

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 55

2 49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO
12 DETERMINE THE NEED FOR SOCIAL WORKERS, THE COST OF GRADUATE
13 SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND THE NEED FOR STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS
14 FOR SOCIAL WORKERS.

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16 WHEREAS, loan forgiveness programs encourage future
17 professionals to pursue certain fields of study by offsetting
18 incurred loan debt with payments for certain work-related
19 requirements that must be fulfilled by the student borrower;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, according to the board of social work examiners,
22 New Mexico had only three thousand five hundred social workers
23 licensed at the master's level in 2008; and

24 WHEREAS, according to the workforce solutions department,
25 a beginning master's level social worker earns an average of
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1 twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per year, but graduates
2 with an average debt of twenty-six thousand seven hundred
3 dollars (\$26,700); and

4 WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2008, an estimated eighty thousand
5 two hundred fifty-four consumers were served with mental health
6 services, according to the annual report of the interagency
7 behavioral health purchasing collaborative; and

8 WHEREAS, as a group, social workers are traditionally the
9 largest provider of mental health services; and

10 WHEREAS, the New Mexico health policy commission manages a
11 geographic access data system that collects and reports
12 information on the distribution of selected health
13 professionals in rural and underserved areas to inform policy
14 decisions regarding the need for health professionals in those
15 areas; and

16 WHEREAS, data regarding the availability or need for
17 social workers is not included in that geographic access data
18 system;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
20 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health be requested
21 to conduct a study to determine the need for social workers,
22 the cost of graduate social work education and the need for
23 student loan forgiveness for social workers; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study identify current
25 shortages of social workers, particularly in rural areas; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health
2 collaborate with the New Mexico health policy commission to
3 identify the steps necessary to include social workers in the
4 geographic access data system; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study develop criteria for
6 awarding student loan forgiveness to social work students; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health
8 consult with the New Mexico chapter of the national association
9 of social workers and an association representing social work
10 students in conducting the study; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and
12 recommendations of this study be presented to the interim
13 legislative health and human services committee by October 1,
14 2009; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
16 transmitted to the secretary of health.

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