



Latino
POLICY FORUM

BIENNIAL REPORT

2017-18



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About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only Chicago-area organization that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum strives to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community. It does this by conducting analysis to inform, influence, and lead, all with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

The [Acuerdo](#) is the Forum's instrument for building the policy-making and advocacy capacity of the Latino community. (The Spanish word acuerdo means mutual understanding or accord.) Acuerdos engage diverse sectors of the community around specific issue areas. The Forum uses the model to unite the collective leadership and influence of more than 100 Latino-serving organizations in its [Education, Housing, and Immigration](#) Acuerdos, which function alongside its 47-member [Illinois Latino Agenda](#).

MISSION

To build the power, influence, and leadership of the Latino community through collective action to transform public policies that ensure the well-being of the community and society as a whole.

VISION

The Forum envisions societal prosperity, unity, and equity in the nation and in the global community.

Accomplishments

Advancing a Shared Future

The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence, and lead, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

INFORM

- The Latino Policy Forum provided valuable information to thousands of Illinois Latinos concerned about the ramifications of the immigration-related Public Charge expansion proposal. The Forum, which co-founded the Protecting Immigrant Families-Illinois (PIF-IL) coalition in 2018, urged them to retain vital public services.
- The Forum contributed nine policy recommendations on behalf of English Learners from early childhood to 12th Grade that were adopted into Illinois' Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. The Forum continued the work in 2018, helping public schools be more accountable for English language proficiency.
- The Forum prioritized Latino families in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods by testifying before Chicago City Council's Home and Real Estate Committee in 2017 to encourage building larger units and creating more affordable housing options.
- Immigrants, and particularly families in school communities, benefitted from 20 "Preparedness Planning" workshops that the Forum held to provide information about steps to take before an encounter with federal immigration officials.

INFLUENCE

- Hundreds of voters heard from gubernatorial and attorney general candidates on issues affecting Latinos at information sessions that the Forum co-organized in 2018.
- Latinos now have more access, inclusion, and equity in state services provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services after the Forum initiated and secured bipartisan support for the Illinois data bill HB3131, which became effective in 2018 and enables advocates to monitor these issues.
- The Forum helped overhaul bilingual education in Illinois as it led a successful effort to increase funding for English Learners, resulting in a total of \$102 million, including an increase of \$38 million for bilingual education.
- Illinois became friendlier to immigrants because the Forum and community partners advocated for the successful passage of the Illinois Trust Act in 2017. It prevents police from holding people for immigration purposes without court-issued warrants; forbids them from stopping, searching, and arresting anyone based on their immigration status; and upholds the basic tenants of the state and federal constitutions.

LEAD

- Five hundred immigrant students and families, school administrators, teachers, and counselors in suburban Cook County and the collar counties were provided bilingual immigration policy trainings in 2018 to overcome the challenges of living in this unfriendly political climate.
- The Forum worked with the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in 2018 to strengthen its protocols, benefitting children whose parents were detained and/or deported.
- Twenty-three African-American and Latino community leaders were brought together and trained as part of the 2017 inaugural cohort of the Multicultural Leadership Academy, and a second cohort of 24 individuals graduated the following year.
- Latino youth participation in community empowerment increased when the Forum recruited and trained more than a dozen students from DePaul University to become Promotores de Vivienda Justa in 2017 to inform the public on fair housing rights and responsibilities.

10 Year Anniversary Overview



The Latino population in Illinois, like that across the nation, is a powerful economic, political, and social group. Its contributions are a driver of economic vitality. Latinos have driven Illinois' population gains. Between 2000 and 2016, the state's overall population grew by only 3 percent. Its Latino population grew by 40 percent in that time. Without Latinos, Illinois would have experienced population decline.

At the time the Latino Policy Forum was launched in 2008 it was given a mandate to shine a guiding light for the Latino community and be a bold, collaborative, and important voice for Illinois Latinos. The Forum's leaders were committed to examining the landscape,

taking the long view, and making a lasting impact. It has done so with a large degree of success.

In order to develop its policy agenda and improve the lives and opportunities for Latinos and all of Illinois, the Forum has actively engaged nearly 100 organizations as Acuerdo members in the areas of Education, Immigration, Housing, and the broader Latino Agenda.

