

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Martin Heinrich
The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan
The Honorable Deb Haaland
The Honorable Xochitl Torres Small

Dear U.S. Senators and Representatives,

We, the undersigned local elected officials, applaud all your efforts to provide health care and economic relief to as many New Mexicans as possible in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are writing to express support for inclusion of immigrant workers and families in future COVID-19 relief packages. As has been reported in many news outlets, immigrant taxpayers who lack a social security number and their families are excluded from much of the federal relief response. This presents undue challenges for families who are long time members of our communities. It also harms the ability of cities and counties to jump start recovery efforts as we begin to reopen our economy.

New Mexico has one of the highest percentages of foreign-born residents in the nation—one in ten New Mexicans is an immigrant. Excluding this segment of the population from federal relief will result in homelessness, hunger, permanent shuttering of businesses, and it will have a detrimental impact statewide. New Mexico’s immigrants—both documented and undocumented—contribute more than \$996 million in federal, state and local taxes that support public schools, hospitals, roads and other local infrastructure projects.

Immigrants also work in key industries throughout the state. The industries with the highest shares of foreign-born employees are construction (22.9 %), restaurants or other food services (21.9 %), and higher education, including junior colleges (17.3 %).¹ Likewise, immigrants in this country are more than two times as likely as U.S.-born workers to be employed in the agricultural and mineral extraction sectors that make up 12 % of our state’s gross domestic product (GDP).

Immigrant families, including children, will suffer from this exclusion, but the local communities where these families live and work will also suffer a monetary loss. More than 38,000 New Mexican children have an undocumented parent and those children will not benefit from a federal stimulus check. The financial hardship imposed on these families due to their exclusion from the federal stimulus checks means a \$55 million economic loss to the state’s and the local economies, according to a recent report by New Mexico Voices for Children.

More than 173,000 New Mexicans have filed for unemployment benefits, an astronomical increase considering the state’s workforce consists of 835,800 workers. Immigrants are overly represented in industries that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the food services industry. Currently, more than one in five New Mexicans receiving unemployment benefits worked in food preparation and immigrants represent about 22% of the food service workforce.

Yet, if an immigrant worker lacks work authorization and a social security number, he or she does not qualify for state unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, nor the additional federal UI relief included in the

¹ “Immigrants and the Economy in New Mexico,” New American Economy (NAE), <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/new-mexico/>, last accessed on May 7, 2020.

CARES Act. These exclusions result in a more than \$2 million weekly loss for New Mexico workers and state and local economies. Workers who do not qualify for unemployment have already begun to turn to predatory and high-interest loans to pay for everyday necessities and bills, especially in rural communities where resources are scarce. Increased reliance on loan products will further harm recovery efforts across the state and in local economies during an already challenging time.

New Mexico is largely a rural state and because of our many sparsely populated areas, our state received the \$1.25 billion minimum of federal relief. But we only have one metro area with more than 500,000 residents. To exclude rural areas in our state from federal economic relief and recovery is financial folly because Latino immigrants have long been helping these communities thrive.

One in four (4) westerners and one in six (6) rural westerners is Hispanic, according to the independent, nonprofit Headwaters Economics research group. The sustained growth of mixed-status families within rural parts of New Mexico has allowed not only for economic, social and cultural vibrancy, but has also brought youth to otherwise aging communities.

Immigrants, as workers, parents and community members, understand the closures of all non-essential businesses, including schools, was necessary but it has taken a tremendous toll on our residents. Even with the many temporary positive changes in federal law regarding health care in light of the pandemic, undocumented immigrants are still largely uninsured as they are ineligible for Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act's federal tax credits, which would reduce the cost of private health care. Due to this exclusion, many families will have to turn to local public health services.

Immigrants need a financial and health care lifeline, just as much as our smaller cities, counties and jurisdictions do. One way to alleviate some of these pressures is to include as many New Mexicans, regardless of immigration status, in future federal economic relief measures. Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to reach out to us for more information.

Sincerely,

Timothy Keller	Mayor	Albuquerque
Klarissa Peña	City Councilor - District 3	Albuquerque
Isaac Benton	City Councilor- District 2	Albuquerque
Diane Gibson	City Councilor District 7	Albuquerque
Debbie O'Malley	County Commissioner	Bernalillo County
Steven Michael Quezada	County Commissioner District 2	Bernalillo County
Diana Murillo-Trujillo	Mayor	Anthony
Terrie Dallman	Las Cruces Public Schools Board President	Las Cruces
Lynn Ellins	County Commissioner District 1	Doña Ana
Manuel Sanchez	County Commissioner District 5	Doña Ana
Shannon Reynolds	County Commissioner District 3	Doña Ana
Maria A Flores	Vice President of Las Cruces Public Schools	Las Cruces
Yvonne-Magdalena Flores	City Councilor District 6	Las Cruces
Gill Sorg	City Councilor District 5	Las Cruces
Gabriel Vasquez	City Councilor District 3	Las Cruces
Tessa Abeyta-Stuve	City Councilor District 2	Las Cruces

Kasandra Gandara	City Councilor District 1	Las Cruces
Johana Bencomo	City Councilor, District 4	Las Cruces
Teresa Tenorio	Member, Las Cruces Public Schools	Las Cruces
Alan Webber	Mayor	City of Santa Fe
Renee Villarreal	City Councilwoman, District 1	City of Santa Fe
Signe Lindell	City Councilor, District 1	City of Santa Fe
Michael Garcia	City Councilor, District 2	City of Santa Fe
Carol Romero-Wirth	City Councilor, District 2	City of Santa Fe
Roman Abeyta	City Councilor, District 3	City of Santa Fe
Christopher Rivera	City Councilor, District 3	City of Santa Fe
Jamie Cassatt-Sanchez	City Councilor, District 4	City of Santa Fe
Henry P. Roybal	County Commission Chairman, District 1	Santa Fe County
Anna Hansen	County Commissioner, District 2	Santa Fe County
Carmen Gonzales	Member, Santa Fe Public School Board	Santa Fe
Kate Noble	President, Santa Fe Public School Board	Santa Fe
Sarah Boses	Member, Santa Fe Public School Board	Santa Fe
Joseph Calderon	City Commissioner	Hobbs
Fidel Madrid	City Commissioner, District 3	Clovis
Robert Sandoval	County Commissioner, District 1	Curry County
Louis Bonaguidi	Mayor	City of Gallup
Francisca "Fran" P. Palochak	City Council/ Mayor Prom Tem, District 4	City of Gallup
Linda Garcia	City Councilor, District 1	City of Gallup
Victor Snover	Mayor	City of Aztec
Mark Lewis	City Commissioner	City of Aztec
Leo Jaramillo	County Commission Chairman, District 2	Rio Arriba County
James J. Martinez	County Commissioner, District 1	Rio Arriba County
Ruben Archuleta	Española School Board Vice President	Española
Juan Oropesa	City Councilor, Ward 1	Roswell
Hilda Sanchez	Roswell Independent Schools Board Member	Roswell