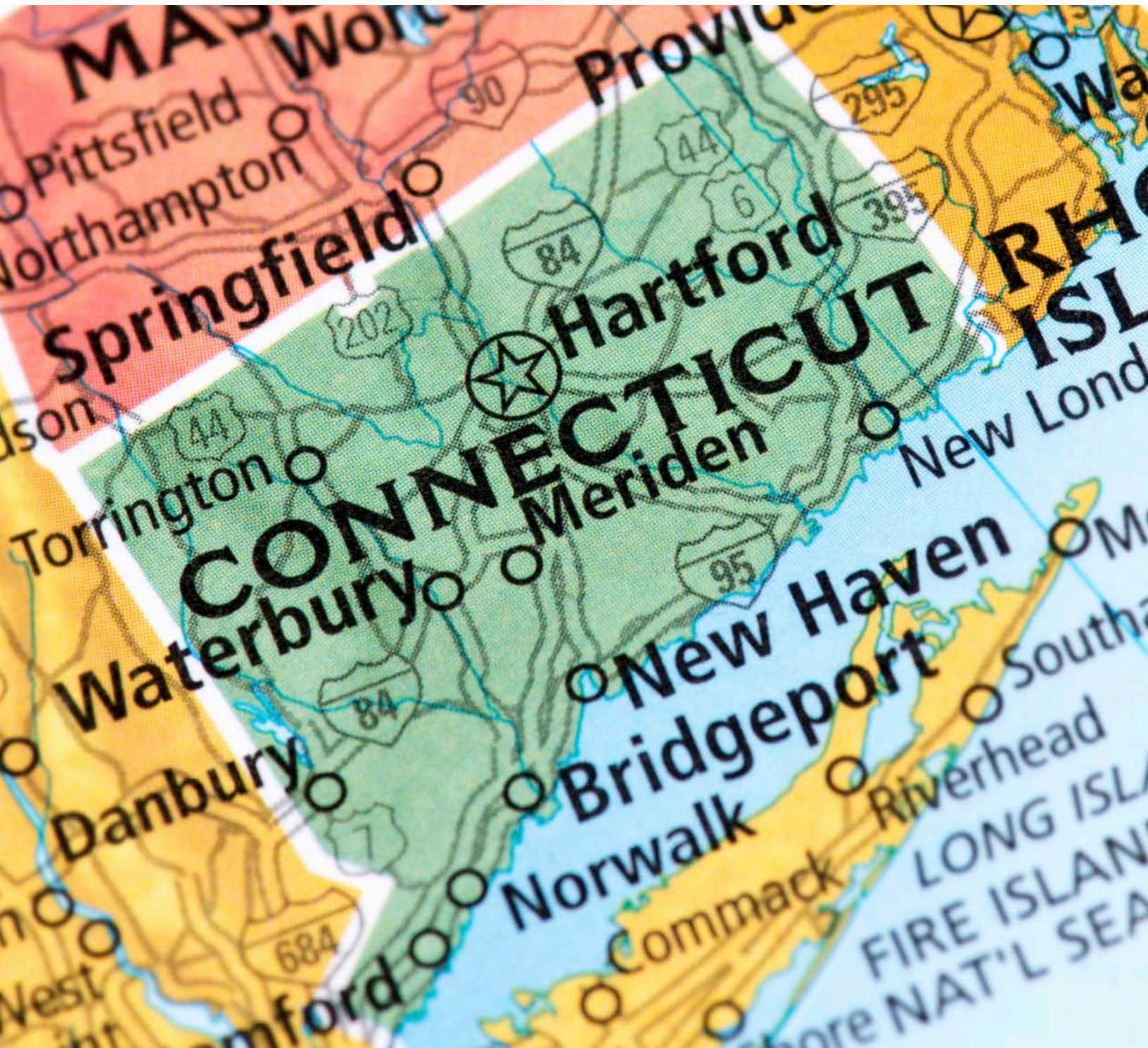


LATINO CONNECTICUT

A CALL TO ACTION

Policy Blueprint | Fall 2014



Acknowledgements

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About Our Network



The **Hispanic Federation** (HF) is the nation's premier Latino nonprofit membership organization. HF uplifts millions of Hispanic children, youth and families through public policy advocacy, innovative community programs and strengthening Latino nonprofits. By working with a dynamic network of leading Latino community-based organizations, HF is able to fulfill its mission to empower and advance the Hispanic community.

As part of its advocacy strategy, HF works with its network leadership to educate policymakers, funders, the public and media about the needs and aspirations of Latinos in the areas of education, health care, immigration, economic development, civic participation, the environment and more.

Since 2013, the Hispanic Federation has expanded its operations in Connecticut and support for the state's 11 Latino-led nonprofit organizations and the communities they serve.

HISPANIC FEDERATION CONNECTICUT MEMBER AGENCIES

Arte
Center for Latino Progress
Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury
Hispanic Health Council
Junta for Progressive Action
Latino Community Services
San Juan Center
South Norwalk Community Center
Spanish American Merchants Association
Spanish Community of Wallingford
Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain



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Executive Summary

Latino Connecticut puts forth an agenda that calls us to action.

For the more than 500,000 Hispanics who call Connecticut home, these are exciting and challenging times.¹ The state is undergoing a dramatic demographic transformation that is making it one of the most diverse places in the Northeast. Connecticut's Hispanic population grew by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2012 and the state now ranks 17th in the nation in total Hispanic inhabitants.² While most Connecticut Latinos live in Fairfield, Hartford and New Haven counties, other counties such as Middlesex, New London and Litchfield have experienced significant increases in their Hispanic population. In short, everywhere one looks in the Constitution State, the number of Latinos is growing.

