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**For Immediate Release**

## **New Mexico Senate Unanimously Passes Legislation That Expands the Opportunity for Health Care Coverage for Children through Child Support**

### **Bill Allows Court to Decide Which Parent Should Be Responsible for Child's Medical Support**

*Santa Fe, February 21, 2007* – Today the New Mexico Senate unanimously passed legislation that will provide an opportunity for New Mexico's children of split families to have private medical insurance coverage obtained by either or both parents.

**Senate Public Affairs Committee (SPAC) substitute for Senate Bill (SB) 296**, sponsored by Senator Phil Griego, allows the court to determine which parent, non-custodial or custodial, is in the best position to obtain medical insurance for the child. Current legislation only requires consideration of coverage by the non-custodial parent. This legislation will also bring New Mexico into compliance with required provisions of the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

“In some instances it may be easier and less expensive for the custodial parent to get medical insurance for the child through their employer,” said Cathi Valdes, Acting Child Support Enforcement Division Director (CSED) in the Human Services Department. “In that case, the non-custodial parent would be ordered to pay regular child support, which would include his or her proportionate share of the cost for the medical insurance coverage being provided by the custodial parent.”

If this legislation passes the full legislature, the result will be that more children will be covered by private health insurance. Currently, only 35% of the children in CSED cases are covered by private health insurance when health insurance has been court ordered.

**SPAC substitute for SB 296** now goes to the House for approval. Duplicate **House Bill 694**, sponsored by Representative Jim Trujillo, awaits hearings before the House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee and the House Health and Government Affairs Committee.

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