



P.O. Box 95735  
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(505) 235-6323

RE: Support **HB 303 Exposure to Certain Drugs as Child Abuse**

Mr./Madame Chair and Committee Members:

Better Together New Mexico (BTNM) brings together hundreds of advocacy groups and thousands of New Mexicans statewide. Our mission is to unite New Mexicans through grassroots initiatives and work to positively shape the decisions that affect our lives, families, and communities.

BTNM strongly supports HB 303 Exposure to Certain Drugs as Child Abuse New Mexico has seen a significant increase in the rate of newborns diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), which grew by 324% between 2008 and 2017. In 2020, 2,000 babies in New Mexico hospitals were identified as exposed to a controlled substance. New Mexico's rate of substance-exposed newborns is higher than the national average.

Federal law, under the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), mandates states to develop plans of safe care for infants affected by prenatal substance exposure. These plans address the infant's and caregivers' health and treatment needs to ensure the child's safety and well-being. Approximately 1,200 safe care plans were created annually between 2020 and 2022 in New Mexico.

New Mexico's 2019 legislation mandates hospitals and birthing centers to develop care plans for substance-exposed newborns and refer families to voluntary support and treatment services.

This bill emphasizes the importance of protecting infants and children from harm. The implementation of safe care plans and the focus on preventing substance use during pregnancy remains essential in ensuring the well-being of both the child and their caregivers.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote '**YES**' on HB 303 Exposure to Certain Drugs as Child Abuse.

Thank you for considering my comments,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Carla J. Sonntag'.

**Carla J. Sonntag**  
President and CEO