

# Rochester Latinx Agenda

2021



[www.RochesterLatinx.org](http://www.RochesterLatinx.org)



ROCHESTER LATINX  
LEADERS ROUNDTABLE

# CONTENTS

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY          | 3  |
| HOW TO USE THIS REPORT     | 4  |
| LATINX AGENDA CONTRIBUTORS | 5  |
| LANGUAGE ACCESS            | 8  |
| ARTS & CULTURE             | 12 |
| HOUSING                    | 16 |
| FAITH COMMUNITY            | 19 |
| EDUCATION                  | 23 |
| HEALTH                     | 26 |
| THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY      | 30 |
| POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT | 36 |
| CIVIC ENGAGEMENT           | 42 |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT       | 47 |
| LATINX LEADERS ROUNDTABLE  | 52 |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Our Vision

As organizations across all sectors begin to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and reaffirm their commitment to racial justice, we advocate for these efforts to also explicitly address the needs of the Latinx community. Too often, the history and experiences of the Latinx community are excluded, yet addressing racial disparities in housing, wages, education, healthcare and more, require an intentional focus on the unique barriers that impact Latinx people. This report provides data on the impacts of systemic racism on the Latinx experience and provides actionable recommendations to mitigate these inequities. Our call to action is to use this report to enhance DEI efforts by including the Latinx community's needs in strategies and action plans across Monroe County.

## Latino, Latina, Latinx, or Latine?

The Latinx Roundtable is made of leaders from various generations, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, abilities, perspectives, passions and so much more. That is the beauty of diversity within and between our communities. It was important for us to use language that reflects this diversity. In her book, *Finding Latinx: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity*, Queer Latina author Paula Ramos writes: "Latinx goes beyond the gender binary of the terms and it encompasses religion, sexual identity and orientation, being Latino/a and not speaking the language, being an indigenous Latino/a, and everything in between. The term provides a space for anybody that has ever felt they live outside of societal boxes."

In allyship with the intersecting identities of our community, we will use the term Latinx in this report as a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina, and as a way to recognize the diversity within the larger Latinx community, embracing our LGBTQI+ compadres and more. In this report, different groups worked with data and insights from many sources and we have kept the nomenclature of those sources the same. Therefore you may see the terms Latino, Latinx, and Hispanic used interchangeably throughout the report. We also understand that there is a growing conversation about using the term Latine in place of Latinx. Language is ever changing to meet the changing needs and identities within our communities. If in the future, language shifts to embrace the term Latine, as leaders, we will shift too.

## Scope

This report is the result of over 70 volunteers working together over one year. The Latinx Agenda provides background, analysis, and recommendations on: Arts & Culture, Housing, the Faith Community, Education, Health, the LGBTQI+ Community, Positive Youth Development, Economic Development, Language Access and Civic Engagement. A forthcoming update will include Immigration, Workforce Development and Latina Issues. Many of the section recommendations focus on access to resources. The most common barriers are lack of language access and the lack of cultural competency in the area's largest private and public institutions.

In the over 130-year old history of the Rochester region's Latinx community, the collective effort put forth in this report is unprecedented for its breadth and scope. This is due to lack of research and reliable data on the Latinx community. It was not until 1980 that Hispanics were even counted in the United States Census. That was only 41 years ago. The Rochester Region's Latinx population is now over 80,000. There is a long history of excluding Latinos and the authors of this report are here to say "no mas." No more exclusion of a growing and important community. No more silence. No more waiting to be included.

Funding for further studies is critical to understand the depth of the problems and how best to resolve them. We ask you to read each section carefully and use the recommendations as a starting point to give the Latinx community an equal seat at the table. The significance of this project cannot be overstated, especially given the current climate of racial and social justice prevalent across the nation. We stand on the shoulders of previous leaders and their work such the 1981 AHORA report that addressed the educational needs of Latinx children and the Latino Summits of the early 2000s that gathered Latinos to raise awareness and advocate for Latino needs across sectors.

This completed report is not the end of the project, but rather the first step in a collaborative effort with the broader community to address these barriers and take advantage of these opportunities. The members of the Rochester Latinx Leaders Roundtable stand ready to collaborate on the work needed to balance the scales toward greater justice for Latinx people.

# HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

The Latinx Leaders Roundtable formed to produce the Greater Rochester Latinx Agenda during the pandemic. The 2021 Latinx Agenda intends to be the starting place to initiate dialogue, create focus, and develop advocacy strategies relevant to our community. This is a living document and will be updated on a consistent basis. The LLR recognizes that there are other important matters that did not make the final document and we will continue to work with the community to evolve our agenda. We welcome your support, advocacy, and partnership to advance our work. This will not be a shelf plan. If there are pieces of the agenda you wish to champion, we encourage you to reach out in partnership. Authentic engagement of the Latinx community will be critically important as context is just as important as the content of this agenda. We look forward to bringing progress to life.

## INSTRUCTIONS

As you engage the agenda, the work is organized in the following manner:

### Summary

The summary section is a brief statement of the focus area and its relevance to the Latinx community.

### Background

The background section summarizes local, state, and national data to provide context and outlines the impact/challenges for the Latinx community.

### Recommendations

The recommendations section focuses on critical components, policies, systems and funding needs that will improve the outlook for the Latinx community.

### References

Each section will include references on a Sources section.

# LATINX AGENDA CONTRIBUTORS



Krista Alfonso



Leslie Alvarado



Jason Barber



Alex Castro



Sandra Chevalier-Blackman



Lucia Colindres Vasquez



Marlene Cortes



Dr. Carlos Cotto



Jose Cruzado



Thomas Cuyler



Ritsel Decena Soriano



Elisa DeJesus



Jaden Dominguez



Diana Fernandez



Sady Fischer



Jeffrey Freeman

# LATINX AGENDA CONTRIBUTORS



Annette Jiménez



Beatriz Lebron



Saul Maneiro



Eugenio Marlin



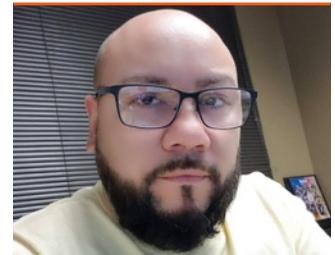
Ray Mayoliz



Miguel Melendez



Shalym Nater



Ricardo Nieves



Anthony Nuñez



Luis Ormaechea



Jackie Ortiz



Orlando Ortiz



Nydia Padilla Rodriguez



Henry Padron



Jesus Paesch



Stephanie Paredes



Melissa Pennise



Angelica Perez-Delgado



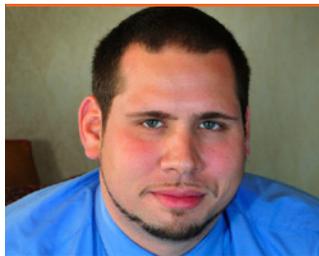
Carlos Perez



Ida Perez



Luis A. Perez



Anthony Plonczynski-Figueroa



Annette Ramos



Rudy Rivera



Mauricio Riveros



Yversha Roman



Liliana Ruiz



Julio Sáenz



Victor H. Sanchez



Jacob M. Santos



Joann Santos Santiago



Raquel Serrano

**OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**

Hector Arguinzoni  
Santos Cruz  
Jaden Dominguez  
Hector Gonzales

Ivelisse Gonzales  
Natalia Martinez-Bliss  
Milton Pichardo  
Orlando Rivera

Agustin Rodriguez  
Carlos Santana  
Josean Vargas-Rodriguez

## LANGUAGE ACCESS

*Monroe County is home to over 30,000 people who speak a language other than English as their primary language and one of the largest per-capita Deaf populations in the United States. Many do not know their rights and are wary of available services and the institutions providing them, in part because outreach on issues that might impact them are not accessible due to language and cultural barriers.*

### BACKGROUND

It is crucial that agencies in Monroe County have access to expertise and support to learn about and implement language access practices and that members of the community know their rights and how to assert them.

Language access is a foundational civil right issue that impacts every area of life, particularly for low-income and marginalized communities. Community organizations, healthcare facilities, legal providers, first responders, financial institutions, and governmental agencies do not have access to the resources they need to equitably serve their communities or the knowledge to implement best practices to ensure language access. When interacting with LEP (Limited English Proficient) or deaf/hard-of-hearing populations, this resource and knowledge gap results in serious harm, neglect, isolation, and even death.

Organizations and institutions cannot say they are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility work and not focus on dismantling language and communication barriers. Not providing interpretation and translation services paired with cultural competence is contributing to the #1 tool for racism towards the LEP or deaf/hard-of-hearing communities. One cannot say they are going to serve the underserved and marginalized population and not have a plan and a budget line for interpreting and translation services. The excuse of "it's too expensive" is no longer acceptable. Language access can no longer be an afterthought.

### DEFINITIONS

What is Language access? Language access allows people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to use and benefit from a wide range of services, according to Federal Guidelines Executive

Order 13166 requiring each federal agency that provides financial assistance to develop a limited English proficient guidance for its recipients on the Title VI obligation to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals.

Limited English Proficient or English-Language Learner (ELL): Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. ELL is a term used for an LEP individual in an educational setting. English-language learners (or ELLs) are students who have difficulty communicating fluently or learning effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.

Someone may still be limited English proficient, even if they appear to speak or understand English well, because they may possess sufficient English-language skills to function in one manner of communication, but not feel comfortable doing so in another. For example, they may speak, but not read, English well. Emergencies or crises pose additional challenges. Additionally, legal terms and concepts can be complicated and are not easily understood by many people, regardless of their language access needs. Cultural barriers can also cause confusion. As a result, someone may benefit from language services in this context, even if their level of understanding is generally reasonable.

What is the difference between interpreting and translation? The difference between interpreting and translation is in the medium: interpreting is for verbal communication while translating is for written text.

What is meaningful access? Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,"

## LANGUAGE ACCESS (continued)

issued in 2000, seeks to ensure that limited English Proficient individuals can receive information and services from federal agencies and those federal agencies can communicate with Limited English Proficient persons in the course of their activities

What is a Language Access Plan? A Language Access Plan sets forth the actions to be taken by the agency to ensure meaningful access to their services. This includes but is not limited to the list of translated documents and languages available, total staff with language access skills and ability, training plan, annual monitoring plan, and outreach strategies. Agencies are required to update their Language Access Plans regularly. This plan should be readily available to all staff.

According to the New York State Language Access website, over 5.5 million people living in New York State speak a language other than English. Of these, 2.5 million speak English less than well. Based on the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, the number of LEP individuals who speak one of the top six languages are:

- Spanish: 1,249,541
- Chinese: 386,290
- Russian: 122,150
- Haitian Creole: 63,615
- Bengali: 62,219
- Korean: 60,405

According to the U.S. Census population estimate for 2019, Monroe County has a population of 741,770 living within 300,796 households. The percent of people (age 5 years +) speaking a language other than English at home (2014-2018) is 13.6%, and 9.2% with people identifying only as Hispanic. We anticipate this number will increase significantly with the 2020 Census. Monroe County also has one of the largest per-capita populations of Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing individuals in the United States. There is no available data breaking down the racial demographics of the deaf community.

Based on the data provided, Spanish is the top language spoken outside of English in New York State and Monroe County.

On August 11, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Executive

Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The Executive Order requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans will provide for such meaningful access consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency.

The Executive Order also requires that the federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. To assist federal agencies in carrying out these responsibilities, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document, "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency" (LEP Guidance). This LEP Guidance sets forth the compliance standards that recipients of Federal financial assistance must follow to ensure that their programs and activities generally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate based on national origin in violation of Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination.

In 2011, New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed Executive Order 26, "which directs executive state agencies that provide direct public services to offer language assistance services (translation and interpretation) to people with Limited English Proficiency. In signing this Executive Order, Governor Cuomo recognized that millions of New Yorkers do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. For these New Yorkers, their LEP status presents potential barriers to accessing important government programs and services."

