

January 13, 2021 *updated*

President-Elect Joseph Biden  
Office of the President-elect  
Washington, D.C.

**Hispanic Federation Priorities for Latino and Immigrant Communities  
for the Biden-Harris Administration - First 100 Days**

Dear President-elect Biden,

On behalf of Hispanic Federation (HF) and its network of more than 300 member and partner nonprofit organizations nationwide, it is my great honor and privilege to offer you our sincerest congratulations on your historic victory in November. It is a political sea change made possible by the unprecedented Latino, Black, Indigenous, and BIPOC voter turnout that took place during these general elections. We look forward to working closely with your Administration to turn the promise of these election results into actions that address the many problems confronting our people and nation. Towards that end, and with the goal to help you succeed in healing, strengthening, and uplifting our families and communities, we write to share our immediate priorities for an incoming Biden-Harris administration.

Since 1990, HF has worked to empower and advance Hispanic communities, support Latino and immigrant families, and strengthen Latino community-based institutions. Underscoring our mission to strengthen and support Latino communities in the United States mainland, Puerto Rico, and Latin America, HF has granted over \$125 million dollars to grassroots nonprofits to date. This includes \$60 million for nonprofit capacity building to Latino and BIPOC nonprofits, and \$65 million for hundreds of thousands of victims of natural disasters in the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean, including \$40 million in relief and recovery grants to more than 130 organizations and initiatives in Puerto Rico. In 2020, HF's Covid-19 Relief Fund has committed nearly \$15 million to 280 nonprofits in 26 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, becoming the most far-reaching Latino COVID-19 Relief Fund in the nation.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the structural racism and barriers to opportunity that are entrenched in our society and disproportionately impact Latino, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. We also know that socioeconomic disparities, carried forward, are not only unfair to our communities, but will become a compounded drag on U.S. society and the economy. Hispanic Federation looks forward to working with you and your Administration to address the most critical issues facing Hispanic and immigrant families today. Our commitment is to work with you to center justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion across your entire Administration and to help create a government that looks like, and is responsive to, the country it governs.

## *Background on Hispanic Federation Priorities for Incoming Biden-Harris Administration*

### **Latinos and COVID-19**

**There must be immediate, robust, creative, and multi-pronged responses to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Latino and immigrant communities that is proportional to the need. Racism must also be recognized as a social determinant of health.**

The impact of the coronavirus on the health, financial security and educational progress of the Latino community has been nothing short of devastating. The percentage of deaths among Hispanic and nonwhite people exceed their representation in the U.S. population.<sup>1</sup> According to the CDC, hospitalization rates for Latinos are 4.1 times the rate among Whites (updated Nov 20). Even though Hispanics make up about 18.3 percent - or nearly 1 in 5 - of the U.S. population, we represent nearly 33 percent of COVID cases nationwide. Latinos are dying at rates more than [three times as high](#) as the white population. Hispanics aged 18-49 are also more likely than their peers to die from COVID-19.

With more than half of the country's second largest population group under the age of 54, concerns run high that many Hispanic COVID-19 survivors in that age group may be facing tough recoveries and long-term poor health.<sup>2</sup> This has the potential to reverberate negatively throughout the country and the economy for years to come. Latinos have the greatest share of deaths in age groups under 54, according to the CDC. Almost half of all COVID-related deaths in the 35-44 age range are Latino (48.9 percent), compared to compared to 27.3 percent of Black people and 15.5 percent of whites.<sup>3</sup>

More than 75 percent of children dying from COVID-19 are minorities, a finding that frighteningly exceeds even the disproportionate death rates among adults. The CDC reported that between Feb. and July, of the children who died from COVID, 45 percent were Hispanic, 29 percent were Black and 4 percent were non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native.<sup>4</sup> Even though the overall number of deaths of young children is low so far, the rate of coronavirus cases, hospitalizations, and deaths were higher among children than adults between May and August, according to The

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<sup>1</sup> Recent state examples of Latino coronavirus case disparities:

- [California](#) is 38.9% Latino, yet Latinos made up 55.6% of COVID-19 cases on Dec. 29.
- [Utah](#) is 14% Latino, yet Latinos made up 23% of COVID-19 cases on Dec. 29, 2020.
- [Oregon](#) is 13% Latino, yet Latinos made up 32.6% of COVID-19 cases on Nov. 29, 2020.
- [Washington](#) is 13% Latino, yet Latinos made up 36% of COVID-19 cases on Nov. 29, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Margarita Martin-Hidalgo Birnbaum, "Doctors Worry About COVID's Effects on Hispanics," WebMD, accessed December 23, 2020, <https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20200727/doctors-worry-about-covids-effects-on-hispanics>

<sup>3</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention COVID Data Tracker <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics> (accessed 12/29/20)

<sup>4</sup> Jane Greenhalgh, "The Majority of Children Who Die From COVID-19 Are Children of Color," *NPR*, Sep. 16, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/09/16/913365560/the-majority-of-children-who-die-from-covid-19-are-children-of-color>

American Academy of Pediatrics.<sup>5</sup> With no vaccines yet authorized for use on children,<sup>6</sup> and vaccine testing just beginning, we do not know how long numbers will remain low as we see cases spiking dramatically across the country and virus mutations occurring across the globe.

