



## HB 207 Food, Hunger & Farm Act

**Summary:** HB 207 Food, Hunger & Farm Act, is sponsored by Reps. Melanie Stansbury and Joanne Ferrary and Senator Liz Stefanics. This ambitious bill would create the Food, Hunger, and Farm Council that would work with multiple state departments, institutions, non-profits, and individuals to develop a statewide strategic plan to assess the effects of hunger, malnutrition, and food and water insecurity in New Mexico. It would develop plans to increase access to food; improve food processing, distribution, and storage; improve the quality of and access to state and federal food assistance programs; address malnutrition among children, seniors, and low-income communities; promote traditional agricultural practices; increase the purchase of local agricultural products; enhance job creation from agricultural production and food distribution; provide emergency relief for food and water; provide food relief on an ongoing basis to address long-term systemic hunger and food insecurity; and increase food and income security by maximizing eligibility and enrollment in state and federal programs. Creates a non-reverting Food, Hunger & Farm Fund in the state treasury with a General Fund appropriation of \$750,000 annually beginning in fiscal year 2022.

### Why HB 207 is Good for New Mexico

- The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture ranks New Mexico 50<sup>th</sup> in food security, with 17% of households unable to provide adequate food due to lack of resources, affecting 28% of our state's children. Food insecurity increased 37% from 2017 to 2020.
- More than 70,000 New Mexicans seek food assistance every week, the equivalent of the population of a city the size of Santa Fe. Between 30% and 40% of household members seeking food assistance are children under age 18; over 20% of people seeking food assistance in our state are senior citizens.
- More than 60% of households seeking food assistance report that in the previous year they had to choose between paying utilities or buying food. A third of those made this tough choice every month.
- Close to 50% of households report having to choose between paying their rent or mortgage or buying food. Almost 20% are forced to make this choice every month.
- Three-quarters of households seeking food assistance report purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food as the most common way to have food in their homes. Research shows that a healthy diet costs \$1.50 more per day per person than an unhealthy diet, an additional \$2,200 per year more for a family of four.
- Food-insecure individuals with poor nutrition are more likely to have chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular illness. Racial and ethnic minorities in our state are more likely to be poor or low-income and therefore more likely to suffer from nutrition-related chronic health conditions.
- Census Data from 2016 show that New Mexico had the highest poverty rate in the nation, more than 21%; and more than 30% of our children live below the federal poverty level of \$19,790 for a family of three.
- Our state exports some 97 percent of food grown in New Mexico, while importing 95 percent of food consumed here. Investments in education and training across the state will build infrastructure that results in more food produced and consumed right here in New Mexico.
- If New Mexico can increase consumption of local agricultural products by 15 percent, it could raise per capita gross domestic product by some \$750 million annually.
- Building jobs in agriculture brings more jobs to rural communities where they are most needed, especially during a just transition away from gas and oil dependence.

**Supporting Organizations:** New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, Farm to Table, NM Farmers' Marketing Association, La Semilla Food Center, Agri-Cultura Network, Center for Health Innovations

**Building grassroots power to successfully advocate for social, racial, environmental, and economic justice.**

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