



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 2348
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

Bill Richardson
Governor

Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.
Secretary

Contact: Betina Gonzales McCracken (505) 827-6245 or (505) 699-4675

For Immediate Release

One of Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Initiatives Unanimously Passes Senate Floor

Other legislation that will increase access to health coverage for New Mexicans, especially children, get committee approval

Santa Fe, February 4, 2006 – One of Governor Bill Richardson's initiatives that will help decrease the number of uninsured in New Mexico unanimously passed the Senate this afternoon and is on its way to the House of Representatives.

Senate Bill 381, sponsored by Senator Sue Wilson Beffort, gives employers more options in covering their employees through the Health Insurance Alliance (HIA). The legislation allows the HIA the opportunity to offer employers affordable health insurance through publicly offered programs, such as the State Coverage Insurance Program. Duplicate legislation, **House Bill 24** sponsored by Representative Peter Wirth, is scheduled for hearing before the House Business and Industry Committee on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, two other *Insure New Mexico!* pieces of legislation are making their way through the session.

- **Senate Bill 267 as amended** and duplicate **House Bill 118 as amended, Medical and Premium Assistance Program**, today unanimously passed out of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Government and Urban Affairs Committee, respectively. This legislation authorizes the Human Services Department to provide medical and premium assistance for children who are not Medicaid eligible. "This is a very important piece of legislation in our efforts to insure every child ages zero to five during this "Year of the Child'," said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department Secretary. **SB 267** is scheduled to be heard by the full Senate on Monday.
- **Senate Bill 280 and House Bill 481 – Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee**, are pending hearings before the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations and Finance Committee, respectively. This committee is designed to analyze and determine the cost of various models designed to achieve health coverage for all New Mexicans.

The number of uninsured New Mexicans stands at 399,000 or 21.0%, according to the Census Current Population Survey, 2004. Of that figure, approximately 21,000 children under the age of five are uninsured; however, approximately 16,000 of those likely qualify for Medicaid, but are not enrolled. Of the remaining uninsured children, 5,000 live in households with incomes above 235% of the Federal Poverty Level and do not qualify for Medicaid.

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