



State of New Mexico
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

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Diane D. Denish
Lieutenant Governor

December 12, 2003

Honorable Pats Domenici
United States Senate
328 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Domenici:

I am writing to express my concern about the TANF reauthorization bill's (H.R. 4) provision to expand the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). I believe that a state-specific survey would provide much more useful in evaluating New Mexico's TANF program. I am hopeful that you would consider co-sponsoring Senator Rockefeller's bill and amendment to provide for the state-specific cross sectional survey instead of the SIPP expansion.

The overarching purpose of welfare reform, set forth in the current reauthorization legislation, is to improve the well-being of children. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of state TANF policy, states need reliable data on how their children are faring. With this in mind, the reauthorization bill provides for expansion of the existing Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). However, even after expansion, the SIPP would not provide state-specific data for the twenty seven least populous states, including New Mexico. A state-level cross sectional survey built on the National Survey of Child Health would provide state-specific data on child well-being for every state. Therefore, I believe that a state-level survey of child and family well-being built on the National Survey of Child Health would be a better investment of the funds allocated to research within the reauthorization bill.

It is important to note that the state-level survey would be funded by the expansion currently provided for in the reauthorization bill. Both current law and the House bill already include \$10 million in annual funding for tracking child well-being. The Rockefeller measures are designed to invest that funding more productively to improve state policy-making capacity.

As you well know, policymakers in New Mexico are often frustrated by the lack of timely New Mexico-specific data. The lack of information makes it difficult to predict the impact of policy or even gauge its consequences. Creation of the state-level data would enable us to make informed choices and adjust state policy as necessary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane D. Denish

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