

Ohio Latino Affairs Commission Biennial Budget Testimony FY18-19

Chairman Jordan, Vice Chair O'Brien, and distinguished members of the Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review, my name is Lilly Cavanaugh. I am honored to serve you as Executive Director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission.

On behalf of our 411,202 constituents and our Board of Commissioners, thank you for your consideration of the Governor's 2018-19 funding recommendations. Our commission is not a regulatory agency; the efforts of the Latino Affairs Commission are guided by statute. The mandates require the agency to:

1. Advise policymakers on issues affecting Hispanic Ohioans
2. Connect Latino communities with each other, state agencies, and vice-versa
3. Build the capacity of Latino community serving organizations

The scope of the agency's advising, connecting, and building is broad. From the revised code, the agency is to focus on "the special problems and needs of Spanish-speaking people, especially in the fields of education, employment, energy, health, housing, welfare, and recreation" §121.32(F). The agency selects a limited number of strategic initiatives on which to focus each biennium, within the agency's scope, and guided by the stated priorities of the Office of the Governor and the General Assembly. As reflected on our 2016 Annual Report, our Commission is presently focused on the areas of Education, Workforce & Economic Development, Health, Empowerment and on the opportunities presented by Ohio's emerging diversity. Our team is comprised by three full time and two intermittent staff for an equivalent of four FTE's, supplemented with volunteers and interns who in 2016 provided \$55,319 in service to the state of Ohio.

The Latino Affairs Commission serves Hispanic constituents and the general public working diligently to empower the growing Latino community so they can become active members in their communities and readily engaged in mainstream society. Our agency plays a pivotal role, considering that Hispanics are at the lead of Ohio's population growth with an 89% increase since the year 2000. In fact, if all Hispanic Ohioans were to join in one city, they would become the second largest city of the state, larger than Cleveland and Cincinnati. Although population growth translates to specific needs for a New American community, it also translates into opportunity. Through a young, vibrant and multilingual community Latinos contribute to Ohio's economic prosperity with more than 16,000 Hispanic-owned businesses resulting in \$2.8 billion in receipts, and a purchasing power that experienced between 1990-2013 a 443 % in growth reaching \$8.4 billion in 2013.

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With a focus on empowerment, sustainability and effectiveness, our commission builds capacity by conducting summits, seminars, and events to provide our communities with the tools to successfully function and excel in mainstream society. In the last two years, 3,600 individuals have participated in these capacity building opportunities; and we have collaborated with more than 50 community partners representing the public and private sector. These partners invest their time and financial resources to deliver these programs. For example, our Latino Health Summit brings experts to share best practices that directly decrease health disparities. We have also worked closely with the infant mortality taskforce and we recently hosted the first statewide medical interpreting conference that attracted over 200 participants from Ohio and five other states.

Through the Education Summits, we have presented 44 innovative best practices that reflect the efforts of our educational institutions and community leadership to support the goal of achieving long term success through education for Hispanic students. By using technology, we instantly connect with Latinos via social media and our robust online hub with a directory of more than 400 Latino serving organizations, plus 6 customized informational directories. In fact, just in 2016, the traffic to our website experienced a 136% growth supporting the national trends of Latinos utilizing digital technology as a means to connect and engage with information.

Our Commission collaborates with state agencies to increase their effectiveness in serving the Latino community in Ohio. We offer agencies in depth knowledge and understanding about the Hispanic community, their language and customs thus decreasing cultural and communication barriers. By using our established networks and the trust built with the community, we increase the impact of any state agency's outreach, educational effort or service promotion resulting in efficiencies and decreased costs for state government. Our team serves in critical advisory roles with the Attorney General DeWine's Commission to combat human trafficking, the Ohio Department of Education's Fairness and Sensitivity Data Review Committee, the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services Disparities and Cultural Competency Advisory Committee, and the Minority Health Commission to name a few. Moreover, we work closely with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Office of Workforce Development, the Ohio Department of Transportation Outreach Office, Ohio's DAS Minority Business Division and the Development Services Agency's Minority Business Division to support their work with this community. Through our effective social media and communications networks, we are able to work with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and state agencies to inform Hispanics in case of any major health and safety emergencies.

We respectfully ask you to support the commission's FY18-19 biennial budget recommendation as introduced by the Governor, which includes a small 2018 GRF fund 8.0% increase from fiscal year 2017 and 2019 GRF fund 3.4% increase from fiscal year 2018. These increases, which were removed in the Ohio House of Representatives, are critical to cover rising fringe costs as well as increases in agency operations costs. Without the Governor's proposed budget, we would not be able to operate at current staffing levels which would negatively impact our ability to meet our statutory mandates. We are committed to financial responsibility while remaining innovative and building partnerships that result in excellent services for Hispanic Ohioans and the state of Ohio.

Thank you very much for your invitation to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.

