



2019 Legislation: New Mexico's County and Tribal Health Councils

House Bill (HB137): County and Tribal Health Councils Act: Authorizes and strengthens New Mexico's health council system; updates and replaces the 1991 County Maternal and Child Health Plan Act. Sets forth procedures and legal basis for county and tribal health councils; outlines functions of health councils; addresses relationships to state, county and tribal governments in the state's public health system.

House Bill (HB67): Funding for County and Tribal Health Councils: Appropriates \$1,000,000 to the NM Department of Health to fund the health councils. Provides funding for county and tribal health councils to create community health plans and other functions.

The sponsor of these bills is Representative Liz Thomson. The Legislative Health and Human Services Committee has endorsed both bills.

Health councils are in all 33 New Mexico counties and 6 tribal communities. Since 1991, the health councils have proven their effectiveness in identifying and addressing local health and health care priorities. Health councils have:

- ▲ Created comprehensive community health assessments and plans
- ▲ Developed hundreds of programs, services, and partnerships in their communities
- ▲ Identified gaps in services and reduced costly duplication of efforts
- ▲ Brought millions of dollars into their communities to improve health
- ▲ Influenced policies at the local, regional, and state levels
- ▲ Provided key support to the NM Dept. of Health and other state agencies in serving local communities

Health councils play a crucial role: New Mexico is one of a handful of states that have centralized public health systems—unlike most states that have local health boards and county-run public health offices. The health councils fill this need through community-based health assessment, planning, and coordination. State agencies depend on the health councils to gather local data and set priorities. Health councils serve as a vital communications link between communities and state agencies and statewide organizations and coalitions. The councils play a key role in New Mexico's national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).

This legislation is important: HB137 reflects and supports the growth of health councils from maternal and child health councils into comprehensive health councils, and recognizes their central role in the state's public health system.

HB67 partially restores the \$2.8 million in annual State funding that was suspended as part of 2010 budget cuts following the 2008 recession. This funding is critical for health councils to achieve full effectiveness and fulfill their statutory mandate.

Senate Memorial 44 (SM44), passed by the New Mexico Legislature in 2018, asked the NM Alliance of Health Councils to convene a task force, comprised of health councils, state agencies, universities and other partners, to “identify steps to strengthen the structure, effectiveness and sustainability of county and tribal health councils.” The SM44 Task Force Report cited the need for new legislation that would provide for continuous quality improvement, outcome evaluation, health council training and technical assistance, and integration with local, regional, and statewide public health and health care systems.

For additional information, or for information for your local health council, please contact:

New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils

A. Terrie Rodriguez, Executive Director

P.O. Box 4641

Santa Fe, NM 87502

Cell: (505) 231-1177

Email: terrie@nmhealthcouncils.org

Web: www.nmhealthcouncil.org