



IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

MARIO ATENCIO; PAUL AND MARY ANN ATENCIO;  
DANIEL TSO; SAMUEL SAGE; CHEYENNE ANTONIO;  
KENDRA PINTO; JULIA BERNAL; JONATHAN ALONZO;  
PASTOR DAVID ROGERS; YOUTH UNITED FOR CLIMATE  
CRISIS ACTION (YUCCA); PUEBLO ACTION ALLIANCE;  
INDIGENOUS LIFEWAYS; CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY; and WILDEARTH GUARDIANS,  
Plaintiffs-Petitioners,

v.

No. S-1-SC-40980

STATE OF NEW MEXICO; THE NEW MEXICO  
LEGISLATURE; GOVERNOR MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM;  
NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT; SECRETARY  
JAMES KENNEY, in his official capacity; ENERGY, MINERALS  
& NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT; SECRETARY SARAH  
COTTRELL PROPST, in her official capacity; ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENT BOARD; and the OIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION,  
Defendants-Respondents,

and

NEW MEXICO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, and  
INDEPENDENT PETROLEUM ASSOCIATION OF NEW MEXICO,  
Intervenors/Defendants-Respondents.

**MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* LAW  
PROFESSORS IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-PETITIONERS**

Pursuant to New Mexico Rule of Appellate Procedure 12-320, the  
undersigned counsel for *Amici* respectfully moves for leave to file the attached  
brief in support of the Plaintiffs-Petitioners on behalf of twenty law professors and  
scholars as *Amici Curiae*. The undersigned is joined in an Of Counsel capacity by

Professor Martha F. Davis, University Distinguished Professor of Law and Co-Director, Center for Global Law & Justice at Northeastern University School of Law, and James R. May, Esq., Richard S. Righter Distinguished Professor of Law at Washburn University School of Law.

In support of this motion, *Amici* respectfully submit the following:

- 1) *Amici* are nationally recognized experts who teach, research, and publish scholarly work in the areas of environmental law and state constitutional law and therefore have an interest in the outcome of this matter. A complete list of *Amici* is attached to the conditionally filed brief.
- 2) Bringing the expertise of numerous respected law professors from around the country, the proposed brief of *Amici Curiae* offers a unique perspective that will assist the Court in its analysis of the rights afforded by Article XX, § 21, the Due Process, and the Inherent Rights clauses of the New Mexico Constitution.
- 3) *Amici* will assist the Court by expanding upon the interpretation of similar constitutional questions in other state jurisdictions; in particular, the interpretation of justiciable rights and affirmative state constitutional rights or duties.
- 4) The brief argues in favor of affirming the state trial court's finding that the New Mexico Constitution affords justiciable claims to address programs and policies that contribute to climate change. The brief highlights the justiciability created by Article XX, § 21, the Due Process, and the Inherent Rights clauses of

the New Mexico Constitution. The brief illustrates that the provisions, especially Section 21, are judicially enforceable mandates.

5) *Amici* are conditionally filing the attached brief pursuant to Rule 12-320(A).

6) *Amici* have contacted all Parties to this case to provide timely notice of their intention to file this motion pursuant to Rule 12-320(D)(1) and to inquire as to their positions pursuant to Rule 12-309(C). The parties responded as follows:

a) Plaintiffs-Petitioners concur in this motion.

b) Intervenors/Defendants-Respondents New Mexico Chamber of Commerce and the Independent Petroleum Association of New Mexico oppose this motion.

c) Defendant New Mexico Legislature takes no position.

d) Defendants Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, the New Mexico Environment Department, Secretary James Kenney, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, and Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst, the Environmental Improvement Board, and the Oil Conservation Commission take no position.

### **CONCLUSION**

Wherefore, *Amici* respectfully seek leave to file the attached brief in support of Plaintiffs-Petitioners in the above-captioned matter.

January 28, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ George Bach

George Bach

*Professor of Law*

University of San Francisco School of Law

2130 Fulton St.

San Francisco, CA 94117

george@georgebachlaw.com

505-208-1675

Of counsel:

Martha F. Davis

*University Distinguished Professor of Law*

*Co-Director, Center for Global Law & Justice*

Northeastern University School of Law

416 Huntington Ave.

Boston, MA 02115

m.davis@northeastern.edu

617-373-8921

James R. May, Esq.

*Richard S. Richter Distinguished Professor of Law*

Washburn University School of Law

1700 SW College Ave.

Topeka, KS 66621

james.may@washburn.edu

785-670-1786

*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026, a true and correct copy of the foregoing document was e-filed and served through the Court's e-filing system upon counsel of record.

/s/ George Bach

George Bach

Counsel for *Amici*

# EXHIBIT A

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

No. S-1-SC-40980

MARIO ATENCIO, *et al.*,  
Plaintiffs-Petitioners,

vs.

THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO, *et al.*,  
Defendants-Respondents,

vs.

NEW MEXICO CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE, and INDEPENDENT  
PETROLEUM ASSOCIATION OF NEW  
MEXICO,  
Intervenors-Defendants-Respondents.

**BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* LAW PROFESSORS IN SUPPORT OF  
PLAINTIFFS-PETITIONERS**

George Bach  
Professor of Law  
University of San Francisco  
School of Law  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
george@georgebachlaw.com  
505-208-1675

Martha F. Davis, Of Counsel  
*University Distinguished Professor of Law;  
Co-Director, Center for Global Law & Justice*  
Northeastern University School of Law  
416 Huntington Ave.  
Boston, MA 02115  
m.davis@northeastern.edu  
617-373-8921

James R. May, Esq., Of Counsel  
*Richard S. Righter Distinguished Professor of Law*  
Washburn University School of Law  
1700 SW College Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66621  
james.may@washburn.edu  
785-670-1786

*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

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## STATEMENT OF IDENTITY AND INTERESTS OF *AMICI CURIAE*

*Amici Curiae*<sup>1</sup> comprise a group of twenty law professors and scholars who teach, research, and publish scholarly work in the subject areas of environmental law and state constitutional law, and therefore have an interest in the outcome of this case.<sup>2</sup> *Amici* urge this Court to affirm the state trial court's finding that the New Mexico Constitution affords justiciable claims to address programs and policies that contribute to climate change. The Due Process and Inherent Rights clauses of the New Mexico Constitution, in addition to Article XX, § 21, especially, are judicially enforceable mandates. *Amici* have reached out by email to all Parties to this case to provide notice of their intention to file this motion pursuant to Rule 12-320(D)(1).

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<sup>1</sup> As required by N.M.R. App. P. 12-320(C), *Amici Curiae* represent that no counsel for a party authored this brief in whole or in part and no counsel or party made a monetary contribution intended to fund the preparation or submission of this brief. Northeastern Law students Owen Doherty and Zachary Varricchione assisted in the preparation of this brief.