The impact of the coronavirus on Latinos necessitates that any fair and effective recovery effort must address the unique challenges the pandemic has had on our communities. Our communities were disadvantaged from the beginning and the outcome was predictable. A just recovery will depend on the way we prioritize resources and policies aimed at improving the health and well-being of Latino and immigrant communities.

As a starting point, the Biden-Harris administration must do everything within its power to ensure that all Americans have equitable access to free testing, COVID-19 treatment and care, and vaccinations regardless of insurance coverage or a person's immigration status. Latino-led and Latino-serving nonprofits are an invaluable and essential resource when it comes to Latino education, engagement, and mobilization. Our network of community-based, front-line service providers stands ready to work with you and your Administration to achieve that goal. The following are additional facts to keep top of mind when it comes to advancing an action agenda to protect the health and well-being of Latinos and all Americans.

### **Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on Latino Communities**

**Latino communities need robust supports for all unemployed workers and their families, regardless of immigration status, and equitable access to aid for Hispanic small business owners and community-based nonprofits for the duration of the pandemic-related economic downturn.**

Two months after the start of the pandemic, by May of this year, Latinos were leading in joblessness among all groups at a record 18.9 percent<sup>7</sup> (after experiencing an all-time low of 3.9 percent in Sept. 2019).<sup>8</sup> Although current joblessness rates have dropped as states have attempted to reopen, they are still in double digits for Latinos in many parts of the country and impacting

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<sup>5</sup> "Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report," *American Academy of Pediatrics*, Dec. 21, 2020, <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/>

<sup>6</sup> Jake Griffin, "Why It Will Take Months before Kids Get the COVID-19 Vaccine," *Daily Herald*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20201210/why-it-will-take-months-before-kids-get-the-covid-19-vaccine>.

<sup>7</sup> Pallavi Gogoi, "Why A Historic Wave Of Latino Prosperity Is Under Threat Now," *NPR.org*, May 10, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/10/853049239/historic-wave-of-latino-prosperity-is-threatened-by-devastating-job-losses>.

<sup>8</sup> Maggie Fitzgerald, "Black and Hispanic Unemployment Is at a Record Low," *CNBC*, October 4, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/04/black-and-hispanic-unemployment-is-at-a-record-low.html>.

Latinas<sup>9</sup> the most among all groups.<sup>10</sup> Latinos are disproportionately represented among the low-wage workers who have faced layoffs, with businesses scaling back or closing as a result of the pandemic, and were already struggling with higher rates of financial insecurity<sup>11</sup> and twice the rates of food insecurity as non-Hispanic whites.<sup>12</sup>

By the summer, nearly two-thirds of Latinos said they had experienced pandemic-related loss of income, the highest rate of wage loss reported by any ethnic/racial group of workers in the nation.<sup>13</sup>

Latinx workers already had lower pre-pandemic wages, wealth, and income, and less access to job related benefits like healthcare and paid leave. This pre-pandemic level of economic insecurity is driven by systemic racism, lower investments in education, historic discrimination that has contributed to the wealth gap<sup>14</sup>, and laws that keep immigrant workers disempowered in the workplace and fearful of insisting on rights related to workplace wage and safety measures. History shows that minority communities are especially vulnerable in economic downturns for all these reasons. It inevitably takes longer for them to regain lost jobs and wages. And it is especially hard for immigrants.

Latino-owned businesses have less cash on hand and when requesting funding from the Payroll Protection Program, Latinos had their PPP loans approved at half the rate of white-owned businesses.<sup>15</sup> Latino-owned businesses were also less likely to get their full funding relative to white owned-businesses, 3 percent compared to 7 percent.<sup>16</sup> Only 63 percent of Latino business

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<sup>9</sup> Elise Gould, Daniel Perez, and Valerie Wilson, “Latinx workers—particularly women—face devastating job losses in the COVID-19 recession,” *Economic Policy Institute*, Aug. 20, 2020, <https://www.epi.org/publication/latinx-workers-covid/#:~:text=Latina%20workers%20experienced%20the%20largest,workers%20were%20unemployed%20in%20April>.

<sup>10</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugh Lopez, “Coronavirus Economic Downturn Has Hit Latinos Especially Hard,” *Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends*, Aug. 4, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/04/coronavirus-economic-downturn-has-hit-latinos-especially-hard/>;

<sup>11</sup> Angela M. Odoms-Young, “Examining the Impact of Structural Racism on Food Insecurity: Implications for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities,” *Family and Community Health*, 41 (2018): S3-S6. doi: [doi.org/10.1097/FCH.0000000000000183](https://doi.org/10.1097/FCH.0000000000000183).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Karpman et al., “The Covid-19 Pandemic Is Straining Families’ Ability to Afford Basic Needs,” *Urban Institute*, Apr. 28, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/covid-19-pandemic-straining-families-abilities-afford-basic-needs>;

“Tracking the COVID-19 Recession’s Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 12, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and>

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Croew et al., “24 million Americans fear missing next rent payment, as benefits dry up,” *USA TODAY*, Jul. 26, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/graphics/2020/07/24/24-million-americans-say-they-have-little-no-chance-being-able-pay-next-months-rent-eviction/5497764002/>.

