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For Immediate Release

Legislation to Increase Access to Substance Abuse Service Providers in Rural and Tribal Areas of the State Passes House Business and Industry Committee and Senate Public Affairs Committee

Bills Will Allow More Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors to Become Providers for Medicaid Services

Santa Fe, February 16, 2007 – The House Business and Industry Committee and the Senate Public Affairs Committee have unanimously passed legislation that increases access to behavioral health services through Medicaid in rural and tribal areas of the state.

House Bill (HB) 713 and Senate Bill (SB) 494 – Counseling and Therapy Licensure Requirements is sponsored by Representative Ray Begaye and Senator Phil Griego, respectively. This legislation allows experienced and qualified Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CADACs) to be grandfathered into the system as Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (LADACs). This change will increase access across the state for Medicaid reimbursable behavioral health services for recipients under the age of 21. Indian Health Service and Tribal 638 providers would also benefit, as the legislation allows them to be reimbursed at the Office of Management Budget all-inclusive rates.

HB 713 and SB 494 would provide a three-year window for the NM Therapy and Counseling Board to grant licensure to providers who have been certified as CADACs from July 1, 1996 through July 1, 2010. The 3-year window begins July 1, 2007 and ends on July 1, 2010.

“Rural and frontier communities of the state, including Native American communities, face compounded shortages of behavioral health practitioners, which continue to be a deterrent to improving behavioral health services,” said Secretary Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department and co-chair of the Behavioral Health Collaborative (Collaborative). “This legislation will help those already certified and working as alcohol and drug abuse counselors become licensed and increase funding for behavioral health services.”

This legislation is a recommendation of the Governor’s Executive Order Working Group on the Behavioral Health Workforce. The Collaborative, the Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC), the Native American Subcommittee of the BHPC and the New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Practice Board all support this legislation.

HB 713 now moves to the House Health and Government Affairs Committee. SB 494 now moves to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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