

**Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy
Policy & Advocacy Action Team
May 28, 2020 ♦ 12:00 – 1:00 pm
Meeting Notes**

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
- Tim Davis, Center of Law and Poverty
- Lucy Foma, Santa Fe County
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Jonas Moya, New Mexico First
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, New Mexico Thrives
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table NM and NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- May Sagbakken, New Mexico Out of School Time and Network
- Mag Strittmatter, Road Runner Food Bank
- Brent Van Dyke, National Association of Conservation Districts

What should be on our radar re. federal policy? What is most exciting and what is most concerning on the policy landscape?

- Sherry noted that the challenges and opportunities are around accessing federal funds. She shared concerns about FEMA's high rate of disallowing reimbursements. Sherry added that the state was encouraging them to access FEMA over state funds. They were in the process of figuring out how to use them, how to get reimbursed, knowing when the reimbursement will come through, and how to prove what they need to prove.
 - Sherry added that their partner agencies, such as food pantries, shelters, etc., have lacked capacity to do so much more. They don't have the ability to handle large quantities of food and it's starting to back up.
- Mag echoed Sherry. She said they were bringing out different community partners to address ideas. Mag shared concerns as they near the beginning of their new fiscal year (July 1), about the next 13-14 months, how they were going to be able to access the quantity of food they know they will need. Mag said that PPP dollars will be running out soon, and she wondered what will that mean in terms of layoffs around the state. She added that people have lost insurance recently and predicted a cascading ripple effect, but they were not sure about how big the wave would be.
- Ellen was concerned about refugees and students. She said that parents are not employed or are taking minimal wage jobs. Students get food at school. Ellen shared their concern about a possible increase in crime if we don't take care of youth. She was also concerned about local farmers. "What's exciting is an awareness of need."



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Please contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

- Carlos noted that money from the feds is still focused on helping big business and not who needs it the most. He shared that his long term concern that vulnerable programs will be cut as low-hanging fruit as a result of budget deficits. “We need to protect federal to state to local, family connection.”
- Tim brought up Online SNAP and said they were excited that Walmart was an approved retailer for the program. He wondered about delivery fees, and if the cost would be waived. He added that the EBT cards can’t be used to pay for deliveries. If so, deliveries would require a separate credit card. Tim shared his concern about whether people are actually able to use Online SNAP.
 - Lilly noted that there had been concern about hunger among college students. She mentioned the survey they had done the previous week of publicly funded universities and colleges. There was not a universal approach to making sure there was access to emergency food on all of the campuses. She asked Tim if he knew whether the work requirement had been waived for college students who are able-bodied adults without dependents. Tim replied that there was still have a waiver in NM from the ABod rule, which would last until one month after the public health emergency expires. Lilly noted that she would get in touch with Tim later as they would address that in their next NM First newsletter.
- Derek noted that in there was a lack of federal dollars going to historically marginalized, under-resourced communities. He wondered how much political will there would be to remedy that negligence. He commented that there would be a need to exert a lot of pressure and advocacy to be sure that those populations were seen. “We know that food is upstream of so many other social determinants of health, whether it’s education or health outcomes or economic mobility.” He added that the priority was getting immediate food needs met.
- Tsiporah said she had spoken with the speaker of the house regarding the special session. She learned that they cannot tap the permanent fund during the special session. However, she added that they could tap the severance tax permanent fund. Tsiporah there was interest in finding a way to provide relief with that fund. She expressed a desire to approach them to support funding programs to nonprofits. She wondered if there was a way to use food banks or the SNAP program to get food out to people no matter their status.
- Pam spoke about federal food and nutrition programs and children accessing food at schools. She said the shifts we need to focus on now were federal-level shifts and maybe state-level shifts later. They had gone from feeding 8,000 to 2,000 and then 600 students. She said students not getting to curbside program due to families’ difficulty with transportation and other issues. The food and employee budgets were based on reimbursement, which was not a sustainable model. Pam commented that there is an opportunity to put policies in place that allow for more flexibility and different approaches, such as meals for children in schools, senior programs, mobile delivery, to meet people where they’re at.
- Bryan reiterated the points on the challenge to accessing federal funding. He noted that many groups were working on advocacy at the federal level. Producers were trying to access federal funding. Bryan added that NM producers are not always set up for federal assistance.