<sup>14</sup> Dedrick Asante-Muhammad and Diego Hernandez, “Latinos, The Racial Wealth Divide and Rebuilding The American Middle Class,” NCRC, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, October 15, 2019, <https://ncrc.org/latinos-the-racial-wealth-divide-and-rebuilding-the-american-middle-class/>

<sup>15</sup> Marlene Orozco et al., “The Ongoing Impact of COVID-19 on Latino-Owned Businesses,” *Stanford Business*, Aug. 2020, <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/publications/ongoing-impact-covid-19-latino-owned-businesses>.

owners have health insurance, the lowest rate of coverage of any demographic group.<sup>17</sup> The window for long-term viability for many of these businesses is narrowing.

## Latinos and Immigrants are Essential Workers

**We cannot open the economy on the backs of brown, black, undocumented, and low-income workers already suffering disproportionately high infection rates and economic hardship without providing adequate compensation, health care, and other supports needed to have healthy workers who can take care of their families and help get the economy back on its feet. We must guarantee hazard pay and other support for essential workers, including paid family and medical leave, childcare coverage, protections from deportation and other benefits.**

Latinos are 18 percent of the population - but make up 40 percent of essential workers and are overrepresented in nine of the ten lowest-wage jobs that are considered high-contact and essential.<sup>18</sup> Many work out of desperation and with few other choices: without adequate personal protection equipment or uniform policies to minimize or mitigate their risk of exposure to the virus, and therefore increased risk of community and family exposure, with no additional pay for being exposed to risks, and with no assistance for supports like childcare. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of undocumented workers up to 5.2 million, work in frontline jobs in essential industries.<sup>19</sup>

Latinos are overrepresented in essential industries with only 25 percent able to do part of their work from home when the pandemic struck compared to 43.5 percent of White adults.<sup>20</sup> Hispanic Americans of any race are less likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to have at least a high school diploma, have a bachelor's degree or higher, and have health insurance. Many of those social factors determine whether someone is more likely to be able to work from home, work in jobs that are considered essential, live in overcrowded or multi-generational housing, and have a car to avoid taking public transportation.<sup>21</sup> That means our health outcomes are often determined by social factors, and not only by biological factors. Many of the conditions giving rise to disproportionate impacts are socio-economic and grounded in systemic racism.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Xavier Azcue et al., "US Hispanic and Latino Lives and Livelihoods in the Recovery from COVID-19" (McKinsey & Company, September 2020), <https://mck.co/2KVa2DB>.

<sup>19</sup> "Immigrant Essential workers are Crucial to America's COVID-19 Recovery." FWD.US. (12/16/20). <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-essential-workers/>

<sup>20</sup> Steven Brown, "How COVID-19 Is Affecting Black and Latino Families' Employment and Financial Well-Being," *Urban Wire: Race and Ethnicity* (Blog), May 6, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-covid-19-affecting-black-and-latino-families-employment-and-financial-well-being>.

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Olivo, Marissa J. Lang, and John D. Harden, "Crowded Housing and Essential Jobs: Why so Many Latinos Are Getting Coronavirus," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/latinos-coronavirus/2020/05/25/6b5c882a-946e-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/latinos-coronavirus/2020/05/25/6b5c882a-946e-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5_story.html).

At the same time, both U.S. and foreign-born Hispanics are performing essential work that keeps the economy running and allows better off workers to work from home safely. Latinos continue to fill critical workforce gaps in labor-short industries such as agriculture, construction, and healthcare.<sup>22</sup> More than 1 in 4 workers in the U.S. food supply chain are Hispanic. In agriculture, 1 in 3 workers is Hispanic. Nationwide, 2.2 million healthcare workers are Hispanic, with almost one-third foreign-born. They are concentrated in sectors such as health aides (17.1 percent of all health aides) and nurses (8.4 percent of all nurses).

Undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)-eligible workers are also essential.<sup>23</sup> 280,000 undocumented immigrants work in healthcare, including 62,600 who are DACA-eligible. Nearly half of the almost 1.2 million DACA-eligible immigrants are essential workers. Of nearly 60 million Hispanics living in the United States, 43 percent are foreign-born.<sup>24</sup> Policies that treat immigrants humanely and fairly are among the highest priorities for Hispanic Federation.

