

defeat **malnutrition** today

February 20, 2019

Dear Chair Armstrong and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

The nonpartisan national Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition is proud to lend its support to New Mexico House Bill 466, which would establish a malnutrition commission to study the impact of malnutrition statewide as it relates to health care, education and prevention.

I especially commend you, Chairman Armstrong, for your special leadership on behalf of this bill and this issue. I also commend the sponsors of the legislation, Reps. Bash, Pratt, Ferrary, Trujillo and Armstrong, and congratulate this Committee for holding this important hearing on Senior Day in New Mexico.

You are correct in this legislation to focus on the problem of malnutrition, especially as it relates to older adults, considering:

- Up to one in two older adults is malnourished or at risk for malnutrition;
- Hospital costs can be up to 300% greater for individuals who are malnourished;
- Malnourished hospitalized adults have up to five times increased mortality and 50% higher readmission rates;
- The estimated cost of disease-related malnutrition in New Mexico alone is over \$92.4 million.

The Commission called for in this bill would approach the issue from a comprehensive and inclusive vantage point from its coverage of older adults and children. It would study the issue as it relates to New Mexico, including assessing the influence of malnutrition on health care costs and outcomes. It would work to improve data collection, so we have a clearer idea of the extent of the problem.

We especially support the bill's call for the development of strategies for maximizing the dissemination of proven effective malnutrition prevention models including community nutrition programs, medical nutrition therapy and oral nutrition supplements. We also support the bill's provisions to raise public awareness and its call for the identification of models for integrating the value of malnutrition care into health care quality evaluations across health care payment models.

We support the timeline of the bill, including a final report by June of 2020, and we also strongly support the proposed composition of the commission members. It is both comprehensive, inclusive and multidisciplinary.

As the bill states, its goals are admirable, including reducing the incidences of malnutrition in the state, improving malnutrition care statewide and reducing the incidences of medical or health complications associated with malnutrition.

We hope the bill can gain swift passage in this Committee followed by the full Legislature. If passed, New Mexico would join Massachusetts and Ohio who also had legislation passed to create malnutrition commissions with very important work to date.

Again, we are happy to convey our strong support and commendation for this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Bob Blancato
National Coordinator
Defeat Malnutrition Today