

Chairman Jordan, Vice Chair O'Brien, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review, my name is Lorena Mora-Mowry, I come here today as a Latina woman, one of 411,202 Latinos that live in Ohio and representing one of Ohio's 16,000+ **Hispanic-owned businesses** with \$2.8 billion in **receipts** with \$2.3 billion receipts every year.

Today, I address you to ask your support for Governor's Kasich's proposed biennial budget funding for the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission.

Hispanics now represent an estimated 3.4 percent of Ohio's population, up from about 3.1 percent in 2010. The state in general has become more diverse. The same is true of the United States as a whole.

My husband and I arrived in Cincinnati on a cold winter day in late 1995 with a few bags, but with big dreams of starting our family. My daughter was born and we moved into one of the best school districts in Cincinnati.

My story is like those of many other immigrants who came to Ohio, following a dream of a better life for their family. But my story also has many faces and colors and is as diverse and rich as the Hispanics who now consider Ohio home.

In 2006, I started MujerLatinaToday.com, a highly recognized social media network that* is connecting, reaching, engaging, inspiring Digital and Mobile Latinos. My interviews have opened the doors for people to share their experiences on many diverse topics, including, domestic violence, daring entrepreneurial businesses, mothers who face bullying in the schools and many others.

After having conducted more than 1000 video / audio / written interviews over the past eleven years, from Columbus to Cincinnati, Akron to Toledo and from Dayton to Cleveland, I can say that I know my community.

I know the stories of women and men who are probably your neighbors, your doctors, your students, your landscapers, your dishwashers, your lawyers or your coworkers. I know the names of many of them, with stories of big dreams with as little luggage as mine, but with a great desire to come to Ohio, our dear Ohio.

Emigrating is not easy, and the Latino Affairs Commission has played a role in helping us come together as a community. The commission informs us, educates us and connects us to government and to each other.

I am here today to ask the committee to please maintain Governor Kasich's Proposed Biennial Budget Funding for OCHLA for the following reasons:

- The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission for 40 years has been the only state agency with the cultural competency and experience to attend to the growing Hispanic / Latino constituency.

- The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission is the bridge that connects the Latino community and their elected officials. It provides an avenue for government agencies to learn how to best meet the need of the growing Latino community.
- In 2014, the commission supported the Domestic Violence Initiative, a DVD compilation with thirteen of my interviews from MujerLatinaToday.com about Domestic Violence. The DVD also included resources and services available for Domestic Violence Victims. In all, 1,000 of the DVDs have been distributed through conferences, workshops, community based organizations in Ohio.
- The commission has helped Latinos to build networks and foster connectedness and facilitate a community building.
- In partnership with the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), the commission hosted a national assisting Spanish-speaking voter hotline. I was one of several volunteers at the commission's office on the Monday and Tuesday of election week, who answered calls from voters across the nation with questions about their polling locations, registration status and some who called to report issues they were experiencing at the polls.
- The commission has provided important educational information and resources available in our communities. In 2016, the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission orchestrated 13 events with more than 1,500 attendees (Agenda Latina, Medical Interpreting Conference, Latino Education Summit, Latino Health Summit, etc.).
- The commission also maintains an online directory of 339 Hispanic service providers in the state. Additionally, through the online Catalogue of Latino Outreach Initiatives, the commission offers updated information on bilingual services in 26 state agencies.

We need your support. Please maintain Governor Kasich's Proposed Biennial Budget Funding for OCHLA. I respectfully urge you to maintain the current funding so that OCHLA can continue carrying out its mission.

Thank you for your consideration and I stand ready for any questions you may have.


Lorena Mora-Mowry

Source:

2016 OCHLA Annual Report
 Latino Population Facts: <http://development.ohio.gov/files/research/P7002.pdf>
 The Columbus Dispatch: Hispanics lead population growth in Ohio
 (Jun 26, 2014) - <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/06/26/hispanics-lead-state-population-increases.html>