

**Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy  
Policy and Advocacy Action Team  
7.9.20 ± TIME  
Meeting Notes**

**Facilitator:** Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

**Notes:** Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Zoey Fink, Young Farmer Coalition
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, New Mexico Thrives
- Krurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico
- Mag Strittmatter, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Xavier Vallejo, New Mexico First
- Brent Van Dyke, National Association of Conservation Districts

**Warm-up question: Anything big or small that in these times are putting on your mind? What are you grieving?**

- Group members shared their challenges and what they were thankful for presently, and hopeful about in the future.

### **Updates**

Lilly noted that at the last meeting the group spoke about the special session, budget cuts and that agency cabinet secretaries had the responsibility of making the final decisions about sanding. She invited those on the call to add any new thoughts that may have come up in the last few weeks.

- Mag said it was a matter of waiting out the unknown variables, including stimulus money, PPP, additional unemployment insurance, and when those would run out. The unpredictability factor - not knowing how many more businesses would have to shutter in the future, and the consequences of that downhill roll-out. “Our job is to be prepared and ready – to respond and not react to, and to be as best prepared for *it*, whatever it is. Are we ready enough? We won’t know until those things start to materialize.” She added that food banks will need to address it both as a collective and individually.
- Sherry said that they delayed their budget until July to allow time to adjust. She said they are anticipating a big increase in demand in August because federal funds will run out at the end of July. Sherry was apprehensive of their executive committee’s reaction when reviewing the budget. She said, “I can’t imagine getting to the point of having to say no to a community.” Sherry added that she was afraid not to be able to meet increased demand. When disaster hits, people start donating. She and Mag agreed that donors were experiencing fatigue themselves. Sherry added that her board was very nervous.
  - Sherry noted that what we didn’t take care of before the pandemic is now hitting us very hard during the pandemic. One example she gave was cold storage. If a community doesn’t have cold storage capabilities it presents a whole host of challenges. Also, the Navajo Nation not having an infrastructure for water and electricity in place – problematic before, exponentially more so now. Sherry added that working with senior centers is challenging due to regulations that point back to policy.



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Please contact Sharon Berman at [sharon@nmfirst.org](mailto:sharon@nmfirst.org) if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

- Emily said the [updated food tax brief](#) they released recently illustrates how food tax impacts low income people the most. She said localities have the option to tax delivered groceries. Voices is analyzing that impact. She said they were looking at where NM can make policy change to ensure households have food on hand so they don't add additional stressors to food banks.
  - Voices is asking for agencies/organizations to [sign on to their TANF pandemic letter](#) to make sure TANF is increased, not cut.
- Tim said the court in DC that issued a nationwide injunction on the ABOD limit rule is putting out a judgment. He said he expect that any decision would be appealed. He said they hope that the judge will continue that injunction.
- Brent noted that they had a million dollar+ appropriation for watershed health, which was swept. We need to get to a time where we're self-sustaining and can produce the nourishment New Mexicans need. We can do it now but we don't have the processing infrastructure. Includes meat, cotton, corn and milk. "We do have the ability to grow and produce the food and fiber. The challenge is to be able to do the further processing parts of that equation." Getting meat processors licensed so local producers can sell locally, which would be a huge advantage to local ag producers.
- Vibrant local food system and resilient agriculture Lilly noted that there would be socially distanced interim committee meetings. The work is real and ongoing. We will continue to communicate with leg council and committee chairs once they are appointed.
- Lilly noted that the other piece is around concrete policy asks. She recalled that at the last general Action Team Meeting, Rep. Stansbury put out a call to action.
  - Protect what we have: We have things we want to protect and prioritize. Let's get clear on that in terms of things already being invested in, because likely things will worsen. United advocacy voice.
  - Infrastructure: Thinking out infrastructure issues in agriculture and our food system. What needs to happen so we have capacity to have more local food and get it out to folks, such as distribution, cold storage, etc. How do we use the resources we have more creatively, cut through bureaucratic red tape?
  - Reimagining how services are delivered. The likelihood where we are going to have a huge economic influx – economic instability and unpredictable markets. Trade war in oil will be impactful to our state.
- Rep. Stansbury framed it as what would you tell folks at a cocktail party conversation about what needs to happen. Lilly wondered about capacity of the group. The wisdom: don't get stuck in nuanced policy drafting that we don't let good policy ideas come out. We need to continue to be cross-sector. Lilly noted that was a real strength of the group. She asked those on the call to join next week's meeting and to think about:
  - Components of policy asks, in a cross-sector way.
  - What are key questions we need to ask to build on work we've done and build on reality we find ourselves in?



