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RE: Oppose **HB 8 Criminal Competency & Treatment**

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 opposes HB 8 Criminal Competency & Treatment, as it fails to fully address the crime crisis in our state. This bill, an 'omnibus bill' combining several other bills, takes a weak approach to crime. HB 8 prioritizes leniency over accountability at a time when New Mexicans are demanding stronger action. NMBC has proof:

From January 31 to February 6, BTNM's sister organization, the New Mexico Business Coalition (NMBC), conducted a survey of 541 randomly selected registered voters using a professional polling company, CW Strategies LLC. Here's how respondents from all major parties and age groups felt about key public safety issues:

- **94% agreed that "Repeat offenders charged with violent crimes should be held until trial"**
- **64% agreed that "State and local law enforcement should cooperate with federal officials to enforce immigration laws against criminals."**
- **88% agreed that "The state should increase criminal penalties for retail theft and vandalism."**
- **93% agreed that "The state should increase penalties for dealers of fentanyl and other deadly drugs."**
- **90% agreed that "The state should take steps to prevent drugs, gangs, and human traffickers from entering New Mexico through our southern border."**

These results send a clear message that New Mexicans want tougher crime policies, not more soft-on-crime legislation rolled into HB 8. This bill's emphasis on outpatient treatment and reduced institutionalization fails to hold offenders accountable, creating more opportunities for criminals to avoid justice. Lawmakers must take New Mexico's crime crisis seriously and implement policies that genuinely protect public safety.

For the reasons stated, BTNM opposes HB 8 Criminal Competency & Treatment and urges you to say 'NO' to its passage. Instead, please consider a tough-on-crime stance that can be addressed in individual pieces of legislation.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Carla J. Sonntag
President and CEO