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SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Tuesday delivered her fourth State of the State address, commencing the second session of the 55th Legislature.

The text of the governor’s 2022 State of the State address as prepared is as follows:

Good afternoon. Thank you Mr. Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, Madam Senate Pro Tem, distinguished senators and representatives, and my fellow New Mexicans, and Happy Birthday to my Mom: I am humbled, once again, to have the opportunity to address the state of our great state.

I know there is a temptation to view today as the opening kickoff of a big game, or the launch of some great battle. Some will describe it that way. But I encourage you to do what you can to resist the perception of a “competition,” to avoid feeding a plotline that would pit one team against another. This isn’t the sports page. We’re all here to do the people’s business. It’s a sacred thing. And we’re all on the same team today – and in fact every day.

At the outset of every legislative session I encourage my colleagues in this building to think about the people we are all here to serve. I think about their dreams, their

hopes and fears; and I think about what service means, about what effective service can deliver for the workers and families all across New Mexico who are represented here in this building – the entrepreneurs and job-creators, the seniors and students, the New Mexicans of every background and belief system. No, we don't agree on everything, and we don't have to. But I believe that the values we share as New Mexicans still truly unite us: The desire to see our families grow and thrive, the willingness to work hard to enjoy what we earn, the optimism that tomorrow can and will be better than today, for ourselves and for our neighbors.

In the last three years, this Legislature and this administration have gotten a lot done. We raised the minimum wage for the first time in a decade. We've guaranteed paid sick leave to every worker in the state. We made early education a key priority and have invested hundreds of millions into the future of our earliest learners. We invested in new economic sectors and we've sent thousands more New Mexicans of every age and background to college for free, no strings attached. And I could go on. I could talk for a long time about the good work of the last few years.

But we need to talk, instead, about what people are really feeling. The needs of this moment remain great. The grief, the loss, the volatility brought on by this hideous pandemic has wreaked havoc on the lives of every family, every American, every human being around the planet. And add on top of that inflation, a supply chain crisis, gridlock in Washington: It's all making it harder for everybody, and especially regular working people, to feel safe, to feel comfortable, to feel optimistic. And we all feel it. My family and I, my daughters, my fiancé, my grandkids – all of us, there are no exceptions. New Mexicans are calling out for safety and stability, for more and more equal opportunity, for an open and fair and free democracy that works and works for them.

Over these next 30 days, we can and we will answer that call, together.

Once again, this incredible state, our home, is on the precipice of momentous positive change. I said that three years ago when I first swore an oath to carry out the duties of this office to the best of my ability. It's been true every day since then. If anything the opportunity has grown, has multiplied exponentially; the sun is rising on a pivotal day, and I believe everything and anything is possible.

We have, right now, unimaginable financial resources at our disposal. I believe we can fulfill, once and for all, after a hundred-and-ten years of statehood, the destiny of New Mexico as a genuine homestead of the American Dream, a place where people can grow and thrive and live in peace and prosperity, where people have the resources they need to support themselves and their families. What we do here now, what we do in the coming weeks, will set the stage.

Dating back decades, a timid mindset has afflicted people in this capitol building, a pessimism that can be self-fulfilling. Thinking small is a curse. Big and meaningful changes are possible, but the biggest change may be our attitude, our perspective. At a moment in time when we have the money to do it all, let's not limit ourselves; let's not be unnecessarily incremental. Can't New Mexico be a state – can't we be *the* state – where everything is possible?

So, on that note, let's give every single educator in this state a 7% raise this year, minimum. That would be the biggest pay bump in recent memory, and it would put us first in the region for average educator pay. They deserve it, and we can afford it, and it's the right thing to do. Let's also raise the starting salaries for every tier of educators, which means some teachers will see a 20% raise this year. And let me be clear: This kind of progress pays for itself. When we support educators, when we retain high-quality teachers and keep our schools brimming with talented professionals, our other strategic investments in New Mexico children and in public education are supported and sustained. Our graduation rates will continue to rise. Our literacy rates will continue to improve, especially with a targeted new phonics program that we have initiated and that the Legislature must continue to support. We get more kids into high-quality apprenticeship programs and institutions of higher learning that will help them build fulfilling careers and lives. It all starts with demonstrating support and respect for our educators; Day One, I said we would do that, and we're getting it done.

