

Food & Hunger Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy - Policy and Advocacy Action Team
4.30.20 ♦ 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
- Tim Davis, Center for Law and Poverty
- Rep. Joanne Ferrary, NM Legislature (east part of Las Cruces, HD 37)
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives
- Jonas Moya, New Mexico First
- Daniel Valverde, NM Appleseed
- Vanessa Roanhorse, Roanhorse Consulting Mag Strittmatter, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Melanie Sanchez Eastwood, New Mexico First
- Rep. Melanie Stansbury, NM Legislature
- Emily Wildau, New Mexico Voices for Children

Federal and state policy updates:

Rep. Stansbury commented that regarding federal policy, another relief package was passed by Congress, but it lacked flexibility to use federal funds for backstopping of revenue loss. She noted that New Mexico will likely have at least a one billion dollar shortfall in the upcoming fiscal year. The LFC and the finance committee body are looking into one-time monies to backstop the bleeding of lost revenue, by either dipping into reserve revenue and/or seeking other ways to scoop up monies that didn't get spent. Rep. Stansbury said the hope is that Congress would meet again in May and pass language to allow states, tribes and local governments to access funds in this way, meaning that in NM, \$400 million could be backstopped by federal funds. She added that if we don't pass that before going into special session we'll have to cut our budget by \$400 million.

- Rep. Stansbury mentioned that another federal piece is that there has been talk for months for an RS style rebuilding package. She reckoned it wouldn't pass in May or the near future due to the hefty price tag. However, she noted that the House had been working on building a larger infrastructure package attached to the federal transportation bill for months and believed there was a window to help inform that, to put forth ideas for food, water and infrastructure. Rep. Stansbury said she was in discussion with other legislators, delegation members and the Governor's office and invited those on the call to **shoot specific ideas, shoot them to her so she could compile them.**
- Rep. Stansbury predicted that legislative committees would meet the first week of June and then the legislature would convene for a special session the second week of June. The amount of cuts for FY 21 would be dependent on the federal piece, and because of the projected FY 22 and FY 23 shortfalls, operational funding would need to be removed from the budget. "Existing programs might not be cut to the bone; it would be built off the new budget we created in January and February of this year." Rep. Stansbury and other legislators are building a set of principles that should be kept, including "must haves" such as expansion of the DD waiver for disability supports, things that are new spending and that we don't want to backtrack on. **She invited those on the call to send her their thoughts about principles to keep.**



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

- Regarding emergency needs, Rep. Stansbury had spoken the day before to Secretary Blalock and others about what the food sector is saying about the skyrocketing prices of food. Emergency food assistance in the state's emergency package for June would need to be scaled.
- Finally, Rep. Stansbury noted that there was discussion about enacting legislation that would be part of a relief package, which would be heavily dependent on consensus with the body and leadership during a special session in the present time. There would be a need for balance between the number of bills they could safely address under the current public health situation. She again invited those on the call to share ideas either via email or during the meeting.
- Rep. Ferrary confirmed what Rep. Stansbury had shared.
- Lilly asked whether the representatives knew of any discussions about process and the use of technology so citizens could still participate in the special session. Rep. Stansbury replied that nothing had been determined yet and would be dependent on the decisions of the Legislative Council, which would be meeting the following week. She encouraged those on the call to share their thoughts with the decision makers: "There is a lot of opportunity for advocates and public who care about what that looks like, to express that right now." She added that it would be good to have those conversations with the House Speaker's and the Senate Majority Leader's office. There was concern that the Roundhouse could be a "germ factory."
- Lilly asked if anyone on the call were interested to collectively imagine ways in which to maintain meaningful public input into the legislative process. **She offered to begin drafting a document and asked callers interested in participating to make a note in the meeting chat box or send her an email.**

Rep. Stansbury: One thing that I would also recommend, which is probably the most time sensitive, is getting policy priorities pulled together. The budget framework is already being worked on and they can't finalize anything until we know whether we have federal revenues to backstop. But they are already looking at worst-case scenarios. And so, if this group wanted to do like a sign on letter, identifying the must keep programs, the emergency relief needed, and what kind of a long term relief package would look like from the food and ag sector. **I would highly recommend pulling together a letter or something like that in the next week or two.**

Lilly: We're going to be discussing policy priorities today. We want to talk about policy priorities regarding emergency food and hunger relief, food systems and agriculture, water quality and access, and people-friendly/family-friendly economic policy and anti-poverty work. Last time, we talked about emergency food, and one of the things that we recognized and celebrated from the last session was investment and wins Appleseed led in eliminating co-pays for those getting reduced priced lunches. In addition, getting \$500,000 for shelf-stable food. We're learning more about what it's taking to keep people fed; the half a million is easily burned though.

