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For Immediate Release

**Changes in Child Support Enforcement Legislation on its way to
Governor Richardson for Approval**
(New Mexico's children will benefit from changes.)

Santa Fe, February 18, 2004 - Tonight the House of Representatives unanimously passed Senate Judiciary Committee substitute for SB 48, that allows the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) of the Human Services Department (HSD) to negotiate with non-custodial parents, lower interest rates, create an amnesty program for delinquent child support cases, and limit the number of years in which to establish paternity.

This legislation, sponsored by Senator Manny Aragon, will help New Mexico's children who are growing up in split-parent families. "Allowing CSED to negotiate with non-custodial parents will make it easier to get them on a payment plan and start getting support to the children who deserve and need it," said Stephanie Gonzales CSED Director

CS/SB allows CSED to forgive accrued interest on delinquent child support cases, under certain circumstances, lower the interest rate to four percent on all cases, and create an unpaid child support interest arrears management program or amnesty beginning later this year. "It is the goal of CSED to ensure that "both" parents are supporting their child, or children," said Gonzales. "These changes help us accomplish our goal by getting non-custodial parents in the door and allow them to take the first step toward becoming responsible." This legislation also limits the time for paternity establishment to 12 years, retroactive to the date of the child's birth.

CSED is handling approximately 63,000 child support cases in New Mexico. Last fiscal year, CSED increased child support enforcement collections to \$72 million, up by 12.6 percent from the previous year. CSED anticipates collecting \$78 million by the end of the current fiscal year.

CS/SB 48 is now headed up to the governor's office for final approval and signature.

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