And we're going to keep going: Let's cut taxes for every single person in New Mexico. We haven't cut the sales tax in this state in 40 years. It's only gone up and up and up, for decades, burdening New Mexico households and making it harder for our small businesses to be competitive. But under my tax cut proposal, New Mexicans would save more than 170 million dollars every year. As my colleagues from across the aisle have pointed out in years past, correctly, that money doesn't belong in government accounts; it belongs in the pockets of hard-working New Mexicans. I agree, and I expect the Legislature to prioritize this relief.

I feel the same way about the taxes that are taken out of social security benefits. New Mexico is one of only a few states that taxes social security. I am calling today for that taxation to end. We must unburden the New Mexicans who rely on social security benefits by cutting their taxes. This is good government, serving the people who have asked us to serve them. New Mexicans deserve it. Because I believe we have an obligation to find ways to make life easier for the people of New Mexico, and I will keep looking for ways to do exactly that.

And there are more tax cuts on the horizon. Our expansion of the Working Families Tax Credit last year has already saved hundreds of dollars each for about a quarter

of a million New Mexicans – the New Mexicans who need those savings the most. Every dollar counts when we're trying to support the middle class, when we're trying to help workers build careers and help families build stability. Next year, a half a million more New Mexico taxpayers will benefit from these expanded credits. This has been the most significant and progressive reform of our tax code in a generation; this is real and meaningful change that helps families keep the lights on and keep food on the table. This is money that is going right back into the pocket of the single mom, the small business owner, the veteran who served our country and our state. Day One, I said we were gonna make this economy work for the everyday New Mexican, and we're getting it done. So let's keep going. In the next 12 months your state government is going to deliver an additional \$230 million in rent and utility assistance to the New Mexicans who need it most. Your state government will continue to help keep the heat on in hundreds of thousands of households across our state. We will not leave families behind. And if the Legislature provides the resources, your state government will do more than just help families stay afloat; we can and we will genuinely invest in New Mexico families and lift them up. Because families don't need to be worrying about a surprise medical bill or car repairs; they don't need to worry about hunger either. In the first two years of this administration, New Mexico reduced food insecurity at the second-best rate of any state in the country. We all know there's more to do. But that's the kind of progress you can build on. It should inspire us to keep going. Reducing poverty and shielding more families from its effects is the most important work any government, any worker anywhere, can do.

In the last year, we're 11th best for job growth in the country overall. In three years, we have created over ten thousand jobs in every corner of our state; and those jobs now have an average salary better than \$90,000 a year: That's a record high, and it's a big bright signal to other businesses, like the hundreds of businesses that have relocated here in the last three years, showing them how successful our public-private partnerships can be, and how business-friendly New Mexico is. We're cutting red tape, and it is making a real difference for New Mexico business owners; I'm thinking of folks like Maurice Lemus in Raton, who was seeing business evaporate into Colorado before we made changes; he was the first New Mexican to receive a new liquor license under the long-overdue reform we enacted. That kind of aggressive go-get-it attitude, supported by a proactive state government that wants to actively support businesses, will not only keep more patrons in Maurice's restaurant but help entrepreneurs throughout our state. People see the economic potential of New Mexico now; we're creating a real pipeline of jobs and opportunity. We are the frontier of economic growth. Unlike in the aftermath of the Great Recession, we're not gonna let the pandemic stall us and take away years of growth; we will not have another lost decade – in fact, despite the challenges of the