Additionally, it has been privileged to enhance leadership through its Multicultural Leadership Academy, which brings together African American and Latino community activists to unite voices and power in the region.

The Forum, which evolved from Latinos United, published its seminal policy brief "An American Agenda from a Latino Perspective" in 2008. This publication established a vision for Latino civic participation in the Chicago region. Its findings and recommendations resulted from a series of community meetings Latinos United convened in 2006-2007 with civic leaders, religious organizations, business, elected officials, and community activists.

In 2018, for its 10th anniversary, the Forum reached out across communities in Illinois again and conducted 15 roundtable "plática" discussions with hundreds of community, nonprofit, and civic leaders.

Their feedback revealed that the problems facing the Latino community specifically and the State of Illinois generally are similar. Solving these problems is necessary to enhance both the viability of Illinois and of the Latino community. The findings hold true that making the Latino community stronger is good for the state overall, and what improves Illinois also strengthens the Latino community.



Dear friends,



Photo © Olga Lopez

It's hard to believe that we are 10 years old. We stand on the shoulders of so many dedicated funders and a vision that is rooted back more than 35 years to the era of Harold Washington and the mayor's advisory committee on Latino affairs. Thanks to all those who have supported the Forum over the years.

In its long history, the Forum has seen many challenging times, but perhaps none as dark as the era our Latino and immigrant communities are currently experiencing. Too often, children are afraid to go to school fearing their parents will be taken away by ICE agents. Parents are afraid to go to supermarkets or take their children to parks, even disenrolling their children from critical services like healthcare because the federal government's proposed Public Charge changes are creating new avenues for telling dark-skinned immigrants that they're no longer welcome here.

These past two years, we've seen thousands of children separated from their families at the border. While it no longer makes the front pages, many of them have still, yet to be reunited. The effects of trauma that will afflict these innocent children in the years to come is heartbreaking.

The scapegoating of immigrants is an immoral, dangerous tactic, fueled by those who wrongly see this population as voiceless, without legal ground or public footing to stand on.

This is a clear signal that the Forum's work is critical.

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2018, four in 10 Latinos surveyed say they have experienced discrimination by being criticized for speaking Spanish, being told to go back to their home country, or being called an offensive name.

These assaults have affected some of us directly or someone we know and love.

The light at the end of the tunnel? According to the Pew survey, just as many Latinos said someone in the past year has expressed support for them because they are Latino. This is heartening because in the face of all these challenges, it demonstrates that there is also tremendous support out there.

With that support, the Latino Policy Forum remains resolute with vulnerable communities in Illinois and will continue to help raise their voices and empower their collective achievement.

The Forum's first publication, *An American Agenda from a Latino Perspective* has been bookended by survey results that the organization compiled from 15 plática roundtable discussions conducted in 2018.

We asked hundreds of leaders around the region what their policy priorities were. The issues of equity, education, housing, immigration, economic opportunity and political leadership were reaffirmed. We heard about the need for strength and unity in the Latino community, and we documented their hopes and fears.

We also shared good news. For example: Latino college graduates doubled since the year 2000. Currently, one out of every three Latino households has a foothold in the middle class, earning an income of at least \$75,000. And Latinos are responsible for all of the labor market growth and all of the demographic growth in Illinois.



Photo courtesy of Maria S. Doughty



The Forum has contributed to policy change by influencing at the state capitol: We have secured tens of millions of additional dollars in education. Especially notable is a \$38 million increase in bilingual education, the largest ever. Additionally, thousands more Latino children have access to early education, providing a solid foundation for their educational success.

We helped pass legislation that provides benchmarks for racial equity — both whom government is serving and who is serving in government.

Today, Illinois has a more equitable disbursement of political power than ever before.

In Illinois state government, we have two Latino deputy governors, including Sol Flores, who co-founded this organization and was a longtime board chair. In addition, Carmen Ayala, a current Forum board member, became the first Latina and first woman ever appointed to superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education.

But not just in Illinois — there are more Latinos in Congress now than ever before, including one of the Forum's founders, Jesus "Chuy" Garcia. Congress now also has its first two Native American women and first two Muslim women.

In Illinois, voters sent an African American woman to Congress in a district that had never elected a woman. This political influence has the energy to illuminate our communities, and it is the Forum's goal to help guide the work of current and future leaders for the sake of Latinos and all of Illinois.