<sup>2</sup> Given *Amici*'s specific expertise and this Court's interest in focused briefing that aids its decision-making process, *Amici* address only Counts I and II of the Complaint and refer the Court to the Plaintiffs-Petitioners' brief for legal argument on Counts III, IV, and V.

## SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Article XX § 21 of the New Mexico Constitution (“Section 21”) sets out judicially manageable standards, and Plaintiffs have stated a justiciable claim under these standards. Defendants’ assertion to the contrary flies in the face of the plain text of Section 21, the accepted understanding of Section 21 at the time it was adopted, and the fundamental structure of the state Constitution. New Mexico courts regularly consult persuasive authority from other state jurisdictions, both for inspiration and to promote uniformity in approaches. Sister courts across the country have found similarly structured constitutional provisions to create justiciable rights in the areas of environmental rights, education, welfare, and other contexts.

Plaintiffs also state an actionable claim under Article II, § 18 of the New Mexico Constitution (the “Due Process Clause”), which incorporates the elements of Article II, § 4 of the state constitution (the “Inherent Rights Clause”). Plaintiffs allege violations of “life, liberty, property, safety and/or happiness.” These claims completely align with the protected elements of the state’s Due Process Clause, as construed in light of the Inherent Rights Clause. The Complaint includes detailed allegations that fully support the assertion that Defendants have violated Plaintiffs’ fundamental rights. While the federal Constitution does not include an inherent rights clause, most state constitutions include such a provision. This Court should find persuasive value in the decisions of sister state courts nationwide, which have

repeatedly upheld the justiciability of claims framed as violations of inherent rights, whether directly under their own inherent rights clauses, under their states' due process clauses, or both.

In light of this powerful support for Plaintiffs' claims, *Amici* urge this Court to reverse the Court of Appeals and find that the Plaintiffs have stated justiciable claims under New Mexico's Constitution.

## **ARGUMENT**

### **I. ARTICLE XX, § 21 OF THE STATE CONSTITUTION CREATES JUSTICIABLE RIGHTS.**

#### **A. Section 21 Incorporates Judicially Manageable Standards.**

Section 21 establishes clear, judicially manageable standards to be interpreted and enforced by courts.<sup>3</sup> The prefatory first sentence establishes the “fundamental importance” of protecting the state’s “beautiful and healthful environment” for the “public interest, health, safety, and the general welfare.” The second sentence then commands that the legislature “*shall* provide for control of pollution and despoilment” of these natural resources, consistent with their beneficial development. Art. XX, § 21 (emphasis added). The mandatory language

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<sup>3</sup> N.M. CONST. art. XX, § 21 reads in full: “The protection of the state's beautiful and healthful environment is hereby declared to be of fundamental importance to the public interest, health, safety and the general welfare. The legislature shall provide for control of pollution and control of despoilment of the air, water and other natural resources of this state, consistent with the use and development of these resources for the maximum benefit of the people.” (Adopted Nov. 2, 1971).

of this provision provides the basis for courts to review whether the legislature has met its constitutional obligations. As Professor Hershkoff observed in her influential article on positive rights in state constitutions, “when a state constitution commits the state to particular public policies, the role of the state court is to ensure that government uses its assigned power to achieve, or at least move closer to achieving, the specified goals.” Helen Hershkoff, *Positive Rights and State Constitutions: The Limits of Federal Rationality Review*, 112 HARV. L. REV. 1131, 1145 (1999); accord *State v. Lujan*, 1977-NMCA-010, ¶ 4, 90 N.M. 103, 105, 560 P.2d 167, 169 (1977) (noting that the words “shall” and “must” generally indicate that the provisions of a statute are mandatory and not discretionary); see also *State v. Boyse*, 2013-NMSC-024, 303 P.3d 830, 832 (2013) (stating that “the rules of statutory construction apply equally to constitutional construction”). If the courts of this state were to turn away from their duty to review the state’s compliance with this provision, it would leave unenforceable a public interest that the people of this state deem “fundamental.” See Richard Fallon, Jr., *Judicially Manageable Standards and Constitutional Meaning*, 119 HARV. L. REV. 1274, 1306-09 (2014) (discussing the danger that underenforcement of constitutional principles on justiciability grounds will foreclose any future review). Even if such a hands-off approach *might* be justified in a federal context, the judiciary in New Mexico has rejected it. See *Grisham v. Van Soelen*, 2023-NMSC-027, ¶ 34, 539 P.3d 272, 285

(2023) (rejecting federal approach in *Rucho v. Common Cause* and finding partisan gerrymandering to be justiciable under state constitution).

Only where there is truly no law to apply have courts found an absence of meaningful standards of review. *See Rucho v. Common Cause*, 588 U.S. 684, 721 (2019) (concluding that partisan gerrymandering is “not law”). *But see id.* at 722 (Kagan, J., dissenting) (asserting that partisan gerrymandering is “not beyond the courts”); *accord Grisham*, 2023-NMSC-027, ¶ 34 (citing Justice Kagan’s dissent with approval and finding partisan gerrymandering to be justiciable under New Mexico law). Here, the detailed allegations in the complaint—which must be taken as true at this point—chronicle the New Mexico Environment Department’s consistent violations of its statutory duty to prevent or abate air pollution in the counties with heavy oil and gas production where Plaintiffs live, work, recreate, and practice ceremony. *See, e.g.*, Complaint ¶¶ 157-185, 199-216, *et seq.* (describing specific harms arising from oil and gas production policies in New Mexico); *see also, e.g.*, Complaint ¶¶ 274-324, *et seq.* (alleging that oil and gas production in the San Juan and Permian Basins and other areas is endangering the health and lives of the state residents). Federal pollution control laws provide ample intelligible standards for the court to apply in judging whether the legislature and executive branches are living up to the constitutional commands. *See, e.g.*, James R. May, *Climate Change, Constitutional Consignment, and the Political Question Doctrine*, 85 DENVER U. L. REV. 919, 953-958 (2008). Contrary

to the Court of Appeals' decision below, the fact that the legislature retains some discretion to balance pollution control with the "beneficial development" of the state's natural resources does not mean that such discretion is unfettered or unreviewable. If at trial the facts show that the state is violating the standards and norms that are meant to protect people's health and quality of life, then the court will be able to consider what remedies are appropriate to protect the Plaintiffs' constitutional rights.

