

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CREATION OF A FOOD GAP TASK FORCE TO INVESTIGATE WAYS TO IMPROVE ACCESS OF RURAL AND UNDERSERVED NEW MEXICANS TO SOURCES OF HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOODS.

WHEREAS, more than six hundred forty-seven thousand people, one-third of New Mexico's population, live in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, nineteen of New Mexico's thirty-three counties are considered to have high or persistently high poverty rates; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is ranked first in the nation in food insecurity and third in hunger; and

WHEREAS, low-income New Mexico families spend as much as twenty-six percent of their annual income on food, a proportion that is double that of the national average; and

WHEREAS, on average, New Mexicans living in rural communities pay eighty-five dollars (\$85.00) for a bag of groceries, compared to urban dwellers who pay fifty-five dollars (\$55.00) for the same bag of groceries; and

WHEREAS, many of New Mexico's rural residents must travel thirty to seventy miles to shop at a grocery store; and

WHEREAS, health problems caused by poor nutrition, including obesity and diabetes, cost New Mexico three hundred twenty-four million dollars (\$324,000,000) annually; and

WHEREAS, those health problems can be remedied with improved nutrition through adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food; and

WHEREAS, evidence suggests that many New Mexicans, especially those living in rural areas, do not have adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods because they lack access to grocery stores and transportation; and

WHEREAS, research shows that people who do not have adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods are likely to have diet and health problems and to experience forms of food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the state of New Mexico that all New Mexicans have adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the governor be requested to appoint a food gap task force, whose members shall include representatives from the New Mexico food and agriculture policy council, the New Mexico task force to end hunger, the New Mexico department of agriculture, the economic development department, the department of health, the human services department, the aging and long-term services department, the Indian affairs department, the department of transportation, regional councils of government, the grocery industry and

agricultural not-for-profit organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the governor be requested to designate the New Mexico department of agriculture to provide administrative support to the food gap task force and that the task force prepare a report to the governor and legislature that provides information about the nature and scope of the barriers that exist between New Mexicans and adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods and that presents recommendations, options and steps that the public and private sectors can use to improve access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods in New Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the food gap task force be requested to investigate economic incentives and finance options that the state could provide to assist grocery store owners; methods of improving transportation and distribution services; potential partnerships between the state and private for-profit and not-for-profit entities; and ways to improve coordination among existing food programs, health initiatives and rural economic development programs to rebuild the infrastructure of New Mexico's food and farming systems; and that the task force develop an action plan that may include pilot projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the food gap task force present its report to the governor and to the appropriate

interim legislative committees by October 30, 2007; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the director of the New Mexico department of agriculture, the secretary of economic development, the secretary of health, the secretary of human services, the secretary of aging and long-term services, the secretary of Indian affairs and the secretary of transportation.