The increase in Connecticut's Hispanic population in the last decade has not only changed the demographic landscape of the state, but also has challenged state leaders to think seriously and creatively about how to address the very real challenges that Latinos in the state face. In many ways, state leaders have already responded with innovative ideas and programs to support Latino families including:

- Enacting a \$10.10 minimum wage by 2017 that will benefit Latino residents of the state, many of whom are disproportionately represented in low-wage sectors of the economy
- Creating a state-level DREAM Act that allows undocumented immigrant students who live and attended high school in Connecticut to pay in-state tuition at Connecticut colleges and universities
- Investing nearly 1.5 billion dollars into cities and towns in each of the next two years for Urban Act and STEAP grants funds for economic development, community conservation and quality of life projects for localities
- Becoming the 11th state in the nation to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for a driver's license, affording undocumented immigrants the opportunity to obtain a Drive Only license through the Department of Motor vehicles, register their cars, and obtain insurance

¹ Data provided by Denise Buffa of the Hartford Courant, "State's Hispanic Population Tops 500,000." Dated June 13th, 2013. Available online at: http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-13/news/hc-census-hispanic-20130613_1_latino-population-connecticut-population-shift

² Pew Hispanic Center Demographic Profile of Hispanics in Connecticut, 2011. Available online at: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/states/state/ct/>

Executive Summary (continued)

Connecticut has long been known for quality public schools, world-class colleges and universities and state-of-the-art health care facilities. In recent decades, the growth of the financial sector in places such as Stamford and Greenwich has made the state home to multinational corporations, banks and investment firms. Not surprisingly, the state ranks third in the nation in annual median income. But for too many Latinos, and despite the efforts outlined above, there is another side to Connecticut. It is a place where unemployment is high, wages are low, schools underperform, housing is expensive and quality health care is inaccessible.

The Hispanic Federation's network of eleven community-based organizations (CBOs) across the state know very well about this other Connecticut. On a daily basis they support families who are struggling to make ends meet, students with significant education gaps, children suffering under the weight of poor health, and immigrants defrauded by employers. It is because of our unique position as a federation of Latino-led organizations that we feel a special obligation to share our knowledge of Connecticut's Latino communities. This report, **Latino Connecticut: A Call to Action**, is the product of extensive research, interviews, meetings and policy planning sessions that we conducted with our Connecticut member agencies over the past six months. It reflects the best thinking of our community on Connecticut-specific proposals designed to provide support and relief to the state's Latino families.

While all of the recommendations in the report are important, practical and achievable, we want to draw your attention to a number of especially important policy proposals, including:

- **Supporting Latino Nonprofits**

Latino-led nonprofit organizations provide the entire gamut of social services in Connecticut: health care, housing, education and senior services. Despite being the front-line service providers for the state's most vulnerable Latinos, these organizations receive a negligible share of state government resources. The chronic underfunding of these groups disrupts services to clients and undermines attempts to recruit and retain talented professionals. State leaders can help remedy this issue by ensuring that state allocations are distributed equitably based on population data and need, and by creating a Connecticut Nonprofit Stabilization Fund that supports the core operational infrastructure and technical assistance needs of Latino community based organizations (CBOs).



500,000+

Number of Hispanics who call Connecticut home

Source: Data provided by Denise Buffa of the Hartford Courant, "State's Hispanic Population Tops 500,000." Dated June 13th, 2013. Available online at: http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-13/news/hc-census-hispanic-20130613_1_latino-population-connecticut-population-shift



Almost **half** of Latinos living in Connecticut are **under 27**

Source: Pew Hispanic Center Demographic Profile of Hispanics in Connecticut, 2011.

- **Improving Education**

Connecticut's public education system is one of the best in the country. The intellectual capital of the state's teachers and administrators has produced innovative curricula that make the state's students national models of achievement and excellence. Latino students in the state deserve the same quality education as their non-Latino peers. While there are a number of policies we believe the state should implement to improve Latino student performance including increased resources, teachers and classrooms dedicated to English Language Learners, year-round schooling for at-risk youth, and additional academic counseling for students and families, we call on the state to invest immediately in early childhood education by creating a universal pre-kindergarten program for all of the state's four year-olds. This initiative, based in part on the universal pre-kindergarten program implemented in New York City this year, would provide Latino children with a head start on learning and improve their chances of successfully completing and thriving in the elementary, middle and high school environments.

- **Increasing Access to Quality Health Care**

Like so many of their peers across the country, Latinos in Connecticut face serious health challenges including disproportionately high rates of diabetes, asthma, obesity, HIV/AIDS and cancer. Making these challenges all the more dangerous and difficult to treat is the fact that many Latino families in the state lack access to quality and affordable health care. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, as of 2012, more than 20% of Latinos in the state lacked health insurance. Without insurance, Latinos are less likely to get preventive care and to benefit from early diagnosis and treatment. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has made it easier for states such as Connecticut to leverage federal resources to increase care for Latinos in the state through programs such as Access Health CT. Nevertheless, the state can do more. We believe that Connecticut should create a new Basic Health Program, as permissible under the terms of the ACA, to provide health insurance to adults living between 133% and 200% of the federal poverty level and lawfully present immigrants below the 200% federal poverty level who are ineligible for Medicaid.

- **Supporting Immigrant Families**

Thirteen percent of Connecticut residents are foreign-born and many of them are Latinos. A growing number of these foreign-born Latinos are undocumented immigrants who are particularly vulnerable to abuse. This is especially true for undocumented immigrant laborers, many of whom face the twin challenges of being targeted by federal authorities and fraudulent practices by predatory *notarios*, unaccredited notary publics unlawfully practicing immigration law. In order to assist these most vulnerable immigrants, Connecticut should create Community Job Centers throughout the state that not only provide immigrant workers with access to safe work opportunities, but also a full menu of services including adult literacy, job skills training, health services and legal representation.

- **Expanding Economic Empowerment and Financial Security**

Latinos in Connecticut confront significant economic challenges ranging from low wages to disproportionately high unemployment rates. These factors are to blame for the state's staggeringly low median personal earnings among Hispanics. If Connecticut expects to continue to be one of the nation's leaders in per capita median income, it must address the issue of income inequality confronting Latino residents of the state. A concentrated emphasis on helping Latinos achieve higher levels of education and career training must be at the core of a statewide strategy to achieve greater economic parity. Connecticut must also create a comprehensive strategy to establish workforce-development hubs that involve Latino CBOs and can provide Latinos with education, skills training, job-search counseling and work placement.



