

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am writing to express support for the proposed changes to the NMAC rule 8.314.3.

I am the Facilitator of the Medically Fragile Family Advisory Board (FAB), the Family Specialist for the Medically Fragile Case Management Program (MFCMP) and the parent of a child who received services through the Medically Fragile Waiver (MFW) and Mi Via Waiver for over 21 years.

In my current roles as FAB facilitator and Family Specialist, I speak with many MFW clients and their families around the state of New Mexico. I visit them in their homes, in hospitals, in clinics and at MFCMP family meetings. I communicate with many via phone and email. I hear firsthand about the needs of their family members and the difficulties they have trying to care for their loved ones. I often hear many of the same struggles. This rule change (and the related proposed MFW amendment) are critically needed and will help to address some aspects of these challenges.

The MFW has needed a number of changes for many years. Many individuals who qualify and come on the Medically Fragile Program are unable to receive the services they need and qualify for due to not being able to find a nurse. Physicians expect these patients to receive nursing services in the home, but in many cases, no nurse is able to staff the case. Part of the reason for this problem is that the current MFW reimbursement rates are very low and not competitive with the rates paid by other programs. Hence, many of the neediest individuals who are on the Medically Fragile program do not receive the services they need. In addition, the rates for therapy and other services are also below market and result in individuals not receiving the services needed. The rate paid for case management is also low and has not been appropriately adjusted in many years. In addition, a majority of individuals who are medically fragile also need some type of environmental modification to their home, yet the Medically Fragile program does not provide a benefit of any amount for these modifications.

The proposed changes to the rule and the related MFW amendment are critical to individuals who are medically fragile. The proposed rate increases will help to make this waiver's rates competitive with other programs so that some of New Mexico's most vulnerable citizens can receive the care that they need and deserve.

The addition of environmental modifications as a benefit is long overdue and will help to provide critically needed ramps, bathroom modifications, and other necessary items to some of the most physically disabled and medically complex New Mexicans.

Finally, the additional funding clause is essential so that individuals do not experience a reduction in services due to the rate increases.

As a parent, the Facilitator of the Medically Fragile Family Advisory Board, the Family Specialist for the MFCMP, and as a New Mexican, I thank the State for its attention to these matters and look forward to the passage of the rules change and ultimately the MFW amendment.

Thank you,

Lori Steward

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