Mag: We're going to have another in-depth conversation tomorrow afternoon. Between all 5 of us and nearly 500 partners, we're looking at somewhere between \$10-15 million. That would possibly tie in job training opportunities for people to be trained in office, warehouse and other environments. It would create multiple opportunities to bring people in for that employment. It would allow us to procure the food that we need. In the last 37 days, Roadrunner has spent over \$1.2 million on food just to have the inventory that we need. That's mostly shelf-stable food that we need to have on hand, for the regional food banks and the agencies we work with. It's integral for us to have that rotating, turning inventory, that is now going to turn every 18-21 days.



- Lilly – I also heard back from Sherry at the Food Depot that at about the 30 day mark they were at \$450,000. The way that our food banks and pantries have stepped in to supplement emergency response efforts where some of the other systems haven't been able to get food to folks quickly has really been incredible. It's really humbling what you all are pulling off, and your resourcefulness and willingness. \$10-15 million seems like a really credible ask to me. I know you're wanting to fine tune that, but as soon as you do we'll put that into that list of priorities.

Rep. Stansbury: Over the last few weeks, we've been trying to figure out how the state's emergency response process works. I was on the phone with Sec. Blalock and his chief of staff Demesia, and Mariana Padilla, the Governor's chief of staff for philanthropy. We were trying to figure out how to streamline our communications between the EOC, the Governor's Office, and the non-governmental sector on all this food stuff. We did sort out communications, Lilly's going to act as a liaison on our side. Secretary Blalock is now in charge of E6, which is emergency food response. It had been under Sec. Scrace, but because he's dealing with the medical pieces of emergency response, they asked Secretary Blalock to step in on the food side.

- They were originally expecting a surge right now to be happening on COVID cases. Everyone was gearing up for the emergency medical response and luckily we've flattened the curve enough that now they have some time and bandwidth to sort out bigger response stuff.
- They told me last night that they're going to be meeting with the food banks on a much more regular basis. I flagged the issue around escalating costs and getting something into the state emergency budget to Secretary Blalock. I'm happy to put Mag, Sherry, and others in touch with Secretary Blalock and the Governor's office so that you can have a conversation quickly, as soon as you have some confidence in the numbers. Because part of the relief package and this session will be organized by the Governor. We can rally the legislature, but it's really going to be important that that ask also comes from the executive side.
- Secretary Blalock mentioned that they're expecting federal dollars to come in. They would like to figure out a way to use philanthropic dollars to leverage federal dollars so they can support you in food buying.
- Mag: We'll make that happen. Thank you for bringing those pieces together very, very much. Would it be a reimbursable situation? That would impact the smaller regional food banks, especially around cashflow.
- Lilly: sounds like preference is cash up front?
- Mag: that would be fabulous. We've been trained really well by the state as far as submit and be reimbursed/ The alternative would be wonderful.

Rep. Stansbury: as you're crafting proposal, do it with the E6 team.

Lilly: Re. Stansbury you and Rep. Madrid and Appleseed worked together and sponsored the legislation around eliminating co-pays. I heard that it was safe and wondered if you have any more to say about it?

Rep. Stansbury: What I've heard people saying in the media is that everything is on the table. And what I was told is that the way the LFC is building the budget is looking at programs that are new spending in FY 21, and determining what are "must haves." It's incumbent on people who care about these issues to make sure that they are viewed as priorities. So that bill specifically was the Governor's bill, so it was certainly her priority. And if we want to try to do an emergency food package, and it makes sense to increase those resources, we would need to work with PED to figure that out, because now they're moving into their summer feeding program.



