

# **NMFAM Legislative Guide for HB65**

## *Short-Term Stabilization for Children in State Custody*

Included:

- Simplified Breakdown of the Bill .....pg. 2
  - *A plain-language explanation of what the bill does, section by section, written to quickly clarify intent, scope, and real-world impact without legal jargon.*
- Messaging & Fact Tool (*Helpful to Legislators*) .....pg. 4
  - *Key talking points paired with supporting facts and data to help legislators clearly and confidently explain their position in committee, on the floor, or with constituents.*
- Likely Opposition Arguments—& How to Respond (*for Legislators*) .....pg. 9
  - *A brief overview of the most common arguments in opposition of the bill, along with concise, factual rebuttals legislators can use in debate or media interviews.*
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  - *Ready-to-use language for action alerts, social media, and constituent outreach that clearly communicates the issue and drives timely engagement.*

## **HB 65—Simplified Breakdown of the Bill**

### *Short-Term Stabilization for Children in State Custody*

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HB 65 creates a three-year Short-Term Stabilization Pilot Program within the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), in partnership with the Health Care Authority (HCA), to better support children in state custody who have higher behavioral or mental-health needs and are at risk of placement disruption.

### **How the Program Works**

Under HB 65, CYFD and HCA will contract with child welfare experts who have demonstrated experience using evidence-based treatment models to stabilize children in home-like settings. These experts will help design and operate the pilot program in select counties, ensuring services are coordinated, effective, and appropriate for each child's needs.

Children will be identified and prioritized using standardized assessments (the CANS assessment), focusing on those with frequent placement changes, acute behavioral needs, or a high risk of disruption. Once enrolled, children and caregivers receive structured supports, including:

- 24/7 crisis intervention to prevent emergency removals
- Weekly in-home therapy for children
- Monthly family therapy and caregiver coaching
- Parent training in trauma-informed care and crisis management
- Ongoing treatment team meetings to track progress and adjust support

The program also creates short-term “bridge” placements (7–30 days) to safely stabilize children while long-term permanency or appropriate placement is secured—reducing the need for emergency or inappropriate placements.

### **Expanding Placement Options**

HB 65 recognizes that stabilization cannot occur without willing, supported caregivers. The bill includes targeted financial and program incentives to expand therapeutic foster homes and small, home-like placement options, especially for:

- Adolescents
- Sibling groups
- Children with acute behavioral needs

These incentives help recruit and retain caregivers while maintaining quality standards.

## **Accountability & Safeguards**

HB 65 is intentionally limited and accountable, not open-ended:

- A three-year pilot with defined counties
- Use of evidence-based treatment models only
- Standardized assessments to guide placement and services
- Clear eligibility criteria and prioritized populations
- Defined funding with a reversion clause if unused
- Ongoing collaboration between CYFD and HCA

## **Why This Matters**

By stabilizing children early, supporting caregivers, and preventing placement breakdowns, HB 65 reduces trauma, protects families, and lowers long-term system costs—while allowing the state to evaluate outcomes before expanding the program.

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# HB 65—Messaging & Fact Tool

## Support to Vote YES on HB 65

### *Short-Term Stabilization for Children in State Custody*

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#### **1. New Mexico's Child Welfare System Is Stuck in Crisis Mode**

Too many children in state custody experience repeated placement disruptions—not because families fail, but because the system intervenes too late and without adequate support.

#### **Facts to Support**

- New Mexico has one of the highest per-capita rates of children in state custody
  - New Mexico has approximately 2,000–2,600 children in state custody at any given time—about 4–5 per 1,000 children—placing a heavy demand on a system already strained by placement shortages and high needs.
- Children with behavioral or mental-health needs experience the highest placement instability
- Placement disruptions increase:
  - Trauma
  - Behavioral escalation
  - Long-term system involvement
    - Foster homes close when caregivers are unsupported

#### **Legislative takeaway:**

A crisis-driven system produces worse outcomes for children and higher long-term costs for the state.

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#### **2. HB 65 Shifts the System from Reaction to Stabilization**

HB 65 intervenes before placements collapse, stabilizing children in home-like settings instead of cycling them through crisis placements.

#### **Facts to Support**

- HB 65 creates a three-year Short-Term Stabilization Pilot Program
- Focuses on children:
  - At high risk of placement disruption

- With acute behavioral or mental-health needs
  - Prioritizes stabilization in home-like environments

**Legislative takeaway:**

Stabilization early prevents crisis later.

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**3. HB 65 Uses Evidence-Based Models—Not Guesswork**

HB 65 requires proven methods and professional oversight, not experimental programs.

**Facts to Support**

- CYFD and the Health Care Authority must contract with child welfare experts
- Services must be evidence-based and outcome-supported
- Participation is guided by standardized CANS assessments
- Treatment plans are adjusted through ongoing team reviews

**Legislative takeaway:**

HB 65 prioritizes data-driven decisions and measurable outcomes.