With these two executive orders, federal and state, one would think that Limited English Proficient individuals have meaningful access to information in their preferred language. They should be able to access health care and be provided with an interpreter at all medical appointments. Most medical facilities accept Medicaid, which is a federal program and state program. They

## LANGUAGE ACCESS (continued)

would be able to open a bank account at any given financial institution and be able to compare financial products that will fit their families' needs. They would be able to view their credit report and be able to discover if they are a victim of identity theft. Unfortunately, even though these laws are there to provide meaningful access to these communities, it is a daily struggle to get basic information in their preferred language that they could understand.

When the State of New York shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, many in the LEP community were left without meaningful access to up-to-date information about COVID-19 vital details, unless they were actively working with an agency. Such agencies were then left to scramble on how to find information to help residents in these communities stay safe and provide valuable resources in their preferred language. Collaborations were formed among community advocates to help these agencies obtain information for their clients in a language they would be able to understand (i.e., "in-language"). Such efforts also included the recruitment of volunteer translators.

The daily briefings of the Governor, County Executive, and Mayor were only English at the beginning. After a few weeks, the Mayor was providing the City's information in Spanish. But the Governor and County Executive only provided the information in written format via their website translation. This information was only available to Monroe County residents that had access to the internet, leaving many in our community without access or knowing where to find the information.

Many reached out to members of the Monroe County Language Access Coalition ("MCLAC") for assistance in finding meaningful access to information and essential information on language access laws. MCLAC is a group of individuals representing public and private organizations in Monroe County. MCLAC's Vision Statement is "They are committed to ensuring that by 2025 all people who are LEP, Non-English proficiency (NEP), deaf or hard-of-hearing, or that have other communication barriers have full access and meaningful inclusion to all public and private services in their preferred language and mode of communication."

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pass a local law to make individuals with language barriers in Monroe County and the City of Rochester a protective class; Look at the work from other counties in New York State that have language access laws. Westchester County passed the language access Executive Order in 2019. [6] Executive Order 1 of 2019. This will ensure that all vital documents are translated, and interpretation provided.
2. Recognize Spanish and ASL as the first and second most spoken languages outside of English in Monroe County.
3. Continue to fund a language access coordinator for Monroe County and hire a language access compliance coordinator for the City of Rochester. These fully trained roles will ensure that every department of the city and county government has a language access plan in order to effectively communicate with residents with language barriers including the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.
4. Every city and county office that engages with the public should have a form of communication to serve residents with language barriers (i.e., language line).
5. Any funding stream provided should consider a budget line for interpretation and translation services and provide a language access plan as part of the funding application. This will ensure that services provided by the grantees are accessible to everyone.
6. Make sure that all communication coming from the City of Rochester and the County of Monroe is multilingual. This includes providing information through local bilingual radio stations and public access television. Not all city or county residents are connected to social media.
7. Provide language access and culturally sensitive training to all holding and working in public office.
8. Making sure that all public meetings have ASL interpreters and/or multilingual interpreters. The city and county must lead

## LANGUAGE ACCESS (continued)

by example and follow not only state language access laws but federal laws.

9. Fund local nonprofits that specifically work with the LEP and deaf/hard-of-hearing communities to bridge this gap.

10. Access to housing is difficult for those with language barriers. Create a program where landlords can go for assistance in communicating with tenants in these communities. This will help the landlords communicate with tenants to make more housing available to those with language barriers.

The burden should not disproportionately fall on the shoulders of people in the LEP and deaf/ hard-of-hearing communities. We need to do our part to ensure that all Monroe County residents receive essential information in a format they can understand.

### Sources

1. <https://www.ny.gov/language-access-policy>
2. Monroe County Census Data <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/monroecountynewyork#>
3. <https://www.monroecounty.gov/?q=node/9433>.
4. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>
5. <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/stateprofile.html?state=new-york>
6. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.westchestergov.com%2Fimages%2Fstories%2Fexecorders%2F2019EO1.pdf&clen=78626&chunk=true>

## ARTS & CULTURE

*In a region that is often praised for the vibrancy of its arts community, Rochester Latinx artists and arts organizations have been left out of many opportunities for exposure and funding. A great opportunity for cultural exchange is being missed.*

### SUMMARY

Latin American-based arts, music, dance, theater, and literature have little representation in Rochester and thus are not viewed as the asset they should be in the local arts community. The vision of the Latino Cultural Arts committee is to explore and broadly share the local Latino arts groups' history, impact, and current state as the basis for the vision of its role within Rochester's creative economy. The committee seeks to elevate, promote, connect, and cultivate the underserved Latin arts and culture sector by providing Latinx artists and arts organizations with critical advocacy and offering funding and networking opportunities, professional development, and training.

In this section of the Latinx Agenda Report, we will explore Latinx arts within Rochester's creative economy, its history, impact, current state and what we envision moving forward. Our goal is to provide critical advocacy and secure critical funding for Latin artists and Latin-led art organizations.

### BACKGROUND

Rochester was home to a thriving arts and culture scene pre-COVID-19, as well as a blossoming network of creative professionals in the local economy. However, as the city with the second largest population of Latinos in New York state, Rochester does not have a central home for Latin Arts. Additionally, Latino cultural contributions are not reflected in Rochester's standing as a City of the Arts.

Currently, a centralized organization does not exist to advocate and represent the voice of Latin artists or inform policies and investments within any local government or major art institutions. As a community of artists and grassroots organizations, Latin arts organizations and artists are almost completely invisible to funders – only one has received

consistent funding from the area's five major funders in a study of tax-exempt non-profits from 2016-2020 which often receive trickle-down economic support. La Cumbre's artist directory serves as the only local resource for Latin arts, yet remains under-utilized by mainstream art groups.

Funding of cultural arts has become increasingly less equitable, according to 2017 research on equity issues in arts funding in the U.S. - "Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy" – a study that was supported by funding from the Surdna Foundation. The study revealed that only 2% of all cultural institutions receive nearly 60% of all contributed funds. This majority of funds supports organizations with budgets totaling more than \$5 million and which are predominantly "white/mainstream" institutions.

In Monroe County, only 13 percent of arts organizations are led by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), when the non-white population totals 30%, according to analysis of U.S. Census data and nonprofit data by the Rochester Area Community Foundation. Of the 13 percent, only five organizations are led by Latino residents and none have budgets nearing \$1 million. One large Rochester museum receives 10 percent of the entire budget allocated by Monroe County from hotel/motel tax revenue for all arts, culture and recreation funding - even as this organization lacks diversity in its staff and board. The County has not provided information or insight on the application process for this funding. Factors that contribute to the disparity in funding and the lower number of arts nonprofits led by people of color include:

- A lack of awareness of funding or grant opportunities
- Disconnect between funders and arts groups
- Lack of transparency in the processes for arts funding at the City of Rochester and Monroe County government levels.

In 2019, the City of Rochester launched an advisory committee

## ARTS & CULTURE (continued)

to explore creation of a Commission for Arts & Culture. The commission would serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council on promoting, encouraging, and increasing support for artistic and cultural assets, integrating arts and culture into community life, and showcasing Rochester as a regional tourist destination for the arts. The City does not have a centralized arts and culture budget. Arts and culture activities appear in various department’s budgets; often earmarked for community events and activities.

The city has funded the Puerto Rican Festival with \$40,000 in 2019 and 2018 and \$35,000 in 2017 and 2016. Increased funding for 2020 was going to be made available for changes to the festival as part of the Welcome Home Roc Initiative. Additionally, the City has worked with FUA Krew for several public arts projects and has presented Hispanic Heritage events annually including a month-long program that includes featuring local Latin artists. Latino Nights at the Rochester Public Market were also hosted by the City. The Rochester 2034 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in November 2019, recommends a more collaborative approach between the City of Rochester and the arts, culture, and creative ecosystem. This plan highlighted only three Latin arts groups. Yet, little economic support is provided and often not included in art requests for proposals or open calls for art projects.

At the county level, Monroe County Executive Adam Bello met with artists at the Rochester Contemporary Art Center prior to the 2019 election and committed to meeting with artists and providing greater transparency to the application process. The Latinx Agenda calls on Bello to meet this commitment as part of its arts and culture platform.

Funding levels by local foundations also reveal disparities in the number of arts and culture grants provided to local Latin arts groups. The 990 forms (tax filings required for nonprofits) for the following local foundations known to cultivate, promote and support the arts were reviewed for 2016, 2017, and 2108:

- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- The Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation
- Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation
- ESL Community Foundation

- William & Sheila Konar Foundation
- Greater Rochester Health Foundation

| FOUNDATION                                    | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|
| Rochester Area Community Foundation           | No   | Yes  | Yes  |
| The Max & Marian Farash Charitable Foundation | No   | No   |      |
| Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation                | No   | No   | No   |
| ESL Community Foundation                      | No   | No   | Yes  |
| William & Sheila Konar Foundation             | No   | No   | Yes  |
| Greater Rochester Health Foundation           |      | No   | Yes  |

Borinquen Dance Theatre was the only established Latin arts and culture institution funded at least once in each of the three years under review (see table). Other major Latin arts and culture institutions - such as the Grupo Cultural Latino en Rochester, Puerto Rican Festival Inc., Rochester Latino Theater Company and Poder 97.1 FM – had not applied for any funding during the review period. (However, Grupo Cultural did receive a grant from the Community Foundation in 2020. Additionally, Ibero-American Action League received a large award in 2019 for the expansion of the Poder 97.1 FM radio signal.) The consistent lack of funding for long-standing, well-established Latino arts and culture institutions stems from the combination of a lack of awareness of funding or grant opportunities and the disconnect between funders and local Latin arts groups.

A review of private corporate foundations – Paychex, Wegmans, Avangrid (RG&E) and Xerox – revealed a similar pattern during the same review period. The only arts organization led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) to receive a grant from any of these foundations was Garth Fagan Dance in 2016 and 2018 from Wegmans. Ibero’s Centro de Oro received an Avangrid grant for its health and wellness programs.

We recognize that during the global pandemic local funders and other institutions have slightly increased their support of Latin artists and Latin-led arts organizations. Although we are pleased to see some progress, this report reflects the long journey ahead for true equity.

## ARTS & CULTURE (continued)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Several community groups have been advocating for greater accountability for municipal support for organizations. The Latinx Agenda joins these calls for action and recommends the following as top priorities:

- Federal (National): Appoint a local Latin artist to serve as a liaison with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to establish a working partnership that will inform local organizations about funding opportunities to boost equitable funding.
- New York (State): Connect local artists and arts organizations with contacts/grant opportunities offered by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) to provide greater visibility for the local Latin arts community statewide.
- Monroe County/City of Rochester (City): Advocate for Latin artists/leaders of arts organizations to serve on city or county committees to offer input on arts funding to ensure their voices are heard and needs met; including representation on the newly formed City Arts Commission and inclusion in the City's Percent for Art public art program.
- Foundations: Connect local arts groups with funders to intentionally increase the dedicated financial resources available for arts organizations and artists of color throughout the greater Rochester area; support opportunities and mentorship to artists of color through paid residencies or other leadership programs; advocate for data collection on artists of color and the organizations that they are part of could also help increase visibility of these artists throughout the community to increase funding opportunities as well.

#### Monroe County:

- Evaluate Monroe County's arts policies and support to ensure it is representative of our many diverse arts communities, it is aligned with regional strategies, and it follows established best practices.

#### City of Rochester:

- Create equitable engagement of Latino artists in the implementation of the city of Rochester 2034 comprehensive plan and projects of the city of Rochester.
- Create a centralized arts and culture budget for artists of color.

- Increase inclusion of Latin local artists in all arts & culture initiatives.
- Increase public Latinx art in the city arts landscape to support community identity and placemaking (El Camino vision plan).

