

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CREATION OF A STATEWIDE TASK FORCE TO ASSESS AND RECOMMEND POLICY OPTIONS TO ADDRESS THE ECONOMIC SECURITY AND HEALTH OF NEW MEXICO WOMEN AND FAMILIES; REQUESTING THE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS DEPARTMENT TO PERFORM A STATEWIDE SURVEY OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.

WHEREAS, economic security is one of the building blocks necessary for individuals, families and communities to have a healthy and fulfilling quality of life; and

WHEREAS, to be economically secure means to have unconditional and consistent access to stable and supportive employment, quality education, safe housing, safe communities, nutritious food, health care, social services and social justice; and

WHEREAS, when individuals, families and communities are economically secure, they are physically and mentally healthy and are able to thrive in their own environments; and

WHEREAS, public policy at the local, state and national levels can be created to ensure economically secure lives; and

WHEREAS, when individuals, families and communities are not economically secure, negative health outcomes result, affecting women and their families, particularly women and families of color; and

WHEREAS, according to the former New Mexico labor

department's 2000 survey of employee benefits in Albuquerque, only thirty-six percent of employers offered paid maternity leave benefits to full-time workers; twenty-three percent of employers offered paid benefits to part-time workers; and fifty percent of employers offered paid sick leave to full-time employees; and

WHEREAS, despite the economic downturn and the economy's negative impact on some businesses, employers still find it hard to find and retain skilled employees; and

WHEREAS, women are more likely to work part time and have lower incomes; and

WHEREAS, women's health status falls as their family income levels fall; and

WHEREAS, women with lower incomes suffer disproportionately from chronic disease, disability, mental health issues and poor health; and

WHEREAS, approximately sixteen million seven hundred thousand women are uninsured nationwide; and

WHEREAS, uninsured women are more likely to lack adequate access to care and have poorer health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, a lack of insurance further heightens economic insecurity; and

WHEREAS, race and ethnicity are important determinants of economic security; and

WHEREAS, the state of New Mexico ranks third-highest in

the nation for the percentage of persons below the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's median annual income for women is ranked forty-second in the nation; and

WHEREAS, fourteen and two-tenths percent of all New Mexicans have incomes below the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, thirteen and two-tenths percent, or ninety-six thousand one hundred eighty-four, of New Mexico households are headed by a woman, with no husband present; and

WHEREAS, among families with a female-headed household, thirty-six and two-tenths percent have income below the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, fifty-one and seven-tenths percent, or twenty-four thousand two hundred thirty-six, of grandparents who live with their grandchildren in New Mexico are primary caretakers, and the majority of these caretaker grandparents are women; and

WHEREAS, in New Mexico, women on average earn only seventy percent of what men earn; and

WHEREAS, for New Mexican women of color, the earnings gap is significantly higher than average: Hispanic women earn just fifty-five percent of what white men earn and American Indian women earn just fifty-three percent of what white men earn; and

WHEREAS, the office of the governor's council on women's

health has completed significant research on the impact of economic security on the health of women and families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the office of the governor's council on women's health or its successor be requested to convene a task force to study policy options related to paid maternity leave; paid time off; part-time employee benefits; policy incentives for family-friendly small businesses; employment-based childcare; and other issues that will improve the health of women and families by addressing economic security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include representatives from the university of New Mexico's bureau of business and economic research; the women's advocacy community; the workforce solutions department; the economic development department; the department of health; the human services department; the children, youth and families department's at-home infant care program; the chambers of commerce of New Mexico cities with populations over sixty thousand individuals; the small business community; an asset-building organization; and others that the office of the governor's council on women's health identifies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the workforce solutions department be requested to update its survey of employee benefits and report its findings to the task force by August

2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to use a five-component health model to develop comprehensive policy recommendations in the following areas:

- A. direct services;
- B. outreach and education;
- C. professional education;
- D. leadership development; and
- E. research; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to report to the interim legislative health and human services committee by November 1, 2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor; the chair and vice chair of the interim legislative health and human services committee; the secretary of workforce solutions; the secretary of economic development; the secretary of health; the secretary of human services; the secretary of children, youth and families; the executive director of the office of the governor's council on women's health; the director of the university of New Mexico's bureau of business and economic research; and the chairs of two chambers of commerce of New Mexico cities with populations over sixty thousand individuals.