

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTNER WITH WINGS OF AMERICA DURING THIS "YEAR OF THE CHILD".

WHEREAS, the nonprofit organization, Wings of America, has been in existence since 1988, serving over seventeen thousand young men and women, and the organization's primary mission is to use the sport of running as a catalyst for empowering Native American youth to take pride in themselves and their cultural identity; and

WHEREAS, the activity of running represents a cultural and spiritual tradition of Native Americans and serves as the court of living a strong, balanced, healthy and harmonious life; and

WHEREAS, for almost twenty years, Wings of America has been sponsoring youth running and fitness camps in Native American communities and leadership and camp facilitator trainings to instill the values of respect, discipline, teamwork and leadership in Native American youth; and

HM 27
Page 1

WHEREAS, as a result of Wings of America's long-standing efforts to improve the lives of Native American youth, measurable results exist that demonstrate the effectiveness of the organization's programs, such as the fact that ninety-four percent of Wings of America students attend college, have a

lower incidence of substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, are more physically active and maintain a healthier lifestyle than their peers in the larger Native American population; and

WHEREAS, numerous federal and state studies indicate that Native Americans have higher rates of suicide, diabetes, alcoholism and accidental death than any other ethnic group in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Governor Bill Richardson has declared the year 2006 to be the "Year of the Child" and stated that his goal is to offer a future "where every child can grow up healthy, attend world-class schools, go to a good college, get a good-paying job, and raise a family right here in New Mexico" and that "physical activity and nutrition are also critical elements to keeping New Mexico's children healthy and fit"; and

WHEREAS, the mission of Wings of America and its proven results are consistent with the governor's goals for the "Year of the Child";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health be requested to explore all opportunities to partner with Wings of America in order to implement the various initiatives of the "Year of the Child" to ensure that Native American youth are included in any positive changes impacting their futures and well-being; and

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