#### Foundations:

- Establish an arts and culture racial equity plan, including providing grant-writing support for applicants of small art and culture organizations.
- Improve staff outreach to artists of color throughout the community to increase financial support for the organizations they helm and the populations they serve.
- Hold organizations that receive municipal support or foundation funding accountable for lack of diversity in their staff and boards of directors.
- Create a pathway between existing leadership programs and arts organizations to increase board diversity. For example, develop connections through Latino Leadership Development program at the United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

#### Programmatic:

- Create a central home for Latino art in the El Camino neighborhood.
- Update and promote Latino arts directory to the community at-large (La Cumbre website)
  - 501c3 list of organizations that can accept funding
  - Individual Latino starving/visual/performing/teaching artists
- Enhance opportunities to leverage arts and cultural events as a platform to educate others (Puerto Rican Festival, Borinquen Dance Theatre, Rochester Latino Theatre Company, International Plaza programming).

#### Media outreach:

- The public WXXI television, digital, radio and print media platforms provide miniscule coverage of Latino arts and music. However, WXXI TV has not had any local programming dedicated to the Latino community in over 15 years since *¿Que Pasa? Rochester* was canceled. A weekly show is needed to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the

## ARTS & CULTURE (continued)

Rochester Latino Community. WXXI's City newspaper and the Little Theater are also powerful platforms that do not give enough of an opportunity to Latino voices.

- Ibero-owned WEPL-LP 97.1 FM, known as Poder 97.1, has proven to be an invaluable resource for educating and informing the Latino community since its launch in 2015. It prominently features the music of local musicians and promotes the events and of local Latino arts organizations. Ibero is currently seeking FCC approval to expand its signal strength from 100 watts to 250 watts so it can provide coverage to the entire region, including Sodus, Brockport and other pockets of the Latino population. The entire local community and its elected officials must get behind this initiative. The current COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the power and importance of the station to the entire community in providing critical information.

### CONCLUSION

The Latinx Leaders Roundtable is committed to providing powerful advocacy on behalf of Latin artists and arts organizations led by Latin artists in this critical moment in history as the ravages of COVID-19 laid bare the needs of more fully funding the creative economy, especially our artists of color. With an anti-racist framework, this report begins the work of promoting the diverse gifts and talents of our Latin artists to a broad Rochester audience. We envision a landscape that fully values and integrates the contributions of Latin artists as a pathway to expand the field for this dynamic workforce of artists. By increasing representation and visibility, we can also increase networking and funding opportunities to support the growth of our arts groups and invigorate the local creative economy through a more robust cultural lens.

The Latinx Leaders Roundtable is a committed strong advocacy voice for Latin artists & Latin lead art organizations. We know too well the need to improve the severe under-capitalization of artistic communities of color with our focus on the Latin art community. We are ready to design and put into practice antiracist policies to promote diverse art offerings to Rochester audiences. With little representation in Rochester's creative economy, this report begins the work of uplifting the Latin arts

sector by building opportunities to renew our stakeholders that stabilizes and revitalizes the Latin arts and culture sector via advocacy, funding, leadership training and providing diverse arts offerings.

We envision a cultural landscape that fully values and integrates the essential contributions of an expanding Latin arts field and its dynamic workforce. We envision acting through educational, financial and relationship-building resources to boost artistic excellence, cultivate responsive cultural stewardship, strengthen career development, advance diversity of prospective, foster sites of belonging, and invigorate community discourse.

### A Home for Latin Arts

Adopting a formal framework, establishing an advocacy body, and developing a cultural center at a site in the El Camino neighborhood would further develop this community's assets and holdings, paving the way for a Latin art renaissance revitalization that would further strengthen this community's resurgence.

Work is well underway with Ibero's dedication to the El Camino neighborhood revitalization, which includes a facility committed to Latin Arts development and engagement. A multi-partner, holistic, community-driven design is leading the way to establish a Latin Arts and Culture Center for the city's diverse community. An advisory committee has been hard at work for more than a year, identifying strategic partners, creating an asset map, contributing to the architectural design of our center, and pushing forward this dream of a home for Latin arts. With Ibero's commitment to the physical building, the next steps include governance, business plan development, and the establishment of partnerships with foundations and grantees who are committed to supporting an equitable and inclusive arts sector in Rochester.

## HOUSING

*Where one lives determines many of the opportunities one will have in life. Housing opportunity and choice are essential to the social and economic vibrancy of the Latino community in the Rochester region. Although there is evidence of growing housing opportunities for Latinos, many still live in the zip codes with the highest concentration of poverty. In addition, with the recent rise in home prices in the region, more programs are needed to make homeownership an affordable option for Latino families.*

### BACKGROUND

At over 60 million, Hispanics are the largest minority in the U.S. and make up 18.4 percent of the overall U.S. population. Hispanics are the fastest-growing demographic, accounting for 57.6 percent of the total U.S. population growth in the last year. Hispanics are also now the largest minority in New York State and are estimated to number over 80,000 in the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Although there is evidence of greater housing choice for Latinos with many living throughout the City of Rochester and metro area there is still a concentration in high poverty zip codes. According to a 2017 Census update, 61 percent of Hispanic residents reside in the City (down from 79 percent in 1980).

According to the City of Rochester 2018 Housing Market study: "Rochester's history of segregation is starkly apparent in the housing market. Racial and ethnic minorities comprise roughly 30% of the population in the two strongest markets but over 80% in the two weakest markets." The same report further explains that Hispanics make up 7 percent and 6 percent in the two strongest markets, they are 25 percent and 27 percent of the two weakest markets. This lack of demand means flat or declining property values that eliminate a key source of intergenerational wealth for Latino families.

According to the Center for Governmental Research Profile of the Hispanic/Latino Community in Monroe County released in 2018, rental housing was not considered affordable for Latinos in Monroe County in 2012-16, with 38 percent of household income of renters going to rent (above the 30

percent considered affordable). The level was a bit higher in the City of Rochester, at 40 percent. This was higher than the share of income going to rent for non-Latino whites and Asians (both 29 percent in the county) but lower than the share for African Americans (45 percent in the county). Owning a home was more affordable for all groups. For Latino Monroe County residents, the ratio of their home value to median income was 1.5, below the 2-3 considered affordable.

The same Center for Governmental Research 2018 study also found that in Monroe County, about one in three Latino or Hispanic residents (34%) owned their homes in 2012-16, similar to the rate in 2000 (32%). The rate was similar for Black or African American residents (32%), but about half as high as for non-Latino white residents (71%). For County residents of Asian heritage, the rate was 51 percent. Within the City, the share of Hispanic residents who owned their homes (27%) in 2012-16 was lower than at the County level and up slightly since 2000 (25%).

According to the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP) 2019 State of Hispanic Homeownership Report, an unyielding desire to own a piece of the American Dream is inherent in the fabric of the U.S. Latino community. Despite facing one of the most acute housing inventory shortages in history and a contraction of credit, Hispanics were the only demographic to increase their homeownership rate for the fifth consecutive year (from 2014 and 2020). Many of the most prevalent homeownership barriers Hispanics face are attributable to a single variable: Hispanics are young. Because credit scores, income, and household wealth all improve with age, the likelihood for continued Hispanic homeownership growth over the next

## HOUSING (continued)

five years remains strong. Clearly, 2021 will bring a new set of economic challenges as Americans confront a global public health pandemic and the associated economic consequences. According to the 2019 NAHREP report between 2020-2040, 70% of new homeowners in America will be Latino.

For those Hispanics unable to purchase their home, they also face a shortage in affordable rental housing. For many families relying on government assistance such as Section 8 vouchers, their options are limited to lower opportunity areas. The Section 8 voucher program is a supplemental assistance which means many of the families are considered to be the working poor. These families often have multiple jobs and are still unable to afford rent. Because “Income Source” is not a federally protected fair housing class, many of these Monroe County families have no access to high opportunity areas in the surrounding towns.

A lack of available housing inventory remains one of the leading barriers to further advancing sustainable Hispanic homeownership growth. According to Zillow, in December 2019 there were 7.5 percent fewer homes on the market than the year prior, marking 2019 as the lowest level ever recorded since the group began tracking inventory data.

In 2019, the United States Census Bureau reported a record low homeowner vacancy rate (HVR) at 1.4 percent, matching the lowest level recorded (1993). The HVR for the top 75 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) has been declining every year since 2008. Inventory shortages are considerably pronounced in states and MSA with high concentrations of Hispanic residents. Among the Top 10 MSAs with the lowest HVR, half have a Hispanic population of 10 percent or higher, and over a quarter of those have a Hispanic population of 20 percent or higher.<sup>27</sup>

Restrictive and exclusionary zoning practices have also stifled new developments in much of the country. In an effort to combat density, much of America’s cities are disproportionately only zoned for single-family dwelling units. In California, it is illegal to build anything other than a single family home (although accessory dwelling units are permitted) in more than

75 percent of the state’s neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> This problem is not limited to California: cities like Seattle, Washington (81 percent), Charlotte, North Carolina (84 percent), and Arlington, Texas (89 percent) are zoned almost entirely for single family residences.

These restrictions have resulted in urban sprawl, longer commute times, and displacement of lower-income residents. Not only does restrictive zoning impact individual neighborhoods, but it has shown to be detrimental to the overall U.S. economy. Researchers at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business estimate that land constraints lowered aggregate U.S. growth by 36 percent from 1964 to 2009.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Funding for a comprehensive study of the state of housing for Latinos in the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area.**

Very little data exists on rates of homeownership, rental rates or the levels of housing discrimination faced by the local Latinx community. A region wide study is needed to identify barriers and opportunities for greater housing choice.

- **Increase homebuyer education to the Latino community to convert existing “mortgage ready” millennials to homeowners:**

Considering that the National Association of Realtors (NAR) found that “millennials made up the largest share of homebuyers at 37%, millennials are ripe for homeownership. Today, one in four Hispanics is a millennial, and in 2018, 4.9 million were identified as being “mortgage ready.” Freddie Mac identified in 2018 there were 4.9 million Hispanic millennials with the credit characteristics that could qualify for a mortgage.”

Looking at that number, had 10 percent of those 4.9 million “mortgage ready” millennials been converted to homeowners in 2019, the Hispanic homeownership rate would have reached 50.3 percent, an all-time high. Freddie Mac and the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professional (NAHREP) identified the top 20 markets with the most Hispanic millennials who could both qualify for a mortgage and afford

## HOUSING (continued)

the median value priced home, while living in a market with available housing stock.

- **Invest in people:** Buying a home is often the largest financial transaction families engage in during their lifetime. It is also one of the most overwhelming and confusing processes, even for the most educated. When experience, language, and cultural barriers are added to that equation, the process is even more challenging. NAHREP estimates that the number of culturally competent Latino realtors and mortgage professionals will need to double in the coming years to meet the growing demand from Hispanic homebuyers. Beyond language and cultural gaps, there is an experience gap for Hispanics in the industry. First-time homebuyers regularly rely on professionals in their network, including close friends or family, to guide them through the home buying process.

- **Make income source a local protected class:** The City of Rochester has deemed “Income Source” as a protected class. This translates in tenants not being denied housing based on their source of income. In other words, if they can afford their rent based on their total income, landlords should rent to them and not disqualify the household because they receive federal dollars via the Section 8 voucher program. This practice should be extended to the towns in Monroe County. These towns have been identified as high opportunity areas which make available more educational resources and an exposure to a larger combination of opportunities.

### CONCLUSION

The state of housing for Latinos in the region is a topic that desperately needs further focus and resources. Like all Americans, Latinos deserve access to safe and affordable housing and barriers to this must be removed. As with many of the recommendations in this report, increasing access to housing for Latinos should not just be an act of goodwill but also something that makes economic sense. Latinos represent almost all the population growth in the region and because of their younger ages are the prime customers for housing.

