

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

**September 28, 2026  
Alex Sanchez Hall, Room 75  
Doña Ana Community College  
3400 South Espina Street  
Las Cruces**

**September 29-30, 2026  
Burrell College of Health Sciences  
3501 Arrowhead Drive, Room 208  
Las Cruces**

**October 1, 2026  
Mimbres Valley Special Events Center  
2300 East Pine Street  
Deming**

The fifth meeting of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee was called to order by Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, chair, on Monday, September 28, 2026, at 9:57 a.m. at Doña Ana Community College (DACC) in Las Cruces.

**Present**

Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, Chair  
Sen. Linda M. López, Vice Chair (9/28, 9/29)  
Sen. Jay C. Block (9/28, 9/29)  
Rep. Eleanor Chávez  
Rep. Pamela Herndon  
Rep. Jenifer Jones (9/30, 10/1)  
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (9/28, 9/29, 9/30)

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Marianna Anaya (9/29, 9/30)  
Rep. John Block  
Rep. Kathleen Cates (9/28, 9/29, 9/30)  
Sen. David M. Gallegos (9/28, 9/29)  
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto  
Sen. Harold Pope  
Sen. Rex Wilson (9/29, 10/1)

**Absent**

Sen. Larry R. Scott

Rep. Christine Chandler  
Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Rep. Nicole Chavez  
Sen. Katy Duhigg  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Sen. Martin Hickey

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Rep. Tara L. Lujan  
Rep. Alan T. Martinez  
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  
Grace Balderamos, Staff, 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](http://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, September 28 — Las Cruces**

#### **Welcome and Introductions (9:57 a.m.)**

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

#### **Welcome to DACC and New Mexico State University (NMSU) (10:00 a.m.)**

Mónica Torres, Ph.D., chancellor, NMSU System Community Colleges, discussed the academic landscapes of and services available to students at DACC, NMSU and NMSU's branch campuses.

#### **NMSU Nursing Program and DACC Health Sciences Program Updates (10:26 a.m.)**

Alexa Doig, Ph.D., R.N., director, School of Nursing, NMSU, provided an overview of the NMSU School of Nursing's enrollment, academics and student outcomes.

Josefina Carmona, Ph.D., dean, Health Sciences Division, DACC, spoke about DACC's registered nursing and licensed practical nursing programs. Ashley Rodriguez, director, Nursing Program, DACC, and Andrea Cathey, simulation coordinator and assistant professor, DACC, provided information about DACC's simulation labs. Travis Hawkins, chair, Welding Technology, Advanced Technologies Division, DACC, provided an overview of DACC's Advanced Technologies Division's program offerings. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=2>.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Integrated Wellness Initiative (1:01 p.m.)**

David Bearshield, Indian Health Service coordinator, Family and Cosmetic Dental Design; Colin A. Forde, D.D.S., Family and Cosmetic Dental Design; and David Williams, epidemiologist, discussed a proposed medical-dental integration initiative inspired by a model in Colorado that aims to streamline referrals between dentists and medical providers. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=3>.

### **Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act Implementation Update (2:09 p.m.)**

Harry Rommel, Legislative Health and Human Services Committee fiscal analyst, Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), provided an update on the development of the behavioral health plans from each behavioral health region pursuant to the Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=4>.

### **Health Care Delivery and Access Act Impact on Hospitals (2:34 p.m.)**

Dr. Rommel discussed the impacts of the implementation of the Health Care Delivery and Access Act on hospital revenues and expenditures. He reviewed expected changes to hospital fiscal health resulting from the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=5>.

**Mimbres Valley Medical Center Update (3:18 p.m.)**

Duke Young, chief executive officer, Mimbres Valley Medical Center, provided an update on the operations of Mimbres Valley Medical Center, including inpatient and outpatient services, employee recruitment and retention and patient satisfaction. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=6>.

**Approval of Minutes (3:52 p.m.)**

Upon a motion made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the August 18-21, 2026 meeting.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 3:53 p.m.

**Tuesday, September 29 — Las Cruces****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 9:39 a.m.

**Burrell College of Health Sciences Update (9:39 a.m.)**

Nina Nuñez, vice president of administration and chief of staff, Burrell College of Health Sciences, provided an update on the Burrell College of Health Sciences' operations, student outcomes and goals. She reviewed the Burrell School of Osteopathic Medicine's student demographics and graduates' residency placements. Ms. Nuñez and Pilar Faulkner, lobbyist, Burrell College of Health Sciences, discussed proposed funding requests. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=7>.

**The Hazards of Heat (10:33 a.m.)**

Eva Gulin, technician, ZiaMet Weather Station, reviewed heat and drought trends throughout the state. Anjali Taneja, M.D., board member, Healthy Climate New Mexico, discussed the health effects of exposure to extreme heat. Charles Goodmacher, M.A., policy advisor, Healthy Climate New Mexico, and Ashley Proud, M.Sc., L.L.M., executive director, Healthy Climate New Mexico, discussed proposed legislation, grants, programs and job positions to address increasing extreme heat. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=8>.

