

HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
HOUSE MEMORIAL 3

56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2024

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO
STUDY THE EFFECTS OF PRENATAL DRUG EXPOSURE ON BIRTH OUTCOMES
FOR CHILDREN; REQUESTING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE
REPORTED TO THE LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, more than one thousand two hundred children are
born in New Mexico each year, with nearly one in ten live
births being substance-exposed, one of the highest substance
exposure rates in the country; and

WHEREAS, the number of New Mexico newborns exposed to
addictive substances in utero increased three hundred twenty-
four percent between 2008 and 2017, and infants born exposed to
addictive substances may struggle with health, learning and
social challenges throughout their lives; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is currently experiencing a crisis in

1 the rise of fentanyl use and fentanyl pediatric exposure and
2 record numbers of overdoses; and

3 WHEREAS, infants whose mothers used drugs during pregnancy
4 are at risk for a range of physical, behavioral and cognitive
5 problems, including low birth weight, premature birth, vision
6 and hearing loss, fine and gross motor development delays,
7 sensory processing disorders, cognitive issues related to
8 executive functioning, gastrointestinal tract and reflux issues
9 and impaired pain sensation; and

10 WHEREAS, substance exposure and substance withdrawal
11 during early developmental stages can permanently alter brain
12 functioning, and effective prevention and intervention
13 approaches are critical to averting such harm; and

14 WHEREAS, since 2018, the United States children's bureau
15 has collected information on the number of substance-exposed
16 infants and service referrals made; and

17 WHEREAS, in 2019, New Mexico instituted the federal
18 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 plan of safe
19 care program to keep mothers and babies together with
20 supportive services; and

21 WHEREAS, according to the children, youth and families
22 department, from 2020 to 2021, nine infants with a plan of safe
23 care or notification died within their first year, and many of
24 those cases were also reported for child abuse; and

25 WHEREAS, early identification and intervention reduce

1 adverse outcomes of prenatal substance use, but stigma, shame
2 and fear of legal ramifications deter women from seeking
3 prenatal care; and

4 WHEREAS, nationally, it is reported that a child born with
5 prenatal substance exposure could cost a state two million
6 dollars (\$2,000,000) from birth to age eighteen;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
8 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the secretary
9 of health be requested to convene a task force to make
10 recommendations and to study the effects of prenatal drug
11 exposure on birth outcomes for children in New Mexico; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to
13 develop a data-driven implementation plan, focusing on
14 preventing prenatal opioid exposure, providing evidence-based
15 treatment for both mothers and infants, increasing the
16 accessibility of services for pregnant and parenting women with
17 substance use disorder, supporting continuing education for
18 health care providers and determining effective family and
19 developmental support services for children who have
20 experienced prenatal substance exposure; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to
22 involve appropriate stakeholders and relevant agencies; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be requested to
24 enter into an agreement with an institution of higher education
25 to perform research that supports the task force's work; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that those findings and
2 recommendations of the task force be presented to the
3 legislative health and human services committee by August 1,
4 2025; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
6 transmitted to the governor, the attorney general, the chair of
7 the legislative health and human services committee, the
8 director of the legislative finance committee, the appropriate
9 cabinet secretaries and the director of the children's cabinet.