## FAITH COMMUNITY

*Latinos are transforming the nation's religious landscape, not only because of their growing numbers but also because they are practicing a distinctive form of Christianity. Two defining characteristics – the prevalence of spirit-filled religious expressions and of ethnic-oriented worship – combined with the rapid growth of the Latino population leave little doubt that a detailed understanding of religious faith among Latinos is essential to understanding the future of this population as well as the evolving nature of religion in the United States (Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion – PEW research Center – Hispanic Trends). In this section of the report, we will explore how the Latino faith community of Greater Rochester can be networked, trained, empowered, and released to a cooperative and interdependent strategy of spiritual, social, and economic asset development that leads to community-wide healing and wholeness.*

### BACKGROUND

For the first time in Rochester's history, the Ibero-American Action League convened more than 25 local Latino pastors and clergy to address the basic and spiritual needs of families arriving from Puerto Rico due to the recent natural disasters. We recognize that faith is central to Latino culture and that the faith community is an integral part of a successful crisis response as we learned with Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's earthquakes, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Latino Faith Leaders Roundtable in partnership with Ibero and the City of Rochester set historic precedent as the first collaborative effort between Latino local churches, Ibero, and the City of Rochester. This group is comprised of faith communities with predominately Latino congregations, mainly providing Spanish-language religious services. Together, the group offered resources regarding critical information and coordinated PPE (personal protective equipment) deliveries for their congregants, opened and coordinated food pantries, provided COVID-19 education, and produced a public service announcement encouraging the faith community to stay home and stop the spread. The Latino Faith Leaders Roundtable has been a critical and complementary resource in serving the Greater Rochester Latino community. When effectively leveraged, it is a powerful force to meet the social needs of the people of Monroe County.

Many Latino houses of worship serve as long-standing anchors of support and stability in our neighborhoods. Often, houses of worship are the front line to accessing services and referrals for our community's most vulnerable residents. In the Greater Rochester area, there are over 55 Latino dual-language houses of worship, many located in high need areas such as 14605, 14606, 14609, and 14621. A commitment to pursuing the research and organizational development necessary to establish an enduring, vibrant, and effective movement in which all the gifts and resources of the Latino faith community are leveraged and utilized to the fullest is critical to the advancement of Monroe County Latinos.

As part of writing this report, an initial survey was sent to 55 Latino churches throughout the Greater Rochester area. A total of 19 (35%) houses of worship responded, representing more than 2,440 congregants, and a diverse group of different denominations. All houses of worship that responded were located within the city limits and 58 percent of them were located in the areas with the highest level of concentrated poverty .

The houses of worship reported 53 percent provided bilingual services and 42 percent provided only Spanish language services. In all, 84 percent reported having a 501c3 designation and all reported self-funding all social service efforts. Other survey results include:

## FAITH COMMUNITY (continued)

| Houses of worship say they help with...                              | Percent |
|--|---------|
| Food, clothing or basic needs  | 95%     |
| Homeless outreach  | 26%     |
| Counseling (mental health, addiction, marital, employment and other) | 26%     |

### Other faith-based initiatives important to the Rochester-area Latino community

**New York:** Former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo created the Office of Faith-Based Community Development Services in January 2015 to be a key resource for faith-based nonprofit organizations to support the valuable social services they provide across the state.

Faith-based organizations traditionally and currently provide a wide range of vital social services that build and sustain vulnerable people and populations throughout New York. These services range from providing affordable and supportive housing, soup kitchens/food pantries, educational services (daycare, day schools, after-school, etc.), employment assistance, mental health support and much more. The primary functions of this office include: Capacity Building, Coalition Building, and Community Outreach.

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Faith-Based Community Development Services provided the bilingual church, House of Prayer and Restoration (Apostol Jose Diaz) 2,000 cloth masks to distribute amongst Latino churches and the community. A total of 20 churches received these to distribute amongst their members.

**Monroe County:** The Monroe County Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) was established by former County Executive Maggie Brooks in the early 2000s as the first county-level FBCI in the country. The office has been serving the Monroe County community for approximately 20 years.

The Monroe County FBCI's primary mission is to strengthen

the role of faith-based and community-based organizations in addressing the social needs of the Monroe County community, including literacy, homelessness, poverty, the care of children, the elderly, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations. The website lists the following responsibilities:

- Building stronger relationships between Monroe County departments and area faith-based and community-based organizations to better serve the community.
- Assisting faith-based and community-based organizations with information regarding government assistance and program development.
- Creating greater community awareness of the federal government's faith-based initiatives as they pertain to Monroe County.

One primary initiative of the office is the Funeral Assistance Program. Working with area funeral directors, financial assistance is provided towards funeral expenses for individuals unable to pay.

**City of Rochester:** Mayor Lovely Warren has created several initiatives and programs for the engagement of the Rochester Faith Community. Throughout her career Mayor Warren has worked with the faith community to improve the lives of Rochester's residents. Mayor Warren's administration actively engaged the Latino faith community in many of the signature programs and initiatives the Mayor makes available to the faith community:

- Clergy on Patrol - <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/clergy-rpd/> This is a partnership between the Rochester Police Department (RPD) and the local clergy. RPD officers walk the neighborhoods with members of the clergy to help build relationships with members of the local community. The program is not restricted to clergy. Citizens of any faith or philosophy are welcome to volunteer.
- Faith in Action Housing Development - <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/faithinaction/>

The City of Rochester's latest, and perhaps most ambitious, faith-based initiative promises to be a game changer for the city as it combines the passion of the spiritual community with the expertise of affordable-housing developers. The aim is to establish Community Development Corporations (CDC)

## FAITH COMMUNITY (continued)

that will bring new levels of investment to the neighborhoods outside city churches and houses of worship.

- **Public Safety Recruitment**

The City of Rochester looks to houses of worship for recruitment efforts by the City of Rochester when seeking candidates for Fire, Police, and Emergency Communications Departments. Recruitment efforts include direct recruiting by those Public Safety Departments and email distributions to houses of worship.

- **Reopen Houses of Worship**

The Mayor's office prepared a proposal for Governor Andrew Cuomo for review by his COVID-19 Faith-Based Advisory Committee. After the reopening proposal was approved by the governor, the City of Rochester provided the document to area houses of worship for their use. Content contributors from the Latino clergy included Pastor Joey Reyes (Iglesia Ministerio Profético Eben-Ezer), Pastor Angel Lebron (Overflow Christian Ministries) and Pastor Raquel Serrano (Parachurch, Hand Foundation).

- **Thanksgiving Support**

The City donates food items to an annual event to provide food baskets for senior citizens and families in need. Latino churches/leaders who are part of this program include Pastor Ruben Serrano, Senior Pastor, Light of the World Church (bilingual church).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**For the Latino community and the Monroe County Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) that ...**

- An initial meeting be set for reaching out to Latino clergy and pastors to share general information of the Monroe County's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.
- That all resources and information be made available in Spanish.
- Follow-up conversations be held to ascertain the opportunities for collaboration and mutually beneficial activities and projects.
- The FBCI meet with Latino clergy periodically throughout the year, to update on new initiatives, opportunities, and engagement.

**As part of the Faith Community Agenda, these are recommendations for the City of Rochester that ...**

- All City faith-based initiatives provide interpretation and all materials are translated.
- The City of Rochester create initiatives targeting the Latino faith community.
- The City of Rochester create a Latino Faith Liaison position to act as a conduit to the Latino faith community.

**As part of the Faith Community Agenda, Ibero's Latino Faith Leaders Roundtable makes the following recommendations to funders, municipalities, and human services organizations:**

- Increase grant opportunities to support community of color religious nonprofits, ministries, and interfaith programs that have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increase faith-based grant opportunities specifically for community of color religious nonprofits, ministries, and interfaith programs.
- Provide technical support to identify, facilitate, secure, and process grant funding for community of color religious nonprofits, ministries, and interfaith programs.
- Provide training and technical assistance opportunities for community of color faith-based religious nonprofits, ministries, and interfaith programs to deliver effective community-based social services.
- Create a Faith wellness forum and highlight services provided.
- Create a Latino Faith directory with services listed.

**Preserving St. Michael's Church in the El Camino Neighborhood**

In the Rochester Latino Community, St. Michael's Church is an iconic institution on North Clinton Avenue and a symbol of hope. St. Michael's church, as part of the St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish, provides spiritual, cultural, architectural, historical, and acoustical value to our community on a prominent intersection of diversity and challenge in Northeast Rochester.

Unfortunately, the church does have its financial struggles. With The International Plaza project finally coming to fruition directly across the street from the church, and the Ibero-American Development Corporation developing 104-units of high-quality affordable housing in the same neighborhood, it is imperative that we use all measures to stabilize and strengthen

## FAITH COMMUNITY (continued)

St. Michael's, affectionately known as San Miguel. The Catholic Diocese of Rochester, intentionally or not, has closed many of the "Latino" churches in the Rochester community. There is a traumatic impact on the Latino community with these closures. While we understand the financial challenges of maintaining such an iconic location, the Latino community will not be silent on St. Michael's and the need to preserve the church and its symbol within the culture and community.

As part of the Faith Community Agenda, these are recommendations for the community at large:

- Join the community effort to secure a sustainable future for St. Michael's Church.
- Work with the committee, parishioners, and community members to offer potential solutions or connections to available resources, where appropriate.

### CONCLUSION

***"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).***

There is a great opportunity right now for culture to change, to be a more perfect union. However, it cannot be done without the church because the faith of the people is more powerful than any law government can enact. The church is the heart and moral compass of a nation. (Dr. John Perkins – Christian Community Development Association/CCDA).

The church is an enduring and critical institution to the health and well-being of the communities in which it is found. The church is called by God to be a light and a source of healing and hope. Daily, as part of its holistic mission, the church is addressing and meeting the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of its congregants, and often, community members alike. When operating as it should, the church is a tremendous source for good, unleashing a transformative power that positively impacts individuals and eventually entire communities.

## EDUCATION

*The state of Latino education in Monroe County remains an urgent concern. While some progress has been made, we must continue to push for improvements and increased support for our students and families. This updated summary of Latino education in Monroe County builds off almost 50 years of research and advocacy that continues today to ensure that Latinos have the same educational opportunities as others in our community.*

### BACKGROUND

Though Latinos have seen rapid national population growth, the level and commitment of services to students and families has not improved or expanded at the same pace. As a result, Latino students and families often attend schools in communities underprepared to meet their critical needs. For example, Latino children have the lowest enrollment in early childhood education programs, with 49.5 percent of Latino 3- to 4-year-olds enrolled in programs compared to 55.5 percent of their non-Latino white peers (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017). In 2017, national assessments revealed that 78 percent of Latino fourth grade student read below proficient levels, and 92 percent of fourth grade English-language learners fall below proficient. While Latino students continue to struggle, investments in Latino education have declined (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017). For example, schools with 90 percent or more students of color spend \$733 less per student per year than schools with 90 percent or more non-Latino white students (Spatig-Amerikaner, 2012). The disparities continue through higher education, where only 54 percent of Latino students complete a degree within six years, compared to 63 percent of their non-Latino white peers (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017).

Similar to national trends, Latino population growth has been rapid in New York state. Since 2010, New York State has the fourth-largest Latino population in the U.S. and is one of six states where Latino population growth has increased more than the overall state population. The other states were New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Mississippi (Gutierrez & Hispanic Federation, 2017; Manuel Krogstad, 2020). In New York, since 2010, the number

of Latinos increased by 319,500, while the overall state population has increased by 53,700 (Manuel Krogstad, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020).

In the state, 73% of Latinos graduate from high school, a rate much lower than their White peers who have a 90 percent graduation rate. In addition, Latinos are two times more likely to drop out of high school. Latinos that enroll in higher education are three times more likely to require additional semester(s) to work towards graduating (NY STATE - Graduation Rate Data; New York State Education Department Data Site, 2018).

College readiness is also an issue. A 2013 report, "Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among Black and Latino Males in New York City," found that only 11 percent of Latino males graduate from high school 'college-ready.' Furthermore, only 18 percent of Latino males attained an associate degree or higher compared to 41 percent of students overall (Roach, 2013; Villavicencio et al., 2013).

