

**Public Testimony for the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Regarding the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs Budget Allocation in HB 110
- March 4, 2021**

Chairman Cross, Ranking Member Howse, and Honorable Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, my name is Lorena Mora-Mowry and I come here today as one of the 4.0% of Hispanic Latino origin, one of the 456,000 Latinos that lives in Ohio. Also, I represent 7.2% of Ohio's population, one of approximately 4,676,358 Ohioans that speak a language other than English at home. As much as the Hispanic population has grown, the needs of the population have grown too.

Today, I address you to ask for your support for Governor's DeWine's proposed biennial budget funding for the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs (OCHLA), which is reflected in HB 110.

Since 2006, I started building a virtual Hispanic / Latino community with MujerLatinaToday.com to create awareness, advocacy and action towards empowering the Hispanic Latino community in Cincinnati, Ohio and beyond.

Since March 2017, I have worked as a Guardian Ad Litem and CASA Manager at Prokids for custody, neglect, and abuse cases, working directly with Hispanic/Latino children and families. During my free time, I have continued connecting, informing and inspiring the virtual Hispanic Latino community through www.MujerLatinaToday.com

I volunteer with groups that provide leadership and support to Latinas in Ohio, and my community efforts have developed strong alliances with businesses and local organizations in Ohio that provide a voice and platform for the Hispanic population. I serve on the advisory board for the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce. I have close ties with the Latina Entrepreneur Academy and I participated at the 2020 Ohio Latino Affairs Summit, and spoke about "Mental Health and COVID-19 in the Latino Community" as a panelist at the summit on November 13th, 2020. I was part of the OCHLA-led COVID awareness and education initiative titled "COVID-19 and your mental health" which also featured two psychologists from Dayton and Cleveland.

My work as volunteer with grassroots organizations efforts as helped me to understand the importance of our Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs. OCHLA has played a role in helping us come together as a community; the Commission engages us and supports our work to empower us to become part of mainstream Ohio. They connect us with programs, initiatives and grants that can help us to support the Latinos that live in Ohio.

Hispanic Legislative Day, hosted by OCHLA, is an important gathering for Hispanic/Latino Ohioans to “hear and be heard” about public policy issues, for Hispanics to advocate in a united way, and to be an integral part of our democratic processes. In the state of Ohio, the Hispanic/Latino population is nearing half a million. The number of businesses owned by Latinos has increased to over 16,000 in Ohio with \$2.8 billion in receipts. Of the Hispanics that are living in Ohio, many are starting businesses and helping uplift our economy and create job opportunities. OCHLA plays a key role in connecting these businesses, empowering and uplifting business leaders from all over the state, and fostering business leadership potential in younger generations of Latinos.

Creating resources and managing constituent services is another major area where the Commission helps our State, with bilingual resources available online relating to scholarships, job postings, and service directories. The Commission continues these extensive and diligent efforts to share essential resources to empower the Latino community in Ohio with a small, but dedicated core staff.

The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs is such an important asset to Hispanics/Latino Ohioans. OCHLA is the trusted link between the community and government. We need their services now more than ever, especially since the Hispanic population continues to grow, make a difference, and become part of the Ohio mainstream.

I fully support full funding of the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs as currently laid out in HB 110. The allocation of \$464,047 per fiscal year in the upcoming biennium is a conservative yet manageable budget to continue the great work of the Commission for the State.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my statement in support of OCHLA.

We need your support. Please maintain Governor DeWine’s proposed biennial budget funding for OCHLA as reflected in HB 110 so that OCHLA can continue carrying out its mission.

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

Lorena Mora-Mowry