

Cure Exists for Health Care Crisis

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A statement from the Governor's office would lead us to believe that any of the reform models studied by Mathematica Policy Research would be less costly than the current system. However, that is not what the study concluded.

The findings were that only one reform model currently costs less than the current system, and that model is the Health Security Act.

We regret to note that a statement attributed by the Governor's Office to Lt. Gov. Diane Denish is also inaccurate: "In the long run, making no change in the current health care system would be more costly than moving forward with some type of reform."

Mathematica found that even after five years of operation, only the Health Security Act costs less than the current system, and the other reform models still cost. In fact, by 2011, the Health Security Act has estimated savings of \$698 to \$887 million - and every New Mexico resident would have coverage.

Mathematica found that the Health Security Act costs the least and saves the most money because it covers most New Mexicans under one cooperative plan with comprehensive benefits. This model also shifts the role of the insurance companies to provide supplementary insurance, just as they did under the original Medicare.

We have to ask:

1. Why are the Governor and Lt. Governor making inaccurate statements about the Mathematica study? .

2. Why, after spending over \$300,000 of taxpayers' money on the Mathematica study, are Governor Richardson and his Health Coverage for New Mexicans Committee (chaired by Denish) ignoring the unambiguous findings and the strong public support for the Health Security Act, which is endorsed by 128 organizations and 25 New Mexico counties and municipalities?
3. Why is Governor Richardson insisting that the private insurance system is broken only for the uninsured?
4. Why are the Governor and his Health Coverage for New Mexicans Committee ignoring the evidence - that is piling up day after day - that the private health insurance system is completely broken?

The Governor has stated that he wants the private insurance industry to maintain its dominant role in health insurance coverage.

The policy recommendations that the Governor sent to the Committee, and which the Committee's proposals mirror to a great extent (including establishing a so-called health insurance authority), will not solve the problem of rising health care costs or simplify an extraordinarily complex health insurance system, and are meant to bind us to this failing system for years to come.

Continuing to invest public dollars in the broken private insurance system makes absolutely no sense. With the clear results of the Mathematica study now before us, we believe that New Mexico has an opportunity to choose one of two very different paths.

We can continue to try to fix the failed private insurance system with ever-increasing amounts of taxpayer dollars, or we can go in a new direction. The Health Security Act, by establishing a cooperative health plan, enables New Mexicans – not the insurance companies - to develop a realistic, cost-effective and comprehensive solution to our health care crisis.

The path we take will have a serious impact on all New Mexicans. We are the ones who need to make that choice and communicate our views to the Governor and our legislators.