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) is the largest school district in Monroe County, serving the largest population of Latino students. The district's overall graduation rate is 68 percent, 66 percent for Latino students, and only 52 percent for English Language Learners (ELL) (RCSD Graduation Data 2020). The massive influx of Latino students from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, earthquakes, and economic recession means the Latino education crisis continues to be an urgent issue.

The increasing focus on ELL students and the focus on the transition of Spanish-speaking students from Puerto Rico is

## EDUCATION (continued)

encouraging. This focus was one of the recommendations made by the Latino Education Task Force over 11 years ago for all Spanish-speaking bilingual students. In this moment of crisis, and with new leadership at the RCSD focusing on these issues, the district must ensure the best outcomes for our Latino students.

The key to success in this area will be for the RCSD to continue to improve and heal a tenuous relationship with the Bilingual Education Council (BEC). A landmark July 27, 1972, agreement between the RCSD and Latino community leaders outlined a plan detailing how the district would work with Latino community leaders to improve the diversity of staffing, the services provided to Latino students, and increase the transparency and consistency in how these decisions are made and instituted. As a result, the Bilingual Education Council (BEC) was created as the representative group of Latinos from the community to work with the RCSD in accomplishing these goals.

The 1972 agreement is the foundation of Latino educational advocacy in Rochester. It was later codified and reinforced in 1986 and 1999, "Access for Hispanics to Opportunities Results In Achievement" (AHORA) reports. In addition, in 2008, the University of Rochester and Ibero American Action League released a study, "School Experiences of Latina/o Students: A Community-Based Study of Resources, Challenges and Successes," which built on our research even further (Marquez Kiyama & Harris, 2010).

A report by the University of Rochester Warner School of Graduate Education and Human Development in 2010 builds on the AHORA report and the 1972 Ad Hoc Committee for Justice's work. Collectively the 2010 study represents almost 50 years of research and documentation on the concerns, issues, and potential solutions regarding the lack of educational opportunity and attainment for Latino students in the district. Unfortunately, while it is clear that the RCSD and the community have received and welcomed the report and its recommendations, it is not readily evident that the necessary ownership, commitment, and sense of urgency exists.

As the Latino community's education advocacy needs grow, so must our footprint. Towns such as Greece, Irondequoit, Gates, and Webster have seen increases in their Latino populations resulting in more Latino students in their schools. It will be vital to create and develop relationships with Monroe County school districts to ensure Latino students and families have the support they need to fight for a sound basic education (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, n.d.).

Building on the partnership and support the Latino Education Task Force (LETF) has created with Eugenio María de Hostos Charter School, it will be essential to advocate for Latino student needs in charter schools.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### United States:

- We join the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), Association for Equality and Excellence in Education (AEEE), and UnidosUS in supporting the Biden Administration's and House of Representatives' FY2022 funding bill to provide a \$200.8 million increase in support for federal TRIO programs to serve low-income/first-generation students, unemployed adults, and students with disabilities (COE, 2021; Unidos U.S., 2019).
- We support UnidosUS' advocacy for legislation that invests in early education to increase access to and improve the quality of early childhood education programs, helping children acquire the necessary developmental skills to succeed in school and beyond. We also support UnidosUS's advocacy for policies that emphasize the benefits of children's dual language development. We believe that TRIO programs should be fully funded to increase access and foster children's social and academic development from low-income and rural communities.
- We join UnidosUS and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) to call on Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) to safeguard affordability, minimize debt burdens, and hold post-secondary systems accountable for the increased retention and graduation of Latino students. In

## EDUCATION (continued)

addition, we support the continued funding for programs that serve Latino students by providing pathways and support to postsecondary education such as TRIO, GEAR UP, HEP, and CAMP (COE, 2021; Unidos U.S., 2019).

### New York:

- Increase support and funding for the Higher Education Opportunity Programs (HEOP/EOP).
- Funding should be increased for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to support all New York state students, especially students covered under the New York State Dream Act.
- As articulated in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE), New York State's educational funding formula needs repair. As a result, we do not have funding to offer an adequate education for our students. To fix this issue, we join advocacy groups across New York state in support of aggressive revenue raisers:
  - Support of a Billionaires' Tax, which outlaws unjust tax shelters and only applies to the 118 New York State billionaires now holding \$566 billion in wealth. Senate Bill S.8277 sponsored by New York State Senator Jessica Ramos, and Assembly Bill A.10414 sponsored by Assemblywoman Carmen N. De La Rosa.
  - Support for an Ultra-Millionaires' Tax represented in Senate Bill S.7378, sponsored by New York State Senator Robert Jackson and Assembly Bill A.10363 sponsored by New York State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal.
  - Support for an Ultra-Millionaires' Tax represented in Senate Bill S.8164 sponsored by New York Senator Rachel May and Assembly Bill A.10364 sponsored by Assemblymember Aravella Simotas.
  - Support for an Ultra-Millionaires' Tax represented in Senate Bill S.8329 sponsored by New York State Senator Shelley Mayer and Assembly Bill A.10450 sponsored by New York State Assemblymember Deborah Glick.
  - Support a Pied-A-Terre Tax, which creates a sliding-scale tax on non-primary residences worth over \$5 million. Senate Bill S.44 sponsored by New York State Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblymember Deborah Glick.

### Monroe County:

- Rochester City School District (RCSD)

- Creation of a Department of Latino Studies with a director or administrator in the RCSD. This department would address Latino students' needs on a cultural and curricular level with champions having decision-making capabilities. A department and cabinet-level Director of Latino Studies should be established, accountable for ensuring Latino student needs are addressed.
- Development and implementation of a Strategic Plan for Latino achievement alignment. Latinos' significant and authentic needs make it imperative that we have an aligned plan in Latino studies and bilingual education. A strategic plan to add structure and direction for both areas across the district should be created.
- Newcomer program for Latino students. Latino students are not the focus of the Rochester International Academy. Instead, our largest schools have become placement centers for newcomer Latino students with no programs to address their unique needs. The district needs a Latino newcomer program.
- Bilingual Education Council (BEC). The BEC strongly believes the lack of academic achievement for ELLs is due to the lack of representation at the highest leadership level. Therefore, the district needs an Executive Director for the Bilingual Department.

## CONCLUSION

As a community, we must seriously consider the concerns and potential solutions submitted here regarding Latino educational needs. While our summary represents close to 50 years of research and advocacy to improve the state of Latino education, these efforts have not always been met with support and action from key decision-makers. This inaction is exemplified in the continued failure to address Latino educational concerns since publishing the 2010 Education Task Force Report. Therefore, we implore all community members to join us in advocating for change on behalf of the Latino community by supporting the recommendations we present in this summary.

## HEALTH

*Latinos experience health disparities related to their social, economic and physical environment, the lack of health insurance, and language and cultural barriers. These factors have a dramatic impact on the Latinx community in the Rochester region. This will not be reversed without large-scale support from the area's health and governmental institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has only served to increase these health disparities.*

### BACKGROUND

Nationally, the leading causes of illness and death among Latinos include heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries (accidents), stroke, and diabetes. Latinos are also disproportionately impacted by asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, HIV/AIDS, obesity, suicide, and liver disease. For the most part, these conditions are preventable.

In the U.S., Latinos constitute 18 percent of the population. In Monroe County and the surrounding area, the Latino population has “more than tripled since 1980” and grown to more than 80,000 by 2020. This was driven in part by people displaced when Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico in 2017. Within the area's Latino community, 69% of Latinos in Monroe County are of Puerto Rican heritage. A majority of Latino (61%) residents in Monroe County live in the City of Rochester.

**Health is more than healthcare** (see figure below about how healthcare is a relatively small contributor to population health): The social, economic, and physical environment in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age are social determinants of health that have a profound effect on health and well-being and are commonly outside the healthcare delivery realm.

Poverty limits access to healthy food, stable housing, safe neighborhoods, and opportunities for physical activity. In Monroe County (34%) and in the City of Rochester (43%) live below the federal poverty line.

- More than 33 percent of City of Rochester residents reported experiencing food insecurity, compared to 23

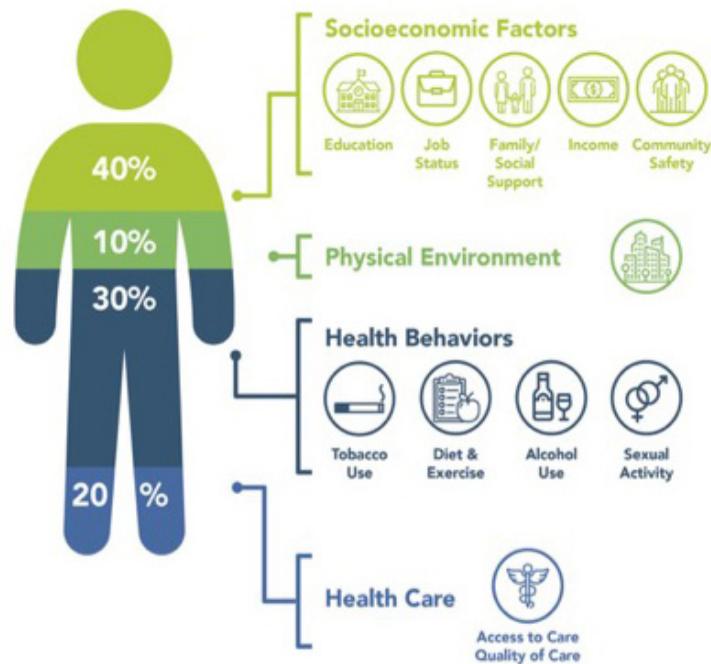
percent for Monroe County overall.

- More than 60 percent of Monroe County Latino residents do not own their homes and 40 percent of these residents don't consider available rental options to be affordable.

- The majority of the 575 mappable drug arrests in Rochester in 2019 were in the Project Clean area (in the predominantly Latino El Camino Neighborhood) And 60 percent of all documented heroin-related contacts over a 3-year period and one-third of the 908 opioid-related overdoses in 2017 occurred near the North Clinton Avenue/Clifford Avenue intersection. Exposure to syringes creates environmental conditions that, among other things, limits the ability of residents to stay physically active. For example, needles are found in the Samuel Torres Park playground on a daily basis.

Access to healthcare is also shaped by social determinants of health. Latinos in our region are more likely to lack health insurance coverage. This represents a significant barrier to the access of preventive and other medical services. At the same time, Latinos who do not speak English as their primary language face additional hurdles in navigating and accessing healthcare and other services.

Data from 2017 shows that 96,003 individuals in Monroe County, or 14% of the population, speak a language other than English. Of these, 42 percent (40,572) speak Spanish. Of those that speak Spanish, 40% speak English “less than very well.” The figure on the next page depicts how healthcare is a relatively small contributor to population health.



Source: The Bridgespan Group; adapted from the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's County Health Rankings Model

CommonGroundHealth.org

### COVID-19 Among Latinos

Latinos are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in the United States and locally. As the pandemic continues a new reality is taking shape for vulnerable populations. The pandemic will continue to have a dramatic impact on the Latino community, especially among isolated seniors, immigrant communities, Latino families and single-parent households, those currently living paycheck to paycheck, and those with language barriers. For many Latinos, this disruption of normal lives has brought them further away from the things they cherish, spiritually, educationally, culturally, and socially. In Monroe County, the number of cases by race and ethnicity was not shared initially. Once data was released, significant racial and ethnic disparities became evident. Specifically, Latinos were more than twice as likely to have COVID-19, three times more likely to be hospitalized and 2.5 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the non-Latino white population.

We believe the observed disparities in COVID-19 are the

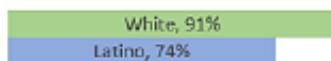
reflection of long-standing social inequalities. The conditions in which many Latinos work and live increased the likelihood of contracting COVID-19.

Many Latinos live in large, multifamily households rely on public transportation, work providing essential services preventing them from working remotely, and did not initially have access to COVID-19 information in Spanish. In addition, poor access to health care and a high prevalence of underlying health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure put them at high risk for severe COVID-19 and death.

