

**Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Workgroup**  
**Policy & Advocacy Action Team**  
**12.10.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30**  
**Meeting Notes**

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

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

In attendance:

- Katy Anderson
- Jane Braithwaite
- Ellen Buelow
- Sarita Cargas
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett
- Tim Davis
- Bruce Hinrichs
- Derek Lin
- Judy Messal
- Roy Montibon
- Carlos Navarro
- Karen Plawecki
- Victoria Quevedo
- Valerie Rangel
- Kurt Rager
- Erika Robers
- Mag Strittmatter
- Daniel Valverde
- Brent Van Dyke
- Emily Wildau

**1. Welcome and Introductions.**

Prompt: Share a story of a time you were engaged in successful advocacy and how it made you feel about yourself and others.

- I worked for the Army as a program manager in Army Community Services for a resilience training. We had to convince senior commanders on the installation to roll it out and get everyone trained within a year. My senior commander was intimidating. But he saw the value of it and immediately ordered very unit to go to the week-long program. Immediately started seeing the emails fly.
- How people can rally together and get things done.
- Students are still able to get their PELL grant before other expenses. It's great to know the legislature agreed with us that the students needed that support.
- Being able to advocate for the students we taught so they could continue to take music lessons, which did beautiful and wonderful things in their lives, made me feel empowered that we could create change for those young people.
- When I was a child, I saw a new access road had been put on an on-ramp to the interstate. Hundreds of turtles were being killed. This floored me. In my traditional culture, turtles are important. I went to my uncle and asked what we should do. He said, I will stand with you in protest until somebody comes along. The news came and we got something done about it. We got a culvert put underneath so the turtles could pass through safely.
- A lot of attention has been drawn to the problem of food and hunger at UNM. I am excited that the university is waking up to the problem.
- 2005 Bread for the World advocacy faith community on hunger and poverty met in Washington D.C. at Senator Pete Domenici's office and ultimately got great results.
- I'm a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Parish. Last year they put a call out to do a survey of our parish. The group was very diverse. We asked about needs, interest in social justice and communicated one on one with the parish. To work through it and come out on the other side was a great experience.

- I try to advocate priorities and believe if there's a problem you should try to address it. The Dietetic Association went to D.C. for a workshop on basic lessons and basic approaches. We educated legislators. I brought it back to my students and share with them regularly. They don't know how to approach it and that their voice does matter.
- In the late 80s I was serving on the local service agency board in Los Alamos to get a senior center approved in the community. We convinced the county council and community that this was worthwhile. It was a good experience to sell a program that was needed.
- Working with community organizations and advocacy groups to get economic relief to those in city who were ineligible for programs. I'm happy to be part of a team that can do that. It's amazing to be able to do this as a job. Super grateful.
- Most recent example was in Las Cruces last year when we passed the ban on the active ingredient in Roundup. It was a beautiful team to be working with.
- A few years ago we identified a need for assisted living in Las Vegas and San Miguel county. Started to work with people in the community to raise \$390,000 initial funding to create a study regarding the need. Among local people we were able to raise \$120,000 and got the initial study done. We had several meetings and got to the point where we had commitment for several million dollars to get it started. This was an advocacy effort that started with me raising questions. I was totally blown away by the response from the Las Vegas community. This project may be revived at some point. I was extremely happy at the response we got and how involved people became very quickly. In NM, people really do care about each other.
- Re. latchkey kids, we organized a discussion with legislative folks and were able to influence funding through justice department to allow us to work with schools, after school programs, teen courts and different partners to create after school programs for kids.
- I used to live and work in Washington DC for a large international NGO. For many years there was international food aid and assistance through the US government, which relied on purchasing food in the states from US-based farmers and shipping it overseas. I worked with other NGO folks to start to try to shift that paradigm where local and regional food purchasing could be an option. It was groups that hadn't advocated for that type of change. We had the right people at the right time working together, being able to incrementally propose some shifts. Now, there is a lot more US gov funding going to more flexible food options than there were 15-20 years ago.
- I lived in Chicago for 15 years, worked for the local union for textile workers. Our biggest victory was organizing immigrant workers from Central America and Mexico. They won their first contract there and were able to secure health benefits and a higher wage.
- I've always wanted to work on child hunger issues and was able to be part of an effort that affected over 100,000 kids across New Mexico – it was a big deal for me and was very positive.
- I ran a statewide association that worked on quality early education and child welfare issues. Sometimes the folks in each were not natural allies. We were able to pass legislation for the state's first quality system, funded with associated technical assistance and mini grants. The legislation had legs and even though there was a change in administration and we didn't have secure support in the next administration, we were able to have massive bipartisan support. We were looking at intellectual, social-emotion, physical development and access to food. We built strong relationships with families and providers along the way. The hyper focus on quality meant children went from having miserable days to having great days.