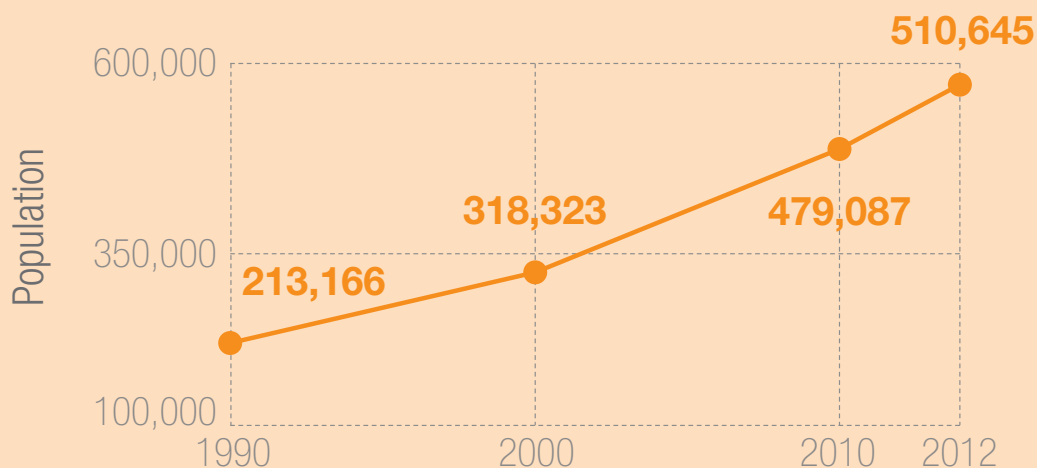
CT's Hispanic population grew more than **50%** between 2000 and 2012

Source: Data provided by Denise Buffa of the Hartford Courant, "State's Hispanic Population Tops 500,000." Dated June 13th, 2013. Available online at: http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-13/news/hc-census-hispanic-20130613_1_latino-population-connecticut-population-shift

As Connecticut's Latino population continues to grow, it is imperative that the state's leading stakeholders and leaders recognize that the future success of the state depends on the success of Latino communities. From public schools to health care, much of what Connecticut will confront in the future revolves around the needs of its Latino residents. The recommendations contained in this report build upon these initiatives and are based on our best understanding of what the next steps in the development of Connecticut's Latino communities should be. They reflect our years of experience supporting Latino community-based organizations providing front-line services to the state's Hispanics.

Finding and implementing comprehensive solutions to the challenges facing Connecticut Latinos won't be easy, but Connecticut is well-positioned to be a national leader in helping Latinos thrive. By working together with a common purpose, government, philanthropy, nonprofits and community can respond to the call to action laid out in this report and help Connecticut fulfill its great promise to all of its residents.

Connecticut's Growing Latino Population



Source: Data provided by Denise Buffa of the Hartford Courant, "State's Hispanic Population Tops 500,000." Dated June 13th, 2013. Available online at: http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-13/news/hc-census-hispanic-20130613_1_latino-population-connecticut-population-shift

Supporting Latino Nonprofits

Connecticut is home to a diverse array of Latino nonprofit organizations providing indispensable community services that complement and augment government assistance. The nonprofits provide critical services to the most vulnerable individuals and families in the state. These organizations also serve as a vital source of employment and economic security for thousands of Connecticut residents. Unfortunately, these institutions have been historically under-capitalized and under-resourced by government and philanthropic sources, inhibiting their ability to comprehensively address the social and development needs of the state's growing Latino community.

Latino organizations collaboratively address Connecticut Latinos' most fundamental needs and are an integral part of their community's stability and well-being. Yet, they are struggling under the weight of government and other funding cutbacks, in a time of great need. Protecting the sustainability and viability of these organizations goes to the core of our work.

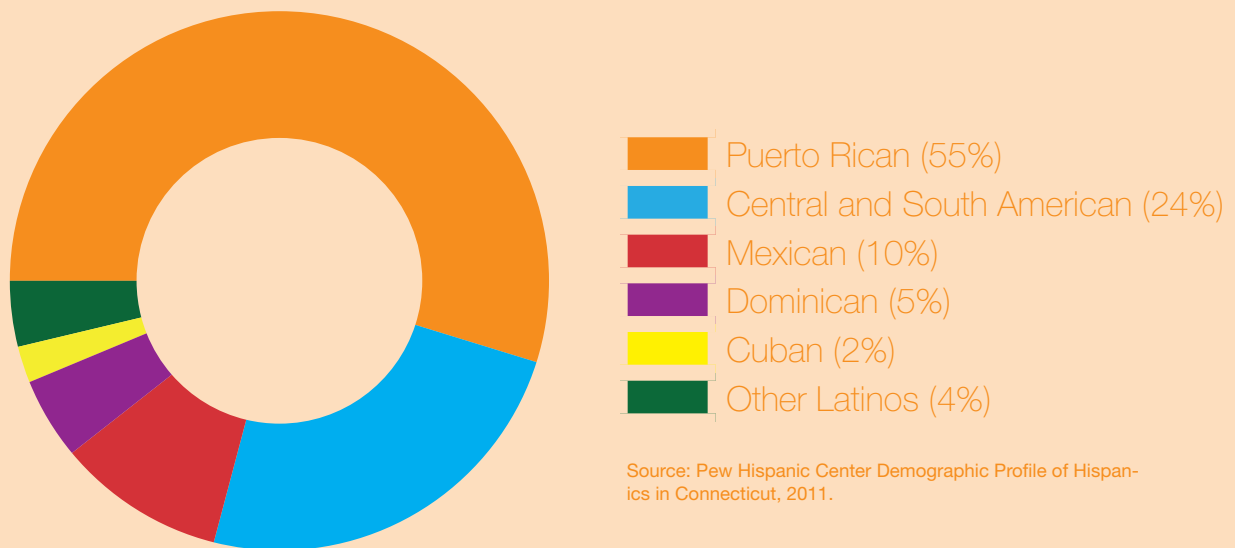
The needs of the state's growing Connecticut Latino community are stark. The state's half a million Latinos make up approximately one-in-seven state residents. That represents a 50% increase in the last decade; a pace of growth 12 times faster than the general population. Despite this dynamic increase in population, Latinos still confront a number of challenges in the state. Median household income is only \$37,421 compared with \$71,628 for non-Hispanic whites.³ One-in-four Connecticut Latinos live under the poverty line and the unemployment rate for Latinos remained at 8.3% in 2013.⁴

Many of these challenges are made more complex by the immigration status of many Latinos. The state is attracting thousands of immigrants each year, many of them from Latin America. Hartford alone is almost half Latino and over a quarter of Latinos are foreign born.

