



Dine' Food Sovereignty Alliance/DFSA
Dine' Bichii'ya' Beehaz'aanii
P.O. Box 145, Church Rock, NM 87311

September 22, 2020

Re: Health & Human Services Legislative Interim Committee Hearing, September 25, 2020

Dear New Mexico Senator Ortiz and Pino, Representative Armstrong and Committee Members:

May this message find you in the best of health and open hearts for the meaningful work you are conducting in today's Hearing for all New Mexicans and Tribal/Pueblo Sovereign Nations. As a Bitterwater Clan Mother of the Dine' Nation, I've had the honor to work with partners of Federal, State, and Dine' Nation programs and organizations to address current tribal food system issues and viewing NM legislative priorities. As a panelist, I thank you for the opportunity to share information and requests that will be highlighted in the following areas.

Jurisdictional issues of Navajo Nation located in three states of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah; in addition to 20 counties; and many federal agency services, Navajo is challenged to abide by many USDA, US Dept. of Interior/BIA tribal land and water, and three state government food system and water regulations. Navajo Nation needs the State of New Mexico to assist the Nation in reviewing policies to benefit both governments.

Water issues are impacting Navajo's ability of water access for home, agricultural, institutional, and business use on the reservation that are causing drastic health, economic, and environmental problems that has been on national media, lately. Thirty percent of Navajo homes do not have water and electricity. Navajo Nation's CARE Act and many organizations are partnering to get water to homes by purchasing water tanks and truck hauling; and plans to establish "transitional water points"/more wells, cleanup/repair wells and dams, purify water sources for human consumption and agriculture production to mention a few. NM has legislative programs that can help with water infrastructure and other resources that are needed on Navajo.

Food and hunger relief by increasing local farm and ranch production and state resources by reopening some of the 70% non-operating agricultural locations on Navajo.

- Currently such projects as the new Shiprock Traditional Farmers' Cooperative, Dine' Farm to School initiatives, potential Navajo FTS sites, Shiprock Food Hub, other public institutions and stores cannot purchase local produce because growers are facing funding and regulation challenges that's blocking their capacity to sell quality, fresh produce.
- An example of challenges, the NM Food Safety training, planning and assessments forces farmers to acquire many supplies, equipment and needs culturally relevant support and training.
- In addition, healthier, productive students and people, Dine' indigenous and traditional foods need to be restored in the diet and food system immediately. Therefore, Dine' culture and language need support.
- To undertake traditional growing, seed banks and traditional agriculture practices needs to be restored.
- COVID 19 opened doors for many food relief programs such as the Navajo Nation Food Relief, Navajo Hopi Relief, McKinley County, Four Corners, and other programs who are seeking food donations or purchases; in addition, there are no food banks on the reservation so churches and others are donating.

We support the many NM programs such as the FTS, Farmer Markets, Farm to Table, Ag Continuing Education, Fresh Produce to Schools & Senior Centers, and seek their assistance.

In closing, many COVID 19 and historical food stories have been collected to justify the many needs of restoring the Navajo food system on the reservation so our citizens aren't traveling 100 miles one way to border

towns to purchase quality and affordable food; or they have a choice of buying quality food because 80-90% of Navajo stores only sell junk food, and 97% of food are imported into Navajo country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share some information. I am available to answer your questions or receive your comments and recommendations.

In Beauty...

(Signature on File)

Gloria Ann Begay
Executive Director
Dine' Food Sovereignty Alliance