## Housing Insecurity and COVID-19

**Much more assistance is needed to support low-income Latinx renters and other vulnerable renters for the duration of the crisis.** Nearly ten million extremely low- and very low-income renter households were severely housing cost-burdened before the start of the COVID-19 economic crisis, spending more than half of their income on rent.<sup>25</sup> Pandemic-related job losses have made already vulnerable people even more at risk for homelessness. People of color are most at risk of being evicted because of COVID-19's economic impact. They are twice as likely to be renters and disproportionately likely to be low-income and rental cost burdened.<sup>26</sup> Studies have shown that Black and Latinx people have historically faced disproportionately high rates of evictions and face high rates of discrimination in housing as evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of Fair Housing complaints based on discrimination.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Hispanic Americans in Healthcare and Essential Roles," *New American Economy Research Fund*, June 4, 2020, <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/hispanic-americans-in-healthcare-and-in-essential-roles/?emci=d4f9583c-6ebc-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&emdi=88ed0865-81bc-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&ceid=392268>.

<sup>23</sup> "Immigration and Covid-19," *New American Economy Research Fund*, March 26, 2020, <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigration-and-covid-19/>.

<sup>24</sup> Luis Noe-Bustamante and Jynnah Radford, "Facts on U.S. Immigrants, 2017," *Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2019/06/03/facts-on-u-s-immigrants-2017-data/>.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Aurand, Dan Emmanuel, and Daniel Threet, "NLIHC Research Note: The Need for Rental Assistance During the COVID-19 and Economic Crisis," *Research Note (Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition, April 3, 2020)*, <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Need-for-Rental-Assistance-During-the-COVID-19-and-Economic-Crisis.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Chester Hartman and David Robinson, "Evictions: The Hidden Housing Problem," *Housing Policy Debate* 14, no. 4 (January 1, 2003): 461–501, <https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/10950.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Deena Greenberg, Carl Gershenson, and Matthew Desmond, "Discrimination in Evictions: Empirical Evidence and Legal Challenges," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 51 (2016): 115, [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/greenberg\\_et\\_al\\_.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/greenberg_et_al_.pdf).



## Education Impacts of COVID-19

**The pandemic has exacerbated long-standing educational disparities, setting children who were already behind their white and more affluent peers even further behind. Multi-pronged supports and deep investments need to be made so that educational losses can be recovered without negative impacts for the next generation of Latino families and U.S. workers.**

Inequitable access to technology and connectivity has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Sadly, learning loss will continue with the absence of quality virtual learning experiences. Inequitable access to basic services such as income, housing, and food is also a major barrier to student wellness and success. A recent analysis of 4.4 million test scores found that when COVID-19 closed schools, Black, Hispanic, and poor kids took the biggest hit in math and reading.<sup>28</sup> The full extent of the problem is not known because a high number of students — 1 in 4 — who typically take the assessment used in the study did not take it this year. They might attend schools that did not participate in testing this year - or they might not be in school at all.

One study estimates 3 million of the nation’s most vulnerable children — those who are homeless, in foster care, have disabilities or are learning English — could be completely displaced from school.<sup>29</sup>

We must also stop the chronic underfunding of institutions where Latino students seek the higher education that leads to better paying jobs. In 2019, the total funding available for Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) represented just \$87 per Latinx student enrolled, compared with \$1,642 per Black student enrolled at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).<sup>30</sup> COVID-19-related relief for Hispanic students has continued that abysmal trend: according to the Congressional Research Service, the CARES Act funding allocated per student to minority serving institutions (MSIs) as follows: HSIs \$44; HBCUs \$2,241; and tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) \$3,090.<sup>31 32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Megan Kuhfeld et al., “Learning during COVID-19: Initial Findings on Students’ Reading and Math Achievement and Growth,” Research Brief, Collaborative for Student Growth (NWEA Research, November 2020), <https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/11/Collaborative-brief-Learning-during-COVID-19.NOV2020.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Hailly T.N. Norman, Bonnie O’Keefe, and Matt Repka, “Missing in the Margins: Estimating the Scale of the COVID-19 Attendance Crisis” (Bellwether Education Partners, October 21, 2020), <https://bellwethereducation.org/publication/missing-margins-estimating-scale-covid-19-attendance-crisis>.

<sup>30</sup> Viviann Anguiano and Marissa Navarro, “Hispanic-Serving Institutions Need \$1 Billion More in Federal Funding,” Center for American Progress, December 8, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/news/2020/12/08/492883/hispanic-serving-institutions-need-1-billion-federal-funding/>

<sup>31</sup> HSIs account for 94.5% of all those enrolled at the four MSI cohorts (HBCUs, HSIs, TCUs, and AANAPISIs) but received only 24.9% of the CARES MSIs set-aside. “CARES Act Education Stabilization Fund: Background and Analysis” Congressional Research Service (updated Aug 6, 2020). <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46378>

<sup>32</sup> Any improvement to federal funding for HSIs should not be at the expense of other minority-serving institutions.

## Equitable Representation

**Improving government services to our communities is not just about funding programs - it also requires ensuring that our government looks like and reflects the interests of those it governs.**

At nearly 60 million, Hispanics are close to 20 percent of Americans, but have never come close to being equitably represented in the Cabinet, across federal appointments, or in the federal workforce. A Biden-Harris Administration should have a strong Hispanic presence at every level, to fully reflect the diversity of our nation's population. That diversity should also reflect representation from within Latino communities, including gender, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Your Administration and our country will benefit from the wealth of talent and commitment that Latinos bring to public service. Our prosperity and well-being depend on our ability to address the full array of issues affecting all Americans in a culturally competent manner and therefore effective manner.