In the current COVID-19 context, the health group urges that attention be focused on the increase in unemployment and subsequent health insurance loss due to the economic consequences of the pandemic that, again, are disproportionately shouldered by Latino and other minority groups. Latinos have experienced 12.8 percent of the job losses from February to July 2020 compared to 8.9 percent for white non-Latinos. <sup>1</sup>

## HEALTH (continued)

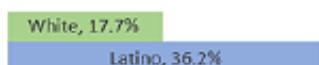
Monroe County graduation rate, 2019<sup>1</sup>



Finger Lakes unemployment rate, 2018<sup>2</sup>



Finger Lakes adults who've experienced street violence, 2018<sup>3</sup>



Finger Lakes adults who do not feel safe in their neighborhoods, 2018<sup>3</sup>



Sources:

1. New York State Education Department
2. New York State Department of Labor
3. Common Ground Health, My Health Story survey, 2018

### RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend taking a systems approach to health disparities. We expect actions suggested by all the other groups in this initiative will address the structural inequities that ultimately contribute to the heavy burden of disease in the Latino community and beyond. From a social determinants of health perspective, social and economic policies are health policies.<sup>2</sup>

The following recommendations are more specifically (but not exclusively) related to health issues.

**1. Form partnerships:** among health systems, payers, medical providers, social service providers, and community-based organizations to develop innovative collaborations that address

the social determinants of health (such as transportation, housing, and food security, in addition to medical needs). Spending on social services has a stronger effect on health outcomes than spending in medical care (higher ratio of social to health spending).<sup>3</sup> Integrating social services into health care delivery can improve health and reduce spending.<sup>4</sup> The United Way Systems Integration Project is an ideal context for the development of such collaborations.

#### 2. Language access/Cultural competency-health literacy:

Service delivery systems in health care and human services must be redesigned to offer person-centered services that consider the cultural distinctions and language needs of each person. This includes understanding the demographics of the populations served by organizations - including preferred language, health literacy needs, and other cultural nuances.

#### Culturally responsive service provider criteria include:

- Providing appropriate interpreting services
- Having health services and programs provided to program participants in their preferred language
- Tracking demographic data and responding to demographic trends.<sup>5</sup>
- Having leadership and staff are representative of the populations served
- Evaluating its cultural competency, diversity, and inclusion based training required for staff and leadership
- Having a welcoming environment: signage in the preferred language, advertising material reflective of diverse communities, friendly staff, etc.
- Employing bi-cultural staff at all levels of service delivery - staff that speak the language and are from the region where the language is spoken
- Translation of organization's website into Spanish

**3. Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders.** The Latino community faces severe vulnerability to mental health illnesses and substance-use disorders in terms of access to treatment and the quality of that treatment. Service delivery systems must address these disparities from a mental health

## HEALTH (continued)

services standpoint and through a public health approach. This entails increasing cultural competency within mental health and substance-use disorder delivery services, decreasing language barriers, and fostering diversified, inclusive environments.

Culturally competent treatment systems promote safety, care, and understanding of the experiences and identity of the community. These systems also reduce the stigma surrounding the seeking of treatment of behavioral disorders. To increase access to health insurance and coverage, healthcare delivery systems must employ a biopsychosocial approach to health and treatment. This approach includes the expansion of services and programs that advance health literacy and attend to the emotional, mental, and physical needs of the Latino community.

The expansion of these services and programs must be implemented through a culturally competent understanding of the socioeconomic challenges that face the Latino community in regards to the inability to cover out-of-pocket expenses and having stable access to treatment centers.

The comprehensive approach we are recommending is supported by the World Health Organization Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan.<sup>6</sup> A feasible and innovative strategy to reduce the gap in access to and quality of mental health services is the implementation of community-based interventions such as the training and ongoing supervision of non-specialized workers (such as peer recovery coaches) in coordination with primary and specialist care.<sup>7,8</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Without large scale action, funding, and partnerships, we will continue to see the Latinx community needlessly suffer health issues for lack of access. We encourage the major players in the health sector to engage with the Latinx community to solve these serious issues. No one should die for lack of access in a region with so many health resources.

Acknowledgment: This report was prepared in collaboration

with Melissa Pennise and Jeffrey Freeman, staff members of Common Ground Health.

#### Sources:

1. USA Facts. <https://usafacts.org/articles/unemployment-race-coronavirus-income-great-recession-job-loss-2020/>. Accessed October 11, 2020.
2. The health effects of social and economic policy: the promise and challenge for research and policy. In: House J, Schoeni, R., Kaplan, G., Pollack, H., ed. Making Americans Healthier: Social and Economic Policy as Health Policy. New York: Russell Sage Foundation; 2008:3-26.
3. National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health. Getting to Health And Well-Being For The Nation: A Call For Cross-Sector Action To Impact The Social Determinants Of Health. 2018 <https://doi.org/10.26099/7avy-fc29> \http://www.nasdo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NASDOH-White-Paper.pdf. Accessed.
4. Commonwealth Fund, 2019 <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2019/evolving-roadmap-address-social-determinants-health>. In.
5. National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care: A Blueprint for Advancing and Sustaining CLAS Policy and Practice. Office of Minority Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2013.
6. WHO. Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020. World Health Organization Press. 2013.
7. The Lancet Commission on global mental health and sustainable development. Lancet 2018;392:1553-1598.
8. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: The Opioid Crisis and the Hispanic/Latino Population: An Urgent Issue. Publication No. PEP20-05-02-002. Office of Behavioral Health Equity. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2020.

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY

*This report focuses on highlighting disparities in the LGBTQI+ Latinx community and recommendations to create a more equitable future.*

### BACKGROUND

Latina/Latino/Latinx (in this executive summary inclusively referred to as Latinx herein) LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other identities), individuals' daily life is shaped by homophobia and transphobia in a heteronormative society.

LGBTQI+ individuals do not experience discrimination, harassment, and prejudice in a uniform manner. Understanding how individuals of intersecting identities, Latinx and LGBTQI+, are facing more challenges in an increasingly divisive era with racism and anti-immigrant sentiment on the rise is crucial. What is unique about people who are both Latinx and LGBTQI+, is that they are subject to the social inequities that impact both groups, such as homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, language barriers, racism and more.

As Kimberle Crenshaw (Columbia Law Professor, civil rights advocate, and a leading scholar of critical race theory) said in 1989: "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It is not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQI+ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things."

Because the LGBTQI+ identity is not visible to others, it is easy to deny or ignore that aspect of self. Multiple struggles affect the lives of LGBTQI+ Latinx individuals because:

- They may have increased difficulties due to the multiple marginalized identities.
- They may feel that one aspect of their identity conflicts with another part (or parts) of their identity.
- They may feel misunderstood by each sub-group as they consider both parts equally important.

**Latinx individuals need culturally competent healthcare.** A Pew Hispanic Center Study reported that half of the Latinos who did not seek medical care in over 1 year had a high-school education, a third were American-born, and 45 percent had health insurance. So, what is the disconnect?

Many Latinx individuals report discomfort with medical providers based on a lack of relationship/engagement/communication with their provider, or report feeling as though they were not listened to or understood by their medical provider. Many Latinx individuals also rely heavily on natural or homeopathic medicine that is tied into beliefs about religion and/ or culture.

Without an understanding of Latino people's beliefs about nutrition, the causes of illness, and the Latinx tradition of medicine, doctors can be dismissive of cultural beliefs and valued tradition and create mistrust by ignoring the need of relationship and trust between doctor and patient.

LGBTQI+ Latinx individuals need providers who are aware of the specific needs of their patients. Community health organizations can help to educate private practices, clinics, and hospitals to provide a more welcoming, safe, judgment-free environment. Providers need to be aware of the specific needs of LGBTQI+ patients to provide more comprehensive care. According to a 2014 report from the Census Bureau, the Latinx community is least likely to seek medical care and least engaged in primary care/preventative medical care. Over 30 percent of Latinx individuals are uninsured, and Latinx people remain the most likely to work low-wage jobs that do not offer insurance or are self-employed and cannot afford insurance.

Cost remains a barrier to Latinx people fully engaging in healthcare. For the trans community in particular, life-saving gender confirmation surgeries and hormone therapy are often unattainable because of cost and need of aftercare. Without insurance that covers these costs, many trans individuals must

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY (continued)

forgo needed medical treatment, or fundraise before being able to complete these surgeries/treatments.

**Affordable access to PEP, PrEP, and HIV/STI testing.** HIV continues to be an epidemic in the Latinx community. According to the Centers for Disease Control's research into HIV diagnoses among Hispanics/Latinos in 50 states from 2015-2016, HIV infection is up 6 percent in the Latinx population.

What is particularly alarming about this study is that HIV infection is down in every category of transmission amongst the Latinx population except Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) sexual contact. HIV infection in fact is down 39 percent amongst those that use injection drugs, and down by 20 percent in the heterosexual sexual contact category. However, amongst MSM in the Latinx population, HIV infection has increased by 21 percent.

This jump in new infections is the sole cause of the overall 6 percent spike in HIV diagnoses for the Latinx community. Rochester, N.Y. has the second highest HIV infection rate in New York State (NYC having the highest). According to the Feb. 17, 2017 City of Rochester Health Equity Report, the number of cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis reported in Monroe County in 2016 were over 50 percent higher than expected according to population for all three infections. Rochester continues to see a steady rise in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) yearly.

Affordable access to PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), and HIV/STI testing were highlighted in New York State's End the Epidemic plan, which seeks to achieve the first ever decrease in HIV prevalence in New York State by the end of 2020. PrEP is a once a day pill regimen of either Truvada or Descovy which, when taken daily and used in combination with condoms, reduces the chance of HIV transmission by up to 99.7 percent. PEP is an antiretroviral regimen used within 72 hours of a potential HIV exposure that greatly reduces the chances of HIV seroconversion after HIV exposure. It is vital that PEP and PrEP be available to Latinx LGBTQI+ individuals without the barrier of cost.

FQHCs (Federally Qualified Health Center) and other community health centers are vital in this access and many rely on funding to provide free access to HIV/STI testing and clinical programs that integrate sexual health counseling and PrEP access. These organizations also typically find ways to provide PrEP at the lowest cost possible, often for free. NYS bill: S34A, requires insurance coverage of PrEP.

For many who don't have insurance the only options are community health centers and Medicaid for receiving services like PrEP and PeP. HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration)-supported health centers and look-alikes, Ryan White clinics and State AIDS Drug Assistance programs that participate in the Medicaid Drug Rebate Program and the 340B Drug Pricing Program that both require drug manufacturers to provide significant discounts on their products.

Under Medicaid, these discounts are provided in the form of rebates on covered outpatient drugs paid for by state Medicaid programs (§ 1927 of the Social Security Act). Under 340B, manufacturers are required to sell drugs to participating providers, known as covered entities, at a significantly reduced price. Since the recent budget shortages in the state, the 340B program has been set to be cut back. This would greatly impact community health centers and their ability to provide services to low-income communities. We need to assure that programs like this are not in constant threat but here to stay.

There needs to be better support to work on learning of struggles faced by the LGBTQI+ community, as well as unlearning misconceptions brought on through cultural and historical context. We each can contribute to this work on an individual level by talking to our Latinx friends and family about LGBTQI+ topics and helping our loved ones acknowledge some of the homophobia and transphobia that may have been passed down as jokes, comments, and "opinions." But on a larger scale, those in our community who have the ability to teach and influence others about the LGBTQI+ community in our organizations, and then pass that knowledge on to the Latino community at-large.

This "learning and unlearning" process may include panels

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY (continued)

hosted by Latino organizations that highlight LGBTQI+ issues, forums that seek to hear the voices and concerns of LGBTQI+ people in Rochester's Latinx community, cultural competency training that focuses on LGBTQI+ for local Latino organizations, and advocacy for sexual health education in schools that includes LGBTQI+ sexual health information. Fear and stigma cause a lack of safe engagement in healthcare for many LGBTQI+ Latinx individuals, but education and leadership amongst Latino organizations can begin to break these stigmas.

