

Steve Pearce's Response to Disability Rights New Mexico Questionnaire to Gubernatorial Candidates

1. What would you do to rebuild New Mexico's behavioral services provider network and increase the availability of behavioral health services throughout the state, particularly in the rural areas?

Immediately task the Department of Health to begin conversation with national mental health providers. The loss of providers in the last 8 years has been a massive hinderance on the progress and growth of New Mexico. Steve Pearce believes working with large national providers, the Department of Health can create contractual agreements that will ensure trained professionals, whether at dedicated facilities, or at local and State facilities are available throughout the State. It is known that distance is a barrier to mental health services and access. New Mexico's largely rural and underserved communities deserve to have the same care as the State's metro areas. Working to provide funding and qualified professionals to work within current medical facilities will aid in adding service, while also providing service quickly.

To be clear, this does not mean simply handing over mental health services to ERs and hospitals that are neither equipped or staffed, but rather working with national providers to ensure trained professionals are contracted into these areas to provide service out of existing facilities, where possible. When this is not the case, Steve Pearce will work with provider networks to re-establish dedicated facilities to fit this need.

2. At the end of FY17, New Mexico had approximately 4,500 individuals with completed registrations awaiting allocations on the waiting list for developmental disabilities (DD) waiver services on the Central registry including about 3,900 individuals. Many individuals have been waiting for over ten years. In your first 100 days, what would you do to reduce the waiting list while still achieving excellence in services provided?

This is a management problem. With decades of leadership experience in the Air Force and in private business, Steve Pearce will immediately work to correct the institutional problems that have failed to provide services to needing New Mexicans, as quickly as possible. In the first 100 days, he will call for an audit of the current registry and the waitlist to understand the issues and circumstances around the backlog. Upon completion of this process, he will work with his Administration and the State legislature to put procedures, and if needed funding, in place to provide every individual seeking a DD Waiver with a clear answer.

3. What are your plans to ensure that all students eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) received the educational support to which they are legally entitled?

It begins with reforming and improving our State's educational system. No one issue within education can be solved in a vacuum, it must be a holistic approach that transforms the State's education department into a national leaders. A core element of Steve Pearce's platform sounds simple, but is fundamental to the success of New Mexico schools and students covered under

IDEA - let teachers, teach. Too often in New Mexico, the State's teachers are performing too many roles in the classroom pulling resources and learning away from the students and creating significant challenges for the teachers and students alike. The State needs to support teachers and student alike by returning teachers to their core function, teaching, and providing the resources to school districts for trained professionals who can oversee IEPs and other tools under IDEA. The education system in New Mexico must change, Steve Pearce believes this begins with refocusing funding and support directly to schools and the students to provides the services that they need.

4. A Medicaid Buy-In Program allows those families who cannot afford a plan on the Health Care Exchange but who also don't qualify for Medicaid to pay a less expensive premium, based on their income, in order to receive Medicaid coverage. As Governor would you openly support and advocate for a Medicaid buy-in New Mexico?

No. Nearly 50% of New Mexico is currently covered by Medicaid and it is crippling access to care in New Mexico. New Mexico must recommit to working with national healthcare providers to create coverage options and plans that are affordable and accessible to all New Mexicans. Cutting 50% of New Mexicans out of the healthcare marketplace reduces choice, increases cost for coverage, and ultimately drives providers, who cannot afford to be reimbursed at below cost rates, out of the business. This does nothing to support care and services for the New Mexican people. Further doubling down on the failed Medicaid expansion policies does nothing to put the State on a path to accessible, affordable, and quality health services.

5. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation announced earlier this month that it has gone back onto an Order of Selection and is accepting only people in the most severe category of disability. What will you do to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and the limitations imposed by Order of Selection?

Steve Pearce will work with his Administration and the State legislature to ensure that DVR has the resources and structure needed to support all New Mexicans in need of assistance under the State run programs. Additionally, Pearce will continue to promote and expand public private vocational training and job placement assistance programs. Finally, he will work with PED to create a larger network of vocational and job training programs within the State's schools to address employment opportunities and challenges for New Mexicans up front.

