

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 12, 2021
Contact: Joaquin Romero
joaquin.romero@nmlegis.gov
(505) 506-5798

Senator Crystal Diamond Applauds Wage Program for Chile Industry

SANTA FE – In response to a letter from Republican legislators, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham today announced the launch of [a wage supplement program](#) for chile workers to help bridge the current labor shortage in the industry. The New Mexico Chile Association reports that the industry is lacking up to 1,350 seasonal employees to harvest this year’s crop. **Senator Crystal Diamond** (District 35-Doña Ana, Hidalgo, Luna, and Sierra), a co-author of the letter, responded with the following statement:

“We appreciate the Governor’s response to our letter and her attention to the labor shortage for our state’s signature crop. While we cannot spend our way out of this problem, this temporary aid will help our family farms in desperate need of workers. Our agriculture industry is the backbone of our state’s economy, and for every community and family that relies on a strong chile harvest, this wage program represents a small step toward recovery.”

The letter from Republican legislators to the Governor is attached.

###



New Mexico State Legislature

STATE CAPITOL
Santa Fe

August 2, 2021

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Suite 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham,

I regret to inform you that our state's signature crop is in dire straits.

In recent weeks, numerous Hatch Valley chile farmers have contacted us in urgent need of a solution to our state's ongoing labor shortage. Based on nationwide trends, it is clear that the increased unemployment benefits set in place by the federal government and your administration during the pandemic have exceeded their use and are now the leading cause of labor shortages in virtually every area of our state's economy, including the chile industry.


Red and green chile are the iconic crop of our state and your administration's lackluster response to this problem may cost our state a valuable crop season for these family farms and may drive some out of business altogether. People in Southern New Mexico are witnessing firsthand how the chile industry is becoming a casualty of our flawed supplemental unemployment insurance program. Though the chile farmers of our state may bear the early burden of this labor shortage, it is not long before other agricultural industries feel the effects of this policy.

We continue to hear from administration officials that the supplemental unemployment insurance is set to expire in a month. While that good news will likely lead to a surge in new hiring, it will simply be too late for this year's chile harvest.


We are requesting that your office take immediate action to address the labor shortage currently impacting New Mexico's signature crop. Inaction in this case will have repercussions for the chile industry this year and the small businesses that rely on a strong annual harvest.

Please do not hang these family farmers out to dry and leave our chile to rot on the vine.

Sincerely,


CRYSTAL R. DIAMOND
State Senator
District 35


REBECCA DOW
State Representative
District 38


LUIS M. TERRAZAS
State Representative
District 39