**Systems integration - healthcare transportation.** The health of its infrastructure mirrors the health of a community. Access and engagement requires more than Spanish interpreters in clinics or cultural competency in the healthcare sphere. LGBTQI+ Latinx people, who disproportionately live in poverty in Rochester, are more dependent on public transportation to get to a healthcare center. Without readily accessible and reliable public transportation, many LGBTQI+ Latinx folks cannot make it to medical appointments. For many who are undocumented, medical care is avoided altogether for fear of deportation.

Poverty in general makes it difficult for patients to attain, and then remain in primary care. We must make the connections to see the ways in which community structural issues detrimentally impact the LGBTQI+ Latinx community and advocate for those things that will help alleviate some of these undue barriers and burdens.

**Reforming the way LGBTQI+ identities are criminalized in the criminal justice system.** Currently transgender individuals are often profiled by law enforcement. In response to their gender expression, officers expect them to be participating in prostitution.

The bill titled "An act to repeal section 240.37 of the penal law [...]" nicknamed the "Walking While Trans" bill has brought this issue to light from a legislative standpoint. Section 240.37 of the penal law, which refers to the prohibition of loitering for the purpose of prostitution, creates an environment for law enforcement to participate in legally sanctioned profiling of

transgender individuals.

This issue is compounded in the sense that the vast majority of parole and post release supervision conditions includes the inability for an individual to have police contact, a violation that can result in an individual being sent back to prison. Walking While Trans could possibly be a key factor to the recidivism rate for trans individuals. "66 percent of currently incarcerated LGBTQI+ Black and Latinx people had been arrested before age 18 compared to 51 percent of non-Latino white LGBTQI+ people," a clear indication that there is a race-based factor that has not been explicitly addressed within the context of LGBTQI+ individuals and the criminal justice system (Movement Advancement Project, 2016).

One person states, "I just be walking through an area and the cops just stops me and assume I be prostituting and I don't, just because I'm transgender" (Hearts on a Wire Collective, 2011).

There is a lack of research and empirical data as it relates specifically to Latinx identified trans individuals. Supporting bills such as bill # A.8070B & S.6066B, which is nicknamed the "Hate Crime Analysis and Review Act", would support the intentional work of data collection for the purposes of developing a database to better analyze how race and trans status intersects in regards to equity. The current lack of data around the subject leaves this community with an inability to protect themselves from this sort of profiling that, all too often, leads to the conditions of their parole or post release supervision being violated unjustly.

**Push legislation around having trans inmates in facilities (both correctional and post release residential) that align with their gender identity.** It is not uncommon to find that transgender individuals are placed in facilities based on the gender that they were assigned at birth as opposed to the gender that they identify with. Carmen Guerrero is only one of many names that has been immortalized after she was killed in prison after she was placed in a facility that did not align with her gender identity.

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY (continued)

ABC News writes, “A California inmate was sentenced to death Thursday for the 2013 killing of his transgender cellmate in a shocking case that shined a light on the dangers of sexual assault and violence trans people face when they are not housed according to their gender identity” (ABC News, 2019).

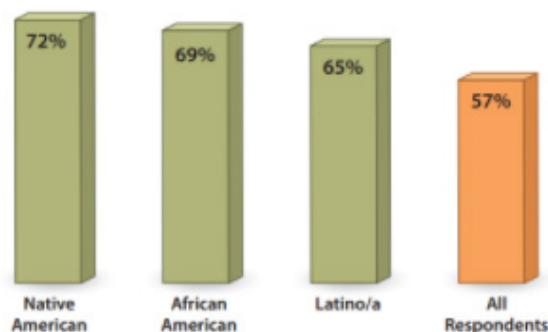
Without assurance that they will be protected by the staff in the facility they are housed in, transgender individuals are often forced to express a gender that is outside of the gender they identify with. By supporting bill # A.5257\* which would require that incarcerated Transgender/Non-Conforming/Non-Binary (TGNCNB) people are housed and provided with services consistent with their gender identities, we can put an end to this inequitable treatment of trans inmates that puts their lives at serious risk. It is essential to the safety of individuals to push legislation that forces county, state, and federal correctional facilities and post-release residential facilities to place individuals according to the gender they identify with.

### **Have advocates/equity officers in schools, juvenile detentions centers, correctional facilities, and post-release residential facilities for trans Latinx individuals for their equity and safety.**

It is reported that within a school setting, those who identify as being a part of the LGBTQI+ community have a higher chance of feeling unsafe. There is a standing disconnect as it relates to disciplinary practices of trans identified Latinx folks being that zero tolerance policies disproportionately impact people of color, in addition to harsher disciplinary practices having been used against LGBTQI+ identified youth (Movement Advancement Project, 2016).

According to Unjust: How The Broken Criminal Justice System Fails LGBT People of Color, Black and LGBTQI+, Latinx identified youth reported higher rates of harassment and violence because of their race and ethnicity compared to non-Black and Latinx identified LGBTQI+ youth. Furthermore, research points to the fact that “LGBT people of color experience high rates of discrimination in employment, housing, and when accessing social services based on their race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and immigration status” (Movement Advancement Project, 2016). Once those in the LGBTQI+ community, specifically trans

Percent of LGBTQ Young Adults Ages 18-24 Reporting Being Sent to Detention in Middle or High School, By Race/Ethnicity



Source: Lambda Legal, “Protected and Served? School Security, Policing and Discipline,” accessed January 7, 2016.

people, are incarcerated, the situation becomes more dire. By funding equity officers in schools, juvenile detention centers, corrections facilities, and post release programs, we create a protective layer for trans individuals against systemic inequities, abuse and assault, and provide an opportunity for social and emotional support for these individuals.

### **Advocate for the end of inequitable restrictions after an inmate is released as well as inequitable conditions in the parole and post release supervision programs that disproportionately impacts trans individuals (i.e. prohibition of police contact, travel restrictions, and prohibitions from receiving government assistance).**

It is essential to understand the difference between parole and post-release supervision. The two are very similar in nature, both referring to the monitoring of inmates after they are released from a local, state, or federal correctional facility. Parole indicates that the person in question is released before the entirety of their sentence is served, and will serve out the remainder of their time under community supervision. Post-release supervision is a sentence of correctional supervision in the community that is put in place in addition to the original sentence, that occurs after the original sentence is served in its entirety. “A court determines how long the sentence will be and the board, or local jurisdiction, determines the conditions

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY (continued)

which must be met by the offender during the sentence (Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision, 2006).

**Police contact:** The vast majority of parole and post release supervision conditions includes the inability for an individual to have police contact, a violation that can land an individual back in prison. With the Walking While Trans bill in effect, this creates an environment where trans people can have their parole or post release supervision violated due to a prejudicial assumption that they are participating in prostitution due to their gender expression.

**Travel restriction:** Trans individuals may not be able to access competent, respectful medical care without traveling. Restrictions such as these may often indirectly prohibit a trans person to their right to adequate medical care. In 2018, a federal district court ruled that withholding needed medical care for inmates was a violation of the 8th Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment. This travel restriction poses a similar barrier for trans individuals by providing an added barrier to receiving respectful, competent medical care.

**Government assistance:** In addition, research shows that “LGBTQI+ identified people of color are more likely to rely on public assistance. The prohibitions for individuals with a criminal record from receiving this kind of government assistance likely has a disproportionate effect on the ability of trans identified people of color to feed themselves and their families” (Movement Advancement Project, 2016).

**Advocate for adequate health services for trans inmates:** transgender people in correctional facilities, face difficulty accessing competent, appropriate transition-related health care. A transgender woman named Adree Edmo who was incarcerated filed a civil rights lawsuit to get the gender dysphoria care that she was refused in prison. “In December 2018, a federal district court ruled in favor of Edmo, citing 8th Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment—in this instance, withholding needed medical care” (American Medical Association, 2019).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**1. Addressing and Eliminating Health Disparities for the LGBTQI+ Latinx Community** by providing low cost, culturally competent healthcare in a patient’s first language.

- a. Support NYS proposed bill S6797 that requires diversity, inclusion, and bias training for physicians, physician assistants and nurses as part of the continuing medical education requirements such training shall be a biennial requirement.

**2. Decriminalizing LGBTQI+ identities in the Criminal Justice System.**

- a. Repeal the bill titled “An act to repeal section 240.37 of the penal law [...]” nicknamed the “Walking While Trans” bill
- b. Supporting bill # A.5257\* which would require that incarcerated Transgender/Non-Conforming/Non-Binary (TGNCNB) people are housed and provided with services consistent with their gender identities. It is essential to the safety of individuals to push legislation that forces county, state, and federal correctional facilities and post-release residential facilities to place individuals according to the gender they identify with.

**3. PEP and PrEP need to be available to the LGBTQI+ Latinx community without the barrier of cost.**

- a. Ensure that rebates on covered outpatient drugs are covered and the 340B program remains on the state budget.

**4. Better Data Collection inclusive of intersecting identities to inform solutions and support for LGBTQI+ Latinx Individuals.**

In order to address the inequities faced by LGBTQI+ Latinx individuals, there needs to be an intersectional approach to solutions and support for legislation, policies and processes that are inclusive across race and ethnicity, gender identity and expressions, sexual orientation, immigration status, language access, economic justice and more. To make meaningful progress in improving the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals, policymakers, researchers, advocates, and service providers need more, and better data related to the experiences and needs of the LGBTQI+ population. Sexual orientation and gender identity data are a critical component of accurately assessing the current problems that LGBTQI+

## THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY (continued)

people experience. What is needed is the collection and analysis of LGBTQI+ data that represents and serves queer lives. This requires data that challenges the heteronormative and cis-normative logics that currently structure notions of demographics and data in general.

### Other recommendations:

**1. The creation of affordable assisted living facilities for the LGBTQI+ older adult community that affirms their identities and provides better and more responsive attention and care.**

**2. Developing and adopting K-12 comprehensive sex education for young people:** Supporting the amendment of education law by adding a new section 804-e 2 that will ensure public and charter schools will include, as an integral part of education in grades kindergarten through twelve, comprehensive sexuality education.

**3. Support the work of local LGBTQI+ Affirming Organizations such as:**

- a. The MOCHA Center (Founded in 1996 as the Men of Color Health Awareness Project) is a community center specializing in the well-being of LGBTQI+ communities of color. The center is under the Trillium Health umbrella.
- b. Provide support and assistance to the Out Alliance in their restructuring efforts.
- c. Black Pride

## CONCLUSION

Difficulty emerges when we as a people have an inability to understand how marginalized intersecting identities in the LGBTQI+ Latinx community creates compounding oppression for individuals. Together, it is our duty to be intentional in dismantling the current system in place by advocating for and supporting the facilitation of change in our community. We pledge elected officials, policy makers, and local leaders to address funding at the local and state level as well as addressing inequities in the law for LGBTQI+ Latinx individuals to feel supported and free from bias, harassment, and discrimination.

### Sources:

<https://www.health.com/mind-body/lgbtq-health-disparities>  
<https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/health-wellness/lgbt-disparities>  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/08/13/iv-sources-of-information-on-health-and-health-care/>  
<https://nbclatino.com/2012/10/01/hispanics-are-less-likely-to-see-a-doctor-says-census/>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/hispaniclatinos/index.html>  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/minority/docs/mcd\\_reports/monroe\\_county\\_city\\_of\\_rochester.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/minority/docs/mcd_reports/monroe_county_city_of_rochester.pdf)  
[https://health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/ending\\_the\\_epidemic/](https://health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/ending_the_epidemic/)  
 American Medical Association. Transgender prisoners have fundamental right to appropriate care. 2019  
 ABC News. Man sentenced to death for killing transgender cellmate. 2019  
 Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision, Administrative Overview. 2006  
 Hearts on a Wire Collective, This is a Prison, Glitter is Not Allowed: Experiences of Trans and Gender Variant People in Pennsylvania's Prison Systems. 2011  
 Movement Advancement Project. Unjust: How the Broken Criminal Justice System Fails LGBT People of Color. 2016  
<https://www.trilliumhealth.org/en/288/mocha>  
<https://outalliance.org/>

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

*This report focuses on highlighting opportunities to provide positive youth development for youth with a focus on mentoring, entrepreneurial and workforce development, and creating geographical bridges for Latinx youth.*

### BACKGROUND

The Latinx Leaders Roundtable's Positive Youth Development Committee was charged with documenting the current status of Latino youth in the Greater Rochester Area. The target population were Latino youth ages 12 to 24. The survey was designed to help determine Latino youth needs and perceptions related to the need for resources post COVID-19, cultural awareness, social-emotional supports, educational opportunities, community-personal/physical well-being. The information will be used to empower Latino youth and stakeholders to advocate for resources and legislation on local, state, and federal levels to meet the needs of this growing population.