6. Persons with disabilities are often faced with limited opportunities for safe and affordable housing. For persons with mental illness, they may seek housing in licensed boarding homes. Unfortunately, the Department of Health has failed to provide oversight over these boarding homes and failed to ensure that people are in safe housing conditions that will support their well-being. What will you do to ensure that these boarding homes are regulated and protections afforded to residents?

Access to safe and affordable housing is something very personal to Steve Pearce. His family lived the experience and challenges of accessing safe housing when he was young. He has been a national leader in working for increased housing accessibility in Congress, from his work on Native American housing to reducing overly burdensome and restrictive regulation surrounding the use and access of manufactured housing. Steve Pearce will bring this same commitment and

dedication to the 4th Floor of the Round House. Steve Pearce commits to creating and demanding that every agency and division within the New Mexico State government act transparently, in accordance with their mission, and work to fulfill their responsibilities to the New Mexican people. He will replace those who are not acting in the best interest of the New Mexican people and work with the State legislature to make needed structural changes where and when needed to ensure the every agency is performing its duties and mission statements to the fullest of their potential.

7. Related to the dilemma for many low-income New Mexicans with disabilities living in unhealthy conditions in boarding homes, there is a lack of safe and affordable housing. New Mexico is faced with challenges in meeting the needs of a population who are homeless, many of whom will have a mental illness. As Governor, how would you ensure that the needs of homeless people who have a mental illness and those at risk of homelessness are addressed in a holistic, cross-agency way?

This is a problem that must be addressed in a multifaceted approach. Steve Pearce will work the State VA Department and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs to focus on veterans homelessness, which is a large cross-section of New Mexico and national homelessness. Additionally, he will work with the NM MFA to promote housing development throughout the State that provides quality and affordable housing for all New Mexicans. Finally, he will work with the federal delegation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the CFPB to ensure New Mexico's housing providers have access to all the needed tools to create housing options for New Mexico's homeless population.

Beyond addressing housing directly, Steve Pearce will work to revitalize hope and opportunity in New Mexico through economic development, vocational training, and job placement assistance. Too many problems facing the New Mexican people revolves around a loss of hope for a better tomorrow. This should never be the case and must change. By creating a State government with a core mission statement of providing hope and opportunity for all New Mexicans we can provide everyone in the State with expanded choice and opportunities for success. This is not limited to bringing more job creators to the State, but addressing mental health services, addiction services, and criminal justice reform. Tackling the homelessness issue in New Mexico is more than providing housing, it must be focused on providing hope.

8. Thousands of New Mexicans have experienced a traumatic brain injury. The State has not developed systems, passed appropriate legislation and/or encouraged private-public partnerships to deal with the issues of traumatic brain injury.

Insurances (private and other) are fully inadequate, for the most part, leaving Medicaid as the fall back. Medicaid has not worked. The State "TBI Trust Fund" is fully archaic.

New Mexico has very few skilled and trained providers. Integrated care and treatment are unavailable.

In the first 2 years after a brain injury, if properly diagnosed and treated using recognized protocols, a very large number of patient costs average up to \$1 million per year (\$1,000,000 ref. CDC). Medicaid does not cover this. However, if these diagnoses, treatment and supports are

provided; long term costs drop significantly and people living with the spectrum of brain injury can return to their communities, jobs and family to function as best as they are able.

To attract appropriate professionals & facilities, training, diagnosis, treatment and long term support, New Mexico must develop systems of care. How do you propose to handle these issues?

This is an issue Steve Pearce has been working on in Congress for over a decade. It is a critical one to support the health and success of thousands of New Mexicans. Steve Pearce will propose and work to implement screening for all returning New Mexico National Guard troops, he will work with the federal delegation on the creation of a TBI facility in New Mexico to treat and serve individuals with TBI. Additionally, Steve Pearce will work to create an inter-agency task force within New Mexico agencies that brings together thought leaders from the Department of Health, Economic Development, and VA to create actionable plans to support individuals with TBI in the most helpful and successful ways possible.