

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL FOR USING COMMUNITY HEALTH SPECIALISTS TO MEET UNMET HEALTH NEEDS IN THE STATE.

WHEREAS, there are many individuals currently residing in New Mexico who have professional health care credentials from another jurisdiction, such as a foreign country, but who do not have licensure or other authorization to apply their health care skills in the state; and

WHEREAS, many of these individuals are highly trained and in their home countries practiced as doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and other health care professionals; and

WHEREAS, some of these individuals' potential is greatly underutilized, as without their health care credentials they may be employed as restaurant workers, taxi drivers or domestic help or in other services that do not involve health care; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has a current and worsening shortage of health care professionals; and

WHEREAS, in this diverse state, there are many individuals who speak languages other than English and whose language and cultural profiles present challenges to their access to health care that is culturally and linguistically

competent; and

WHEREAS, many of the health care professionals from other jurisdictions speak Spanish or other languages that are spoken in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the presence in the state of highly trained international health care professionals represents a greatly underutilized cache of cultural, linguistic and professional competence in the state; and

WHEREAS, internationally trained health care professionals may afford the state access to linguistic, cultural and health care competence that is greatly needed in the state, especially among underserved Hispanic communities; and

WHEREAS, a group of community health experts in New Mexico has sought to build a bridge between this pool of internationally trained health care professionals living in New Mexico and the need for linguistically competent health services in underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, these community health experts propose a new profession to employ internationally trained health professionals, known as community health specialists, who could be employed:

A. for health education and promotion focused on primary prevention;

B. health literacy and advocacy; and

C. culturally and linguistically appropriate approaches to chronic disease management; and

WHEREAS, the outcomes for New Mexico that are anticipated through the creation of the community health specialist role are:

A. healthier and health-literate communities;

B. a decrease in health disparities;

C. an increase in chronic disease management;

D. a decrease in health care spending;

E. training cost savings resulting from the use of a health care work force that already has expertise in health care;

F. an efficient, effective and rapid way of increasing the health care work force;

G. a means of building community capacity in health promotion and disease prevention; and

H. increased access to health care for underserved communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the chancellor for health sciences at the university of New Mexico be requested to convene a task force made up of experts in health professional education, regulation and licensing, public health, health care service utilization, health care economics, health care disparities, employment law,

immigration law, state government and community health care as well as stakeholders from underserved communities and health professionals licensed in other jurisdictions to study the possibilities for creating community health specialist positions in New Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to undertake the educational, fiscal, public health, health care economics and legal systems analyses necessary for evaluating the utility and challenges that community health specialist positions represent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to present its recommendations to the legislative health and human services committee by November 1, 2014; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the chair of the legislative health and human services committee and the chancellor for health sciences at the university of New Mexico.