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**For Immediate Release**

## **Legislation That Expands the Opportunity for Health Care Coverage for Children through Child Support Headed to the Governor for Final Approval**

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

*Santa Fe, March 16, 2007* – 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 unanimously passed the State Senate this evening and is now headed to Governor Bill Richardson for his signature.

**House Bill (HB) 694**, sponsored by Representative Jim Trujillo, allows the court to determine which parent, non-custodial or custodial, is in the best position to obtain medical insurance for the child. Current law requires consideration of coverage by the non-custodial parent only.

“This change will extend health care coverage to more children, by giving the court more options to determine which parent should be responsible for the child's health care coverage,” said Cathi Valdes, Acting Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) Director in the Human Services Department. “In some instances, it may be easier and less expensive for the custodial parent to get medical insurance for the child through his or her employer and the non-custodial parent would then pay a proportionate share of the costs along with child support.”

The result of the passage of this legislation is 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 ordered by the court.

This legislation will also bring New Mexico into compliance with required provisions of the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

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