



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Former Governor Bill Richardson establishes fund to bring emergency medical supplies to Navajo Nation in New Mexico, in partnership with the New Mexico Children's Foundation and Molina Healthcare**

**April 10, 2020**

There is an urgent and immediate health crisis on the Navajo Nation. The Nation, like the rest of the country, is in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic. Infection rates, however, on the Nation have been up to seven times higher than in the rest of New Mexico, according to data compiled by [The Albuquerque Journal](#).

Healthcare access issues within the Navajo Nation are being compounded by the dynamics of the pandemic. Hospitals on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico only have 10 intensive care unit beds to handle severe cases of COVID-19. There is also a severe shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical medical supplies necessary to protect healthcare workers and first responders as they provide care for their patients. Navajos are also experiencing challenges in obtaining masks to abide by the new guidance for all individuals to wear masks in public. With much of the reservation lacking running water or indoor plumbing, it is almost impossible for many Navajo people to follow the strict handwashing and disinfecting guidelines.

As a longtime supporter and friend of the Navajo people, Governor Bill Richardson has established a fund to aid in getting essential medical supplies and equipment to the Navajo Nation.

"The Navajo people face an unprecedented challenge as coronavirus spreads through the Nation," said Governor Richardson. "Working with our partner organizations, we want to assist in the purchase, delivery, and distribution of critical medical supplies to the Navajo people."

In partnership with the New Mexico Children's Foundation and Molina Healthcare, Governor Richardson's COVID-19 Navajo Families Relief Fund will begin to immediately purchase PPE for delivery and distribution to areas on the Nation where they are most-needed. The Fund will prioritize the purchase of equipment based on expeditious distribution that is reasonably priced.

"Molina Healthcare is grateful for Governor Richardson's leadership in creating this fund to provide resources for Navajo families and facilities that are being impacted by this unprecedented situation," said Carolyn Ingram, Executive Vice President of Policy and

Government Affairs for Molina Healthcare. “We are committed to the Governor’s mission and stand with him to make sure Navajos have the PPE they need to protect themselves against this virus.”

“This effort aims to immediately ensure safety and security to people of all ages and whole families in our Navajo communities,” said Former Attorney General Gary King, President of the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Children’s Foundation.

The Fund will partner with Navajo organizations, clinics, and volunteers on the ground that have established a distribution infrastructure for food, water, and emergency supplies.

The Fund has begun purchasing masks, gloves, gowns and other PPE to deliver to families and clinics within the Navajo Nation.

For those interested in donating to the fund, please visit the New Mexico Children’s Foundation website at [www.nmchildren.org](http://www.nmchildren.org) or mail a check to:

New Mexico Children’s Foundation

PO Box 8182

Santa Fe, NM 87504

*Please indicate Richardson Navajo Fund in the memo line.*

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