This approach is consistent with Section 21's intent to create enforceable rights. This intent is squarely confirmed by the official guide prepared by the New Mexico Legislative Council Service in July 1971, created to assist the legislature's consideration of Section 21. Specifically, the summary of "Arguments For," which prevailed when the legislature approved Section 21, emphasizes the command that the legislature "take positive action . . . to protect the environment." Constitutional Amendments Proposed by the 1971 Legislature and Arguments For and Against, New Mexico Legislative Council Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, July 1971, at 34-35.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the "Arguments Against" laid out by the Legislative

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<sup>4</sup> The central significance and content of Section 21's command is further emphasized in the authoritative description in the Oxford University Press volume on the New Mexico Constitution. According to the author, "[t]he maintenance of a beautiful and healthful environment in New Mexico is made a constitutional *requirement* by this section. The legislature is *mandated* to enact appropriate laws to control and limit the pollution and despoilment of natural resources." CHARLES SMITH, THE NEW MEXICO STATE CONSTITUTION 188 (2011) (emphasis added).

Council Service, which failed to secure the support of the majority of legislators, argued without basis that there could be no judicial enforcement of the Amendment. *Id.* at 35-36. The legislature’s rejection of that position, and the Amendment’s ultimate adoption through popular vote, are powerful evidence that Section 21 is intended to create a judicially enforceable mandate. It was with that understanding that the state adopted Section 21 by the largest margin of approval of any amendments put before the New Mexico voters in November 1971. *See, e.g., Seven Amendments Win State Approval*, CLOVIS NEWS-JOURNAL, Nov. 3, 1971, A-1; Bill Feather, *Easier Amendment Proposal Fails*, ALBUQUERQUE J., Nov. 4, 1971, A-5; *League Outlines Proposed Amendments*, LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS, Oct. 13, 1971, at 5 (League of Women Voters guide published in advance of statewide vote states that “the amendment could be considered a mandate from the people asking for more pollution control”).

Ignoring these facts, Defendants contend that the sole remedy for a violation of the Amendment is through an electoral campaign to defeat the recalcitrant legislators responsible for the legislature’s inaction. But that argument ignores the constitutional text and doctrine. Certainly, such an approach is available in a democracy. However, if that were the only way to enforce constitutional provisions then much of the state’s rich history of constitutional

adjudication, which builds squarely on *Marbury v. Madison*, would be thrown into question. *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137, 177 (1803).<sup>5</sup>

The courts of this state have repeatedly recognized that the judiciary’s proper “function and duty [is] to say what the law is and what the Constitution means.” *Grisham*, 2023-NMSC-027, 539 P.3d at 285 (citation omitted) (finding partisan gerrymandering claim to be justiciable); *State ex rel. Los Ranchos de Albuquerque v. City of Albuquerque*, 1994-NMSC-126, ¶ 15, 119 N.M. 150, 156, 889 P.2d 185, 191 (1994) (“The reviewability of executive and legislative acts is implicit and inherent in the common law and in the division of powers between the three branches of government.”); *State v. Gutierrez*, 1993-NMSC-062, ¶ 55, 116 N.M. 431, 446, 863 P.2d 1052, 1067 (1993) (“[T]he primary responsibility for enforcing the Constitution's limits on government, at least since the time of *Marbury v. Madison*, . . . has been vested in the judicial branch.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted); *Dillon v. King*, 1974-NMSC-096, ¶ 28, 87 N.M. 79, 529 P.2d 745 (1974) (citing *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137, 177 (1803)); *see Marbury*, 5 U.S. at 178 (“It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is.”).

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<sup>5</sup> *Marbury v. Madison* has been cited at least thirty-three times by this state’s appellate courts, including by both this Court and the Court of Appeals. Westlaw search of “Citing References” linked to *Marbury v. Madison* conducted Dec. 31, 2025.

This Court should reject the Court of Appeals’ approach—which ignores text and history, turns *Marbury v. Madison* on its head, and shields constitutional controversies from judicial review—and affirm the judiciary’s power to interpret and apply this provision of the New Mexico State Constitution.

**B. Section 21’s Justiciability is Further Supported by the State Constitution’s Fundamental Structure.**

Courts of this state have adopted a functionalist approach to separation of powers. *See, e.g., Martinez v. State of New Mexico*, No. D-101-CV-2014-00793, Decision and Order at 8-9 (1st Jud. Dist. Ct., July 20, 2018). And no wonder. The rigid formalist interpretation of Article III, § 1 advanced by Defendants is plainly unworkable, contradicted by decades of state courts’ review of state constitutional issues and the state judiciary’s repeated endorsement of *Marbury v. Madison*.

A significant body of case law and scholarship recognizes that state constitutions, including New Mexico’s, are not merely miniaturized versions of the federal constitution. G. Alan Tarr, *Interpreting the Separation of Powers in State Constitutions*, 59 N.Y.U. ANN. SURV. AM. L. 329, 330 (2003). *See also State v. Gomez*, 1997-NMSC-006, 122 N.M. 777, 932 P.2d. 1 (1997) (adopting independent mode of analysis for state constitution’s due process clause); *State v. Cordova*, 1989-NMSC-083, ¶ 17, 109 N.M. 211, 217, 784 P.2d 30, 36 (1989) (departing from federal courts’ “totality of circumstances” test for determining probable cause); *see generally* EMILY ZACKIN, LOOKING FOR RIGHTS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES: WHY

STATE CONSTITUTIONS CONTAIN AMERICA'S POSITIVE RIGHTS (2013). Instead, even in instances where state constitutional wording is similar to the federal constitution, the concerns and values that motivated the state-level drafters are very often quite different than those of the federal framers. That is especially true of a state constitution such as New Mexico's, which was drafted during the Progressive era, more than a century after America's founding. *See, e.g.*, AMY BRIDGES, DEMOCRATIC BEGINNINGS: FOUNDING THE WESTERN STATES, 19 (2017) (noting that New Mexico's 1911 constitution responded to the concerns of the time).

This insight explains why Defendants' reading of Article III, § 1 of the state constitution, is fundamentally misguided. At least forty state constitutions contain explicit separation of powers provisions. Tarr, *Interpreting the Separation of Powers in State Constitutions*, 59 N.Y.U. ANN. SURV. AM. L. at 337. Defendants argue for rigid formalist interpretation of Article III, § 1 that would preclude judicial oversight of state constitutional claims. *See* Scott R. Bauries, *Is There an Elephant in the Room?: Judicial Review of Educational Adequacy and the Separation of Powers in State Constitutions*, 61 ALA. L. REV. 701, 737 (2010) (explaining functionalist vs. formalist approaches). Yet this Court is not bound to follow such an inflexible approach. Indeed, an in-depth analysis of this issue concluded that an explicit separation of powers provision "does not have any discernable impact on whether courts choose to abstain from the merits of constitutional litigation on the very grounds of separation of powers." *Id.* at 746.

Further, the analysis found that the significant majority of states with explicit separation of powers provisions rejected the formalist reading when considering the justiciability of state constitutional education clauses. *Id.* at 741-743 tbl.1 (18 of 26 courts found such constitutional claims to be justiciable).

