



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
P.O. Box 2348  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

**Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.**  
*Secretary*

*Contact Betina Gonzales McCracken (505) 476-6205*

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Speaker Lujan's Health Care Partnership Act Gets House Appropriations and Finance Committee Approval**

### **Legislation is Compromise Approach to Health Care Reform**

*Santa Fe, New Mexico* – Today the House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC) gave a “do pass” to the Committee substitute for House Bill 779, the Health Care Partnership Act, sponsored by House Speaker Ben Lujan and other key Representatives and part of Governor Bill Richardson’s Health Care Reform Agenda.

HAFC substitute for HB 779 is a collaborative effort of the legislature and the executive branches of government to address health care access, quality, coverage and costs. This legislation is a compromise approach to health care reform by taking pieces of several comprehensive bills that have been introduced over the years, but have not had enough traction to get approval.

The Health Care Partnership Act 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.

H AFC substitute for 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.

H AFC substitute for HB 779 now heads to the House floor for approval.

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