last two years, we've hardly lost a step. The fact is: Unemployment has gone down every month for 10 straight months. The number of unemployed New Mexicans dropped by 5 percent in November alone. We're expanding our economic footprint into every single community. Legal cannabis is going to create thousands of jobs and serious tax revenue for local governments to support local services in every corner of our state. Almost forty thousand more students receiving high-quality college education for free under my Opportunity Scholarship program means more skilled workers building 21st-century careers right here in Roswell, Espanola, Sunland Park, Rio Rancho, Chama and so many more; the intellectual infrastructure of a nationally competitive state economy is being built right here, right now, on campuses and in communities through our state. And clean hydrogen will support thousands of jobs, especially in rural New Mexico, while helping us sprint toward our net-zero carbon deadlines and decarbonize the transportation sector.

But if we want to keep up our economic momentum, and we have to, we have got to get crime under control. I don't accept the argument that this is an issue in only one part of our state. I don't accept that any decision-maker in this building would say that somehow this isn't their problem. We all have a role to play in keeping New Mexico safe. Public safety doesn't just exist on its own; we have to create it, and support it, and own it. So we need tougher penalties for the worst of the worst, the repeat offenders and those who have proven themselves to be a danger to our communities; I support rehabilitation and this administration has done a lot of innovative good work in that area, but at the end of the day I stand with the families and communities who have been victimized unnecessarily by the violent criminals that this system needs to secure. The worst offenders, the most serious and dangerous criminals in our state, need to be behind bars, simple as that. And we are going to pass a law, this session, that will keep violent criminals behind bars until justice can be done. We will put a wedge in the revolving door of violent crime in New Mexico. The safety of our communities cannot be up for debate. A smart-on-crime approach can work; it has worked. In my first year in office, violent crime went down for the first time in 6 years: We can regain that momentum when we make sure our local communities (and public safety officers) have the resources and support they need.

So I am asking the Legislature for a 19% increase in the budget of the department of public safety to fund innovative new crime fighting strategies and hundreds of new positions, including a 19% raise for our state police officers. And I am asking for 100 million to support hiring and retention efforts to get a thousand more officers in place statewide as quickly as we can. I am asking for those things because New Mexicans are asking for them. New Mexico is a state that respects and supports law enforcement officers. I reject the rhetoric from Washington and elsewhere that has made public safety a political battleground. This isn't about politics; it's about basic

human respect for one another: Respect from officers to the people they serve, and respect for officers from the communities they protect. If we have that, we can move forward, unified, in our desire to clean up the streets of this state, to keep violent criminals behind bars, and to ensure every day that justice is done, equally, under the law.

We all want safe communities. And we all want healthy communities. This administration has made important strides: We have capped costs for life-saving medications, we've protected safeguards for those with pre-existing conditions, we've invested in affordable care for thousands of lower-income families, we have eliminated co-pays for behavioral health services and we've begun the great task of rebuilding a mental health care infrastructure that was decimated. But, still, too many people, especially people in the rural areas of our state, don't have timely access to the health care they need – or access at all. Every community deserves high-quality care. I propose a new Rural Health Care Delivery Fund that will provide bridge financing to communities that have been waiting for assistance to kickstart construction without massive upfront costs; state government can help fill these gaps. With interventions like these, communities like those in Valencia County are moving toward securing a brand new hospital, after years of delays. And with investments like those I have proposed in my executive budget, we will put tens of millions of dollars into new behavioral health services, expanding access to treatment for substance abuse, suicide interventions and more. New Mexicans call me about this issue more than almost any other, and we will answer that call.