- May noted that she was on the PED's strategic planning committee. She shared that one of their sub goals was the elimination of childhood hunger. They are asking for big initiatives for low funding. May said that the federal funding source is underutilized across the state for feeding children. She referred to Pam's statement that there were families struggling to access food. May wondered not only about funding, but also how to get the food to the families.
- Jonas thought that building and sustaining markets on the long term was important. He noted that different agencies and programs were working on internships and markets.
- Lilly noted that she had been hearing questions and concern from the emergency food sector and the nutrition/meal programs. They are wondering how to access federal dollars and cover what needs to be covered. She added that NM Appleseed had been saying they were concerned about how the summer food program was going to work. They were conducting survey of the 89 school districts and found the biggest challenge was transportation, which isn't covered by federal relief. And even when there is money for food, some communities are having a hard time sourcing food.
 - Sherry said they learned in meetings with school districts that the food they're getting is not the food they need for summer. "For instance, we have a kitchen, but we're going to be delivering sack lunches this summer and not cooked meals." Schools weren't getting food they could use to make meals this summer. She confirmed that transportation is an issue. Sherry said they take meals to the kids by going to mobile home communities and low-income apartment complexes, etc.
 - Pam noted that regarding USDA commodity foods, that there are deadlines to use that food. She wondered if it could be moved into the emergency food system? "We need to meet kids and families where they are." She noted that some communities want to do bus stop deliveries, and that parents don't want kids walking to the schools or in the street. Pam added that they might be able to serve food in the classrooms as opposed to the lunchrooms. She noted that the Coronavirus Food Systems Funding had just rolled out from the Farm Service Agency and that she had calls into them asking how we can be of support moving those dollars.
- Tim said that the Pandemic EBT program works like SNAP but it's the value of school meals between mid-March through the end of the school years. He wondered if anyone on the call had heard how that was unfolding. Lilly replied that Karmela had been on an earlier meeting and had shared that there were only 16 states in the union that had started Pandemic EBT. Karmela had said that if folks hadn't already been receiving free or reduced lunches, they needed to speak to their school administrator about accessing the Pandemic EBT. Lilly added that this might not be something parents would know to do and that there was some communication work needed to help families figure out how to benefit from this relief. Bryan asked Tim if there was any talk of extending the time period for the summer months. Tim said it might be worth speaking to the Congressional Delegation. Derek said that the Heroes Act would extend it through the end of summer
 - Action steps: follow through with Federal delegation.



- Lilly noted that members of the general action team put together a one-pager with recommendations that over 20 orgs had already signed onto – policy recommendations around root causes of poverty. There were three recommendations. Section 1 looked at what needed to be done urgently, included funding for food banks and their partners. Section 2 addressed protecting existing funding \$1.2 million and also \$500,000 that had been secured in the regular session. The final section was related to local food systems and agriculture.
 - Lilly noted that they had sent the policy funding recommendation one-pager out to all legislators and got acknowledgement of receipt. She added that the hard copy would be mailed to legislators along with two letters, one from the Food, Hunger, Water, Ag Policy Workgroup and the other from the NM Food and Ag Policy council. She added that they would get that to the post office the following day.
 - Tsiporah shared that Speaker Egolf had said that they weren't going to cut programs, and that the increases originally planned for the FY 20/21 budget at approximately 7% would be reduced to 2-3%. Lilly replied that she understood that discretion would be given to cabinet secretaries.

What are you planning to keep hunger water ag at top of priorities list?

- Sherry said they were sending out letters that their full board was signing, to do no harm to programs and departments doing basic needs work. She said one legislator did not believe the food tax or tax on nonprofits would get traction. The legislator didn't see the \$12.5 million for food banks happening. Sherry added that at the federal level they were working on increasing SNAP benefits and similar programs.
 - Tsiporah said that Speaker Egolf had predicted that a food tax would not pass the House. Tsiporah added that she felt there would be minimal ability during the special session to raise any taxes. Lilly noted that opposing a food tax was in the group's policy priorities.
- Brent wondered if the federal funds coming into NM were earmarked for specific projects or were general. Lilly replied that they all had strings attached. She added that most required a local match, commenting that when we are able to allocate local money, we're able to make those dollars go farther with federal funding.
 - Brent said they were looking at the rules of engagement for the legislature, which follows Mason's book of parliamentary law. He wondered whether that required in-person voting. He said he was concerned about the transparency factor.
- Pam said that as people collectively come together, our values statement is about setting a set of values around equity, that we hold each other accountable across many domains, and are doing everything we can to ensure everybody's voices are heard. She said it was incredible to see the long term work that has been done. She commented that we don't want people to burn out and that the co-work is really important. Pam noted that we are creating common goals and priorities, and the more we are able to do that and speak each other's language, the more people hear and resonate with it. Pam added that we need to make a greater reach to federal programs and dollars, to see those federal dollars coming home to NM, and not just emergency dollars.



- Lilly encouraged group members to connect with Pam if they would like to be more engaged in the NM Food & Ag Policy Council. pam@farmtotablenm.org, Farm to Table, NM and the NM Food & Agriculture Policy Council: www.nmfapc.com, 505-660-8403.



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