



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Announces Support for “Kendra’s Law”

Legislation will help those with serious mental illness receive needed care

(SANTA FE, NM) - Governor Bill Richardson today announced his support for “Kendra’s Law,” House Bill 174, a bipartisan effort to help those with a serious mental illness receive the care they need before their illness drives them to commit a crime.

The Governor was joined by Representative Joni Marie Gutierrez, the bill’s sponsor, as well as Debbie King and Susan Smith whose husbands were killed by a behavioral health patient last August in Albuquerque, and Albuquerque Police Sgt. Carol Oleksak who in 2003 was shot in the head by a man with both brain injuries and schizophrenia.

“Kendra’s Law will help patients live and function in their communities by working to get them the compassionate care and treatment they need,” said Governor Richardson. “We need this law to prevent events like the tragic murders in Albuquerque last summer. We have to do everything we can to prevent this from happening to another family, another police officer, or another community, ever again.”

Under this law, a patient’s family or doctors will be able to get a court order to require treatment for those whose severe mental illness makes them a threat to themselves and their community. This law, named for Kendra Webdale a New Yorker who was pushed in front of a subway train by a schizophrenic man, is already in place and helping people in 42 states.

“This law is all about helping those who, sadly, are too sick to help themselves,” said Representative Joni Marie Gutierrez, sponsor of House Bill 174. “Treating this small but significant group of people will make New Mexico’s communities safer.”

Kendra's Law is supported by the National Alliance for Mental Illness and Jane Lancaster, NAMI's Albuquerque Chapter President, also joined Governor Richardson at his afternoon press conference. Both Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez and U.S. Senator Pete Domenici, have also come out in strong support of this legislation.

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