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Legislators and Coalition Members Push for HB 207, New Mexico's Food, Hunger and Farm Bill

Contact: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director, New Mexico First 505-234-0694 lilly@nmfirst.org

A coalition of organizations from across New Mexico have endorsed House Bill 207, The Food, Hunger, and Farm Bill. HB 207 creates the Food, Hunger, and Farm Council, bringing together local governments, tribes, state agencies, non-profit organizations, the agricultural sector, healthcare providers, the emergency food sector, and individuals to develop a plan to identify and assess the effects of hunger, malnutrition, and food and water insecurity in the state. The coalition and members will be having a Facebook Live Media event on 2/12 from 12-1 pm to help spread the word about this brave, bold and collaborative legislation. Watch it live on FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/nmfirst>. Representatives Stansbury and Ferrary, along with farmers, people of faith, and someone who has navigated food insecurity before and during the pandemic, will be available to discuss the importance of HB 207.

Coalition members include individuals and organizations from across all regions of New Mexico. Organizational endorsers include: Adelante, Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network, Center for Health Innovation, Casa de Peregrinos Emergency Food Program, Covenant Pathways, Farm to Table, Food is Free Albuquerque, Interfaith Hunger Coalition, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry- New Mexico, McKinley Collaborative for Health Equity, New Mexico Acequia Association, New Mexico Association of Food Banks, New Mexico First, New Mexico Food and Agricultural Policy Council, New Mexico Healthy Soil Working Group, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, New Mexico Social Justice and Equity Institute, New Mexico Thrives, New Mexico Voices for Children, Save the Children Action Network, Shiprock Traditional Farmers Cooperative, Storehouse New Mexico, the Montibon Company, University of New Mexico Basic Needs Research Team, Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque.

"House Bill 207 makes problem-solving more collaborative and strategic to address food insecurity and strengthen our local food systems." Sherry Hooper, President of the New Mexico Association of Food Banks, described why this legislation is so vital in light of the pandemic and the long-term challenges New Mexicans have related to food security. "With the pandemic, New Mexico food banks have experienced a 30 percent increase in the number of people seeking emergency food assistance," explained Hooper. "Clearly, the pandemic has drawn attention to the severity of hunger in our state and the challenges we face in offering help. This bill brings together the partners needed to develop long-term solutions to the growing crisis of hunger."

"What we've learned from the pandemic last year and ongoing, is that collaborations among farmers, agencies, sectors and institutions is crucial for ensuring that the supply chain isn't disrupted, that food gets onto the tables of families who need it, and that farmers and farm workers are able to sustain themselves financially and have outlets for their crops," said Anita Andjala farmer and Produce and Distribution Manager at the Agri Cultura Network. She went on to say, "Crops continue to grow despite pandemics or disruptions in society, vegetables need to be harvested, and people need access to nutritious food. It takes collaboration and communication on all fronts to move product throughout the state."

"Food is an inherent right for all people who have dignity and a right to nourishment that sustains their lives," said Ellen Buelow, a member of the steering committee of the Interfaith Hunger Coalition. "We were pleased to have participated in the discussions on HB207, which is compatible with our goal to ensure that all New Mexicans have access to nutritious and affordable food now and for generations to come."

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