



House Bill 589
Proponent Testimony
State and Local Government Committee
Lilleana Cavanaugh
June 26th, 2018

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Chairwoman Anielski, Vice Chairman Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Lilleana Cavanaugh and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to express support for House Bill 589, which would designate the fifteenth day of September to the fifteenth day of October each year as "Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month".

In the past twenty years, Ohio has undergone a major transformation in the makeup of its resident population, with the minority population increasing by over 30 percent since 2000, and the white population decreasing by over 3 percent. Hispanics/Latinos, in particular, are leading Ohio's population growth with a 93 percent increase since the year 2000. While much of the growth within Ohio's Hispanic/Latino population has occurred among the Mexican community, Ohio is also home to Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Cubans, El Salvadorans, Spaniards and more. This diversity of heritage is part of what makes our community flourish in Ohio, and the name "Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month" aims to celebrate this diversity by encompassing Ohioans of both Latin American and Spanish origin.

As our community grows, so does the magnitude of our contributions in areas including, but not limited to, business, education, government, science, and the arts. There are currently more than 16,000 Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses in Ohio, which employ more than 23,600 workers with an annual payroll of more than \$528 million. Hispanics/Latinos are also overrepresented in health care and social services, where they comprise over 12 percent of all workers. House Bill 589 is an important step to honoring and recognizing the contributions that Hispanics/Latinos have made in these fields and others.

Finally, data shows that Hispanics/Latinos are the future of Ohio. Our median age of 25 is 14 years younger than the median age of all Ohioans, and nearly 21 percent of our community falls between the ages of 5 and 14 years old. Hispanic/Latino students make up 5.5 percent of Ohio's student body with over 91,700 students enrolled in our public schools last year. It is our hope that designating a "Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month" will inspire those younger members of our community to continue enriching our state with their unique competencies and perspectives.

On behalf of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission, I ask for your favorable consideration of this bill. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee and stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