Properly understood, this state’s separation of powers provision supports Plaintiffs’ claims. Rather than enforcing strict, inflexible lines between the three branches, “the core of the state approach is government accountability,” and “[t]he separation of powers is a tool that the people have enlisted to help them better monitor and control government.” Jonathan Marshfield, *America’s Other Separation of Powers Tradition*, 73 DUKE L. J. 545, 616 (2023). The purpose of the separation of powers provision is not to establish rigid boundaries of power nor build walls between the branches of government, but to reinforce vertical avenues for ensuring that government bodies are meeting their obligations to the people. That is exactly the role of judicial review here: to provide an avenue for the people to enforce the state’s duties under Section 21.

The case for judicial enforcement of Section 21 is bolstered by the relative ease with which the legislature and the people can respond if the courts over-enforce a state constitutional norm. The constitution of New Mexico has been amended 178 times in 107 years. In this state, constitutional amendments are put to a majority vote of the legislature before being submitted to the voters for approval by a majority vote, a relatively low threshold that allows for rapid response to

emerging issues. Because of this state constitutional design, the legislature and the people are well-positioned to respond to judicial decisions if needed. *See, e.g.*, Helen Hershkoff, *Positive Rights and State Constitutions: The Limits of Federal Rationality Review*, 112 HARV. L. REV., at 1161. The availability of such a dialogue—and the possibility of appropriate corrective measures—provides further support for finding that Section 21 is justiciable. In its insistence that the judiciary has no role in enforcing Section 21, the Court of Appeals ignores the importance of such inter-branch dialogue at the state level.

Finally, that Section 21 exists outside of the state constitution’s Bill of Rights does not make it non-justiciable. Justiciable provisions appear throughout the constitution and are not limited to the Bill of Rights. *See, e.g.*, N.M. CONST. art. XVI, § 1 (confirming water rights); N.M. CONST. art. XVII, § 2 (banning child labor in mines). As adopted in 1971, Section 21 was added to the “Miscellaneous” section of the constitution to avoid the need to amend the entire constitution in order to recognize a newly enumerated right. *See generally* NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERV., PIECEMEAL AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF NEW MEXICO SINCE 1911 23 (2016) (indicating that piecemeal amendments have been favored as a way to avoid opening the entire constitution for review). The placement has no impact on the provision’s justiciability.

In sum, Section 21’s role in the structure of this state’s constitution favors a finding of justiciability.

### **C. The Context of Section 21's Adoption Supports its Justiciability.**

Environmental issues were prominent when Section 21 was adopted in 1971, arising as part of expanding international, national, and subnational recognition of environmental rights. *See generally* James R. May, *The Case for Environmental Human Rights: Recognition, Implementation, and Outcomes*, 42 CARDOZO L. REV. 983, 989-91 (2021). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was increasing interest in, and urgency around, environmental issues. EMILY ZACKIN, *LOOKING FOR RIGHTS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES* at 148-149. The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970. Internationally, the United Nations held its first conference focusing on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, adopting the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment. *See* Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: In Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, *Rep. of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, UN Doc. A/CONF. 48/14 (1972). In the United States, environmentalists were inspired by the civil rights movement, and judicial enforcement of government's environmental obligations was a high priority. *See generally* JOSEPH L. SAX, *DEFENDING THE ENVIRONMENT: A STRATEGY FOR CITIZEN ACTION* (1971) (urging enforcement of environmental rights in court).

As the specialized field of environmental law took shape, litigation was an important tool to tackle not only individual protections but also national environmental issues. Samuel P. Hays, *Environmental Litigation in Historical*

*Perspective*, 19 UNIV. MICH. J. L. REFORM 969, 969 (1986). Reflecting the importance of this strategy, the Environmental Defense Fund was founded in 1967, followed by the Natural Resources Defense Council in 1970.

State-level constitutional reform was a key aspect of the environmental rights movement. See Roland M. Frye, Jr., *Environmental Provisions in State Constitutions*, 5 ENV'T L. REP. 50028 (1975) (noting the success of incorporating environmental provisions into state constitutions). Though attempts to achieve federal constitutional recognition of a right to a healthful environment were unsuccessful, fourteen states adopted new constitutional amendments regarding environmental protection and conservation between 1960 and 1980. ZACKIN, LOOKING FOR RIGHTS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES at 151, tbl.7.1.

Most of these state constitutional provisions, including New Mexico's, create positive rights, using language that commands government action. *Id.* at 165-68. Several state courts have found these constitutional amendments to be judicially enforceable. This is consistent with their framers' intent. *Id.* at 148 (noting that state constitutional environmental provisions in the 1960s and 1970s were intended to enable litigation). For example, the Montana Supreme Court recently upheld claims filed by Montana youth who challenged legislative actions as inconsistent with the state constitution's right to a "clean and healthful environment." See *Held v. State*, 2024 MT 312, ¶ 30, 419 Mont. 403, 422, 560 P.3d 1235, 1249 (Mont. 2024) ("Montana's right to a clean and healthful

environment and environmental life support system includes a stable climate system, which is clearly within the object and true principles . . . of the right to a clean and healthful environment.”); *see also Montana Env’t Info. Ctr. v. Dep’t of Env’t Quality*, 1999 MT 248 ¶¶ 63-66, 296 Mont. 207, 225-26, 988 P.2d 1236, 1246 (enforcing that state’s 1972 constitutional amendment in challenge to legislative exemptions of arsenic discharges in well water testing). The language of the Montana provision is similar in language and structure to Article XX, § 21 of New Mexico’s constitution. Both provisions, adopted within one year of each other, assert the fundamental right to a healthful environment and impose on the legislature an affirmative duty to uphold that right. *Cf.* N.M. CONST. Art. XX, § 21; MONT. CONST. Art. IX, § 1.

Supreme Courts in other states have held state constitutional provisions recognizing environmental rights to be justiciable, including in Pennsylvania (*Robinson Twp. v. Commonwealth*, 83 A.3d 901 (Pa. 2013); *Pa. Env’t Def. Found. v. Commonwealth (PEDF II)*, 161 A.3d 911 (Pa. 2017)) (construing PA. CONST., Art. I, § 27), Hawai’i (*In re Maui Elec. Co., Ltd.*, 506 P.3d 192, 202 n.15 (Haw. 2022) (construing HAW. CONST., Art. XI, § 9), Louisiana (*Save Ourselves, Inc. v. Louisiana Control Comm’n*, 452 So. 2d 1152, 1156-1157 (La. 1984) (identifying standards for reviewing claims under state constitution’s environmental amendment), and Michigan (*Highway Comm’n v. Vanderkloot*, 220 N.W.2d 416, 426 (Mich. 1974) (recognizing that the mandatory language of state constitution

imposes requirements on state government, reviewable by the court). *See also generally*, James R. May, *Subnational Climate Rights*, 26 U. PENN. J. CONST. L. 26 (2024) (discussing justiciable claims based on state environmental rights provisions).

