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SENATE MEMORIAL 54

**52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2016**

INTRODUCED BY

Howie C. Morales

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE TO COLLECT DATA REGARDING THE COST OF IMPLEMENTING A THREE-MONTH TIME LIMIT AND EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, one-fifth of all New Mexicans live at or below the federal poverty level, while nearly one-half of New Mexicans live below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level, an even more accurate measure of poverty; and

WHEREAS, fourteen percent of New Mexico's children live in extreme poverty, meaning below fifty percent of the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, one in five New Mexicans reports experiencing food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico ranks fourth in the nation for child

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1 food insecurity; and

2 WHEREAS, New Mexico is ranked second to last in the nation  
3 for overall child welfare; and

4 WHEREAS, New Mexico's unemployment rate is the highest in  
5 the nation and thirty percent higher than the national average  
6 unemployment rate; and

7 WHEREAS, New Mexico is one of only three states in the  
8 country where the unemployment rate increased in the last  
9 twelve months; and

10 WHEREAS, the United States congress' intent in  
11 establishing the supplemental nutrition assistance program,  
12 formerly known as food stamps, was to improve the nutrition  
13 levels among low-income households; and

14 WHEREAS, one in five New Mexicans participates in the  
15 supplemental nutrition assistance program to help provide food  
16 for a household; and

17 WHEREAS, according to the human services department, in  
18 federal fiscal year 2015, the human services department  
19 improperly terminated or denied food assistance in forty-eight  
20 percent of all cases that were closed or denied that year; and

21 WHEREAS, in May 2014, the United States district court for  
22 the district of New Mexico found that the human services  
23 department was not processing requests for food and medical  
24 assistance by eligible New Mexicans in compliance with federal  
25 law and ordered the department to comply with federal law; and

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1           WHEREAS, the federal district court renewed its court  
2 order because, as of February 2015, the human services  
3 department was still not processing requests for food and  
4 medical assistance in compliance with federal law; and

5           WHEREAS, starting January 1, 2016, the human services  
6 department has begun to restrict seventeen thousand five  
7 hundred adults in New Mexico to just three months of food  
8 assistance; and

9           WHEREAS, the three-month time limit on food assistance  
10 that the human services department has imposed applies to  
11 adults who cannot find a job that offers twenty hours of work a  
12 week or a qualifying job training program, regardless of how  
13 hard they are looking for work or if applicable work training  
14 is even available; and

15           WHEREAS, the human services department has implemented  
16 this harsh time limit on food assistance despite the fact that  
17 New Mexico continues to qualify for a statewide waiver of the  
18 requirement due to persistently high unemployment; and

19           WHEREAS, on October 1, 2016, the human services department  
20 will require teenagers age sixteen and seventeen, parents with  
21 children over the age of thirteen and older adults age fifty to  
22 sixty to complete unpaid work hours or lose food assistance for  
23 up to one year;

24           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
25 OF NEW MEXICO that the legislative finance committee be

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1 requested to study and calculate:

2 A. all costs associated with administering the  
3 three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without  
4 dependents age eighteen to forty-nine;

5 B. all costs associated with administering work  
6 requirements in the New Mexico supplemental nutrition  
7 assistance program's employment and training program;

8 C. the number of New Mexicans subject to the three-  
9 month time limit or the employment and training requirement;

10 D. the number of applicants and participants in the  
11 supplemental nutrition assistance program in the state who gain  
12 employment or increased earnings from participating in the  
13 supplemental nutrition assistance program's employment and  
14 training program; and

15 E. the number of applicants and participants in the  
16 supplemental nutrition assistance program who are disqualified  
17 from receiving food assistance for noncompliance with time  
18 limit or employment and training work requirements in the  
19 supplemental nutrition assistance program and the corresponding  
20 loss, in dollars, of federal food assistance in New Mexico as a  
21 result of those disqualifications; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
23 be requested to provide the legislative finance committee with  
24 all data and information necessary to conduct its study of the  
25 costs associated with implementing a three-month time limit and

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1 employment and training requirements in the supplemental  
2 nutrition assistance program; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that legislative finance committee  
4 staff present its report pursuant to the study to the  
5 legislative finance committee and the legislative health and  
6 human services committee by October 1, 2017; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
8 transmitted to the governor; the chair, vice chair and director  
9 of the legislative finance committee; and the chair and vice  
10 chair of the legislative health and human services committee.