Hispanics remain the most underrepresented group in the federal workforce despite Executive Order 1371 issued in 2000.<sup>33</sup> 20 years later Hispanic representation in the federal workforce has only gone from 6.4 percent to 8.4 percent which represents a regression when compared to the population as a whole. A Biden administration can remedy this with strong Executive Action which includes funding and accountability measures for federal agencies.

No Hispanic has been appointed to any Circuit Court since 2016. Only 18 (of a total of 179) serve in any of the thirteen circuits. Despite there being 94 federal judicial districts, only 77 Latino jurists (of a total of 673) serve in the Article III District bench, 10 of them in Puerto Rico. This undermines the people's trust in the judiciary. You will have the opportunity to fill thousands of positions in your Administration, as well as on advisory boards, commissions, and other bodies within the federal government. We urge you to ensure Latinos comprise at least 20 percent of these positions, in number, quality, and importance. There are talented Latinos serving as elected and appointed officials, civic and community leaders, and in the private and nonprofit sectors, many of whom are well-qualified to serve at every level of your Administration.

## Equitable Climate and Disaster Response

**The racism people have been marching in the streets against is undeniably a social determinant of health. Racism (and colonialism) also play a role in environmental policies regarding land use, zoning, and regulations. Latinx and other frontline communities must provide our own leadership for solutions to these issues in our communities.**

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<sup>33</sup> In 2016, Hispanics represented 17 percent of the civilian labor force but only 8.6 percent of the federal government's workforce.

Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016, Labor Department (Oct. 2017) <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2016/home.htm>

FY2016 Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) Report to Congress, OMB (Feb. 2018) <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/feorp-2016.pdf>.



The Biden-Harris environmental agenda recognizes the impact of systemic inequality in our environmental laws, and the incoming administration shares a greater vision of environmental justice than any administration in U.S. history.

Therefore, the U.S. response to natural disasters must incorporate a framework of equity, climate preparedness, resilience, and mitigation. Natural disasters and extreme climate and other emergencies like COVID-19 has affected millions in the United States but has impacted Latinx communities disproportionately due to longstanding and systemic health, economic, and environmental inequities. For example, communities of color and low-income communities are statistically more likely to live next to a coal-fired power plant, coal ash, landfill, refinery or other highly polluting activity or facility.

The majority of U.S. Latinos live in areas that have experienced devastating impacts of extreme climate-related events, such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico, longer and stronger wildfires in California, hurricanes and rising sea levels in Florida, and historic drought and heatwaves in Texas. Equitable treatment in disaster recovery for Puerto Rico and a “Marshall Plan” to systematically invest the resources necessary to rebuild, revitalize, and revive the Island’s economy are among our priorities. Across the United States, given the drinking water emergencies that face many communities, we also support legislation to increase flexibility and accessibility of water-emergency related funding across federal agencies such as FEMA.

We are also a generous and wealthy country and must respond to humanitarian crises created by natural disasters across the globe with humanity and empathy, including the crisis in Central America due to the recent devastation by tropical storms Iota and Eta. These disasters in our hemisphere, especially if they are not met with a vigorous humanitarian relief response by the U.S., will continue to have a clear impact on segments of our community and future migration flows to our nation.

### **Hispanic Federation Priorities for Incoming Biden-Harris Administration**

Communities like ours, that have already been marginalized by structural barriers to equal opportunities and have low levels of wealth, are particularly vulnerable during all emergencies, whether natural disasters, economic downturns, or a health pandemic like the one caused by COVID-19. To respond to the crisis being faced by Latinos due to COVID-19, as well as to address other issues negatively impacting Hispanic and immigrant communities across the country, we urge the Biden-Harris administration to implement the following policies as soon as possible.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda policy agenda for a more comprehensive list of policy recommendations impacting Latinx communities developed in partnership with Hispanic Federation. “2020-2024 Hispanic Public Policy Agenda,” Comprehensive Policy Agenda, Quadrennial Blueprint for Advancing the Latino Community (National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, October 1, 2020), [https://nationalhispanicleadership.org/images/Agenda/2020\\_Agenda/nhla\\_booklet\\_online2020.pdf](https://nationalhispanicleadership.org/images/Agenda/2020_Agenda/nhla_booklet_online2020.pdf)

## Housing

- Extend, improve, and enforce the federal eviction moratorium on foreclosures and evictions to help struggling renters and homeowners stay in their homes.
- Request an [additional](#) \$50 billion in emergency rent and utility assistance for low-income renters.