The Alaska Supreme Court has also held that the environmental provisions of Constitution of Alaska are justiciable, notwithstanding Defendants’ assertion otherwise. *Sagoonick v. State*, 503 P.3d 777, 788, 796 (Alaska 2022) (construing Article VIII, sections 1 and 2 to require that courts take a “hard look” to ensure that the government has exercised “reasoned discretion,” acknowledging “a duty to ensure compliance with constitutional principles, and . . . a duty to redress constitutional rights violations”). Substantive review is appropriate here because Section 21 expressly recognizes the “fundamental importance” of the “protection of the state's beautiful and healthful environment.” The Plaintiffs have identified a pattern of statutory exemptions and exclusions from key environmental protections that the Court can redress through such an examination. *See* Complaint ¶¶ 175-98.

New Mexico’s citizens overwhelmingly voted in favor of Section 21 *because* they understood it to be enforceable by the courts. The Jan.-Feb. 1971 newsletter of the environmental organization New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water, for instance, told readers that “an environmental bill of rights . . . will be presented to the voters as a constitutional amendment at the next general election,” scheduled for November of that year. Harvey Mudd II, *Environmental Legislation in the 1971*

*Session*, NMA Jan.-Feb. 1971, at 12. See ZACKIN, LOOKING FOR RIGHTS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES, at 148 (explaining that “constitutional declarations that the state must maintain a healthy or healthful natural environment” were often known as “environmental bills of rights”). The newsletter explained that the amendment “would give clear constitutional grounds for *future legal action* against polluters.” *Id.* (emphasis added). Judicial enforcement was understood to be essential to vindicate new Article 21. Indeed, *that is why it was adopted*. See Richard J. Tobin, *Some Observations on the Use of State Constitutions to Protect the Environment*, 3 ENV’T AFF. 473, 482 (1974) (noting that if “legislatures are unwilling to enact legislation to guarantee citizens’ rights to a decent or healthful environment . . . citizens hoping to vindicate their environmental rights may have to move from the legislative to the judicial arena”). This context for Section 21’s adoption provides ample support for the justiciability of Plaintiffs’ claims.

**D. Peer Courts Have Found Similarly Structured Constitutional Provisions to Establish Enforceable Standards.**

The courts of this state often look to, and credit, the persuasive value of the decisions of sister courts confronting similar issues. For example, in assessing a novel case of search and seizure, the New Mexico State Supreme Court noted that it would “seek guidance” from, *inter alia*, “the decisions of courts of our sister states interpreting their correlative state constitutional guarantees . . .” *Gutierrez*, 1993-NMSC-062, 116 N.M. at 435-36 (surveying decisions from Kansas, North

Carolina, Massachusetts, and others). The Court explained that it did not look to sister states for binding precedent, instead adopting a comparative lens because “we find the views expressed persuasive and because we recognize the responsibility of state courts to preserve national uniformity in development and application of fundamental rights guaranteed by our state and federal constitutions.” *Id.* at 436; *see also Moses v. Skandera*, 2015-NMSC-036, 367 P.3d 838 (2015) (citing cases from Hawai’i and South Dakota in construing the New Mexico State Constitution provision prohibiting appropriation of funds to support any sectarian or private school); *Griego v. Oliver*, 2014-NMSC-003, 316 P.3d 865 (2013) (invalidating New Mexico’s state ban on same-sex marriage, citing rulings from Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, California, and Connecticut); *State v. Vallejos*, 1997-NMSC-040, 123 N.M. 739, 945 P.2d 957 (1997) (citing rulings from Florida, New Jersey, West Virginia, and New York in holding that the New Mexico Constitution is violated when police exceed the standards of proper investigation and create a likelihood of entrapment for an ordinary person).

Jurisprudence from sister states involving comparable state constitutional provisions provides significant persuasive authority supporting the justiciability of Section 21. Importantly, consideration of this analogous jurisprudence can promote the national uniformity identified as an important value by this state’s Supreme Court.

One such notable analogue is Article XVII, § 1, of the New York State Constitution, which provides:

The aid, care and support of the needy are public concerns and shall be provided by the state and by such of its subdivisions, and in such manner and by such means, as the legislature may from time to time determine.

N.Y. CONST. art. XVII, § 1 (1938).

Although Article XVII (N.Y.) and Section 21 (N.M.) address distinct areas of public concern, their structure is remarkably similar. Section 21 identifies the protection of the state’s “beautiful and healthful” environment to be of “fundamental importance,” and mandates that the legislature address this interest in accordance with general criteria set out in the Amendment. Article XVII likewise identifies “aid, care, and support of the needy” as an important public concern, and mandates the legislature take action to provide for it, leaving some discretion to the legislature as to the manner and means.

New York courts have repeatedly affirmed that Article XVII is justiciable and sets out enforceable standards. In *Tucker v. Toia*, 371 N.E.2d 449, 43 N.Y.2d 1, 8 (1977), the New York Court of Appeals held that Article XVII, Section 1 “imposes upon the State an affirmative duty to aid the needy.” Thus, “the provision for assistance to the needy is not a matter of legislative grace; rather, it is specifically mandated by our Constitution.” *Id.* at 7. See also *Callahan v. Carey*, 909 N.E.2d 1229, 1233 (N.Y. 2009) (recognizing that Article XVII obligates the

state “to provide decent shelter for homeless adults”); *McCain v Koch*, 511 N.E.2d 62, 70 N.Y.2d 109, 113-114 (1987) (issuing an injunction, under Article XVII, requiring New York City to “provide housing which satisfies minimum standards of sanitation, safety, and decency”). In *Aliessa v. Novello*, New York’s highest court reaffirmed that the provisions of Article XVII establish constitutional limits on the legislature’s discretion and that a statutory scheme that ignores plaintiffs’ “need” in allocating benefits “violates the letter and spirit of article XVII, § 1.” 754 N.E.2d 1085, 1093 (N.Y. 2001). Given the parallel structure of New Mexico’s Section 21, the approach taken by New York’s highest court to enforcing New York’s Article XVII is particularly instructive here.

