A bill that codifies school-based health centers into law passed Feb. 15 in the House and now heads to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to sign into law.

Senate Bill 397, sponsored by Sen. Nancy Rodriguez and Rep. Christine Trujillo statutorily protects school-based health centers by putting them in state statute and preventing them from being eliminated. The New Mexico Department of Health will continue to work with school districts interested in providing access to primary care and behavioral health services to children who need it.

“We are thrilled school-based health centers are on track to be codified in law,” Patrick M. Allen, DOH Cabinet Secretary, said. “Providing healthcare services to the children of New Mexico is a high priority for DOH and because these centers are based in schools, it means more children have access to the primary care and mental health services they need.”

School-based health centers have operated in New Mexico for more than 25 years and the bill ensures the DOH will continue to establish and support SBHCs for any county that requests them. DOH supports 54 centers by supplying supplemental operating funds, technical assistance and other necessary support to 16 provider organizations that deliver care to school-aged children. The SBHCs operate in 24 counties and are located on or adjacent to school campuses.

School-based health centers provide primary health care, preventive health care, treatment of minor, acute and chronic conditions, mental health care, substance use disorder, crisis intervention and referrals for additional treatment including inpatient care, specialty care, emergency psychiatric care, oral health care and vision health care services. SBHCs address many of the barriers to health care access for school-aged children.

