

New Mexico House of Representatives

Representative Javier Martinez (Democrat, District 11)

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House Memorial 71 Is Changing the Conversation about Alcohol

Legislation aims to take a more complete look at the effects of alcohol abuse

Santa Fe- NM House Representative Javier Martinez is broadening the conversation about alcohol to involve economics, and the New Mexico State House of Representatives unanimously passed House Memorial 71 during the 2015 session to more thoroughly study the impact of alcohol.

The Santa Fe Prevention Alliance played a pivotal role in educating legislators about the need for such a study. House Memorial 71, sponsored by Rep. Javier Martinez (D- Bernalillo County), requests a study that will compile all aspects of the impact of alcohol on our state into one comprehensive document to provide critical information to state and local policy makers as they address alcohol availability.

Key issues to be studied include alcohol's contribution to state and local economies, the impact on Medicaid and other health care expenditures, allocation of alcohol prevention and treatment resources, and the impact of underage drinking.

When communities turn to alcohol sales as a means of economic development, the cost of associated alcohol-related harm is often ignored. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) estimates that the economic cost of alcohol abuse in New Mexico is \$1.9 billion, a per capita cost of \$960- the third highest in the nation.

Additionally, alcohol abuse and dependence pose significant risks to public health and safety in New Mexico. Since 1997, New Mexico has had the highest death rate due to alcohol in the United States: 1 in 6 deaths among working age adults (ages 20 to 64) are attributed to alcohol in our state. Underage drinking is also a serious concern, with 22% of high school students reporting drinking alcohol before the age of 13, the fourth highest rate in the nation.

HM 71 will require state agencies, led by the Department of Health, to study all relevant factors and report back to the Legislature by November of 2015. The Prevention Alliance will continue to support efforts that foster a change in the conversation about alcohol, so decision-makers can make informed choices about state alcohol policy.

Rep. Javier Martinez has been a tireless advocate for New Mexico's communities. His work on this legislation demonstrates his commitment to social justice and bringing forward innovative and transformative ideas to the New Mexico State Legislature.

The Santa Fe Prevention Alliance is a coalition of 20+ local and state organizations whose shared vision is a Santa Fe County where no one under 21 drinks alcohol, adults model low risk use of alcohol, no one drives while impaired and no one abuses drugs. The Prevention Alliance recently received national recognition as the 2015 recipient of the prestigious Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Chairman's Award for their exemplary leadership in the field of substance abuse prevention. <http://santafepreventionalliance.com/>

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