



Marilyn Laila Sampilo, PhD, MPH
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Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and Honorable Members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs' budget allocation in Sub. House Bill 110.

My name is Dr. Marilyn Sampilo. I serve as a pediatric psychologist at Cleveland Clinic Children's and have worked collaboratively with the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs (OCHLA) on various initiatives to support mental health in the Hispanic and Latino community throughout Ohio. The purpose of this letter is to express my sincere and most enthusiastic support for OCHLA and its budget allocation as currently included in Sub. HB 110. Since its inception, the Commission has been an essential resource for Hispanic and Latino Ohioans. Their advocacy related to issues significantly impacting the Hispanic and Latino community, and their representation as a voice for Hispanic and Latino Ohioans at the state level is invaluable. The Commission's worth cannot be understated.

Thanks to the Commission, the Hispanic and Latino Ohioans have a tireless advocate and vital resource. I have witnessed the Commission devote their time and effort to tackling some of the most pressing issues facing the Hispanic and Latino community in Ohio, including issues of mental and behavioral health. The mental and behavioral health needs of this marginalized community have always been great and were only amplified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Commission gathered input from constituents and stakeholders and subsequently developed initiatives to educate, inform, and address the issue of mental and behavioral health disparities in the community. They held a virtual summit highlighting issues of mental and behavioral health and published a bi-monthly newsletter to more quickly and efficiently disseminate critical mental health information and resources to the community at-large. They also participated in cross-sector collaborative efforts to obtain more local information regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hispanic and Latino Ohioans, to better understand its impact on the community.

Additionally, the Commission performed a critical role in addressing health disparities broadly among Hispanics and Latinos in Ohio during the pandemic. For example, they facilitated the transmission of critical information through their translation of public health information and information from the Governor's office. They used various media platforms to communicate critical public health information to the community. They also held various virtual events to address community member concerns with vaccines. Community-based organizations and minority community-based organizations throughout the state also relied heavily on OCHLA as a centralized hub for information and resources. What is particularly striking is how OCHLA not only operated in this critical capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, but how it was just the most recent example of how they support the Hispanic and Latino community in Ohio every day, pandemic or not. As a community that is heavily reliant on trusted community entities and consistent and reliable support, OCHLA serves a necessary role and function for Hispanic and Latino Ohioans.



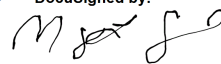
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With current national estimates and projections stating that it may take up to a decade for Hispanics and Latinos to recover from the pandemic, the needs of this community have never been greater. And, as a result, the need for the Commission has never been greater. There will be many challenges ahead as we push forward with recovery from the pandemic, and the Commission's work is critical to promoting equity for Hispanic and Latino Ohioans. I am both professionally and personally grateful for their work. I see the value of their work daily, in my interactions with Hispanic and Latino patients, in my conversations with Hispanic and Latino community members, and in my own home. While I have highlighted just a few examples of why the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs is such an important asset to Hispanics/Latino Ohioans, their reach and impact is far beyond.

I fully support full funding of the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs as currently laid out in Sub. 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.

Most sincerely,

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