## Immigrants

- Immediately grant TPS for Mexican nationals. The COVID-19 crisis in Mexico represents extraordinary and temporary country conditions that make it unsafe to return Mexican nationals.
- Include immigrants regardless of status, in all COVID-related relief packages, health care, and vaccination programs.
- Ensure privacy guardrails are in place for health data collection efforts related to COVID treatment.
- Provide COVID-19 stimulus relief to almost 3 million U.S. citizen children that have been left out of all COVID relief packages to date because their parents filed taxes using ITIN numbers. This relief should be retroactive and not continue to be denied to any U.S. citizen.
- Direct DHS to rescind DHS and DOS's "public charge" rules which have had a chilling effect on immigrant and mixed-status families seeking healthcare and may play a role in hesitancy accessing COVID-19 vaccinations.
- End all forms of separation of migrant parents from their children, an act that is illegal under the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child.
- Rescind newly imposed [regulations amending Sec. 1557 of the ACA](#) which limit access to healthcare for non-English speakers and LGBTQ individuals and reinstate the 2016 (or 2017) Final Rule for this section.
- Prioritize releasing as many individuals detained in prisons, jails, and detention centers as possible, with a focus on those at particular risk of COVID-19 contagion and/or complications while instituting baseline testing at all detention facilities.
- Release children in detention centers in compliance with the Flores agreement and provide the opportunity to remain with their parents or other relatives through alternative to detention programs.
- Work to reallocate the \$23 billion authorized by Congress in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#) to the Department of Homeland Security's immigrant detention and deportation system into programs that provide aid to immigrants during the pandemic such as funding stimulus checks, health care, and nutrition assistance to all families regardless of status, lowering the cost of naturalization by reversing the ill-conceived immigration fee structure that increased naturalization application fees, and reinstating/funding fee waivers that have long been available to qualified low-income LPRs considering citizenship, and addressing USCIS backlogs, including asylum applications.

- Terminate the Migrant Protection Protocols and ensure immigrants are provided full access to asylum and refugee protections consistent with federal law and international obligations and rescind the “Third Safe Country” agreements with Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.
- Enact legislation to provide a pathway to lawful permanent resident status to individuals who have resided in the U.S. for long periods of time as recipients of different forms of temporary status, such as Temporary Protected Status (TPS).
- Revise upwards the recently lowered levels of asylum caps, to at least recent historic levels, and provide for the free movement of people granted asylum and awaiting the adjudication of their claims.
- Provide a more robust system to expand access to prosecutorial discretion and take necessary steps to ensure uniform availability nationwide.
- Withdraw National Guard troops from the Southwest border and limit CBP authority to conduct internal immigration enforcement to a designated area along the border.
- Ensure U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is allocated adequate resources and staffing levels and require systems reform to address current backlogs and prevent future backlogs of immigration benefit applications, including eliminating the significant backlogs in the U visa and asylum adjudication process.
- Reverse the decision made by Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions in *Matter of A-B-*, in which the Trump administration attempted to limit the ability of survivors of gang and gender violence to obtain asylum, and establish regulations providing access to asylum for qualifying victims of gender-based and gang-related violence.
- Take immediate action to halt the denaturalization apparatus that has been quietly stripping naturalized Americans and their families of citizenship.
- Ensure protections from immigration enforcement for sensitive locations, including schools, hospitals, community health clinics, institutions of worship, and court appearances.

### **Hispanic and Latino Workers**

- Do not push to open the economy on the backs of low-wage Latino, Black, and immigrant workers without adequate safety protections, compensation, and worker supports, including access to healthcare, childcare, and paid family leave so sick workers can afford to stay home, take care of their families, and minimize virus spread. Provide protections from deportation for essential workers.
- Strengthen the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) protections for all essential workers by mandating that OSHA issue an Emergency Temporary Standard immediately to protect all high-risk workers from exposure to COVID-19 and enact strong worker protections and employee standards necessary to safely reopen our economy, (especially if liability protections are ever passed).

- Extend and appropriate additional robust funding for the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Extended Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and 100 percent of the federal financing of regular-law Extended Benefits (EB).
- Provide the financial assistance needed to stabilize the childcare sector, ensure childcare providers can care for our nation's children during this pandemic, and provide parents and employers the needed certainty that safe, affordable childcare will continue to be available for families who are currently working, especially given the high proportion of Latino and Latina essential workers.
- Ensure the well-being of farmworkers by including provisions of the [Farm Workforce Modernization Act](#), in any COVID-relief package directing financial assistance to employers to provide job security, pandemic premium pay, sick pay, family leave, carry out CDC recommendations, offer targeted nutrition assistance to farmworker communities, expand the eligibility for childcare programs and additional funding and flexibility for the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program, and provide additional support for community health centers, particularly in rural and agricultural communities.
- Grant the right of naturalization, including retroactively, to all farmworkers and other essential workers working in the United States during the COVID-19 crisis and provide employers immunity from adverse action for employing those essential workers, if they were undocumented.
- Incorporate in any COVID-19 relief bill, provisions in the Paycheck Fairness Act including guaranteed paid sick and family leave, defending workers' ability to join unions, and extending worker protections currently denied to farmworkers, caregivers, domestic workers, and day-laborers.

