

How New Mexico Prepares for Today's and Tomorrow's Challenges That Affect Our Physical, Mental and Economic Health

By Senator Pete Campos

As New Mexico lawmakers head into the legislative session, the number one priority is ending the COVID-19 pandemic so we can get back to school, work and economic development. We face a pandemic that impacts two million New Mexicans of all ages and income levels, with prevention that involves federal, state, tribal, county and city governments. New Mexico has never faced such a need for coordination and communication among governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

A comprehensive statewide COVID-19 prevention plan must go far beyond a strategy for testing, contact tracing or vaccine implementation. New Mexico requires a thorough plan to address the COVID -19 pandemic while also addressing an economic downturn and a disrupted education process.

New Mexico has what no other state has — a data-driven and collaborative strategy to mobilize the state and each county. This strategy, called the "100% New Mexico initiative", seeks to ensure 10 vital services for all residents, including a pandemic-prepared medical care sector. The 100% New Mexico initiative is sponsored by New Mexico State University and is based on the book *100% Community: Ensuring 10 Vital Services for Surviving and Thriving*. The concept behind this initiative originated from the idea that "together we can care for one another" — 100% of residents. The 10 services include medical care, behavioral health care, food, housing, transportation, support for parents, early childhood learning, community schools, mentoring and job training.

This initiative is currently in place in seven counties. In my region, San Miguel County, the initiative is proving to be an inspiring process of collaboration. Matt Probst, medical director at El Centro Family Health, stated, "The 100% New Mexico initiative promotes 'big picture' systems change as it builds a countywide system of critical support."

I propose that New Mexico commit to investing in the 100% New Mexico initiative for five reasons:

1. **Alignment:** Our priority is to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, follow safe health practices, test regularly, provide vaccines and get people back to a position of optimism and

opportunity. The 100% New Mexico initiative brings together all of the contributors in medical care and public health, creating a network to ensure alignment of services and messaging that supports public health guidelines.

2. **Comprehensiveness:** We need a plan that encompasses statewide health recovery and long-term proactive maintenance. The data-driven 100% New Mexico initiative is poised to provide the prototype for an action plan that can be effectively applied in crisis situations and customized to work in all 33 counties. In addition to county-based capacity building, we can expand and strengthen regional support using the current five-region public health model.

3. **Inclusivity:** The 100% New Mexico initiative states that "we can care for one another" — 100% of residents — and keep our population strong, whether people live in an urban, rural or frontier area anywhere in the state.

4. **Cost-Effectiveness:** This approach coordinates the effectiveness of available human and material resources, eliminates duplication and minimizes professional burnout. It is designed to bring together all of the talent from within a county and harness local ingenuity and energy. It operates with support from the existing workforces in 10 sectors, including health care, education and workforce development.

5. **Unification:** The initiative encourages more collaboration, working together and sharing the credit. This concept enhances unified accomplishment, curtails blame and builds bridges of health, hope and happiness.

During a time of countless obstacles, including stresses, strains, depression, addiction, hunger, increasing debt and uncontrollable family burdens, the 100% New Mexico initiative, already being piloted in seven counties, shines as a beacon leading us to a collective vision and strategy. It leaves us motivated to provide hands-up services to those who may not have been recognized under normal circumstances.

Once the 100% New Mexico initiative is fully implemented, we will be prepared for unprecedented events that affect our physical and mental health. We will also be prepared, on a county, city and community level, to address our economic health through careful crisis-proof business development. We have the plan; now we require the visionary political will.