

Laura Rodriguez-Carbone
2069 McKinley Avenue
Lakewood, Ohio 44107
Phone: (440) 610-4977
E-mail: lauraforlakewood@gmail.com

Testimony supporting HB72 Recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month in Ohio

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 72

My name is Laura Rodriguez-Carbone, and I am currently the Regional Health Leader for the Federal COVID-19 Response (formerly Operation Warp Speed). I have lived in Ohio all my life, and both my father and uncle made Ohio their home.

They emigrated here from Puerto Rico as part of the U.S. Farm Labor program in the 1960's and worked in Farm Labor Camps in Pennsylvania. Their efforts and hard work, like many of Hispanic descent, have been overshadowed and minimized by decades of bias, discrimination and racism that have been institutionalized in our laws and policies, as well as within American society. Racism is an imposed hereditary condition in the United States: When people of color have families, their children are automatically born at a disadvantage, and their early lives are shaped by learning how to navigate a society where not everyone believes they should belong.

Because racism has been historically institutionalized into our policies, the answer to supporting efforts to advance anti-racism in Ohio, and in the United States, is to institutionalize reforms. Bills like HB72, recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month, is the least Ohio can do to raise affinity and awareness of the vast contributions Hispanics continue to make in our State, despite the presence of racism and bias that still permeates our society. It is also the least the State of Ohio can do to let our community know they, their families, and the struggles they continue to face are seen.

It is in the spirit of progress in anti-racism, that I lend my support to this bill and hope the Ohio legislature will endorse its passage and be proactive in working on ways to continue to advance equity for the Hispanic community in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Laura Rodriguez-Carbone