

September 23rd, 2025

The University of New Mexico Board of Regents
University of New Mexico
MSC05 3200
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131

Dear Members of the Board,

As both the former Secretary of the Interior, and former Representative for New Mexico in Congress, I am concerned that New Mexicans aren't getting the healthcare they need – some people wait months for doctors' appointments, must go out of state to see a specialist, and can't afford care. I write to express strong support for the resident physicians represented by The Committee of Interns and Residents (SEIU-CIR) at the University of New Mexico. These physicians play a central role in the delivery of care—often serving as the first and last point of contact for patients, and carrying out the bulk of clinical decision-making. Yet despite their critical importance, their compensation remains among the lowest in the Southwest, a reality that does not reflect their dedication, workload, or value to our healthcare system.

New Mexico's low resident salaries are not just an issue of fairness—they are a barrier to addressing the doctor shortages in our state by retaining the residents that are graduating from our higher education institutions. It is no surprise that UNM frequently relies on second-round Match placements, as prospective applicants weigh the increasing cost of living in Albuquerque against limited financial support. At a time when our state is grappling with the second-worst physician shortage in the nation, with a third of our physicians expected to retire by 2030, failure to invest in resident physicians now is a decision with long-term consequences.

Equally concerning is the university's proposal to remove explicit anti-discrimination language from the resident physician contract. These protections are vital to ensuring a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment—both for the diverse group of physicians who train at UNM and for the equally diverse communities they serve. In a state that is multi-cultural, a diverse healthcare workforce helps build trust and ensures language, cultural differences, and understanding are not barriers to care.

UNM's mission in providing care is rooted in serving Native American, Hispanic, and other underserved people of Bernalillo County. That mission depends on fostering a workforce that reflects the people it serves and can provide care that is not only clinically sound but culturally competent. I urge you to protect this mission by supporting fair compensation for residents and

preserving strong anti-discrimination language in the contract. These are not just administrative decisions—they are moral and strategic imperatives for the future of healthcare in New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deb Haaland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deb" and last name "Haaland" clearly distinguishable.

Deb Haaland
Former Congresswoman, NM 1
Former Secretary of the Interior