

November 10, 2020

TO: BIDEN-HARRIS TRANSITION TEAM

FR: THE LATINO POLICY FORUM, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

RE: POLICY AND INITIATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE LATINO COMMUNITY

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The Latino Policy Forum appreciates the opportunity to provide suggestions for policies and initiatives aimed at reinforcing Latinos’ social and economic stability and national contributions. Our nation’s economic, political, and social vitality is inextricably linked to the vitality of its Latino community.

Latinos are the primary drivers of both the nation’s population and labor-force expansion. Between 2010 and 2019, Latinos accounted for 52 percent of the growth in the US population. Between 2008 and 2018, the Latino labor-force participation rate increased 29 percent, highest among all racial-ethnic groups. The conversation around Latinos in the US should not only be a conversation about immigration; key policy initiatives must also focus on US-born Latinos who are driving this economic and population growth.

Latinos represent 18 percent of the US population. More than two-thirds are native-born, and about 79 percent are US citizens. Between 2010 and 2020, Latino buying power increased 212 percent to $1.5 trillion. At the same time, almost 60 percent of Latino workers earn under $15 per hour and work in labor sectors experiencing disproportionate losses of wages and jobs due to the COVID pandemic. Latinos represent 13 percent of the healthcare workforce, with most working in paraprofessional jobs, and are the largest minority group participating in the essential labor force, at 21 percent. Latinos are also experiencing highly disproportionate rates of infection and death due to the coronavirus.

**Recommendation: Create Equity Metrics**

Develop an equity scorecard for all federal programs, initiatives, and policies to determine the extent that they serve Latinos and other minority communities.

**Recommendation: Strengthen the Education System**

* Family engagement and education recommendations:
  + Ensure that all parents, including immigrant parents, can participate in their child’s education. Increase funding for parent engagement programs from pre-k through 12th grade that target culturally and linguistically diverse families.
  + Reduce the digital divide by providing hardware, training, and support to enable Latino and immigrant parents to successfully navigate remote learning with their children.
* These education policy recommendations are based on the University of Chicago study “English Learners in Chicago Public Schools: A New Perspective” (December 2019). Strengthen the educational success of English Language Leaners (ELs) by changing the accountability metrics of the Every Student Succeeds Act to include the following:
  + Collect longitudinal data on ELs from pre-k through 12th grade, even after students are deemed English proficient and no longer receiving services. A complete understanding of EL achievement requires more than just cross-sectional standardized-test data from year to year.
  + Monitor the progress of children’s English language proficiency in their early years. ELs who are at academic risk can be identified as early as first grade.
  + Increase Title III funding to provide consistent financial investment in EL programming.
  + Increase federal investments in building pipelines of qualified bilingual and Latino educators and create incentives to ensure that our nation’s educators reflect the diversity of our students.

**Recommendation: Better Wages, Better Jobs, More Job Opportunities**

* Increase job training and retraining for those with limited or no higher education, and particularly for those experiencing wage and job loss due to COVID.
* Invest in technology training and opportunities for those with and without post-secondary educational credentials. Devise a STEM initiative aimed at Latinos and other minority groups.
* Build an infrastructure of benefit-bearing, living-wage care jobs with career ladders (e.g. from child-care assistant to classroom teacher, or from paraprofessional healthcare worker to licensed healthcare provider).
* Reconfigure opportunity zones with a special emphasis on Latino communities:
  + Create a pilot program in Chicago for the city’s second largest tax-generating retail venue, 26th Street in the Little Village neighborhood. This venue has been devastated by the COVID epidemic. Use it as a laboratory for how to restore local retail vitality and provide a roadmap to other communities around the country.

**Recommendation: Address the COVID Housing Crisis**

* Work with Congress to provide at least $100 billion in federal emergency housing assistance to all, regardless of immigration status.
* Create easier pathways to homeownership to support familial, social, and economic stability, and to wealth accumulation by developing an equitable credit-reporting system and reforms aimed at ensuring property-assessment equity.
* Incentivize states to:
  + Create mortgage, rental, and utility assistance programs that are open to all, regardless of immigration status. Special attention must be paid to “mom and pop” small property owners and landlords. (Illinois has found success and insights through such mortgage and rental assistance.)
  + Extend the moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent for 12 months.
* Break the cycle of banks’ and other lenders’ disinvestment in Latino and other minority communities:
  + Institute reform and accountability measures for all lending institutions, as well as structural incentives to ensure the provision of low and fair interest rates.
  + Create a reporting/accountability system to monitor lenders’ investments.

**Recommendation: Overhaul Immigration**

* Place a moratorium on detentions and deportations of all immigrants.
* Immediately release detained immigrants who do not pose a threat to public safety.
* Ensure that all future federal stimulus relief includes ITIN filers and mixed-status families.
* Expand federal medical coverage to all, regardless of immigration status.
* We support the Biden-Harris administration’s commitment to:
  + Developing a plan to fix the nation’s broken immigration system.
  + Reviewing and rescinding the 400 policy/administration/executive actions taken by the Trump administration.
  + Creating the National Task Force to ensure that the 600-plus children currently languishing in the US without their families are reunited with them. (We specifically recommend conducting an immediate federal investigation into reports of children being sent back to Mexico without family members, as well as the immediate release of all children from detention centers.)

Finally, we ask the Biden-Harris team to realign the narrative around immigration. We discourage the usage of terms signifying “good immigrants,” such as DACA recipients, or “bad immigrants,” such as “illegal aliens.”