Daniel: What you said is pretty much what we heard. As for the summer meals program, that's a separate entity. It's separate program determined by area eligibility. All school districts have been doing summer meals as of a month and a half ago.

Lilly: when you look at the anticipated need around school needs as well as summer feeding programs, do you have a dollar amount in mind yet?

Daniel: We don't because everything might change. All the kids eligible for free and reduced price meals, the number will change. We don't have those numbers. Right now we're seeing record numbers. I've been trying to get updated per week on the meal count and we're up to almost half a million meals given out each week across the state, which is staggering. We're up to almost half a million meals given out each week across the state. It blew out all the meals in the past 30 years. They've given out more meals in the last month and a half than they have in all past summers combined. So we're at record numbers right now, and that number is climbing. So right now, we're working with the Governor's office, PED and CYFD, because we are at what they call emergency summer meal. We have waivers to take meals off site. We're trying to get the waivers extended throughout the summer. When schools go to typical summer meals operations they rely on nonprofits and summer programs. We're hoping that school districts take on as is, keep doing what they're doing. We anticipate a drop-off around June 3, partially related to bus and employee contracts. We're trying to work on that to keep operations as is because we're seeing record numbers across the state. It's almost unbelievable.

Lilly: thank you. I'm thinking in terms of the timeline Rep. Stansbury shared. If we can do work in the next week to try to put together. I know that Appleseed, you're going to do your own advocacy efforts, and we learned last time in our coalition work together in terms of endorsing an overall package, that's not your typical way of doing things. But we certainly want to include the analysis and the policy work that you all are framing up. And so, I think we're going to just need to communicate a little more frequently altogether, to figure out how that's coming together, so we can put together a coherent and comprehensive ask.

Lilly: Let's shift gears and talk and hear from folks who are working in food systems and resilient agriculture. We had some modest, but much appreciated wins during the last session. We know there has been a greater reliance on local food and we've been very vulnerable, having over 95% of our food reliant on national food chains that don't always prioritize a state like New Mexico. That has impacted the emergency food sector and our grocer stores. There are some creative solutions coming together from our local food systems. I wonder if anybody has ideas or policy priorities. Beef production. Jonas?

Jonas: There are a lot of different things going on around the state. New beef and livestock processing plants are being opened. There's a lot of exciting work around the state being led by NMDA and a few other organizations to open new processing facilities. Producers will be able to get animals processed through local channels. Currently, there are not that many USDA certified processing plants here in New Mexico. Secretary Witte and others are working hard on that and hopefully within the next 90 days the new plants will be open and we'll be able to give you an update.

Lilly: it sounds like that doesn't require legislation or policy and is in the works already. I know there was work through the NM Farmers' Marketing Association to get food to seniors. They've also been responsive and



instrumental in terms of their value chain coordination of connecting smaller pantries to fresh local produce as well as shelf-stable items such as peanut butter, corn, posole, etc. As we're looking at all those pieces that lead to a resilient local food system, do you think that the strategy of putting together those related asks into an omnibus makes sense for the special session as well?

Rep. Stansbury: When I think about the things that we did get funded as new money in FY 21, they included things like the Farmers Marketing Association, which is currently playing a critical role in emergency relief. Anything like that I would reframe as emergency relief needs. If they knew it was critical to providing emergency relief in the food sector right now would be a different situation. I think that is all part and parcel of having it all on one sheet of paper, whether or not everyone signs onto it. Having it all in one place as critical to having a functioning food sector, especially as we're facing catastrophic impacts to the food sector and growing Hunger needs right now.

Lilly: Several folks have been working on water issues, their entire careers, and I know Representative Stansbury, it's one of your areas of expertise as well and New Mexico's needs around potable water. For drinking, for bathing and for livestock, has it been I'm saying that, you know, many of us are involved in daily communications about trying to help co-ordinate, and so I wonder, when folks think about kind of relief efforts and policy priorities, what comes to top of mind.

Rep. Stansbury: And as part of that larger federal relief package, while we were sitting here, I got a text that Pelosi has once again, floated the \$1000 billion state relief package. just announced. One of the top priorities that was identified was providing money for water. Having worked on the Hill, on water issues, Congress's usual impulse is to turn to federal loan programs. It's very important that we advocate right now for federal grant programs that come with technical assistance.