Lilly noted, after listening to everyone's stories that what emerged for her was where our passions and world collide, amazing things happen. Intergenerational and community can make a difference. Individuals can be spark plugs. Thinking systemically and working collectively can do powerful good.

- Ellen: When you start with high expectations you get things done.
- Valerie: at the base of our works is ethics.

## 2. Legislative Update

- Hunger Caucus and how it works in this virtual environment. Carlos said they hadn't addressed it a lot except in brief conversations with Rep. Ferrary. He said that they want to use it to reach out to the newly elected legislators of both parties, and to get them involved in the caucus. The difference between the hunger caucus and other workgroups, is that the impetus is to be as bi-partisan and bicameral as possible. They have a hunger coalition meeting on January 5 at 6:30 pm and Rep. Ferrary wants to bring in legislators to talk a little about the hunger caucus. They are also dealing with a project that Dr. Cargas is working on from the food and hunger program at UNM. Stephanie Rogus will also be talking. Carlos noted that they hadn't had a strategy session yet about how to reach out and added that it is harder to do organizing remotely. He said he would share information about the meeting.
  - Lilly noted that President Bailey at Northern be a person to loop in. Carlos mentioned an individual at Santa Fe Community College who was concerned about student hunger as well.
  - Kurt asked about the Hunger Caucus. Carlos replied that it's not as structured an entity as they would like. In 2019 session there was a memorial related to the creation of the council would support the hunger caucus.
    - Michael Padilla was involved, said Ellen.
    - Lilly asked Carlos to share list of legislators involved with the Hunger Caucus with NM First staff.
    - Lilly said that there is more support out there than people who are participating in formal or informal caucuses.
    - Carlos added that Rep. Stansbury has information about this, and that Senator-elect Brenda McKenna is interested in these issues
    - Lilly noted that NM first had reached out to newly elected legislators and received responses indicating their interest in alleviating hunger and improving food systems issues.
- Brent said they were still addressing the same issues: a weather recording system program that sends information about drought to USDA, which allows farmers, ranchers and agriculturalists to qualify for drought assistance. USDA has trouble verifying drought with our systems in NM. USDA is asking for \$3 million to verify information USDA needs. BC of our inability to record weather correctly we lose a lot of \$\$\$. We're going to watch that carefully during the session.
- Daniel said that NM Appleseed was not planning on doing anything this year.
- Sarita Cargas said she had been having conversations with UNM Governmental Relations about having SNAP on campus. SNAP can't currently be used on campus stores. She asked those with expertise to talk with her about it. She added that it may be a statewide issue so she would keep everyone updated.
  - Lilly said coalition members from the following entities might have information to share: NM Center on Law and Poverty, NM Voices for Children, NM Farmers Marketing Association, NM Association of Food Banks. Sarita asked those on the call to put their emails in the chat.
- Lilly said she'd spoken with Rep. Stansbury, who is thinking through what is possible for the bill. She is working on a draft and will share that back out as soon as possible.



- Lilly reminded those on the call that the NM Food & Ag Policy Council would be holding a meeting on December 15, 9-11 am.
- Lilly noted that complementary coalition efforts were underway related to food and agriculture policy. A smaller team would present to the Legislative Education Study Committee next week, on the 18th. NM First would send another reminder out about that. Big thanks to Rep. Ferrary, Rep. Stansbury, Mag Strittmatter from Roadrunner Food Bank and Helga Garza from the Food and Ag Policy Council to be willing to be on the panel. Thanks to all who were available even though we were only allowed to have 3 people on the panel. We'll send out info as soon as it is available.

### **3. Next Steps**

- The next meeting of the Policy & Advocacy Action Team will be on January 7, 2021, from 12-1:00 pm.

