



House Bill 252: Kinship Caregiver Support Pilot Program

Sponsors: Representatives Susan K. Herrera (D41), Michelle Paulene Abeyta (D69), Kristina Ortez (D42), D. Wonda Johnson (D5), and Speaker of the House Javier Martinez (D11).

The LANL Foundation is committed to supporting grandparents and kin raising children. **HB 252 is needed** to establish the “**Grandparents & Kin Caregiver Support Pilot Program**” within the **Aging and Long Term Services Department**. The program aims to support kinship caregivers (grandparents, next-of-kin, or fictive kin) raising children. Key details include:

- The pilot will run for three years in five to seven counties.
- It will provide participants with economic support, legal assistance, and referrals to essential services.
- The department will collaborate with community organizations and nonprofits to administer the program.
- **HB 2** includes **\$4 million** for grandparents raising grandkids projects for expenditure through fiscal year 2028.
- HB 252 will create a framework that will enable partnerships with foundations and nonprofits to provide stipends and other resources and economic support for participants.
- A report on the program's impact will be submitted annually to the Legislative Finance Committee.
- An emergency clause ensures immediate implementation.

Kinship Care in New Mexico



Nationally, more than 2.6 million children are being raised by their grandparents or other kin. However, between 2021 and 2023, **New Mexico had the highest percentage of children in kinship care** (8 percent) of any state and **more than double the national average** of three percent.¹ Additionally, from 2017 to 2023 the number of children in kinship care in New Mexico increased from an estimated 30,000 to an estimated 36,000 while nationally these numbers slightly declined.

The LANL Foundation Report – [Resilient Families: Helping Grandparents and Kin Raise Children in New Mexico](https://lanl.org/reports/resilient-families-helping-grandparents-and-kin-raise-children-in-new-mexico) – is available at lanl.org.



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Please encourage the Senate Finance Committee to **hear** and **pass** HB 252 so it can be heard on the Senate Floor

Purpose & Importance

- HB 252 establishes a **three-year** Kinship Caregiver Support Pilot Program under the **Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD)** to support grandparents, next-of-kin, and fictive kin raising children.
- **Kinship caregiving in New Mexico is rising** despite national declines, with 9% of children in kinship care, more than **double the national average**.
- The program aims to provide essential **economic, legal, and public assistance** services to kinship caregivers, addressing financial hardships, legal challenges, and access to resources.

Key Features of the Program

- The program will operate in **five to seven** counties with an estimated **50 participants per county (250-350 caregivers total)**.
- ALTSD will **partner** with community organizations, nonprofits, and other agencies to develop application criteria based on household income and child needs.
- Participants will receive **legal assistance** and **referrals** to public programs and services, in addition to **stipends** from philanthropic partners pending passage of the bill.

Funding & Implementation

- House Bill 2 (HB 2) includes **\$4 million nonrecurring** revenue for a grandparents raising grandchildren pilot program.
- ALTSD will establish program rules by June 1, 2025, and submit annual reports on program impact and recommendations to the Legislative Finance Committee.
- The program requires recurring funding **beyond FY28** to continue supporting kinship caregivers.

Why This Matters

- Parental **substance use disorder (SUD)** is a major driver of kinship caregiving—nearly half of kinship caregivers in Rio Arriba County reported SUD as the reason for taking in children.
- 25.6% of grandparents raising grandchildren in NM live in poverty, compared to 18.3% nationally—demonstrating the urgent need for financial and legal support.
- Investing in kinship caregivers keeps children in family-based environments, reducing strain on the foster care system while promoting stability and cultural continuity.

Call to Action

- Ask the **Senate Finance Committee** to schedule HB 252 to be heard on **March 18 or 19, 2025**.
- Ensure the **long-term sustainability** of kinship support programs beyond the pilot phase.
- Recognize the **critical role of kinship caregivers** in child well-being, family stability, and community strength.