While the substantive focus of Article XVII—general assistance to the poor—is unusual among state constitutions, many states have constitutional education clauses that are structured similarly to Section 21. These clauses may mandate that the state legislature achieve a specific standard, such as an “efficient system” of public education (TEX. CONST. art. VII, § 7), or a “thorough and efficient system of public schools” (MINN. CONST. art. XIII, § 1), or they may simply mandate the establishment of public schools without specifying a standard (S.C. CONST. art. XI, § 3; N.Y. CONST. art. XI, § 1). Like Section 21, these clauses often give the legislature some discretion as to the means of achieving the constitution’s mandate, using words such as “appropriate legislation” (CONN. CONST. art. XIII, § 1), “as it determines” (TENN. CONST. art. XIII, § 1), “in such

manner” (KAN. CONST. art. VI, § 1), or “as may be desirable” (S.C. CONST. art. XI, § 3). The availability of some legislative discretion does not, however, defeat the enforceability of these provisions. The high courts in each of these states have found these clauses to be justiciable: *see, e.g., Conn. Coal. for Just. in Educ. Funding, Inc. v. Rell*, 176 A.3d 28 (Conn. 2018) (rejecting claim that reviewing the constitutionality of the state’s education funding scheme presented a nonjusticiable political question); *Gannon v. State*, 319 P.3d 1196, 1231 (Kan. 2014) (concluding the same, relying on sister-state precedents); *Cruz-Guzman v. State*, 916 N.W.2d 1, 9 (Minn. 2018) (“Although specific determinations of educational policy are matters for the Legislature, it does not follow that the judiciary cannot adjudicate whether the Legislature has satisfied its constitutional duty.”); *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. N.Y.*, 801 N.E.2d 326, 330-32 (N.Y. 2003) (confirming judicial role in determining whether the legislature has met the state constitution’s mandate of a system “wherein all the children of this state may be educated”); *Abbeville Cnty. Sch. Dist. v. State*, 767 S.E.2d 157, 166 (S.C. 2014) (“Nothing in the text of the article precludes the judiciary from exercising its authority over the [education clause’s] provisions, or intervening when the Defendants’ laudable educational goals fall short of their constitutional duty.”); *Tennessee Small Sch. Sys. v. McWherter*, 851 S.W.2d 139, 148 (Tenn. 1993) (declaring it the court’s “duty to consider the question of whether the legislature . . . disregarded, transgressed, and defeated” provisions of the state constitution);

*Neeley v. West Orange-Cove Consol. Independent School Dist.*, 176 S.W.3d 746, 772 (Tex. 2005) (holding the Texas Constitution’s education clause justiciable and rejecting arguments that proper funding levels presented a political question); *Morath v. The Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coal.*, 490 S.W.3d 826, 847 (Tex. 2016) (holding that the legislature’s discretion over education policy “is not without bounds” and may be reviewed by the judiciary).

The Kansas Supreme Court’s analysis of its state constitution’s education clause is particularly instructive. In *Gannon*, the Kansas Supreme Court found its education clause to be justiciable, reasoning in part that the word “shall” creates a clear, mandatory constitutional duty that is distinguishable from a mere direction that the legislature should strive towards. *Gannon*, 319 P.3d at 1220.<sup>6</sup>

The *Gannon* court contrasted this with other constitutional provisions using language such as “may,” that do not create such an affirmative duty. *Id.* at 1221. Similar choices between mandatory and discretionary language are also apparent in the New Mexico Constitution. Compare N.M. CONST. art. II, § 20 (“Private property *shall* not be taken or damaged for public use without just compensation.”) and N.M. CONST. art. XX, § 21 (“The legislature shall provide for control of

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<sup>6</sup> “The legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools, educational institutions and related activities which may be organized and changed in such manner as may be provided by law.” KAN. CONST. art. VI, § 1.

pollution and control of despoilment of the air, water and other natural resources of this state . . .”) *with* N.M. CONST. art. IV, § 42 (“The senate, in exercising its advice and consent responsibilities over gubernatorial appointments, *may* by resolution designate the members of an appropriate standing committee to operate as an interim committee . . .”) (emphasis added).

Notably, the Kansas education provision in Art. VI, § 1 of the state constitution does not qualify its command with specific standard-setting language. Rather, it contains a straightforward mandate that the legislature provide for “intellectual . . . improvement” by “establishing and maintaining public schools, educational institutions, and related activities.” The word “suitable” appears only in Art. VI, § 6, the section of the Kansas constitution addressing school financing. *Gannon*, 319 P.3d at 1219. The Kansas courts nevertheless found Art. VI § 1 to be justiciable based on the clear command to the legislature. *See, e.g.*, KAN. CONST. art. VI § 1 (“The legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by by establishing and maintaining public schools . . .”). Likewise, the use of the word “shall” in Section 21 is sufficient to demonstrate justiciability. The text conveys a constitutional command deliberately chosen by Section 21’s drafters and overwhelmingly approved by the people of the State of New Mexico.

Still, Defendants argue that even when the constitutional provision conveys a mandate, the language in these clauses regarding the means of achieving the

mandate creates wide latitude for legislative choices, barring judicial review. Courts throughout the land, however, have rejected such extreme deference. As they recognize, it is the provisions regarding the scope of discretion that constrain the actions of the legislature and reserve a place for judicial review of legislative decisions. For instance, Connecticut’s education clause includes “qualifying terms such as ‘appropriate legislation’ that imply a judicial role in disputes arising thereunder, particularly when coupled with the word ‘shall,’ which itself implies a constitutional duty that is mandatory and judicially enforceable.” *Rell*, 990 A.2d at 220 (internal citation omitted).<sup>7</sup> The court opined that “courts should view [such cases] with a heavy thumb on the side of justiciability, and with the recognition that, simply because the case is connected to the political sphere, it does not necessarily follow that it is a political question.” *Id.* at 218. *See also Sheff v. O’Neill*, 678 A.2d 1267 (Conn. 1996) (establishing courts’ role in enforcing state constitution’s education clause).

Once courts find that an education clause establishes a constitutional duty that binds the legislature, they recognize an obligation to address the justiciable claim. The Tennessee Constitution, for example, commands that the General Assembly “provide for . . . a system of free public schools.” TENN. CONST. art. XI,

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<sup>7</sup> “There shall always be free public elementary and secondary schools in this state. The general assembly shall implement this principle by appropriate legislation.” CONN. CONST. art. VIII, § 1.

§ 12. The Tennessee provision does not incorporate any explicit qualifying language, but simply commands that an educational system be established considering the state’s recognition of “the inherent value of education.” *Id.* When presented with a claim to enforce this provision, the state’s high court cited *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137 (1803), and concluded that a court has no choice but to adjudicate the government’s adherence to the constitution, for doing otherwise “would be a denigration of our own constitutional duty.” *McWherter*, 851 S.W.2d at 148 (Tenn. 1993).

The Supreme Court of Texas came to a similar conclusion when it held that although the language of the education clause may be imprecise when it comes to specific policy prescriptions, “it is not *inherently* the Legislature’s role to define and interpret the Constitution,” and in fact, “courts have the ultimate authority to determine whether the Legislature’s interpretation of these terms is arbitrary or unreasonable and, therefore, unconstitutional.” *Morath*, 490 S.W.3d at 846-47 (emphasis in original). Indeed, the *Morath* Court astutely noted that “[i]f the framers [of the constitution] had intended the legislature’s discretion to be absolute, they need not have mandated that the public education system be efficient and suitable; they could instead have provided only that the legislature provide whatever public education it deemed appropriate.” *Id.* at 847. Therefore, once a review of a state education clause reveals a mandate to the legislature to provide education and includes even a modicum of guidance as to what that education

should look like, the task falls to the judiciary to determine whether the legislature's policies adhere to that mandate. *See Rell*, 990 A.2d at 245-50 (collecting cases as of 2010).

