

1 A JOINT MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE  
3 TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL MISUSE AND OVERUSE OF PRESCRIPTION  
4 DRUGS IN DEALING WITH CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN  
5 SCHOOL.

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7 WHEREAS, an increasing number of children are being  
8 diagnosed with a variety of behavioral problems ranging from  
9 mildly disruptive behavior to serious disorders such as  
10 autism; and

11 WHEREAS, depression in children is associated with  
12 social dysfunction, academic underachievement and suicidal  
13 behavior; and

14 WHEREAS, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is  
15 being identified as epidemic throughout the United States,  
16 with more than five percent of all children being diagnosed  
17 with the disorder; and

18 WHEREAS, prescription drugs are being given to millions  
19 of school-age children to control behavior problems such as  
20 hyperactivity, inattention, impulsivity and depression; and

21 WHEREAS, these drugs include methylphenidate, commonly  
22 known as ritalin, D-amphetamine, commonly known as adderall,  
23 fluoxetine, commonly known as prozac, sertraline, commonly  
24 known as zoloft, isotretinoin, commonly known as accutane,  
25 and others; and

1           WHEREAS, unintended side effects of these drugs can have  
2 very serious consequences, including decreased blood flow to  
3 the brain, disruption of growth hormone, addiction and abuse,  
4 psychosis, depression, suicide, insomnia, agitation, social  
5 withdrawal and worsening of the very symptoms the drugs are  
6 intended to control; and

7           WHEREAS, research has shown that as many as six percent  
8 of all children taking stimulant medications developed  
9 psychotic symptoms or side effects during treatment; and

10          WHEREAS, research has also shown that there is no  
11 evidence that antidepressants are more effective than  
12 placebos for depression in children and adolescents; and

13          WHEREAS, antidepressant drugs have been demonstrated in  
14 trials to be effective in treating adult major depression,  
15 but these trials generally excluded children, making it  
16 unsafe to extrapolate this evidence of effectiveness to  
17 children; and

18          WHEREAS, the prescribing of drugs whose chemical action  
19 can alter thinking and behavior, triggering hostility,  
20 aggressiveness and impulsivity, may pose a safety hazard  
21 greater than drugs that are obtained illicitly that are used  
22 by only a few individuals; and

23          WHEREAS, a growing body of research indicates that the  
24 benefits of proper nutrition are critical in modulating  
25 attention deficit hyperactivity disorder behavior, and that

1 there is a need for supplementation of specific vitamins and  
2 minerals in these children; and

3 WHEREAS, regular exercise has been proven to reduce  
4 stress, anxiety and depression, boost self-esteem and improve  
5 sleep; and

6 WHEREAS, exercise is known to increase the body's  
7 production of endorphins, which reduce pain and promote a  
8 general sense of well-being; and

9 WHEREAS, many factors, including advertising,  
10 promotional campaigns targeted at teachers and pressure from  
11 teachers and others lead parents to seek pharmacological  
12 treatment as a solution to managing their child's disruptive  
13 behaviors in the classroom; and

14 WHEREAS, family physicians are probably the most  
15 frequent prescribers of stimulant drugs and antidepressant  
16 drugs, but do not necessarily have the experience or training  
17 to accurately diagnose behavioral health disorders;

18 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
19 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health be  
20 requested to convene a task force to study the potential  
21 misuse and overuse of prescription drugs in dealing with  
22 children's behavioral problems in school; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include  
24 representation from the public education department, the  
25 children's health program of the university of New Mexico,

1 pediatricians, child psychiatrists, pharmacists and others  
2 with special knowledge and experience in child health and  
3 welfare; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force identify  
5 alternative approaches to prescription medication, including  
6 nutrition and vitamin supplementation, and evaluate the  
7 safety and effectiveness of these approaches; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that approaches be identified to  
9 promote regular exercise and participation in sports in  
10 schools as a way to channel disruptive behavior in more  
11 positive directions; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that public outreach efforts to  
13 better educate physicians, parents, classroom teachers and  
14 school counselors about the potential dangers of prescription  
15 drugs and alternative approaches to disruptive behavior be  
16 developed; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that recommendations be developed  
18 regarding appropriate observation and examination of children  
19 prior to suggesting treatment with pharmaceutical agents; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and  
21 recommendations of the task force be presented to the  
22 legislative health and human services committee and the  
23 legislative education study committee at their respective  
24 October 2005 meetings; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be

1 sent to the department of health, the public education  
2 department and statewide organizations representing  
3 pediatricians and psychiatrists. \_\_\_\_\_

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