Lilly: And seeing similar critical issues at Jicarilla. I think, if we can also add one more process to that advocacy effort around grants, rather than loans, is to have applications that aren't so cumbersome. If there's a way to streamline those application processes, so, it's more accessible for folks, that would be great.

Rep. Stansbury: I would recommend adding that to state ask around emergency relief. If we're looking at potentially being highly dependent on federal dollars for the next couple of years, the state may be able to provide extra technical assistance to communities around grant writing and the like. I think the LFC staff would be amendable to that if the ask was crafted around emergency needs.

Lilly: Let's talk a little more about some of the broader anti-poverty more family- and community friendly economic development. Are there specific federal or state policy issues or asks that you'd like to bring to our attention? Emily, Tim or Derek?

Derek: At the state level we have some waivers in mind we'd like to see. For example, a hot food waiver would be helpful for some folks who can't prepare their own foods and have limited access. There's nothing new at the moment. We're monitoring what is being done on the federal level. We are hoping to see two policy issues at the federal level make it into the next relief package: a 15% SNAP increase, and raising the minimum amount of SNAP benefits. Those are two policy recommendations we are hoping for at the federal level and are fairly heavy lifts.



Lilly: In the cliff effects report we released last fall, one of the things we looked at is what other states are doing to fill in the gap between federal SNAP benefits and the actual need. Other states have opted to do supplements from their state budget to cover the difference between anticipated need and what the feds fund. Is that policy work that you all have considered before, do you have any input on the merits of that kind of ask?

Derek: It's possible, but going into this special session with a budget shortfall, we're wondering whether or not that is going to be a feasible strategy. We would like to see that and we do know that individual benefits run out well before the end of the month and that would be an excellent way of covering that gap. We haven't heard much from the executive if they're interested in that type of policy. That would be an excellent way to cover the gap in federal SNAP.

Lilly: In terms of next steps, there are a couple of different pieces:

- Putting together a list of priorities, both of things we've achieved that we want to protect as well as things we've worked on where the need is significant: food relief, water relief, local food systems and family friendly policies, anti-poverty stuff.
- As folks are working within their organization, please send that forward. We'll also work on the draft.
- We asked at the top of the call who was interested in putting together that letter
 - Derek and Vanessa volunteered. If others are interested, please join in.
- Paying attention to federal priorities regarding action. Let's be in touch with our federal delegates about relief efforts.
 - One of the things in particular is around water to advocate for grants rather than loans and for technical assistance applications that aren't so cumbersome

Rep. Stansbury: I am currently working on a list of priorities with other legislators, and I think our hope is to communicate that with others. If you would like to see principles or specifics like included in the budget, please email those to me by or ideally before Monday.

Rep. Stansbury: I'll reframe it this way: if there were things that you advocated during the session that you think absolutely must stay in the budget, please send that to me in an e-mail and explain why.

Rep. Ferrary: Mag, is the 14th route, getting the extra trucks, is that something that you still need and we should include in our list of priorities?

- Mag: It's definitely needed. The mileage is only going to go up as we distribute to more areas that are effected. The question would be, are capital items possible within these requests?
- Rep. Stansbury: The capital budget is still TBD. So we just need to include everything in the conversation now. Once the conversation shuffles out we'll see what's possible.
- Lilly: Is mobile food distribution part of the \$15 million ask?
- Mag: Yes, it takes that into account. We're already doing around 200 mobiles every month (just Roadrunner in our territory). We've already added 5 big mobiles (500 household mobiles), and the list is going to grow. We're going to have to create more of these drive-through mobile opportunities just because of the safety factor with COVID. Everything is boxed for drive-through processes. We've adapted.

Rep Ferrary: I didn't know if Stephanie Rogus was on and if she's still working on the food survey.



- Lilly: Stephanie's not on this call. I know she's still is working on getting it finalized and getting approval from the university to get that out. I don't know that we will have it back in time. **I can circle back with her.**

Lilly: We'll send you the notes and will **highlight "to dos" in the notes.**

Meeting Recording



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