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For Immediate Release

New Mexico House of Representatives 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, March 2, 2007 – Today the New Mexico House of Representatives 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.

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 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.

HB 694 now goes to the Senate, where last month the Senate unanimously passed duplicate **Senate Bill 296**, sponsored by Senator Phil Griego.

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