³ United States Hispanic Leadership Institute. The Almanac of Latino Politics, 2012. Data available online at: <http://almanac.uskli.org/states/connecticut/>

⁴ Ibid.

Breakdown of CT's Latino Population



Although Hispanics represent 14% of the state population, funding for Hispanic-led non-profit organizations accounts for less than one percent of the state budget. The Governor and General Assembly should better champion and fortify our state's human services infrastructure by instituting the following reforms:

- Protect and increase funding for the Hispanic Human Resource Development (HHD) line-item and allow Latino nonprofit organizations to expand culturally and linguistically competent human services to the state's Latino community
- Support fair-share allocation of resources to nonprofits by adopting allocation processes that support and yield an equitable share of funding for Latino-led organizations
- Create a \$5 million Connecticut Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to support people of color-led nonprofit organizations with core, operational infrastructure needs and technical assistance focusing on staffing and organizational development
- Diversify Request for Proposals/Bid Review Panels ensuring inclusion of community experts who understand our local community context and nonprofits, and reflect the ethnic diversity of the state
- Ensure equitable foundation funding for Latino nonprofits. Nationally, the Latino population has dramatically increased, yet foundation funding has stayed flat at 2 percent since 1990. Connecticut foundations can more closely partner with Latino CBOs to ensure they have the resources to effectively fight the educational, employment, health and other inequities confronting divested communities

Improving Education

It all starts with education. It is the basis for growth for any community. Unfortunately, the state of Latino education in Connecticut leaves much to be desired. Despite the fact that Connecticut has one of the strongest school systems in the nation, many of the indicators of Latino student performance in the state reveal that public schools are struggling to adequately educate Latino children and prepare them for success in the global workforce. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Latino graduation rate in Connecticut is just 64% as compared to 89% for non-Hispanic white students. Even worse, only 59% of the state's 30,000 English Language Learners (ELLs) graduate on time. Moreover, once in college many Latino students face a difficult road to graduation due to insufficient high school preparation, growing costs and few culturally appropriate counseling and student success programs.

However, there are bright examples of Latino student success and experts acknowledge that when we invest in effective programs, the overwhelming majority of our youth succeed. We have a remarkable opportunity and an obligation - both for our current crop of children and future generations - to enact a series of reforms designed to improve Latino student achievement, harness the power of parents, support adult learners, and make every school, no matter where it is in Connecticut, a palace of effective learning for all of our kids and their families.

The Governor and General Assembly can ensure more Latino students succeed academically by implementing the following reforms and investments:

1. Early Childhood Education

- Make free full-day pre-kindergarten available to all four-year-olds throughout the state
- Provide high quality pre-kindergarten teachers and require that all early childhood head teachers hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from a State Department of Education-approved program
- Establish additional Spanish dual language pre-kindergarten programs



2. English Language Learners (ELLs)

- Common Core methodologies and performance measures must respond to the unique needs of ELL students, and parents and teachers must be sufficiently informed about the curriculum changes and their impact on Latino children
- Incentivize dual certification in bilingual education/TESOL for pre-service teachers in the form of grants
- Prepare and invest in training new teachers in best practices with ELLs, strengthen parent outreach and bolster parental engagement opportunities to ensure parents of ELLs are aware of their child's educational options among ESL, transitional bilingual, and dual language programs
- Strengthen ELL teacher quality by providing all teachers an opportunity to learn methodologies to support ELLs in all academic and elective courses and by expanding bilingual teacher recruitment initiatives
- Support the expansion of innovative immigrant- and ELL-serving schools like the International High Schools model that are tailored to serve recently-arrived youth
- Establish extended instruction and summer academies for at-risk ELLs who are older and behind in graduation credits and for Students with an Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)

3. Turnaround Failing Schools and Build Strong Community Schools

- Build community schools in low-income communities. Through a shared location and partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs), community schools provide an integrated set of services including academic, health, social, youth, family, and community development and engagement. Open to the community beyond normal school hours, they not only raise student outcomes by overcoming social obstacles, but they help build stronger families and healthier communities
- Support a policy that requires all underperforming schools to partner with high quality youth-serving CBOs with free access to school facilities from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm to provide academic, cultural, athletic, and other extracurricular activities and supports to students
- Make curricula culturally relevant to keep children engaged in learning
- Incentivize teachers to live in the neighborhoods where they teach and recruit local, high-performing students to pursue positions within their communities
- Eliminate the “summer learning loss” or “summer slide” by supporting year-round student learning in at-risk communities, replicating successful models such as the School of the 21st Century
- Provide year-round comprehensive social services in low-income areas in partnership with CBOs in the pursuit of authentic neighborhood schools and extended learning time



- Adopt successful models to transform school culture including conflict resolution, parent engagement and training, and student leadership development
- Expand CBO-led dropout prevention, disconnected youth, and multiple pathways initiatives throughout the school system including existing magnet schools and charter schools
- Enact broad scale change by ensuring that every school has a senior operations and community manager responsible for forging relationships with CBOs and achieving robust community and parental involvement
- Hire additional guidance/college counselors and expand their role to include job search for graduating students who are heading directly into the workforce
- Reduce the student-to-counselor ratio so that counselors can better assist Latino families in the college application process
- Develop a uniform student discipline policy to dramatically reduce the number of in-school arrests and expulsions among Latino students
- Reduce the focus on high-stakes testing and instead emphasize academic progress to encourage students to stay in school
- Increase access to and availability of vocational schools to students in at-risk communities
- Increase transparency and equity in funding K-12 education by reducing Connecticut's highest-in-the-nation dependence on local property taxes for funding K-12 education and by increasing public access to all school revenues and expenditures data
- Adopt and replicate successful models for identifying and coordinating transitional support for high mobility students who transfer frequently between schools/school districts during the school year and are at greater risk of lower school performance and dropping out of school