- Tsiporah: NM has been talking about diversifying our economy. “With oil and gas plummeting, we have to.” Legalizing cannabis could potentially bring in \$100 million in tax revenue. She added that this would be a way to address the funding problem. She added that we don’t want cannabis suck all of the nutrients and water out of the soil. We need to make a push for regenerative ag tied to legalization of cannabis. She said I don’t see why we couldn’t make an ask for a portion of that tax money. She said in Colorado, the tax allocations hadn’t been decided in advance. She suggested that NM use those lessons learned and make a tax revenue allocation plan in advance.
  - Lilly said that this seemed like the type of thing Rep. Stansbury was hoping the group to think about. She said that she was asking a process question. Should we organize groups to discuss by topic? Let it be random? She said we’d use the three broad topics: policy strategies and root causes of food insecurity; what’s going on with getting emergency sector and relief efforts; and resilient ag.
- Shery thought: hunger, food systems, agriculture. How does it all come together? Issues around hunger – people who are truly hungry in NM have very different challenges. Maybe she said, she needs better education. When we started work with Rep. Stansbury, was late to group due to surgery. Talk about hunger generally – how to get product to market. We also have people who are low or no income who struggle to get food on the table. She says they are two different things. She has a hard time bringing them together and figuring out how to talk about them both at the same time. They are two very different challenges
  - Lilly said it was the challenge of doing cross-sector work. She noted that in general what has traditionally happened is that we haven’t look at intersectionality of the areas. There are policy issues that are unique to each area. There are also core issues that apply to all. When going to advocacy space, advocating to our piece of the puzzle, we fight over the same resources and end up with entrenched food insecurity, challenges to how resources are used, and still poor people. Working in silos isn’t working. Which policy solutions have bang for buck on multiple fronts. Educated about these issues with and among each other. It’s an ongoing process.
- Mag commented that it would be interesting to see how that could be accomplished without harming one for the other.
- Brent said the reason he was involved in this is because he had a desire to help people put food on the table. Ass gov affairs director for cons district, he understands some of the challenges in feeding those who can’t feed themselves He added that the lack of water resources, both surface and subsurface water. To be able to feed our population, we’re going to have to address the water issue. We don’t have enough water to feed NM, golf courses and everything else we really want. They are huge challenges we’ll have to address. Not only as a state but as a policy group. He added that it would be great to wave a magic wand and oil and gas would go away and we could I – oil and gas produces \$2 billion a year. There is no one alternative that can produce that kind of funding.
- Emily noted that it would be helpful to have guiding question to keep it from ballooning so large that we have to keep meeting to narrow it back down. There are benefits to separate pick your topic option. Maybe assigning a mix of people to topics so you get a mix of people.



- Carlos said he kept thinking back to a conversation a decade ago on poverty. He added that a lot of different ideas came together. He saw a similarity with this group. I think it's a really good idea to break down into groups because the same priorities won't come up every year, but they're all part of the conversation. We should all be part of this conversation. He added that they would meet with Rep. Joann Ferrary on Monday to do a hunger caucus. They wanted to ascertain her thinking and what the caucus needs from the group.
  - Ellen added that working with faith communities, everyone has a right to clean water and food. To start on that, agree on that.
  - Lilly said, to understand this as human rights/humanitarian issue. Do I see it as a fundamental human right, and if so, whose responsibility is it to address it? What is our economic situation? Tsiporah's economic drivers – oil, cannabis, combination, something else? She asked Emily about Voices is working with
  - Emily said the Fairness Project is a coalition to discuss reframing tax policy. So taxes aren't raised on people who are already paying a disproportionate amount into the state.
  - Lilly said – there seems to be a willingness to listen, a sense of urgency. By focusing in together we can look at concrete practical things we can do as policy solution that won't have unintended consequences that we'll have to deal with 20 years later.
  - Could we prepare for next week – topic areas, how to frame. She would like to send out a draft agenda to this group and would appreciate feedback from the group. She said she might not have time to work on the agenda until the weekend and would send it out as soon as it would be ready. She asked that everyone keep their eye out for the agenda and send back her feedback by end of the day Monday.

**Other policy opportunities happening at the federal level or in a nuanced way at the cabinet level that you need support around ?**

- Mag said that continued dialogue, sharing of observations as you see things on the ground level across the state would be helpful to the food bank association. She predicted that by December there would be a new picture of what we might be able to advocate for as the new session comes around. "We know that the tables are tipping with respect to the loss of what the consequences of those losses may be remains to be seen.
- Brent said that there are limited resources, so trying to figure out with what to do with state budget is crucial, and dividing the pie up is a challenge. "I'm hoping, from an ag perspective that some of that pie can be divided up into making NM Agriculture be sustainable." He said they were constantly looking at federal level, especially in RCS and FSA. To try to help be that safety net. On our radar is constantly looking at leveraging state private and federal funds for NM agriculture.
- Tsiporah said via chat: Sign on [letter to Congress about nonprofit priorities](#):
  - The national council of nonprofits is asking for support to sign onto a letter to congress. Paycheck protection loans, loosening the regulations about who can get them, allowing nonprofits to have a



second round, making forgiveness loans accessible to nonprofits, having a program just for nonprofits, and more. Possibly increase charitable donations to 1/3 to donate to nonprofits.

- Lilly encouraged the group to share out the call to action. So much of what happens is not what happens with taxpayer dollars and state programs. It happens through private donations. The reality in NM was that our ability to respond to emergency food needs in the most efficient, effective and high quality way came through our food banks and food pantries, not the National guard. What does it mean for the national guard to come into a sovereign nation, or an immigrant community. Often, people don't show up for food. If we don't invest in nonprofits, we lose channels of food delivery and support.
- Emily spoke about the federal COVID package and. She asked the group to keep NM Voices' talking points in mind. She emailed after the meeting to clarify the talking points.
  - There are 3 overarching principles for the next federal COVID package:
    1. The next package needs to be robust and comprehensive to adequately address the unprecedented crisis we're facing;
    2. It needs to target substantially more assistance to state governments and people who have been hit hardest by the pandemic and recession, including people with low incomes, immigrants, and people of color; and
    3. The aid it provides must last as long as needed and not end prematurely.
  - Emily reminded those on the call about the [pandemic TANF sign-on letter](#).