Sylvia Puente
Executive Director
Latino Policy Forum

Maria S. Doughty
President, Board of Directors
Latino Policy Forum



Education

When the Latino Policy Forum revitalized its agenda a decade ago, extensive focus groups and listening tours were conducted with Latino civic and neighborhood leaders. Above all else, the issue of public education was the key area of concern for the Latino community in Illinois. Today in Illinois, one in four children under age 5 is Latino. The state has made significant gains in supporting their access to early childhood services and programs. Latinos now make-up one-third of all students within state-funded preschool programming.

Brain development during a child's first five years is critical; the earliest years of life are the building blocks for later success.

The Forum has taken this matter seriously, forging significant policy changes that have increased Latino access to quality early childhood services; promoting a PreK-12th Grade system responsive to language and cultural diversity; and providing parents and community leaders with the knowledge and tools to support Latino children's academic success.

In 2017-18, the Forum led a \$38 million increase in funding for bilingual education PreK-12th grade—a 40 percent increase, the largest boost in decades. The Forum secured \$140 million in additional funding for Latinos in public education, including \$45 million in capital grants to build or rehab early education centers in order to provide access to thousands more children. This includes \$5 million to facilities in largely Latino communities, such as Belmont Cragin. Joint advocacy also secured \$50 million to the Early Childhood Block Grant for five years, amounting to an additional \$250 million, the largest increase ever. In addition, the Forum helped secure \$500,000 in Gateways scholarships to assist teachers in pursuit of the bilingual/English as a Second Language endorsement.



Housing

Housing and home ownership have long been a symbol of fulfilling the American Dream. Owning property is a primary tool that families utilize to build wealth and assets. While many Latino families see being a homeowner as an opportunity to accumulate wealth and provide a stable environment for their children, too many face constant challenges: discrimination, affordability, limited access to financial literacy and counseling programs, and an inadequate supply of affordable homes.

A report by the Racial Wealth Divide Initiative found that among Latinos in Chicago, 56 percent of renters and 58 percent of homeowners are paying more than 30 percent of their total income toward housing.

The Forum's Housing team has worked to ensure that all Latinos have access to quality, affordable, and sustainable housing. The team has done this by providing issue education to community members and by influencing the structure and implementation of policy. These have been accomplished through research, advocacy, development of strategic relationships, and collaboration with policy makers, community members, and leaders. In addition, the team has focused on developing and coordinating coalitions to address issues pertinent to the Latino community.

The Forum has convened stakeholders and other community members through its Acuerdo network, which acts as an essential partner and provides leadership and input in developing policy agendas and advocacy strategies. The Acuerdo has built a legacy of successfully working with the Chicago Housing Authority to make affordable options more accessible to Latino families.

In 2017, the Forum prepared 15 community leaders to become Fair Housing Ambassadors through its train-the-trainer TECHO (Training and Education Create Housing Opportunities) workshops. TECHO has helped thousands of families in the area.

The Forum's efforts disseminating information and working with Latino renters and homeowners also led to the development of a curriculum that covers federal, state, county, and city fair-housing laws, as well as foreclosures, security deposits, and leasing agreements. In partnership with the Mexican Consulate Department of Financial Education, the Forum provided weekly resources and referrals to more than 1,000 individuals in 2017 and 2018.

The Forum continued to promote equal access housing rights by advocating for the passage of the Immigrant Tenant Protection Act which was designed to prevent landlords from evicting or retaliating against undocumented tenants simply based on their immigration status.

The future economic growth and stability of the Latino community in Illinois depends on its members having access to an adequate supply of quality housing in proximity to employment, public transportation, and community resources. It also depends on appropriately addressing the chasm that exists in Chicago where Latino neighborhoods are either under siege of gentrification or neglect due to disinvestment.



Immigration

Immigration has always been an important and, all too often, controversial item on the state and national level; in recent years it has become one of the nation's most important and polarizing policy issues.

Illinois is home to more than 1.8 million foreign-born residents, including more than 800,000 people from Latin America. All individuals living in the United States, regardless of their country of origin, are valuable and contributing members of society and should be afforded equal opportunities.

Long before it was atop the national policy agenda, the Latino Policy Forum has prioritized the need for immigration reform as one of its most important advocacy issues.