4. Higher Education

- Prioritize college readiness and success and significantly improve parent and community engagement in languages accessible to all families
- Expand innovative student mentoring programs to improve college retention and success
- Expand access to scholarships and financial aid for all students, regardless of status, by working with private foundations and other philanthropic sources to ensure that all worthy students have access to financial support
- Ensure that all universities fully comply with the CT In-State Tuition Law and remove barriers – including the sole reliance on the FAFSA Form – that hinder eligible students from affording a college education
- Continue and expand programs that promote awareness of the costs of college and that provide real tools and incentives for smart education financing
- Ensure that all schools offer Advanced Placement and College Now courses and are staffed with qualified teachers
- Offer the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exam to all high school seniors to leverage early college credits and lower college costs

5. Adult Education

- Increase funding for CBOs, public libraries and senior centers, to offer adult literacy and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs including programs aimed at 18-21 year olds
- Expand Career and Technical Education schools and programs to offer high school students, including English Language Learners and undocumented immigrants, alternatives to college

6. Parent and Community Engagement

- Expand effective community-based initiatives that build the capacity and train Latino parents on how they can support their children's learning. One such example is the Hispanic Federation's *Pathways to Educational Excellence* program, which offers parents a series of workshops on college preparation, dropout prevention, and early-childhood education

- Expand parent resource centers managed by CBOs to provide parents multilingual information and technology access regarding school issues
- Establish an ELL Parent Academy to prepare and assist parents and families in supporting their children's education, including teaching them how to participate in schools and manage their child's social, emotional and academic development
- Ensure that all early care and education settings have a family liaison to develop active and reciprocal partnerships with parents resulting in parental engagement and inclusion
- Build two-generational strategies of school readiness and workforce readiness for children and families living in poverty
- Institute strategies that increase communication between schools and parents to eliminate chronic absenteeism



Supporting Healthy Lifestyles

Latino health indicators in Connecticut are deeply troubling. Serious health disparities persist between Latinos and the general population, including increased incidence of obesity, diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, cancer rates and disproportionately high mortality rates. Illness in Latino communities, especially in the immigrant community, is compounded by poverty, language barriers and limited healthcare interaction. Additionally, the cultural competence of health care providers and their inability to understand and respond effectively to these challenges and differences exacerbate the prevalence and increased incidence of preventable diseases.

Below are some examples that indicate the extent of the health crisis facing our community:

- In 2012, of the 10,474 people living with HIV in Connecticut, 32% were Hispanic
- Latinos in Connecticut have 51% higher mortality rates due to diabetes and 45% higher mortality rates due to diabetes-related causes than their non-Hispanic white neighbors⁵
- Among children under 6 years of age who had a confirmed blood lead test in 2012, Hispanics (4.1%) were significantly more likely to be lead poisoned at levels of 5 g/dL than Non-Hispanics (2.6%)⁶
- In 2010, 9.2% of adults and 11.3% of children in Connecticut had asthma. Hispanic adults had 5.2 times the rate of asthma hospitalizations as non-Hispanic White adults from 2000-2009 and during that period Hispanic children had the highest asthma ER visit rates of all ethnic and racial subgroups⁷

⁵ CT Department of Public Health. "Facts about Minority Health in Connecticut." Connecticut Department of Public Health, Apr. 2013. Web. 19 June 2014. <http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/Facts_Minority_Health_CT_2013.pdf>.

⁶ Connecticut Department of Health. "CT Department of Public Health Annual Disease Surveillance Report on Childhood Lead Poisoning." Connecticut Department of Health, Jan. 2014. Web. 18 June 2014.

⁷ CT Department of Public Health. "Fast Facts About Asthma in Connecticut." Connecticut Department of Public Health. N.p., 2011. Web. 19 June 2014.



Connecticut's Latino families are less likely to be insured under the state's health exchange network, more likely to lack basic health knowledge, and less likely to access health education and prevention opportunities to alleviate health disparities. Connecticut's Latino community-based organizations (CBOs) provide a culturally competent safety net for uninsured and underinsured Latinos. They help these populations overcome multiple barriers to accessing health care through providing culturally competent services, complementing state-wide education and outreach campaigns, and facilitating relationships between Latinos and mainstream health institutions.

Connecticut can do more to improve the health of Latinos by implementing the following policies and initiatives:

1. Expanding Access, Cultural Competency and Addressing Health Inequities

- Support public health and preventative education initiatives for culturally-competent CBOs with a demonstrated history of serving populations of color
- Expand Latino CBOs collaborations with the Connecticut State Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families, Access Health CT and others
- Expand Connecticut's success in implementing Access Health CT by establishing in the FY'15 Budget a new Basic Health Program, permissible under the federal Affordable Care Act and federally funded at 95% of marketplace rates, to provide quality, affordable insurance to adults living between 133% and 200% of the federal poverty level and to lawfully present immigrants living below the 200% federal poverty level who are ineligible for Medicaid

SECTION 3: Supporting Healthy Lifestyles (continued)

- Implement the federally-led No Wrong Door Policy under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which aims to enable people seeking coverage to complete one application to determine health and social services programs eligibility for their family
- Pass Raised Bill No. 5385 to reinstate state funding for the payment of medical interpreting services, which will ensure limited-English-proficient (LEP) patients have access to needed translation and interpretation services at health facilities
- Invest in the training and capacity for CBOs to provide Trained Medical Interpreter Services in Connecticut by establishing funding through the Department of Public Health in the form of an RFP
- Pass Raised Bill No. HB05457 regarding the collection of data by health and human services agencies to ensure we have baseline data on the provision of social and health services to the Latino community
- Incentivize health professionals to pursue cultural awareness/sensitivity development and prioritize the development of a pipeline of Latino health professionals to ensure more hospitals and clinics are equipped to treat the state's growing Latino community
- Provide funding to Latino CBOs to serve as ACA enrollment facilitators/assisters and fortify outreach efforts for healthcare outreach and access for U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants



2. Youth Health Issues

- Allocate dedicated funding and expand Connecticut's Children's Behavioral Health Plan (General Assembly Public Act 13-178) to support suicide prevention programs serving young people of color, specifically for Latina teens who hold an alarmingly high rate of suicide attempts (one in every seven Latinas attempt suicide)
- Invest in initiatives focusing on health education and healthy lifestyles inclusive of counseling, nutrition and age-appropriate sex education for children and young adults
- Bolster school physical education requirements for children in K-12 education to ensure they achieve the basic daily requirement for physical activity

3. Environmental Health Risks

- Reinvest resources to reduce significant levels of lead in Hispanic children 6 years and under
- Incorporate increased opportunities for Lyme Disease testing and prevention education of Latinos in Connecticut, targeting the state's Latino day laborers and farm workers who account for a substantial number of newly diagnosed cases
- Invest in preventive care education opportunities to reduce the number of emergency room visits due to asthma and asthma-related ER visits

4. Maternal Health

- Initiate a statewide culturally-competent education/awareness campaign to reduce the high incidence of low birth weight and infant mortality in the Latino community
- Increase funding for access to comprehensive prenatal care for Latina women

5. Reproductive Justice

- Increase support for family planning programs including at the state's reproductive health clinics and hospital emergency rooms that provide access to emergency contraception
- Ensure continued access to Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Title X clinics with emphasis on sliding-scale fee programs
- Ensure all women in Connecticut have access to a full range of linguistically-appropriate reproductive health services (including abortion and contraception) without being misled or deceived into going to a Crisis Pregnancy Center

SECTION 3: Supporting Healthy Lifestyles (continued)

6. HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment

- Create a task force of government, health and community stakeholders to develop a statewide plan to eradicate HIV/AIDS by 2020
- Increase funding for communities of color HIV preventative education, testing and supportive services

7. Safe Spaces

- Establish and invest funding for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) homelessness prevention and support programming for Latinos and communities of color
- Create a multi-year anti-homophobia community mobilization and social marketing campaign to address LGBTQ bias and prejudice



Integrating Immigrants

Connecticut is currently home to more than 500,000 immigrants. Over the past two decades, the state has undergone a significant demographic transformation as the foreign-born share has risen from 8.5% in 1990, to 10.9% in 2000, to 13.4% in 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This growth has created a pressing need for local and statewide planning with regards to the delivery of comprehensive integration services for immigrants.

Our newcomers face a multitude of challenges – from language barriers to fraudulent business schemes targeting immigrants – that make life hard for their families and slow economic advancement. Connecticut and select cities have taken positive steps to ensure undocumented immigrants have access to drivers' licenses, in-state tuition at state universities and community colleges and issuance of municipal identification cards. However, much needed citizenship, English language instruction, legal protection and other services for immigrants do not come close to meeting the growing demand. Fewer than half of the state's immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens, raising the need for increased citizenship services and ultimately voter registration drives.

The Hispanic Federation and its Latino-led CBO membership are steadfast in their commitment to helping Latinos integrate, contribute and succeed in Connecticut. These institutions are ready to partner with the state to offer immigrant integration services to newcomers. The following reforms and investments will help to strengthen immigrant integration efforts across the state.

1. Assist Immigrants and Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) to Achieve Citizenship

- Establish and baseline \$5 million in funding for citizenship and immigration assistance including:
 - A. Legal consultations
 - B. Community referrals and bilingual case management wrap around services to promote health/well-being/economic stability of legal permanent residents (LPRs) as they make the transition to U.S. Citizenship
 - C. Naturalization preparation classes
 - D. Fraud Prevention
 - E. ESL, Financial and Technology classes
 - F. Wage theft prevention and recovery services
 - G. Employment assistance
 - H. Tax Preparation
 - I. Family reunification and Deferred Action/DACA assistance

- Allocate funding to provide English language instruction allowing nontraditional formats and curricula for ESL and adult literacy instruction including focusing on essential worker training, OSHA safety and school-parent engagement

2. Protect Vulnerable Immigrants from Fraud

- Prevent immigration and employment services fraud by engaging in community education, enforcing regulations and fine, conducting business sweeps, and by passing legislation and state regulations to stop predatory *notarios* (notary publics) from unlawfully practicing immigration law

- Establish funding for CBOs to train, educate and help eligible immigrants State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles “Drive Only” Drivers Licenses

- Increase wage theft prevention and recovery services, make wage theft a crime for employers, increase fines, and shut down businesses who are repeat offenders



3. Immigrant Civic Engagement

- Protect language-minority voters by ensuring translated ballots and interpretation services are available on Primary and Election Day
- Increase bilingual assistance and proper training of bilingual poll workers
- Ensure that the nine municipalities – Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, Windham – under the federal Voting Rights Act fully comply with the law’s language access provisions to prohibit racial discrimination in voting

4. Stop Deportations and Keep Families Together

- Expand work at the local level to ensure that the TRUST Act is doing its job to mitigate the damage done by the Department of Homeland Security’s “Secure Communities” Program
- Protect and secure policies preventing local government cooperation and information sharing with federal immigration authorities
- Limit Department of Correction’s cooperation with the US Department of Homeland Security’s Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) division including the honoring of voluntary detainees
- Implement reforms to improve police-community relations by enforcing a confidentiality policy and limiting state and local government cooperation and information sharing with ICE

5. Support Day Laborers

- Establish Community Job Centers across the state to assist immigrant day laborers and other workers to safely seek and find employment opportunities and supportive services, including adult literacy classes, health and safety training, job skills training, legal immigration services, tax preparation and other ancillary services

Economic Empowerment and Financial Security

In the wake of the Great Recession of 2008, Latinos still face disproportionately high rates of poverty and unemployment, including an 8.3% Latino unemployment rate.⁸ Data from 2007-2011 shows that during this period, a quarter of the Hispanic population was living below the poverty line. Similarly, the median annual personal earnings of Hispanics in Connecticut was staggeringly low given the statewide average (\$22,000 vs. \$40,000 for non-Hispanic whites).⁹ Although the Hispanic share of the workforce increased significantly from 3% in 1970 to 15% in 2011, Hispanics were only 7% of the STEM workforce in 2011.¹⁰

Home ownership is another troubling indicator of the wide economic gap that exists between Latinos and Connecticut's non-Hispanic, white residents. In 2011, one third (32%) of Connecticut Hispanics were homeowners in comparison to 76% of non-Hispanic whites.¹¹ While the number of Latino small business owners are booming nationally, only 4.2% of Connecticut firms are Hispanic-owned.¹² Clearly, Latino economic outcomes have a long way to rise. Given that Latinos make up 14.2% of Connecticut's population and have a collective purchasing power of nearly \$10 billion as of February 2012¹³, Latino economic growth is not only important for the Latino community but for the future success of the state.