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**4. HB 65 Directly Supports Foster and Kinship Caregivers**

Placement stability depends on caregiver support—HB 65 provides it.

**Facts to Support**

Children and caregivers receive:

- 24/7 crisis intervention
- Weekly in-home child therapy
- Monthly family therapy
- Trauma-informed caregiver training
- Ongoing treatment team coordination

**Legislative takeaway:**

Supporting caregivers protects placements and children.

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**5. HB 65 Prevents Emergency and Inappropriate Placements**

The bill creates short-term “bridge” placements to stabilize children safely while long-term solutions are secured.

### **Facts to Support**

- Bridge placements last 7–30 days
- Designed to prevent:
  - Emergency removals
  - Office placements
  - Inappropriate congregate care
    - Focused on stabilization—not institutionalization

### **Legislative takeaway:**

Planned stabilization is safer and more responsible than emergency placement.

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## **6. HB 65 Expands Therapeutic, Home-Like Placement Options**

Stability requires available, supported homes.

### **Facts to Support**

HB 65 includes targeted incentives to expand:

- Therapeutic foster homes
- Small, home-like placements
  - Focuses on:
    - Adolescents
    - Sibling groups
    - Children with acute needs

### **Legislative takeaway:**

This bill grows placement capacity where gaps currently exist.

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## **7. HB 65 Is Limited, Targeted, and Accountable**

HB 65 is not a system-wide expansion—it is a measured pilot with guardrails.

### **Facts to Support**

- Three-year pilot program
- Limited to specific counties

- Defined eligibility criteria
- Evidence-based requirements
- Funding includes a reversion clause if unused

**Legislative takeaway:**

HB 65 tests outcomes before expansion and protects taxpayers.

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**8. HB 65 Reduces Long-Term Costs**

Preventing placement disruption saves money and improves outcomes.

**Facts to Support**

- Placement instability drives:
  - Higher service cost
  - Emergency intervention
  - Congregate care use
    - Stabilization lowers:
      - Crisis spending
      - Re-entry into care
      - Long-term system dependence

**Legislative takeaway:**

Early stabilization is fiscally responsible.

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**9. HB 65 Works in Partnership with HB 76**

These bills are designed to work together—not overlap.

**Facts to Support**

- HB 65 stabilizes children early in home-like settings
- HB 76 expands higher-level placement capacity when needed
- HB 65 manages stability and flow
- HB 76 ensures capacity exists when stabilization alone is not enough

**Legislative takeaway:**

Together, the bills fix gaps without duplicating services.

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## **10. HB 65 Prioritizes Children Over Bureaucracy**

The bill strengthens outcomes without expanding administrative complexity.

### **Facts to Support**

- Services are coordinated through expert contracts
- Decisions guided by standardized tools
- Focus on children and caregivers—not paperwork

### **Legislative takeaway:**

This is child-centered reform, not bureaucracy growth.

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### **Closing Statement for Legislators**

New Mexico's children cannot wait for perfect systems.

HB 65 delivers immediate stabilization, real caregiver support, and accountable reform—without expanding bureaucracy or risking taxpayer dollars.

HB 65 is a responsible, evidence-based step forward that protects children, supports families, and strengthens the child welfare system.

HB 65 deserves a YES vote.

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### **Quick One-Line Floor & Media Responses**

“HB 65 stabilizes children before placements fall apart.”

“This bill supports foster families instead of burning them out.”

“Stability is cheaper and safer than crisis.”

“HB 65 uses evidence-based care with real accountability.”

“This is measured reform, not expansion.”

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## HB 65 — Likely Opposition Arguments & How to Respond

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### **Opposition Argument 1: “CYFD already provides services like this.”**

#### *Response:*

CYFD offers services, but HB 65 addresses a specific and documented gap—the lack of coordinated, early stabilization for children at high risk of placement disruption. Existing services are often fragmented and reactive. HB 65 aligns services around placement stability, using standardized assessments and evidence-based models to intervene before placements collapse.

#### **Key takeaway:**

HB 65 does not duplicate services—it fixes how and when they are delivered.

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### **Opposition Argument 2: “This expands government programs.”**

#### *Response:*

HB 65 is a limited, three-year pilot program, not a permanent expansion. It is targeted to specific counties, populations, and outcomes, with funding that reverts if unused. The bill is designed to test effectiveness before any expansion is considered.

#### **Key takeaway:**

This is measured reform with guardrails—not unchecked growth.

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### **Opposition Argument 3: “This could be expensive.”**

#### *Response:*

Placement disruption is already expensive. Emergency placements, repeated removals, congregate care, and out-of-state placements cost far more than stabilization. HB 65 reduces long-term costs by preventing crisis escalation and repeated system involvement.

#### **Key takeaway:**

Early stabilization saves money and improves outcomes.

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**Opposition Argument 4: “Foster care should be family-based, not therapeutic.”**

*Response:*

HB 65 strengthens family-based care by supporting caregivers, not replacing them. Therapeutic foster care and in-home services allow children with higher needs to remain in family settings safely instead of being pushed into congregate care due to lack of support.