Along with many other organizations, the Forum assisted with the passage of the Illinois Trust Act in 2017, which prevents local police from holding people for immigration purposes without court-issued warrants. In order to uphold basic requirements under the US and Illinois Constitutions, it forbids local police from stopping, searching, or arresting anyone based on their immigration or citizenship status. The Act garnered widespread support from the business community and the key law enforcement community in Illinois.

A year later, the Forum collaborated with allies in the Illinois Campaign to Protect Our Children and Families to advocate for the immediate overturn of the federal policy that separated families at the southern border. At the same time, it co-sponsored a rally that drew 65,000 people to downtown Chicago to protest the policy.



Recognizing the importance of research and data for decision making, the Forum has led and collaborated with a variety of partners to analyze and/or disseminate data on immigration, economic, social, and political issues, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), Temporary Visitor Driver's License (TVDL), and preparedness planning for parents at risk of detention or deportation.

Given the complexity of the issues, the Forum has been instrumental in reaching broad audiences through various media. It began an innovative partnership with Univision Chicago to create digital town halls to inform and reach tens of thousands of viewers on issues ranging from know-your-rights to the mental health effects of crippling fears that families face with the possibility of deportation. By the end of 2018, the townhalls had accrued more than 100,000 social media views.

In 2018, the Forum co-founded Protecting Immigrant Families-Illinois (PIF-IL) which is an unprecedented coalition of diverse Illinois organizations speaking out against the expansion of the Public Charge that would make it more difficult for immigrants to obtain legal residency. The Forum also provided information, conducted advocacy, and supported other organizations in a variety of ways since the first proposed rule was revealed. Informational sessions have been provided to a broad range of audiences, reaching over 500 people, including parents, school officials, government leaders, and 60 nonprofit partner organizations.



Illinois Latino Agenda (ILA)

Recognizing that the distribution of state resources in Illinois was not reflective of changing demographics and that the number of Latino state employees also was not commensurate with their growing statewide population, the Forum convened leading Latino organizations from across the state to establish the Illinois Latino Agenda (ILA).

The ILA is the largest coalition of Latino-led nonprofits and businesses in the state with more than 40 member organizations, including organizations whose memberships reach over 250,000 people. It is committed to securing equitable resources and investment for Latinos while building their power, influence, and leadership through a strategic alliance of organizations.

Similar to the Forum's Acuerdo model, which is central to its work across all issues, ILA was created as a collaborative effort among organizations to promote accountability in government by leveraging its collective voice and civic influence.

Members work to ensure that information, policy, and advocacy on state issues represent the Latino perspective and its community needs. They meet with key state legislators and other public officials to secure their commitment and collaboration regarding equitable access to state government services, equitable representation on state Boards and Commissions, and equitable distribution of state resources reflective of the community's changing demographics.

Regrettably, during the state's two-year budget impasse that ended in 2017 and the ensuing fiscal crisis, ILA membership declined because several nonprofits were extremely challenged by the lack of state funding and were forced to close. They include La Voz Latina, a 40+ year-old community-based organization in Rockford, IL, and Casa Guanajuato, an organization with more than 20 years serving Latinos in the Quad



Cities. Many others were forced to cut staff and reduce services, which resulted in a diminished quality of life for many low-income families throughout the state. The forced cut of countless services caused irreparable harm in the nonprofit and human services sector.

To respond to these challenges, the ILA organized rallies and press conferences and published a four-part series in *Hoy* (Spanish language newspaper) depicting the impact the budget crisis was having on the Latino community. Thankfully, with the passage of a full budget for FY2019, the Agenda, along with many other community organizations, has been actively rebuilding. The ILA recognizes that progress is often incremental and that it requires consistent vigilance and advocacy. Thus, despite not reaching equity as quickly as desired, there have been significant gains.

Collaborative advocacy efforts, led by the Forum's Latino Unity Day, brought hundreds of Latinos and allies to the state's capitol and then increased the number of participants in 2017 and 2018.

There were several other significant accomplishments:



In 2017: The agenda advocated for The Data Bill, which requires the Illinois Department of Human Services to report on the racial/ethnic composition of those served, ensuring that state services are distributed equitably.



In 2018: The Governor's Office officially recognized Latino Unity Day, which carried the theme "Illinois: 2.2 Million Latinos, 1 Voice." The title demonstrated the growing Latino population in the state and the importance of how its members can leverage their civic influence.