**Public Comment (11:55 a.m.)**

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

**Update on Pharmaceutical Trends (1:03 p.m.)**

RubyAnn Esquibel, principal analyst, LFC, and Dr. Rommel provided a presentation about pharmaceutical trends in the state and country. Ms. Esquibel discussed the implementation of New Mexico's Medicaid program's preferred drug list and glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist medication coverage and spending. Dr. Rommel reviewed pharmaceutical costs and drug price transparency. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=9>.

**Expanding Clinical Pharmacy Access in Rural Areas (2:01 p.m.)**

Melanie Dodd, Pharm.D., Ph.C., B.C.P.S., F.A.S.H.P., associate dean for clinical affairs, University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Pharmacy, and Joe Anderson, Pharm.D., Ph.C., B.C.P.S., associate dean for professional curriculum, UNM College of Pharmacy, discussed the practice of clinical pharmacy in New Mexico and around the country. They explained the challenges of expanding advanced practice pharmacy to rural parts of the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=10>.

**Families and Youth Innovations Plus Juvenile Justice Update: Community-Based Organization Perspectives and Outcomes (3:14 p.m.)**

Logan Howard, L.M.S.W., director of impact and public policy, Families and Youth Innovations Plus, provided an overview of Families and Youth Innovations Plus's juvenile justice-related services and partnerships. Lisa Chavez, L.I.S.W., chief program officer, Families and Youth Innovations Plus, spoke about outcomes of participants in those services. Denali Wilson, policy counsel, All Safe New Mexico, discussed national trends in juvenile justice. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=11>.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 4:23 p.m.

**Wednesday, September 30 — Las Cruces****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 9:10 a.m.

**Bold Futures New Mexico Update (9:11 a.m.)**

Micha Bitsinnie, policy manager, Bold Futures New Mexico, and Queva Hubbard, community and advocate associate, Bold Futures New Mexico, discussed resources offered by Bold Futures New Mexico with regard to the federal Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA). Brandi Sedillo, lived experience expert and certified peer support worker; Miranda Chavez, lived experience expert and community support worker; Berta Aguilar, lived experience expert and community support worker; and Candace Prendergast, lived experience expert and community health worker, shared their personal CARA-related experiences. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=12>.

**Meeting the Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness (10:22 a.m.)**

Nicole Martinez, executive director, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, discussed homelessness in Las Cruces and the work of the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. She highlighted the income support and outreach services offered by the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, fundraising projects and housing programs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=13>.

**Crisis Intervention Services (11:01 a.m.)**

Allison Stoner, L.C.S.W., clinical supervisor, Las Cruces Fire Department; Michael Daniels, chief, Las Cruces Fire Department; and Wes Smith, case manager, Las Cruces Fire Department, provided information about the Las Cruces Fire Department's crisis response program, Project Lessen the Incidence of Grief, Harm and Trauma (Project LIGHT), which includes a dispatchable team of firefighters, paramedics and licensed social workers, and shared success stories of Project LIGHT. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=14>.

**Mitigating Harm in the Child Welfare System (1:02 p.m.)**

F. Michael Hart, attorney, discussed the *Kevin S.* settlement, including progress since arbitration began, and explained how the *Kevin S.* order issued by the federal district court addresses challenges faced by the child welfare system. He shared ideas for lessening harm in the child welfare system. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=15>.

**Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act Implementation Update:  
Behavioral Health Region 3 (2:03 p.m.)**

Jamie Michael, director, Health and Human Services Department, Doña Ana County, explained how Behavioral Health Region 3's behavioral health region plan was developed. Athena Huckaby, M.P.H., special project manager, Health and Human Services, Doña Ana County, reviewed Behavioral Health Region 3's priority areas, funding allocations and proposed recommendations. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=16>.

**Public Comment (2:35 p.m.)**

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

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 2:40 p.m.

**Thursday, October 1 — Deming****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 9:41 a.m.

**Behavioral Health Updates (9:44 a.m.)**

Lidia Vega Chavira, executive director, Desert Oasis Reentry and Wraparound Center, discussed the services offered by Desert Oasis Reentry and Wraparound Center and shared her personal experience with recovery and reentry services. Manuel Ortega, clinical director, Recovery Management Center, spoke about the work of the Recovery Management Center and challenges providing rural outpatient behavioral health services. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=17>.

**Public Comment (11:00 a.m.)**

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

**Meeting the Needs of Seniors in Rural New Mexico (11:21 a.m.)**

Barbara Rios, finance manager, Deming Luna County Senior Center, provided a presentation about the difficulties of providing services related to aging and long-term services for elderly people who live in rural parts of the state. Tisha Green, county manager, Hidalgo County; Kelly Peterson, commissioner, Hidalgo County Board of

County Commissioners; Aimee Essary, president, Rodeo Community Association; and Deneca Chino, area vice president of sales, Ambercare, discussed the growing population of seniors in New Mexico. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=9/28/2026&ItemNumber=18>.

### **Rural Emergency Medical Services and Fire Update (12:19 p.m.)**

Pablo Montoya, assistant county manager, Luna County; Joe Owen, chief, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, City of Deming; Andres Ramos, fire chief, Columbus Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department; and Joy Harrell, chief nursing officer, Mimbres Valley Medical Center, discussed challenges faced by rural fire departments and emergency medical services departments, such as staffing and access to resources.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:47 p.m.