

Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative

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Statement by the Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative on immediate priorities for the Latino Community

A coalition of over 50 Illinois Elected Officials, Stakeholders and Health professionals speak as one voice to secure accurate data, equitable resources, and more testing centers in Latino communities

Chicago, IL – The Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative, a coalition of over 50 Illinois Elected Officials, Stakeholders and Health professionals, joined in its weekly Zoom meeting to discuss the concerns about the continued spread of COVID-19 in the Latino communities. The coalition identified a myriad of concerns, with four urgent priorities that need to be addressed this week.

1. Standardization and improvement of the collection and availability of COVID-19 data as it relates to the Latino community and all minority groups need to improve now. There are legitimate concerns that the Latino community is being undercounted in many aspects of data collection and how it is reported. Latinos are often categorized as “White” or “Black” and the questions of ethnicity are ignored. Hospital personnel, funeral directors, and/or private laboratories need to also improve in collecting this data. Data is critical to determine the context of the problem for the Latino community. This information will guide government agencies, the health care sector, and local organizations to take the appropriate actions including the equitable allocation of resources to prevent, address, and treat the spread of the virus within Latino communities. It is important to note, a stakeholder member of the initiative was tested recently and was not asked his nationality during the process. Moreover, the initiative requests that any information on efforts and services be available with bilingual and bicultural staff to conduct contact tracing. **The initiative wants assurances by State, County and City government that data collection and analyses improve in gathering the following information:**

- a. Full demographic and geographic data breakdown including Latino subgroups for testing, cases identified, hospitalized, self-quarantined, and deaths (specific ethnicities).
 - i. Include preferred or primary language, age, gender, income, etc.
 - ii. Include aggregate data by zip code, community area, census tract, and neighborhood
- b. Breakdown of screening by ethnicity including an accurate count of Latino/Hispanic
 - i. Total number of tests conducted to date by ethnicity, including an accurate count of Latinos
- c. Number of Latinos who tested positive
 - i. Number of Latinos hospitalized
 - ii. Number of Latinos who have recovered
 - iii. Number of Latinos who have been placed on home self-quarantine
- d. Number of Latino deaths and the inclusion of identification of pre-existing conditions (i.e

- diabetes, asthma)
- e. Changes in the data collection forms and personnel training (e.g., hospital personnel, laboratories, funeral directors) to reflect the above mentioned
 - f. Plans to retroactively address Latino undercount for cases to date

2. Increased testing and screening sites in the Latino community with bilingual and bicultural contact tracing staff. Rapid-result tests should be deployed to essential workers in the growing COVID-19 zip codes and individuals should be informed that by federal law they are eligible to be tested regardless of their citizenship status and thereafter informed of the options to pay for treatment. The initiative seeks a confirmation that State, County and City government agencies and health care institutions are committed to make this happen now.

3. Equitable investment for the Latino community from all government, business, and philanthropic relief efforts—particularly for the Chicago and Illinois COVID relief funds. Latinos comprise one out of every three residents in Chicago and nearly one out of every five in Illinois. Their demographic representation needs to be met with equitable investment to contain the virus and benefit all of our communities. As the coronavirus crisis continues, we recognize that so many vulnerable communities are in serious need of social, financial and mental health resources. Specifically, the access to COVID-19 testing among Latino, African-American, and senior communities is of extreme importance and we stand in full solidarity with them. We urge for the equitable investment towards the Latino community from all government, business, and philanthropic relief efforts—particularly the Chicago and Illinois COVID relief funds. As these entities develop their responses, we ask that they keep in mind that Latinos comprise 25 percent of the population in the Chicago region and 17 percent in Illinois, and **we request that they make public their plans for equitable investment.**

4. Increased representation of Latino leadership in the Illinois and Chicago Health Equity Task Forces to assure that these task forces are developing linguistic and culturally relevant strategies targeting the Latino community to ensure maximum results in containing the virus in our community. The Initiative seeks consistent Latino/a leadership representation in the Governor's and Mayor's Press Conferences to ensure our community is included and reflected in the solution development and signals the importance of staying informed and adopting necessary measures for containment.

The Initiative would like to recognize the amazing efforts that our State, County and City have undertaken. However, stakeholders in the Latino community need to stay vigilant for a population that has put itself at a continued high risk of contamination, particularly our immigrant population, as essential employees in our hospitals, restaurants, grocery stores and other sectors serving our population. Furthermore, we want the public and the private sector to be aware that our communities are hurting and are most likely to be severely affected by COVID-19 due to their high proportion of Latinos that suffer from co-morbidity such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, asthma, and many other chronic conditions.

*The Latino COVID-19 Initiative group will continue meeting and has established the website **IllinoisUnidos.com** to share our work with the public. The website will have an official launch on Monday, a release will be sent out then with the announcement.*

Please contact Xavier Nogueras @ 773-593-1345 or Cesar Rolon @ 773-251-3329 for more information or to interview participants including Health Experts / Elected Officials / Community Stakeholders.

Current members of the Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative (Group will continue to expand)
Names in bold have signed off on this communication. Updated names who have signed off will appear on the website IllinoisUnidos.com

Dr. Aida Giachello - Northwestern University, Dept of Preventive Medicine
Dr. Marina Del Rios - U of I at Chicago College of Medicine
Dr. Patricia Canessa - Illinois State Board of Health
Esther Sciamarella, M.S. - Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition
Sylvia Puente - Latino Policy Forum
Dr. Tina Pacione-Zayas - The Puerto Rican Agenda
Juan Calderon - Chicago Board of Health
Eddy Borrayo - Rincon Family Services
Congressman Jesús “Chuy” García
State Senator Cristina Castro
State Senator Iris Martinez
State Senator Celina Villanueva
State Senator Omar Aquino
State Representative Fred Crespo
State Representative Eva-Dina Delgado
State Representative Edgar Gonzalez, Jr.
State Representative Will Guzzardi
State Representative Lisa Hernandez
State Representative Barbara Hernandez
State Representative Aaron Ortiz
State Representative Delia Ramirez
State Representative Karina Villa
Cook County Commissioner Alma Anaya
Hon. Jesse G. Reyes, President of the Diversity Scholarship Foundation
Hanover Park Municipal Clerk Eira Corral Sepulveda
Chicago Alderman George Cardenas
Chicago Alderman Felix Cardona
Chicago Alderman Daniel LaSpata
Chicago Alderman Roberto Maldonado
Chicago Alderman Michael Rodriguez
Chicago Alderman Rossanna Rodriguez
Chicago Alderman Susan Sadowski-Garza
Chicago Alderman Byron Sigcho-Lopez
Chicago Alderman Gilbert Villegas
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