Multicultural Leadership Academy (MLA)

The Latino Policy Forum has a long history of promoting policies that have a positive impact on Latinos and other minorities in metro Chicago. With this goal in mind, the Multicultural Leadership Academy (MLA) (formerly the Latino Leadership Academy) was created to address a clear absence of Latino leadership.

The MLA's objectives were broadened to include the goal of building trust and collaboration between African American and Latino community leaders. The MLA graduated its first cohort of 23 participants, representing 23 individual organizations, in 2017. The following year's cohort included 24 participants, representing 23 organizations, in 2018.

Today, the MLA continues to be successful in creating networks of well-trained leaders who actively pursue policy issues affecting their communities.

Its current goals include increasing cross-cultural understanding and collaboration among the participants to address pressing social issues; dedicating resources and expertise to develop the capacity of organizations by training and empowering their leaders; building networks of Latinos and African Americans to strengthen their organizations and communities. Building trust is a fundamental element of any leadership program's success.

MLA presents opportunities to create paradigm shifts that allow Latinos and African Americans to share concerns, collaborate, and generate mutually beneficial outcomes. It creates a safe place to acknowledge inequalities, share common concerns, and celebrate cultural differences.

Participants include all levels of internal management, board members, and volunteers of organizations. They engage in action-learning projects and collaborate on cross-cultural teams. Working together leads them to inspired partnerships for social justice, community, and political impact.

Feedback taken from participants ranges from Good to Excellent 92 percent of the time and is encouragement for the Forum to continue bringing together black and brown leaders to build trust, cultivate strategic alliances, and together work for justice.



Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2017

ASSETS

Current Assets:

Cash/Cash Equivalents	\$1,062,226
Grants Receivable	\$ 55,110
Other Receivable	\$ -
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 32,481
Security Deposit	\$ -

Total Current Assets **\$ 1,149,817**

Property and Equipment	\$ 6,210
Certificate of Deposit	\$ 9,500
Investments for Deferred Compensation Plan	\$ 120,186

Total Assets **\$1,285,713**

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	\$ 19,577
Agency Liability	\$ 40,882
Accrued Expenses	\$ 25,896
Deferred Rent	\$ -

Total Current Liabilities **\$ 86,355**

Deferred Compensation Plan Liability	\$ 120,186
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Total Liabilities **\$ 206,541**

Net Asset

Unrestricted	\$ 975,216
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 103,956

Total Net Assets **\$1,079,172**

**Total Liabilities and Net
Assets** **\$1,285,713**

Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2018

ASSETS

Current Assets:

Cash/Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,250,840
Grants Receivable	\$ 12,773
Other Receivable	\$ 24,245
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 12,142
Security Deposit	\$ -

Total Current Assets **\$1,300,000**

Property and Equipment	\$ 21,985
Certificate of Deposit	\$ 9,500
Investments for Deferred Compensation Plan	\$ 117,935

Total Assets **\$ 1,449,420**

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	\$ 14,419
Agency Liability	\$ 241,000
Accrued Expenses	\$ 30,134
Deferred Rent	\$ -

Total Current Liabilities **\$ 285,553**

Deferred Compensation Plan Liability	\$ 117,935
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Total Liabilities **\$ 403,488**

Net Asset

Unrestricted	\$ 919,738
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 126,194

Total Net Assets **\$1,045,932**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$1,449,420**

The Latino Policy Forum thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generous support of our work:

2017

\$100,000+

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Pritzker Children's Initiative
The Robert R. McCormick Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
The Reva & David Logan Foundation

\$10,000 - \$99,999

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The Ounce of Prevention
UnidosUS (Formerly National Council of La Raza)
University of Illinois at Chicago
Wintrust
Woods Fund of Chicago

\$100,000+

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Chicago Community Trust
The Joyce Foundation
The Reva and David Logan Foundation
The Robert R. McCormick Foundation

\$10,000 - \$99,999

Allstate Foundation
Allstate Insurance Company
American Express Foundation
Anonymous
BMO Harris, N.A.
Department of Housing - City of Chicago
Driehaus Foundation
First American Bank
Grand Victoria Foundation
Harris Family Foundation
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\$1,000 - \$9,999

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2018

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