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For Immediate Release

Health Care Recommendations Accepted by Governor Richardson

Santa Fe, October 15, 2003 – Today the Steering Committee of the Governor’s Health Care Coverage and Access (HCCA) Task Force submitted its report with recommendations to move the state forward in finding universal coverage and access for all New Mexicans. “The overall recommendations not only include universal coverage and access, but also the importance of incremental steps, and a shared responsibility of individuals and families, New Mexico businesses, state, local, tribal and federal governments,” said Pamela Hyde, Secretary of the Human Services Department (HSD).

The Task Force, which is a bi-partisan group of concerned New Mexicans representing the business community, the general public, health care professionals and advocates, and many dedicated legislators, began working together in July. “The Governor gave us a short amount of time to deal with a very large issue, and we believe we used that time wisely,” said Jim Hinton, HCCA Co-Chair and CEO of Presbyterian Health Services. “The cooperation of all those involved in the process helped us accomplish our goal in creating a very detailed report for the governor” said Ellen Leitzer, HCCA Co-Chair and Co-Director of the Senior Citizens Law Office Inc.

Some of the recommendations from the task force include:

- The serious exploration of an insurance purchasing pool.
- Strategies to re-design the behavioral health system and purchasing collaborative.
- Strategies to develop a comprehensive statewide health plan.
- Establishing state oversight of the financial stability of health care facilities in New Mexico.
- Maximize Medicaid, as resources for match are available.
- Implement financial policies – including tax code changes, reimbursement rates, and data collection.

“The Task Force examined the system to understand what’s working, and what is not,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “I am ready to examine the recommendations of the Task Force and move this agenda forward.”

Some of the next steps recommended by the HCCA are to initiate legislative action during the January 2004 regular session, with any subsequently needed legislation addressed in special or regular sessions later. “We will also be working closely with the Interim Health and Human Services Legislative Committee,” said Patricia Montoya, Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH).

A federal grant received recently by the Human Services Department will provide resources for the financial analysis of some of the Steering Committee’s recommendations.

**The complete report by the HCCA Task Force can be found on the HSD website at
www.state.nm.us/hsd/home.html**