In sum, state courts across the country have not shied away from their obligation to enforce standards and legislative obligations set out in state constitutions, in contexts ranging from welfare to education to the environment. In exercising that duty, these courts ensure that the directives enshrined in constitutional language and endorsed by the people of the state are implemented and respected. The examples cited here from sister courts around the nation provide persuasive authority to support this Court in finding that Plaintiffs have presented justiciable claims under Section 2.

## **II. IN COMBINATION, THE STATE CONSTITUTION'S DUE PROCESS CLAUSE AND INHERENT RIGHTS CLAUSE ESTABLISH JUSTICIABLE RIGHTS.**

### **A. The New Mexico Supreme Court Has Made Clear that These Twin Provisions of the State's Bill of Rights Can Support Justiciable Claims.**

Count II of the Complaint sets out a claim based on two provisions of the New Mexico Constitution's Bill of Rights, Article II, Sections 4 and 18. Section 4 provides that all persons born have "certain natural, inherent and inalienable rights," including but not limited to "rights of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of seeking and obtaining safety and happiness." N.M. CONST. art. II, § 4 (the "Inherent Rights

Clause”). Section 18 provides in pertinent part that “[n]o person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.” N.M. CONST. art. II, § 18 (the “Due Process Clause”). The Supreme Court of New Mexico has affirmed that the Inherent Rights Clause and Due Process Clause in tandem can support a justiciable claim. *See Morris v. Brandenburg*, 2016-NMSC-027, ¶¶48, 51, 376 P.3d 836, 854-855 (2016). Plaintiffs have stated such a claim here. Indeed, Plaintiffs’ claims that Defendants have violated their rights to “life, liberty, property, safety and/or happiness” are completely aligned with the specific fundamental protections set out in the Inherent Rights Clause. *See, e.g.*, Complaint ¶ 9, 97, 118, 121, 123, 155, 293, 354, 379.

This conclusion is consistent with the unique text, structure, and history of the state constitution. While sharing a common inspiration with the federal constitution, New Mexico’s Due Process Clause has important differences with its federal analogue. In particular, New Mexico’s provision provides that “[n]o person” shall be deprived of due process. In contrast, the federal language focuses on state power (i.e., “no state shall”). Like most states, New Mexico’s Due Process Clause is phrased not as a limitation on the State, but as a grant of affirmative rights to persons within the jurisdiction. *See BRIDGES, DEMOCRATIC BEGINNINGS: FOUNDING THE WESTERN STATES* at 138 (explaining that Western state constitutions expanded rights of individuals’ and governments’ obligations to them).

A rights-protective reading of the state’s Due Process Clause is justified not only by the differences in text from its federal counterpart, but also because state and federal constitutions do not perform identical functions in our governmental structure. The federal government is one of enumerated powers, and the federal constitutional text sets limitations on government.<sup>8</sup> *See* BRIDGES, DEMOCRATIC BEGINNINGS: FOUNDING THE WESTERN STATES at 16. In contrast, states, including New Mexico, have general, unenumerated powers, a crucial structural distinction that reinforces the broader scope of state power and the justiciability of claims arising under this state’s Bill of Rights. *Id.*; *see, e.g.*, U.S. CONST., amend X.

The New Mexico Supreme Court has instructed that the Due Process Clause should be interpreted through the lens of the state’s Inherent Rights Clause. The Inherent Rights Clause, which has no counterpart in the federal constitution, is drawn from the Declaration of Independence and the philosophy of John Locke. Joseph Grodin, *Rediscovering the State Constitutional Right to Happiness and Safety*, 25 HASTINGS CONST. L. QTRLY. 1, 11 (1997). New Mexico’s high court has recognized that application of the Inherent Rights Clause may lead to “greater due process protections than those provided under federal law.” *See Morris*, 2016-NMSC-027, ¶ 51. Clearly, the Inherent Rights Clause has legal weight under this state’s jurisprudence. *See Griego*, 2014-NMSC-003, ¶ 1 (“When government is

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8.

alleged to have threatened any of these rights, it is the responsibility of the courts to interpret and apply the protections of the Constitution.”); *Morris*, 2016-NMSC-027, ¶ 51 (concluding that the Inherent Rights Clause “may also ultimately be a source of greater due process protections than those provided under federal law”).

The prominent placement of the Inherent Rights Clause in New Mexico’s Bill of Rights is a further indication that it was intended to have legal weight in protecting state’s citizens’ rights of “enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of seeking and obtaining safety and happiness.” N.M. CONST. art. II, § 4. This Court’s conclusion that the Due Process Clause works together with the Inherent Rights Clause to protect individual fundamental rights, *Morris*, 2016-NMSC-027, ¶¶ 48, 51, is consistent with the text, history, and structure of the state constitution. There is no reason for this Court to revisit its prior determinations that claims of the type presented by Plaintiffs here, which are fully aligned with the rights identified in the Inherent Rights Clause, are justiciable.

**B. Sister Courts have Repeatedly Found Similar State Constitutional Clauses to Create Justiciable Rights.**

Beyond the controlling New Mexico case law cited above, the justiciability of the Plaintiffs’ claims here are further confirmed by the conclusions of sister courts construing similar provisions of their own state constitutions. Thirty-four state constitutions explicitly protect “inherent” or “inalienable” rights. Martha F.

Davis, *Annotated Bibliography “Persons Born” and the Jurisprudence of Life*, 104 B.U. L. REV. ONLINE 161 (2024), at Table 1. Forty-two state constitutions contain due process clauses. *Id.* State courts across the country have repeatedly found that, alone or in combination, these provisions support justiciable claims involving individual rights.

State high courts have found inalienable or inherent rights clauses to be justiciable in cases involving a wide range of fundamental rights. *Commonwealth v. Weston W.*, 913 N.E.2d 832, 840 (Mass. 2009) (finding that “inherent rights” clause protected right to move freely within the Commonwealth); *Tully v. City of Wilmington*, 810 S.E.2d 208, 213-14 (N.C. 2018) (upholding justiciability of claim to “enjoy the fruits of their labors” under “inherent rights” clause); *Hodes & Nauser, MDS, P.A. v. Schmidt*, 440 P.3d 461, 472 (Kan. 2019) (inherent rights clause protects a right to abortion); *Members of the Med. Licensing Bd. of Ind. v. Planned Parenthood Great Nw.*, 211 N.E.3d 957, 973 (Ind. 2023) (finding that inherent rights clause is enforceable in abortion context); *Breese v. Smith*, 501 P.2d 159 (Alaska 1972) (inherent rights clause protects right to access public education); *Okla. Call v. Drummond*, 2023 OK 24, 526 P.3d 1123, 1130 (recognizing pregnant women’s inherent “right to life” under state constitution).

