



A Memorial to Create a New Mexico Measure of Poverty

The Problem: The current standard of identifying whether or not an individual or family is living in poverty is based on the standards set by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The standards are the same across the 48 contiguous states, and do not vary by location. In 2023, approximately 368,669 people in New Mexico were living below the federal poverty level, representing a 17.8 percent poverty rate, which is one of the highest in the nation. An even broader measure indicates that nearly half of New Mexico households (46 percent or over 385,000) struggle to make ends meet, combining those in poverty with "ALICE" (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

The Solution: Because the Federal Poverty Levels are not measured by individual states or even regions, a study is needed to show how many individuals and families are truly living within the levels of poverty. We don't believe that the federal thresholds are adequate to represent the daily lives of New Mexicans.

Legislative Proposal: We propose that a memorial be introduced to instruct the Legislative Finance Committee to conduct a study on the number of people (individuals and families, especially veterans) that are living within or below the poverty threshold set by HHS. We believe that this study will show that many more New Mexicans are struggling than are eligible for assistance under the current standards. Special attention should be paid to rural communities that lack access to urban resources.

Potential Partners: Legislators from both parties should support this measure from both urban and rural communities as well as housing and homelessness prevention organizations, and the Center on Law and Poverty.

Potential Opposition: No opposition currently identified.

How will we pay for it? LFC staff would conduct the study, or a private contractor could be engaged.