**Key takeaway:**

Support keeps families intact; neglect pushes children into institutions.

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**Opposition Argument 5: “CYFD should be fixed before adding new initiatives.”**

*Response:*

Children cannot wait for systemic perfection. HB 65 provides immediate, practical support within the current system while broader reforms continue. Delaying stabilization only increases trauma and costs.

**Key takeaway:**

Reform and stabilization must happen simultaneously.

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**Opposition Argument 6: “This will be hard to manage or oversee.”**

*Response:*

HB 65 includes strong accountability measures:

- Standardized CANS assessments
- Evidence-based treatment requirements
- Defined eligibility criteria
- Treatment team oversight
- Collaboration between CYFD and the Health Care Authority

This structure improves oversight—not complicates it.

**Key takeaway:**

HB 65 improves coordination and accountability.

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**Opposition Argument 7: “This incentivizes higher-cost placements.”**

*Response:*

HB 65 incentivizes appropriate placements, not higher-cost ones. The goal is to prevent children from escalating into far more expensive emergency or congregate care settings by stabilizing them earlier in home-like environments.

**Key takeaway:**

The most expensive placement is the one that fails.

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**Opposition Argument 8: “This won’t solve all of CYFD’s problems.”**

*Response:*

No single bill fixes everything—but HB 65 solves a specific, urgent problem: placement instability for high-need children. It is intentionally paired with HB 76, which expands capacity when higher-level care is truly needed.

**Key takeaway:**

HB 65 is a critical piece of a coordinated solution.

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**Bottom Line Response**

HB 65 is not about expanding government—it’s about stabilizing children, supporting families, and preventing failure before it happens. It is targeted, accountable, evidence-based, and fiscally responsible.

## HB65—Messaging for Action Items & Socials

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### **CALL TO ACTION: Say YES to HB 65**

Stabilizing Children. Supporting Families. Fixing What's Broken.

Right now, too many New Mexico children in state custody are moved from home to home—not because families don't care, but because the system doesn't provide the support they need.

#### **HB 65 fixes that.**

This bill creates a short-term stabilization pilot program that gives foster families and kin caregivers real tools: in-home therapy, 24/7 crisis support, and evidence-based services that help children stabilize before a placement falls apart.

HB 65:

- Keeps children in home-like settings
- Supports foster parents instead of burning them out
- Reduces trauma caused by repeated placement disruptions
- Uses proven, accountable models—not experiments

New Mexico families deserve a child welfare system that stabilizes, not scrambles.

#### **TAKE ACTION NOW:**

Tell your legislators to vote YES on HB 65 and support smart, responsible reform that puts children and families first.

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### **Social Media Messaging Options (Multiple Tones)**

#### **1. Clear & Informational**

HB 65 helps stabilize children in state custody by supporting foster families *before* placements fall apart. It's evidence-based, accountable, and focused on better outcomes.

👉 Tell legislators to **vote YES on HB 65**.

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#### **2. Family-Focused & Compassionate**

Every move is another trauma for a child. HB 65 keeps kids in safe, home-like placements by giving families the support they need to succeed.

👉 Stand with children and families—**vote YES on HB 65.**

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### **3. Accountability & Fiscal Responsibility**

Crisis placements cost more and fail children. HB 65 invests early, uses proven models, and includes real accountability.

👉 Smart reform starts with stability. **Vote YES on HB 65.**

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### **4. Foster Parent Support Angle**

Foster families want to say yes—but they need support. HB 65 provides crisis help, therapy, and training so placements can last.

👉 Support foster families. **Vote YES on HB 65.**

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### **5. Values-Based / Faith-Friendly**

Protecting children means supporting the families who care for them. HB 65 strengthens homes, reduces trauma, and promotes stability.

👉 Advocate for children. **Vote YES on HB 65.**

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### **6. Strong & Direct**

The current system reacts after failure. HB 65 stabilizes children *before* crisis hits.

👉 It's time for better outcomes. **Vote YES on HB 65.**

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### **D. Short Reel / Video Caption Options**

#### **Option 1:**

Stability changes everything. HB 65 helps keep children in safe homes by supporting foster families early.

👉 Tell legislators to **vote YES on HB 65.**

**Option 2:**

When families are supported, children thrive. HB 65 puts stability first.

👉 **Vote YES on HB 65.**

**Option 3:**

Less chaos. More care. Better outcomes.

👉 **Support HB 65.**

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**E. One-Line Advocacy Statements (Great for Graphics or Quotes)**

- “Stability is safer than crisis.”
- “Support families. Protect children.”
- “Early care prevents lifelong trauma.”
- “HB 65 puts stability first.”
- “Smart reform starts at home.”

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**F. Hashtag Suggestions (Optional)**

#SupportHB65

#StabilityMatters

#ProtectKidsNM

#FosterFamiliesMatter

#BetterChildWelfare