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**For Immediate Release**

## **Health Care Partnership Act Introduced By Speaker Ben Lujan**

### **Legislation Final Piece of Governor Richardson's Health Reform Agenda**

*Santa Fe, New Mexico* – Today Speaker Ben Lujan introduced House Bill 779, the Health Care Partnership Act in an effort to identify solutions to the high number of New Mexicans without health care coverage.

“The Health Care Partnership Act is a collaborative effort of the legislature and the executive branches of government to address health care access, quality, coverage and costs,” said Ben Lujan, Speaker of the House. “It is time to work together to come up with answers for such an important issue and not work against each other to find roadblocks.”

“This legislation puts aside the disagreements of the past and is a real compromise approach by taking pieces of several comprehensive health care reform bills that have been introduced over the years, but have not had enough traction to go anywhere,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “By coming together we could really get something done for the citizens of our state.”

HB 779 will set the framework and take real steps toward controlling the cost of health care and health coverage; addressing the quality of health care to achieve real outcomes; setting standards for access and workforce capacity in New Mexico; and increasing health coverage and portability options for New Mexicans. The bill calls for the following:

1. Conduct studies to make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by September 1, 2010 concerning coverage, quality, access and other health care issues.
2. Develop essential, expanded and long-term services benefit plans that employers and individuals can buy into
3. Develop potential financing mechanisms for paying for these plans
4. Develop affordability guidelines that the legislature can use if and when they are funds available to assist individuals in participating in these plans
5. Authorize the Human Services Department to offer these partnership benefit plans to employers, individuals, and other groups, using private sector insurance companies where appropriate, and using state, federal and private dollars as available and appropriate to increase coverage and portability
6. Authorize the Department of Health to review and adopt practice and access standards for health care in New Mexico.

HB 779 does not create any new administrative infrastructures, nor does it mandate anyone to have insurance other than nonresident students who are enrolling in New Mexico educational institutions.

There is a one-time appropriation of \$500,000 for the legislative council services for use by the Partnership in accomplishing its work.

HB 779 has been referred to the House Business and Industry Committee and the House Appropriations and Finance Committee.

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