

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ADDRESS THE UNDER-USE OF FOOD STAMPS IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has the highest rate of poverty in the nation, with nearly eighteen percent of its people living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, twenty-five percent of the children in New Mexico live in poverty and eleven percent of New Mexico's children live in extreme poverty, putting New Mexico first in the nation in child poverty; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has the highest rate of food insecurity in the nation with fourteen percent of its people having limited or uncertain access to enough food and is third-highest in the nation with five percent of New Mexicans not being able to afford enough food; and

WHEREAS, the food stamp program is the nation's best defense against hunger and food insecurity, and data from the 2000 federal census indicate that as many as seventy-six thousand New Mexico families with children are eligible for food stamps, but only fifty-eight percent of these households participate in the food stamp program; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that increasing the enrollment of eligible families receiving food stamps to eighty percent would bring forty-two million dollars (\$42,000,000) in additional food stamp benefits to New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of participation in the food stamp program ripple outward from the families who use food stamps to the local businesses where families spend their money, the businesses that supply goods and services to local businesses

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and the people who are employed by those businesses; and

WHEREAS, the expanded use of food stamps by a greater number of families with children would create at least six hundred new jobs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the human services department be requested to develop a plan to significantly increase the use of food stamps in New Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department collaborate with organizations that serve the hungry and food insecure and with organizations that advocate for the relief of hunger and food insecurity in developing that plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing that plan the human services department consider simplifying the food stamp enrollment form, training department staff to ensure that the program is as accessible as possible, exploring and developing ways to provide out-station food stamp enrollment options such as senior centers, food banks, public health offices and community centers, marketing the program to underserved populations, including the elderly and working families with children, and considering changing the name of the program to reduce the social stigma sometimes associated with the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department present that plan and report progress in addressing the under-use of the food stamp program to the legislative health and human services committee prior to November 30, 2003; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of human services.

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