### **Small Business and Nonprofits**

- Provide targeted aid to local, community-based nonprofits that work in, and whose staff and leadership are representative of, the highly impacted communities they serve to fill health, financial, educational, nutritional, and other social service gaps at the local level.
- Authorize additional set-asides of PPP funding for community-based lenders like Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and minority depository institutions (MDIs) best positioned to deliver relief to our communities and to stabilize minority-owned small businesses and nonprofits.
- Direct the Small Business Administration and the U.S. Treasury Dept. to collect demographic data disaggregated by the race, ethnicity, and geographic region of the approved applicants to analyze inequities experienced during the PPP process and direct agencies to implement equitable small business relief moving forward and recommend retroactive remedies if possible.

## Education

- Resources must be invested to ascertain the educational impact of the pandemic on Latino, immigrant and other low-income students and invest heavily in the academic and emotional well-being of students.
- Provide adequate funding to states and localities so that schools receive the funding and planning they need to open safely and ensure the wellbeing of the students, teachers, and support staff. We urge you to appropriate \$230 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund to deliver public K-12 schools the support they need to provide ongoing teaching and learning for children, whether in-person (where safe) or remotely.
- Support increased allocation of \$1 billion for Title III ESSA to support the nearly 4.9 million English learners (ELs) enrolled in K-12 public schools. The overwhelming number of whom are US-born citizens with immigrant roots.<sup>35</sup>
- Enact legislation to provide for a higher education system that advances equity and protects civil rights as reflected in the [Civil Rights Principles for Higher Education](#) supported by Hispanic Federation.
- HSIs have been chronically and severely underfunded. To improve racial equity and give a rising generation and future U.S. workforce the opportunity to succeed in college and the economy, Congress should invest [\\$1 billion](#) in Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), or set aside no less than 10 percent of the total funds for higher education to support HSIs, as defined under Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) - provided they *demonstrate a commitment* to serving Latinx students and increasing [graduation rates](#).
- Enact legislation to expand access to early childhood education, including Head Start, especially for children who are low-income or from migrant families.
- Extend the student loan moratorium suspending payments on federal student loans, debt collection, and interest accrual to help student borrowers manage the ongoing economic crisis for the duration of the economic crisis.
- Provide increased funding for ESEA Title III to support English Language Learners.
- Provide significant funding for the Federal TRIO Programs to provide more college access and support services to additional first-generation, low-income students, students with disabilities, and unemployed adults and veterans. TRIO currently serves 66 percent students of color, who already face significant barriers to accessing and completing college.

## Racial Equity/Representation

- Announce a commitment to ensure at least 20 percent of new positions of the approximately 4,000 political and other jobs to be filled by a new president will be held by Latinos including in leadership positions across Agency departments and bureaus Latinx appointees should strive for gender equity, and diversity in race, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, and physical ability.

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<sup>35</sup> “The Federal Role in Advancing Education Equity and Excellence.” Learning Policy Institute (August 2020). [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/LPI\\_Ed2020\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/LPI_Ed2020_BRIEF.pdf)

- Include detail in the Administration's budget to indicate specific line items for expenditures toward environmental justice and vulnerable communities. Expenditures should be tracked by census block and methods for determining geographic disbursement of funds should be publicly accessible.
- Nominate judges who have demonstrated records of preserving or expanding civil rights protections and who reflect the country's growing diversity and improve the representation of Hispanics in the federal judiciary by setting a goal of no less than 20 percent of your nominations to the federal bench be Latinx judges, to improve the representation of Hispanics in the federal judiciary. Reject any representations that judges of Latino ancestry are somehow biased and unfit to serve on the judiciary or preside over specific cases.

### **Puerto Rico Disaster Relief and Recovery**

- Ensure disaster relief and other federal funds - including funds intended for COVID relief - are distributed and released in a timely and legal manner, without additional restrictions and barriers to access that are not required of other post-disaster entities.
- Allocate and distribute funds appropriated by Congress to Puerto Rico for rebuilding and restarting the island's education system without imposing additional controls that are not required of other local governments.
- Activate a White House [Puerto Rico Task Force](#) as quickly as possible with expanded responsibilities to include providing advice to the President and the Congress on policies and initiatives for Puerto Rico's disaster reconstruction, mechanisms to promote and monitor implementation of the Task Force's recommendations across agencies, and with full-time staff assigned to support the work of the Task Force.
- Seek parity in all federal benefits, especially those intended to provide benefits to low-income Puerto Ricans and alleviate poverty such as SNAP, EITC, CTC, Pandemic EBT, and end all federal block grant programs including Medicaid and NAP.
- Support a pathway to comprehensive debt relief and the ability to terminate debt obligation so territories can recover and rebuild with dignity. Any benefits of projected federal disaster dollars should only be used for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico – not the vulture funds and other creditors.
- Ensure the Stafford Act's preference for local funding for local recovery is followed and that federal agencies are given additional incentives to provide contracts to Puerto Rico businesses.
- Establish a moratorium on negotiations or repayment of existing debt until the federal government has ensured an independent audit is performed and certified by nongovernmental experts and discharge of any illegal or unconstitutional debt is allowed.
- Strengthen and improve Puerto Rico's power system, including modernizing PREPA's power generation, transmission, and distribution systems through necessary infrastructure investments by prioritizing *renewables* and make long term investments needed to achieve Puerto Rico's goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.
- Halt austerity measures imposed on Puerto Rico by the federal budgetary oversight board in the PROMESA legislation, which have resulted in school closures and decreased



funding for the island's public university system.