We can and must ensure that kind of service-delivery is available throughout the state – we have the resources to do so. That means endowing our medical school with 10 million dollars, ensuring that we keep our best and brightest here to provide care for New Mexicans after they graduate. That also means endowing our nursing school with the power of the state, ensuring more highly skilled professionals enter this all-important field. And it means, once and for all, delivering the health care families in the rural parts of our state still desperately need. When I visited Clayton last year I met Eloise Valdez, 92 years young, whose family cares for her 24/7. It's not easy. Thousands of New Mexicans are living the same story, unable to pay for outside help, because it's too expensive, and it's not covered. As a caregiver myself, I know the strength and resilience it takes; I know it can be physically and mentally exhausting. Well, I think it's time we start saying thank you, and I propose a dramatic expansion of the state program that directly supports caregivers; what that means is we are going to pay families who are doing the work of taking care of their elderly loved ones, regardless of Medicaid eligibility. Let's call it New Mexi-Care, and let's make it a model program for the rest of the country. This is an investment in people that goes well beyond politics or any one politician; this is the kind of investment that can be and should be a lasting service, one that

reflects our shared values as a state. In this state, we provide for and care for our parents, our grandparents, our disabled loved ones. This state government, under my leadership, will help provide for that care, unequivocally. Caregiving is a full-time job, I know it first-hand; and we respect working people in New Mexico. Let's invest in the dignity of our elders, and of their families, by helping caregivers and those they care for stay in their homes with the financial support they need.

On the same note, it is time that we build a new veterans home – a state-of-the-art independent assisted-living facility for those who sacrificed to protect our freedoms. The original building on the campus in T or C was built in 1936. I think it's time for an upgrade. So I am calling for 60 million dollars, which we will leverage with an additional \$60 million from the federal government, to build the kind of modern facility our veterans, and their families, deserve. We're going to get it done.

Because when government has the right tools, and the right people, problems are solved. Yeah, we can dream big and make bold plans – it doesn't matter much if we're not solving people's problems, each day. And we are. Just a few months ago, Veterans Service Officer Dagmar Youngberg in Carlsbad took a call from a veteran who needed some help taking a fresh look at an old benefits claim, a claim that had been denied for decades. This state employee at the Department of Veterans Services did some digging and got to work talking with the feds about what went wrong. Turns out, a lot went wrong. In the end, Ms. Youngberg helped this disabled veteran get full back pay dating back 20 years, recovering 738,000 dollars in total that was owed to this individual, a person who served their state and their country. She helped this veteran get off food stamps and pay off their mom's mortgage. This is a government that is solving problems. And here's why: Because it's filled with New Mexicans, and New Mexicans look out for their neighbors; we make the extra effort to do what's right; we get up when we've been knocked down and we fight for what's ours.

The state of our state is ready to move forward. Ready to rise. We have all the tools we need. My vision is this: Communities all across our state where families aren't worried about the next bill, or their kids' future, or a job market or health care system that doesn't quite seem to work for them. My vision is a New Mexico where the founding ideals of this great country – equal opportunity and justice for all – are made real, and meaningful; where the pursuit of happiness is more than a phrase from a dusty piece of paper; it's something tangible, something everyone can actually feel.

We can do it all. We have the finances. We're going to fund an unprecedented suite of new affordable housing programs at the state level. We're going to expand protections for voters because we believe in democracy and everyone's right to

vote. I subscribe to an optimism that says: Big things are within our reach, and blue skies are ahead – and hopefully some snow, too.

When my grandfather was a young man he traveled across this state, across mesas and over mountains, in a covered wagon. He never could have imagined that by the time he was an old man he would see the Sandias from 30,000 feet in an airplane. He never could have imagined his granddaughter would watch a rocket blast off and literally reach space from New Mexico. None of us can predict the future. It feels unsettled, especially these days. But what I know, for a certainty, is that we have the power to make that kind of a bold leap into the unknown beyond, together; we have the power to envision a bright tomorrow, and to execute that vision, on behalf of the people. And we must recommit ourselves to that unifying purpose today.

So for the next 30 days, let's be aggressive on behalf of the New Mexicans we're all here to serve. Let's remember who benefits from good public service. It's not about politics, it's about community: Your community; our community; the families and workers and seniors and parents who just want to live in peace, and with dignity, confident in the promise of tomorrow and the stability of today. We've made so much progress. Let's make sure New Mexicans feel it. Let's go above and beyond and embrace the potential of this pivotal moment in time.

Thank you, God bless New Mexico, and let's get to work.

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