

Slide 1:

Good Afternoon, Chair Christine Trujillo/ Vice Chair Gerald Ortiz y Pino and Legislative committee members and advisory members. My name is Lorenzo Alba, I'm the Executive Director of the storied Casa de Peregrinos Emergency Food Program in Las Cruces. Our mission at Casa de Peregrinos is to alleviate hunger in our community through the acquisition and distribution of nutritious food.

As part of that mission, we also commit ourselves to promoting public awareness of hunger in Doña Ana County and to securing broad-based support for hunger prevention and relief in the county.

I'm super excited that this is happening as we all celebrate Hunger Action Month, September is indeed Hunger Action Month!

Slide 2:

Food insecurity in Doña Ana County can be defined simply by addressing the real issue which is poverty. The high poverty rates in our border county (averaging between 25%-28%) especially in the rural communities. Anapra, Santa Teresa, La Union and others linger at around 33% poverty rate. And as you can see in 2019 the numbers were high as we could only do so much as a not for profit organization not enough infrastructure. We still provided over 3 million meals.

Slide 3:

The Covid-19 Pandemic did something, it put the SPOTLIGHT on FOOD INSECURITY in New Mexico and in our nation. (Story) We rediscovered how poor we are at addressing hunger in our own back yards. We lacked infrastructure like refrigeration, dry storage and more importantly people (Staff). With all the federal and state programs that helped us address food insecurity, it was more evident than ever that we lacked infrastructure. We also discovered our food systems in New Mexico are broken. As you can see for Casa de Peregrinos still managed to distribute nearly 4 million meals to 6,000 more people than the previous year. But the Spotlight was on Hunger in our state!

Slide 4:

As you can see in all categories the need was great and our efforts were evident. 25 percent more people were served and 25 percent more meals. We're grateful to our leaders at the City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, our food bank, Roadrunner Foodbank and especially our donors for their help and confidence in us to persevere.

Slide 5:

We are indeed part of the Roadrunner Food Bank family in New Mexico which is part of the New Mexico Association of Food Banks and its 400 plus partners across New Mexico. And we provide services to thousands of New Mexicans across the 33 counties in our state. Look at what the state's foodbank network of partners did from one year to the next, a 36% increase. Casa de Peregrinos is proud to be a key part of the Roadrunner distribution team in New Mexico.

The 2021 numbers will far exceed what happened in 2020. What will we do as a network to address food insecurity as we move forward?

Slide 6:

Why does New Mexico have to be the top of the worst. We are 2nd worst in addressing senior hunger and again near the top at child hunger, ranked 3rd worst. With all due respect New Mexico leaders, this is unacceptable.

I firmly believe that all of us in the food bank network know that hunger is only a symptom of the bigger picture that is poverty. And that EDUCATION. EDUCATION, EDUCATION is the only way out of it. We also know that with that comes an obligation to provide basic necessities to our families in New Mexico, that will come with funding that can help address the lack of infrastructure in the 5th largest state in the nation and

food. The foodbank will need financial assistance for food, trucks, drivers and so much more. The local pantries need financial assistance for growth in infrastructure like new and upgraded facilities, vehicles and personnel. This is the time for the state to invest in the existing infrastructure and for additional infrastructure.

Casa de Peregrinos is thankful to this state and especially our legislators from our region for their support, especially State Reps. Micaela Lara-Cadena, Joanne Ferrary, Doreen Gallegos, Angelica Rubio, Nathan Small and Willie Madrid. As well as state senators Jeff Steinborn, Carrie Hamblen, Bill Soules and former state senator Mary Kay Papen. Thanks to their commitment through capital outlay funding and the City of Las Cruces we will soon be breaking ground on new 13,000 sq./ft. facility in Las Cruces, Doña Ana County. And just beginning to touch on more infrastructure in New Mexico. Thank you