- Establish a process that ensures transparency in decisions, allocations, and contracts by all government agencies at every level to avoid corruption and favoritism and ensure meaningful community participation and appropriate allocation of resources.
- Direct the Census Department to include Puerto Rico in all Census activities, especially the [Household Pulse Surveys](#) in order to get a timely and accurate picture of critical needs.
- Ensure that federal relief, remediation, and reconstruction funds are inclusive of, and targeted and accessible to, local community-based nonprofits who continue to be at the forefront of uplifting families and neighborhoods across the island and building a stronger and more resilient Puerto Rico.

### **Climate Emergency**

- Support an immediate, urgent, and comprehensive response across the federal government to the climate crisis facing Latino communities and the planet with a persistent focus on the gendered impacts of climate change.
- Appoint Latinos to leadership positions with responsibility for crafting new environmental regulations, and meaningfully engage Latinos and frontline communities in the development of environmental laws, policies, and regulations.
- Appoint Latinos to leadership positions in your White House and across Agencies to lead and oversee solutions to the challenges caused by years of environmental racism.
- Oppose efforts by fossil fuel allies in Congress to undermine bedrock environmental protections, such as the Clean Air Act or the National Environmental Policy Act, instead choosing policies that help us build back better and recover from COVID-19 by making fair and equitable investments, supporting hardest hit communities, and supporting frontline workers while investing in policies that protect our health and environment.

### **Executive Orders/Actions**

- Automatically extend Employment Authorization Documents (EAD) and underlying status of work-authorized immigrants, including for DACA and TPS holders for at least the original time period granted to the individual.
- Take immediate action to grant [TPS for Mexican nationals](#). The COVID-19 crisis in Mexico represents extraordinary and temporary country conditions that make it unsafe to return Mexican nationals. It will likely take a significant amount of time to undo the Trump administration's harmful immigration policies, and many efforts may be delayed by the courts. In the meantime, your administration has the legal authority to protect significant number of undocumented people who cannot return to Mexico safely under current conditions.

- Reverse efforts to end DACA. Begin implementation of deferred action to undocumented parents under the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) policy, extend DACA to allow relief for more individuals who came to the United States as children, and enact policies to extend deferred action to LGBTQ immigrants without children, in the absence of federal legislation.<sup>36</sup>
- Take immediate action to protect communities impacted by the devastation caused by Hurricanes Iota and Eta by directing your State Department to grant TPS redesignation for Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador and include Guatemala in the designation.
- Direct the Dept. of Justice to end appeals of the Federal District Court’s determination that residents of Puerto Rico should be eligible for the SSI program.
- Issue an executive order on Hispanic hiring to increase the representation of diverse Hispanics in career federal employment positions and other government posts. Include funding for initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion in workforce hiring, training and retention, and strong accountability mechanisms that encourage agencies and managers to meet diversity hiring targets for Hispanics (including in race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability).
- Take executive action on Day 1 to immediately halt construction along the Southern border and [terminate existing construction contracts](#), and create a commission on Healing and Reparations for border communities and to assess mitigation for ecological damage to the environment, habitat, and sacred native lands. This impact of this wasteful border wall has fallen disproportionately on Latino, immigrant, and indigenous communities, and created, in some cases, irreparable environmental harm.
- Work to reallocate the \$1.375 billion for the southern border wall, which was recently appropriated to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for FY’21, to begin repairing fragile ecosystems, desecrated Indigenous sacred sites, and reverse the deadly militarization of the region.
- Address the student debt crisis and wealth inequality by broadly cancelling federal student loans and providing assistance for private student borrowers prioritizing low income, and first-generation college students to help close the wealth gap.
- Elevate the leader of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to an Assistant Secretary position similar in status to the head of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Office for Civil Rights.
- Rescind July 11, 2019 Executive Order on Collecting Information about Citizenship Status in Connection with the Decennial Census.
- Rescind July 21, 2020 Presidential Memorandum on Excluding Illegal Aliens from the Apportionment Base Following the 2020 Census.

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<sup>36</sup> “2014 Executive Actions on Immigration,” USCIS, April 15, 2015, <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/2014-executive-actions-on-immigration>.

***Moving Our Nation Forward: Working with the Biden-Harris Administration to Uplift Latino and Immigrant Communities***

From addressing a health pandemic to closing the education gap for Latino, BIPOC, and immigrant students, we have a grave and growing number of problems facing our nation. As complex and troubling as these issues are – and others we highlighted in this letter like climate change and systemic racism – we share your belief and optimism that together we can make meaningful change. By working together, with an unprecedented level of collaboration, we have the knowledge, resources, and leadership to bring about needed change on many important fronts.

We are at a pivotal moment in the social history of our nation and we look forward to rolling up our sleeves and working with you and your Administration to find solutions, remedy historic injustices, and work together to heal our communities and our country.



Sincerely,

Frankie Miranda  
President and CEO  
Hispanic Federation