



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NEW MEXICO TO PARTNER WITH FEDS TO RUN HIGH-RISK INSURANCE POOL**

SANTA FE, N. Mex. – Additional New Mexicans could get insurance coverage as early as this summer through the first program to emerge from the recent federal health care legislation. Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidance to states on how to apply to participate in creating a temporary high-risk pool as allowed by the new law. The pool would cover New Mexicans with pre-existing conditions who have been uninsured for at least six months.

On behalf of Governor Bill Richardson, a letter was submitted to HHS indicating New Mexico's intent to submit an application to contract with the federal government to operate a temporary high risk pool program. The letter states that, "New Mexico's initial concept is to operate the federal temporary high risk pool program in coordination with the State's current high risk pool." The state's next step will be to submit an implementation plan for federal approval.

"We are a 'shovel ready' program that is well equipped to manage this new federal funding and to assist the Governor in his intent to encourage health care coverage and access for as many of our citizens as possible," said Farmington City Councilman Jason Sandel, the Vice Chairman of the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool.

"Thanks to Governor Richardson New Mexico will be out in front to capitalize on an estimated \$37 million in federal funds until the end of 2013," said Deborah Armstrong, NMMIP's Executive Director. The temporary pools, which start in 2010, will expire in 2014 when the new federal law bars the denial of insurance coverage for medical reasons.

"We'll launch it as quickly as we can," said Armstrong. "Having it under the existing NMMIP board would make it more likely that we'll have it up and running by July 1."

New Mexico created its high-risk pool program in 1987, known as the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool (NMMIP). It currently serves more than 8,000 state residents who are denied adequate health insurance and are considered uninsurable. NMMIP is

considered one of the most efficient, affordable and comprehensive health insurance pools in the nation.

NMMIP Vice Chairman Jason Sandel added, “We should capitalize on the pool’s existing governance, efficiency in operations and fiscal accountability standards. By utilizing our existing program, the NMMIP will be able to maximize its ability to offer affordable coverage to New Mexicans. “

For additional information on the NMMIP please see NMMIP’s website at <http://www.nmmip.org> or for any additional questions or to contact Deborah Armstrong, please contact our media liaison, DeAnza Sapien at (505) 301-9202.

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