Several state courts have found that “safety”—which is explicitly protected in the New Mexico Constitution—is an inherent right protected under states’ Inherent Rights Clauses. For example, the Washington Supreme Court noted that

“children have substantive due process rights to be free of unreasonable risk of harm” and “a right to reasonable safety.” *Braam ex rel. Braam v. State*, 81 P.3d 851, 865 (Wash. 2003). In a decision that was subsequently vacated on other grounds, this Court likewise endorsed the view that the state’s constitutional protections extend to the safety of its citizens. *Reed v. Reed ex rel. Ortiz*, 124 N.M. 129, 947 P.2d 86 (1997), *judgment rev’d sub nom.*, 118 S. Ct. 1860 (1998) (noting that “our Constitution can offer not only to protect life, but also the ‘more expansive’ guarantee of obtaining safety”).

Further, at least one jurist in Hawai’i has found that environmental rights are among the inherent rights protected by that state’s Due Process Clause. In *In re Hawai’i Elec. Light Co.*, 526 P.3d 329 (Haw. 2023), an energy company sought to obtain regulatory approval to provide energy by burning eucalyptus trees. Enforcing the state constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment, the state supreme court upheld the decision of the Public Utility Commission to deny the company’s application. In a concurring opinion, Justice Wilson opined that the “right to a life-sustaining climate system” is separately and independently protected by the state’s due process clause, as part of “life, liberty, and property.” *Id.* at 337 (Wilson, J., concurring). And as noted in the majority opinion, the fundamental rights protected by the Hawai’i constitution are necessarily developing as circumstances change, particularly in the area of climate. According to the court, “[t]he right to a life-sustaining climate system is not just affirmative; it

is constantly evolving.” *Id.* at 336. See May, *Subnational Climate Rights*, 26 U. PENN. J. CONST. L. at 59-60.

The propriety of exercising judicial review in these cases is bolstered by recent scholarship examining inherent rights clauses, which confirms the intention to establish justiciable rights. Anthony B. Sanders, *Social Contracts: The State Convention Drafting History of the Lockean Natural Rights Guarantees*, 93 UMKC L. REV. 641, 657-61 (2025). The enforceability of these clauses was recognized from their earliest origins. See Steven G. Calabresi & Sofia M. Vickery, *On Liberty and the Fourteenth Amendment: The Original Understanding of the Lockean Natural Rights Guarantees*, 93 TEX. L. REV. 1299, 1312 (2015). This was a common understanding of these provisions when New Mexico adopted its own inherent rights provision in 1911.

In sum, New Mexico is far from alone in determining that inherent rights and state due process clauses can support justiciable claims. Many sister courts have reached the same conclusion, and some have gone further to find that inherent rights clauses create independent, justiciable rights. This Court’s decisions in *Morris* and *Griego* make clear that this state’s Inherent Rights and Due Process Clauses, both situated in the Bill of Rights, combine to support a finding of justiciability particularly where, as here, the Plaintiffs have raised claims that are completely aligned with the fundamental rights articulated in the Constitution. *Morris*, 2016-NMSC-027, ¶ 58; *Griego*, 2014-NMSC-003, ¶ 1.

## CONCLUSION

Because Section 21 sets out justiciable standards, because judicial review of Plaintiffs' claims is fully consistent with the state constitution's provisions regarding separation of powers, and because the state constitution's Due Process Clause encompasses the guarantees of Article II, § 4 of the state constitution, *Amici* urge this Court to reverse the decision below.

January 28, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ George Bach

George Bach

*Professor of Law*

University of San Francisco School of Law

2130 Fulton St.

San Francisco, CA 94117

george@georgebachlaw.com

505-208-1675

Martha F. Davis, Of Counsel

*University Distinguished Professor of Law;*

*Co-Director, Center for Global Law & Justice*

Northeastern University School of Law

416 Huntington Ave.

Boston, MA 02115

m.davis@northeastern.edu

617-373-8921

James R. May, Esq., Of Counsel

*Richard S. Righter Distinguished*

*Professor of Law*

Washburn University School of Law

1700 SW College Ave.

Topeka, KS 66621

james.may@washburn.edu

785-670-1786

*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

**APPENDIX**  
**Amici Curiae<sup>10</sup>**

**J. Michael Angstadt**

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies  
Environmental Law & Policy, Colorado College

**David Cassuto**

Professor of Law & Kernan Family Scholar  
Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University

**Kim Diana Connolly**

Professor of Law  
University at Buffalo School of Law

**Erin Daly**

Professor Emerita of Law  
Widener University Delaware Law School

**Tim Duane**

Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies  
University of California, Santa Cruz

**Wes Henricksen**

Associate Professor of Law  
Barry University Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law

**Sam Kalen**

William T. Schwartz Distinguished Professor  
University of Wyoming College of Law

**Ryke Longest**

John H. Adams Clinical Professor of Law, Duke School of Law

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<sup>10</sup> Titles and organizational affiliations of individual signatories are included for identification purposes only.

**Nazune Menka**

Assistant Professor of Law  
Faculty Director for the Center for Indian Law & Policy  
Seattle University School of Law

**Sharmila Murthy**

Professor of Law  
Northeastern University School of Law

**Patrick Parenteau**

Emeritus Professor of Law, Senior Fellow for Climate Policy  
Vermont Law and Graduate School

**Amber Polk**

Assistant Professor of Law, University of Alabama School of Law

**Ann Powers**

Emerita Professor, Haub School of Law at Pace University

**Daniel J. Rohlf**

Professor of Law, Lewis and Clark Law School

**William Snape**

Professor and Assistant Dean  
American University, Washington College of Law

**Clifford J. Villa**

Professor of Law  
University of New Mexico School of Law

**Richard Wallsgrove**

Associate Professor of Law  
Co-Director of Environmental Law Program,  
William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

## STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH NMRA 12-318(F)(3)

The body of this response brief uses Times New Roman, a proportionally-spaced typeface, and contains 8,106 words. This brief therefore complies with NMRA 12-318(F)(3).

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 28th day of January, 2026, a true and correct copy of the foregoing document was e-filed and served through the Court's e-filing system upon counsel of record.

/s/ George Bach

George Bach

*Professor of Law*

University of San Francisco School of Law

2130 Fulton St.

San Francisco, CA 94117

[george@georgebachlaw.com](mailto:george@georgebachlaw.com)

505-208-1675