FVSSW), New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), and Anna Nelson, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., principal investigator and director, Center for Excellence in Social Work, FVSSW, NMHU, provided an update on NMHU's social work facilities and programs. They also discussed next steps after the enactment of the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact and presented recommendations for providers and organizations and for state policy. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=9>.

Rural Health Care Delivery Fund Brief (3:17 p.m.)

Drew Weaver, program evaluator, LFC, provided an update on the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund. He described how the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund was originally structured, the funding time lines beginning in 2023 and the types of services that have been funded. He also outlined how the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund is monitored, how programs are evaluated and how outcomes are reported. He outlined the application for and administration processes of the fund. He highlighted recommendations for the HCA and the legislature. Elisa Wrede, acting rural health director, HCA, provided an update on appropriations received for sustainability grants. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=10>.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 3:49 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22 — Red River — Joint Meeting with the LFC**Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 8:40 a.m.

Overview of New Mexico's Health Care System (8:40 a.m.)

Dr. Hernandez presented on the health insurance market in the state, including health care expenditures and increases in costs and premiums for New Mexico residents. She presented about individual health insurance plans and summarized state agency administration of health plans. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=11>.

Cost Drivers in Health Care (9:24 a.m.)

Eric Chenier, principal analyst, LFC, presented about medical loss ratios. Mr. Chenier presented Medicaid statistics showing lower enrollment and higher expenditures in the state. He also presented statistics showing rising costs per member per month in the Medicaid market and factors leading to those increased costs.

Kari Armijo, secretary, HCA, and Alanna Dancis, acting Medicaid director, HCA, presented about Medicaid oversight. Secretary Armijo provided an overview of the state's Medicaid managed care program, Turquoise Care, and how the program is financed by the HCA. Secretary Armijo also provided a comparison of New Mexico's Medicaid program with other state and national trends regarding enrollment and program spending. Ms. Dancis discussed oversight and performance of managed care organizations in the state. Ms. Dancis also presented about compliance monitoring, oversight and compliance actions regarding managed care organization contracts. Secretary Armijo then discussed potential impacts that Medicaid cuts from the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill could have on the state, including higher costs and more uninsured New Mexico residents. Secretary Armijo also presented data indicating that New Mexico is the only state that experienced marketplace enrollment growth in the United States after federal premium tax credit enhancements expired.

Alice Kane, superintendent of insurance, Office of Superintendent of Insurance, and Viara Ianikieva, director, Life and Health Division, Office of Superintendent of Insurance, discussed health insurance costs in the state. Ms. Kane outlined how insurers develop premium rates and presented data indicating that, due to higher rates of claims than expected in 2024, individual market rate premiums have increased in 2026. Ms. Kane described a rising trend in medical and prescription drug costs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=7/20/2026&ItemNumber=12>.

Public Comment (1:20 p.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.