Changes are needed – both statewide and in municipalities – to help achieve Latino economic empowerment and financial security.

⁸ United States Department of Labor. Data available online at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>.

⁹ Pew Hispanic Center. "Demographic Profile of Hispanics in Connecticut, 2011." Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project. Pew Hispanic Center, 2011. Web. 14 July 2014.

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau. "Disparities in STEM Employment by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin." United States Census Bureau, 27 Nov. 2013. Web. 19 June 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "United States Census Bureau." Connecticut QuickFacts. United States Census Bureau, 2013. Web. 20 June 2014.

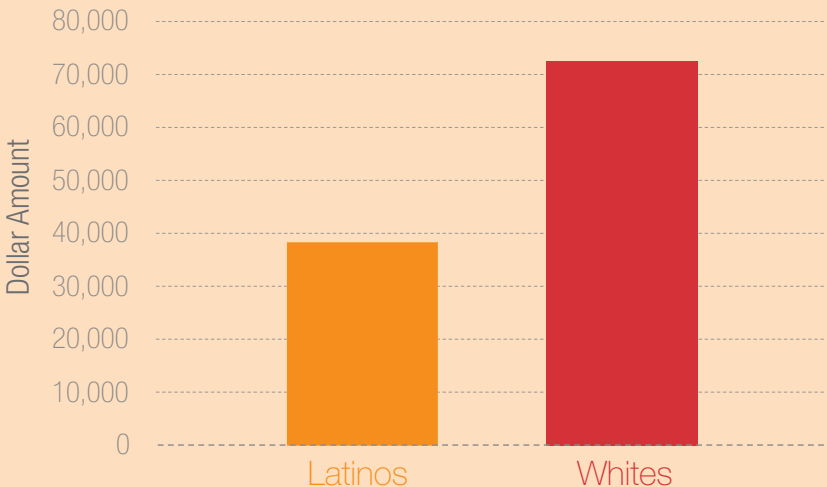
¹³ Kane, Brad. "Booming Hispanic Market Creates Business Opportunities." HartfordBusiness.com. The Hartford Business Journal, 6 Feb. 2012. Web. 18 June 2014.



We applaud Connecticut's leadership in becoming the nation's first state to pass legislation to increase the state's minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2017. This important step will help to reduce poverty among Latinos and their families, as well as mark progress towards closing the Latino pay gap.

To further advance economic security and opportunities for working individuals and families, we support efforts to create good paying jobs with benefits, build affordable housing, implement progressive tax policies, and expand anti-poverty and hunger initiatives especially for youth and seniors. The state should also expand workforce development and summer youth employment programs, as well as strengthen the rights of vulnerable domestic, tipped and farm workers. A concerted emphasis on helping Latinos achieve higher levels of education and career training must buttress these efforts and be at the core of a Latino economic development strategy.

The Governor and General Assembly can do more to champion and support working families and Connecticut's middle class by implementing the following reforms:



Median Household Income in 2010

Source: United States Hispanic Leadership Institute. The Almanac of Latino Politics, 2012.

SECTION 5: Economic Empowerment and Financial Security (continued)

