



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

July 16, 2003

Dear (Task Force Member):

I am very pleased with the progress the members of the Uninsured Stakeholder Group made in their initial two meetings to address the health care coverage and access issues in New Mexico. As you know, I have made a commitment to work toward opportunities for coverage for all New Mexicans and to assure that access to care is possible for everyone in New Mexico who needs that care. With your help, I think we can achieve those goals.

After input from many of you and from the Cabinet Secretaries working on this issue, I have decided to formally appoint a Governor's Health Care Coverage and Access Task Force to continue the work that has been started. I am also asking a smaller group, as a Steering Committee of this Task Force, to make a report to me by October 1, 2003, on what we can do as a state to achieve these goals. I am appointing you as a member of this Task Force, and ask that you provide input on recommendations for legislative and executive action that can be taken to further these goals. This Task Force represents businesses, health care professionals, advocates and legislators. It will be staffed by Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde and Department of Health Secretary Patricia Montoya.

I am also pleased to tell you that Mr. James H. Hinton, President/CEO of Presbyterian Healthcare Services, and Ms. Ellen Leitzer, founder and co-director of the Senior Citizens Law Office, Inc. and Vice President and founder of Health Action New Mexico, have agreed to be co-chairs of this Task Force and Steering Committee. These individuals, along with the Secretaries staffing and supporting this effort, will provide the leadership and perspective necessary to be successful in this daunting task.

We live in extraordinary times, with extraordinary opportunities. Our people are disproportionately poor and uninsured. Our children are disproportionately reliant on Medicaid for their health care needs. Our employers are disproportionately unable to afford health care for their employees, and our economy is increasingly dependent on the business of health care. Working low-income individuals in our state cannot afford the health insurance or the health care they need to keep themselves and their families healthy and productive. We must find ways to insure all New Mexicans and reduce the impact of lack of access to preventive, primary and tertiary health and behavioral health care in New Mexico. We must also find ways to reduce the economic burden on businesses and on health care providers of increasing insurance costs and uncompensated care.

I am looking for your best thinking about how to address these issues. I want to call a special session of the legislature when the time is right. I believe we can accomplish the work necessary to craft legislation to begin



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this process sometime this fall. I would like your report on what that legislation should be and when during the next several months we as a state might be ready for that special session to occur.

My Cabinet Secretaries have taken the first step. They have worked with the stakeholder group to discuss and refine the principles that will guide your work. I ask that you use the principles presented at the second meeting of the stakeholders group for this purpose, and that you focus on the ideas in the paper *A Proposed Health Care Agenda for New Mexico* as the basis for your work. Refine those ideas; put meat on the bones; add and delete what you think will work to assure universal coverage and access for all people in New Mexico. You will soon receive information from Secretaries Hyde and Montoya about your next meetings.

Thank you for your work so far, and for what I know will be hard work in the months ahead. Together, we will find a way to take action now to address the health care needs of our state.

Sincerely,

Bill Richardson

Governor