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Low-Income and Environmental Advocates Applaud New Mexico's New Energy Conservation Building Code

The New Mexico Construction Industries Commission voted this morning to adopt a statewide energy conservation code based on the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) with some New Mexico specific amendments. This new code will bring New Mexico up to date with its energy code for new buildings, reducing energy use in new residential and commercial buildings by about 25 percent.

“Updating our energy code is one of the most important and effective things New Mexico can do to reduce its climate impact from the

buildings sector,” said Tammy Fiebelkorn, the New Mexico representative for the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project.

John Ammondson, State Director, Environment New Mexico added "We applaud the Construction Industries Commission (CIC) for taking this long-overdue step to make New Mexico's buildings more energy efficient, reducing emissions from wasted energy and saving consumers money. New Mexico is taking serious steps to address our state's climate emissions, and we all benefit from saving energy and modernizing buildings."

This important update to our state code is a result of Governor Lujan-Grisham’s Executive Order 2019-003, signed on January 29th, 2019, that set in motion a long-overdue update process. The State was using the 2009 version of the code before today’s update. Due to inaction by our previous Governor, New Mexico missed three code cycle updates; leaving them far behind on technology improvements, energy cost savings, and building performance boosts.

Camilla Feibelman, Director of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, said "The Governor's climate vision is taking shape. Last week the Public Regulation Commission approved 100 percent renewable energy and battery storage for coal replacement in the Four Corners and this week the Construction Industries Commission approved strong energy conservation codes. These actions don't just protect our planet and New Mexico's air, water, and communities, but they also save us money on our electric bills in our homes and businesses."

The new code is cost-effective for New Mexico, as proven by studies completed by Pacific Northwest National Labs (PNNL) for both the residential and commercial codes. In fact, PNNL found that the average life cycle cost savings for a new residential dwelling in New Mexico is \$6,397.

Given the large number of low-income residents in the State, this savings will be a welcome relief for those with high energy burdens. It is estimated that new homes built under this code will save about 22

percent more energy than those built under the old code, and "the associated cost savings allows New Mexicans to cover other essential commodities that they are now doing without," said Ona Porter of Prosperity Works.

"All New Mexicans, and especially low-income families, will be positively impacted by the CIC's adoption of the 2018 IECC building codes. Energy bills are the highest cost of living after rent or mortgages. Reducing energy use in new buildings will save New Mexican families money, and help families no longer have to make decisions between paying to heat or cool their homes versus paying for essentials like medicine," stated Sanders Moore, director of Policy Solutions Institute.

New commercial buildings will use about 27 percent less energy, which will be extremely helpful as businesses rebound from COVID-19 shutdowns. Less money spent on operating buildings will leave more funds for employee salaries and benefits, as well as reinvesting into the business.

"The fastest and cheapest way to cut global warming emissions is to burn less fossil fuel to heat, cool, and power our lives. Buildings, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, account for 19 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions, so they must be designed and built up front in the most efficient way possible. These new building codes get that done. Congratulations to the New Mexico CIC for this decision. Your children will thank you" said Tom Solomon and Jim Mackenzie, co-coordinators of 350 New Mexico.