1. Creating Good Jobs

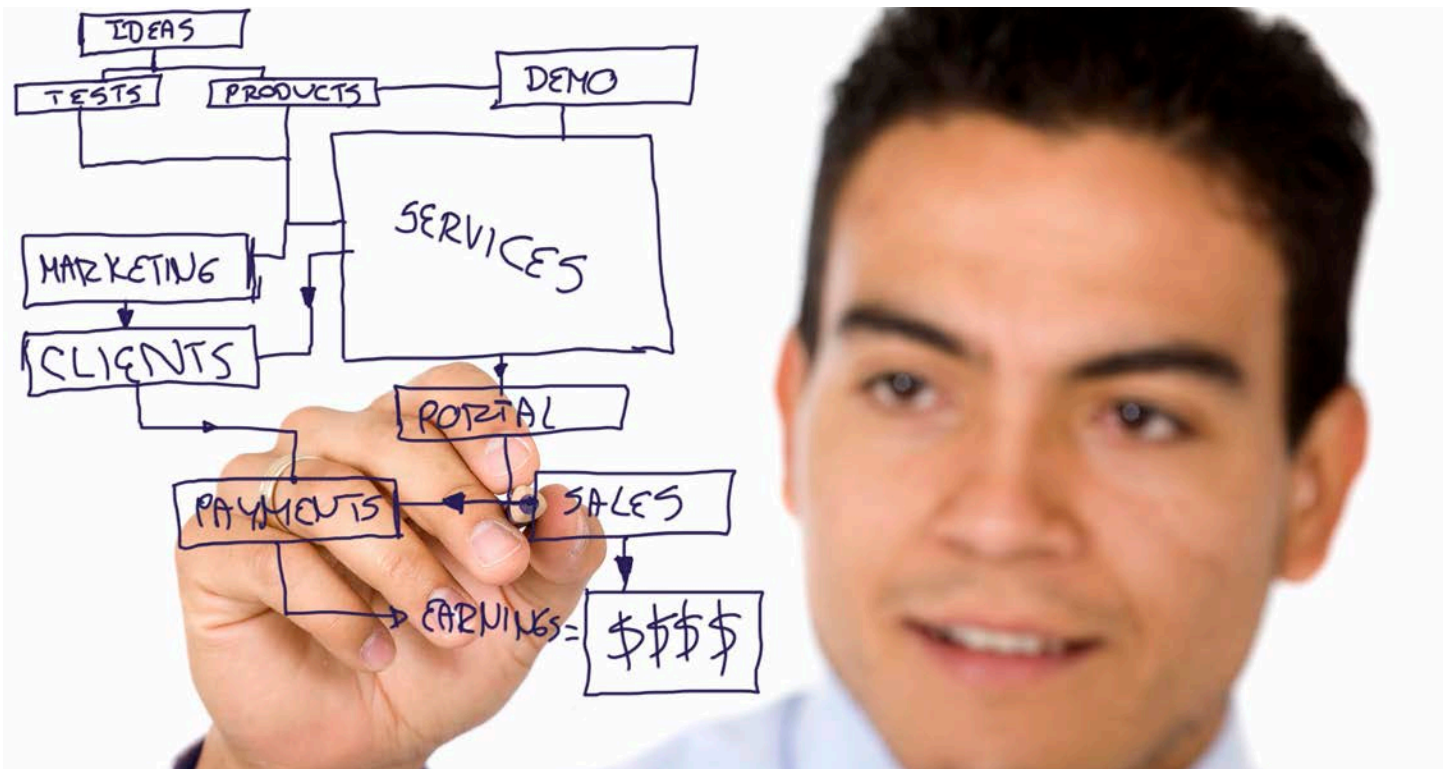
- Support and baseline \$30 million the state has invested for three “Step Up” programs — the Subsidized Wage Program, the Small Manufacturer Training Program, and the Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training Program
- Support worker organizing and unionization efforts for fast food, farm workers, tipped workers, car wash and other essential workers through the state’s budget and other sources
- Pass HB5527, the Domestic Worker’s Bill of Rights, to create a task force to address the working conditions and leave policies of domestic workers
- Pass legislation to ensure farm workers have the same workplace protections and leave rights as most other workers in Connecticut
- Strengthen paid sick leave policies for small business employees
- Maximize pensions to leverage local jobs and increase retirement options for nonprofit and small business employees
- Increase construction and transportation spending to employ low-skilled workers

2. Supporting Small Business

- Increase outreach and education efforts to Latino and immigrant small business owners to leverage increased federal Small Business Administration loans for Hispanic-owned businesses
- Foster small business growth in Latino and immigrant communities by driving 20% of state procurement to Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE)
- Appoint an adjudicator to ensure state contracts are sufficiently benefiting Latino and other MWBE firms
- Increase entrepreneurial development and apprenticeship programs to build the state’s next generation of Latino small business owners and CEOs
- Develop micro-lending programs to support small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs
- Encourage banks to expand financial services and products that meet the needs of Latino and immigrant small business owners

3. Expanding Workforce Development and Diversity

- Expand on Connecticut’s investment of up to \$3.6 million for the Platform to Employment (P2E) program to be inclusive of Latinos and fund comprehensive social services including intensive job readiness training, behavioral health services, financial coaching, and subsidized work experience
- Bridge and expand immigration services, ESL and workforce development programs to create a model of integrated service delivery
- Establish and finance intermediary organizations inclusive of Latino-led CBOs as entry points for workforce development services for Latinos, as well as to serve as bridges between key system stakeholders, Workforce Investment Boards and the Department of Labor
- Ensure workforce development programs match growing industries including health care
- Increase Summer Youth Employment opportunities and funding to CT Works (Capital Workforce Partners) and other municipal agencies that provide summer jobs for teens
- Diversify the state government workforce
- Incentivize organizations and businesses receiving state funding to have a board and staff that reflects the racial & ethnic diversity of the communities they serve



SECTION 5: Economic Empowerment and Financial Security (continued)

4. Combating Poverty

- Establish a major transitional jobs and training program for public benefits recipients to rebuild our state's infrastructure and provide vital support services
- Significantly increase Connecticut's Care 4 Kids and other childcare slots to support low- and middle-income working families seeking culturally and linguistically-appropriate programs
- Establish a Financial Literacy Initiative to partner with community based organizations and run multi-media advertisements to teach CT residents about basic budgeting, banking, credit and financial planning principles and resources
- Fight wage theft for vulnerable workers through a public education campaign, monitoring businesses and enforcing state law
- Support and enforce policies preventing government agencies and private companies from solely disqualifying job candidates based on criminal records or credit scores
- Restore Connecticut's Earned Income Tax Credit to 30%
- Support and pass progressive tax reforms including closing corporate loopholes and raising income taxes on high-income earners to support anti-poverty and education programs
- Implement alternatives to prison and detention for young, first time nonviolent offenders and undocumented immigrants



5. Tackling Food Insecurity

- Combat child hunger and poor academic performance by providing free in-school breakfast and lunch to all public school students including during the summer
- Significantly increase the number of schools providing free summer lunches to youth
- Increase Emergency Food Assistance Program funding for soup kitchens, food pantries and food banks
- Support the establishment of major supermarkets in neighborhoods lacking sufficient fresh fruits and vegetables

6. Promoting Affordable Housing

- Connecticut's Department of Housing (DoH) should release the overdue report, titled *The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Connecticut* including all data in the possession of the Connecticut Department of Housing and the Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Fight homelessness by expanding transitional housing opportunities across the state
- Ensure that the Department of Housing provides budgetary and operational transparency and increases aid to speed up repairs and needed community investments
- Expand foreclosure-prevention outreach efforts to preserve the Latino middle class
- End mass evictions by increasing legal services funding for housing court consultations and representation
- Support the homeless by supporting a right to shelter and ensuring robust social safety net services for all residents
- Enforce protections for tenants against landlord sweeps aimed at checking for legal status of undocumented immigrant tenants for the purposes of rent increases and eviction
- Enforce the recommendations of the Impediments to Fair Housing Task Force
- Remediate residential segregation
- Stop locating affordable housing in high-crime and high-poverty areas and increase availability of subsidized housing in high performing school districts



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