

Chairman Madalena, Members of the Committee:

Welcome to Lea County. Our county is located in the southeastern corner of New Mexico and is characterized most often by its flat topography. The County covers 4,393 square miles or approximately 2,822,522 acres which is three times the size of Rhode Island and only slightly smaller than Connecticut. From north to south the County spans 108 miles and at 44 miles at its widest point. Lea County has five school districts and total population of 64,727 (2010 census).

Lea County was one of the last counties to establish a Health Council under the State of New Mexico Department of Health's grant. Since 2005, the Lea County Health Council has been steadily helping the various community health related organizations by working on issues such as Teen Pregnancy Prevention, housing, alcohol and drug prevention, and childhood obesity. One of the biggest accomplishments was the Lea County Health Council's Emergency Planning committee being formally accepted by the Lea County Commission. The members of the Health Council committee were appointed by the Lea County Board of Commissioners to the reestablished the Lea County Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Council. The priority issues were determined by in-depth research, community assessment, and consensus of members.

The Lea County Health Council was fortunate and insightful enough to plan for short term sustainability to be able to continue their efforts after the State no longer funded these County Commission/Board appointed councils. For the past three years the Lea County council has continued to provide a means for organizations to share useful information. According to membership, which has representation from all five major communities, this venue has enabled them to learn about services that each of them provide, share resources, and has enabled them to work toward common goals. They feel it has strengthened their communication and helped eliminate duplication of services.

The Lea County Health Council currently has enough funding to provide a minimum wage five hour a week staff person to assure they meet all of the open meeting act requirement and other such tasks for another ten months. Because the appointed membership consists of business people, they have limited time to devote to the council, thus, they have a strong desire to return to their former status of having a part time coordinator to help them provide more detailed work on the specific health disparities in our communities. This could be possible with your help.

On behalf of the Lea County Health Council, thank you for your time and consideration of the future of these much appreciated councils.

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