The survey responses revealed the top three concerns to be education, family and overall wellness/health. Urban and suburban youth selected the same top themes, in slightly different order:

- Urban: family, education, wellness/health
- Suburban: education, family, wellness/health.

These three topics lend themselves to developing a community-based web of support for Latino youth.

"The web of support represents the importance of understanding our youth and providing a support structure that is focused, committed, and determined to meet their needs, goals, and dreams. The web concept is personal and individual. To be successful, it needs to be developed for each student based on their internal and external motivation and inspiration to succeed. The center of the web of support is the individual student. Surrounding the student is a support structure built around their interest and key stakeholders, who are ultimately fundamental to their success." Cotto, Carlos M. Jr., "The Impact of Interscholastic Athletic Participation on Academic Success" (2016). Education Doctoral. Paper 295.

The survey highlighted the need to focus on the mental and physical wellbeing of young people. Latino youth may be hesitant to seek health-related support due to mistrust of the medical community and perceived discrimination. "Research suggests that feelings of systemic marginalization or exclusion could negatively affect Latinx youth's mental health and socioemotional development. Accumulated exposure to discrimination contributes to higher levels of stress, which puts Latinx adolescents at increased risk for mental health difficulties such as lower self-esteem, more depressive symptoms, higher levels of stress, and increased substance use (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Hovey & King, 1996; Romero, Martinez, & Carvajal, 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009)." Creating a web of support and breaking down the wall of marginalization will establish a healthy common ground for Latinx youth to empower themselves in a caring environment.

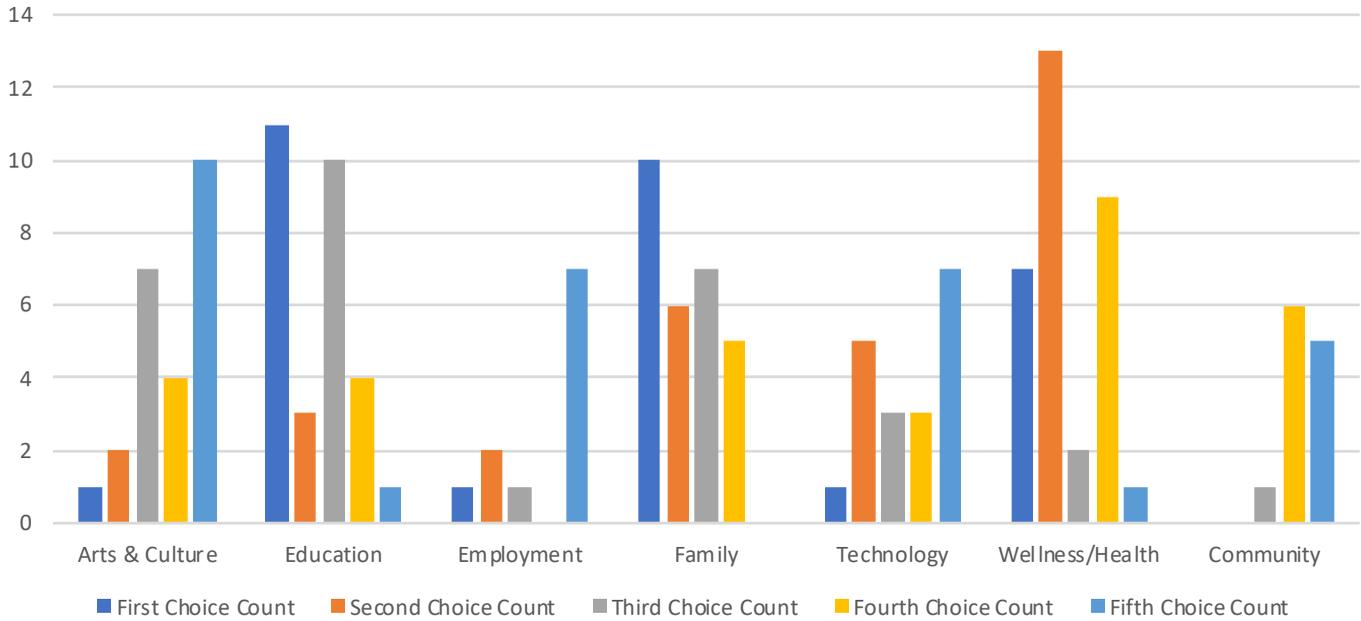
The Positive Youth Development survey respondents were from urban as well as suburban communities. Latinx is a term that includes all those of Latin American descent living in the U.S. Rochester has historically been a Caribbean hub; however, this survey indicates the growth of Mexican youth in suburban areas. A 2019 study in Rochester reveals what we consider replicable findings regardless of geographic location, based on the similar responses to the survey for both urban and rural youth.

Invest in Safe Community Spaces Youth centers were a signature strength of the urban neighborhoods of Rochester. Time and again, youth highlighted the safety and comfort they derived from these community spaces. The centers were primarily city-run and thus represent a vital investment Rochester has made to protect the lives of children and adolescents in these communities.

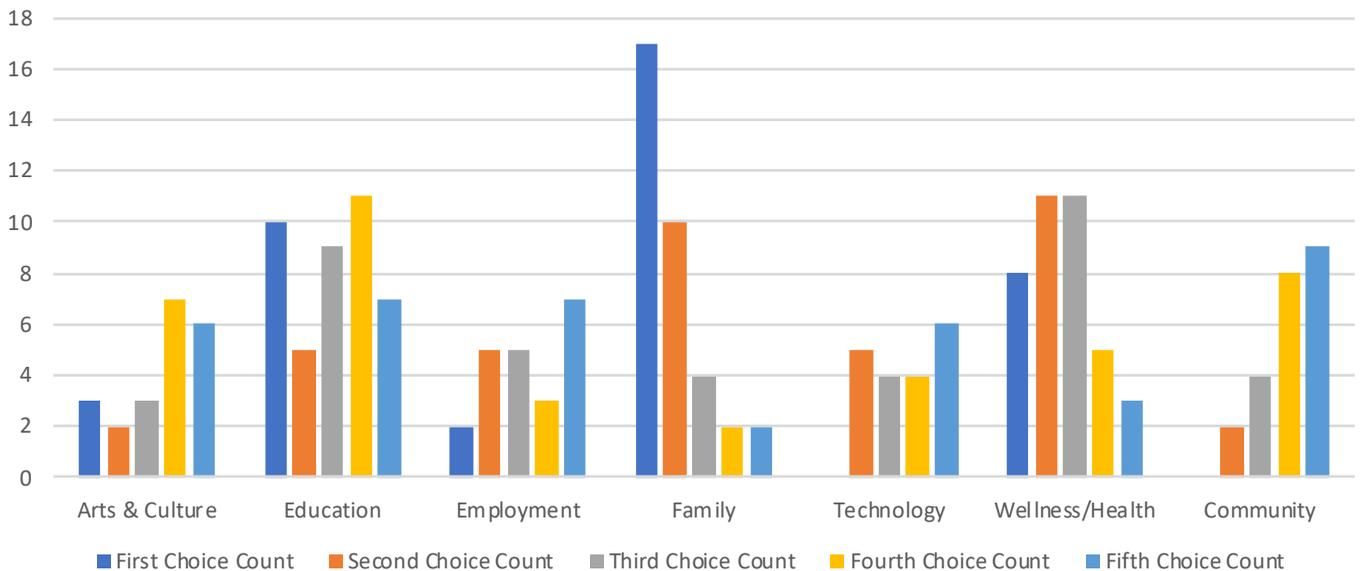
Besides youth community and recreation centers, other community institutions such as churches and nonprofit organizations could offer similar spaces for youth. Regardless of where they are located, our findings underline the value of safe

# POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (continued)

### Suburban Youth Survey Results



### Urban Youth Survey Results



## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (continued)

spaces where youth can interact with peers, play sports, and just hang out (see also Hirsch, 2005).

These spaces also have potential to offer empowerment programming and other civic opportunities, but youth should have voice in structuring these opportunities. Any added programming must be balanced with the recognition that these centers function as a “home” for youth who need space to have fun and be kids. We urge cities with prevalent community violence to invest in safe spaces and work to ensure that all youth feel safe and welcome within them.” Pathways to Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth of Color Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, Vol. 85 , No. 2 , 2020, Serial No. 337.

The stress of COVID-19 has been shown to adversely affect mental health as well as physical health. In 2019, the Rochester City School District Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered in the RCSD using a confidential computer-based platform. (3,280 students participated in the survey out of an enrollment of 26,078). The report reads, “...33 percent felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing their usual activities, in the past year. Thirty-two percent have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions because of mental or emotional challenges. Ten percent attempted suicide in the past year.”

Research has shown that overall mental health in all communities has suffered since the pandemic. Based on these reports, it can be extrapolated that the mental health conditions of Latino youth are likely worse now than when the survey was administered, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **1. The creation of a Community-Based-Mentoring Model (CBMM) that enhances the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of Latino youth ages 12 to 24.**

According to national data, there are 24 million at-risk youth in the U.S. 9 million or 1 out of 3 youth will grow up without a mentor in their life. Many youths lack the consistency and

intensity of adult support required to successfully navigate challenging transitions during their development.

Building effective adult-youth-partnerships improves academic performance, social and economic prospects. Research shows that young people who are connected to a trusting adult are:

- 55 percent less likely than their peers to skip school
- 55 percent more likely to enroll in college
- 46 percent less likely to start using illegal drugs
- 78 percent more likely to be civically engaged
- 130 percent more likely to hold leadership positions in their community.

To respond to the needs of Latino youth and to be more responsive to the evolving needs of the community, we propose a CBMM on the northeast side of the City of Rochester. The CBMM will be an early intervention program designed to assist young people ages 12 to 24. Youth will be connected to caring adults within a youth-centered framework.

CBMM staff will provide peer and social skills development strategies, behaviorally based incentives, achievement recognition, and rule compliance structure-which leads to enhanced academic and behavioral outcomes for young people. Providing cognitive and non-cognitive developmental support is critical for youth’s success. The focus will consist of closing education gaps, ensuring the youth meet developmental milestones while promoting social, emotional, and physical wellness.

The model will include engaging caregivers to become active partners in the youth’s education and personal development. Interventions designed to support families and foster a safe and supportive social environment can contribute to the healthy development of youth, including resilience, goal setting, tenacity, and problem-solving skills. Caregivers will have the opportunity to participate in culturally responsive workshops. These workshops will empower caregivers to become better advocates, assist youth to achieve educational goals and other life skills. There will be opportunities for family-focused activities and connecting caregivers with information and resources in their community.

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Funding is needed to fully develop a CBMM for Latino youth that includes:

- A logic model for community-based programming
- Theory for change
- Culturally responsive curriculum in both Spanish and English

**2. Establishing a coalition to bridge Latino youth from city, suburban, and rural areas by creating a Latino Youth Advisory Board.** Latino youth are of diverse backgrounds representing various ethnic subgroups, social, economic, spatial and political status. There are Latino youth in suburban, rural and urban communities that are excluded and lack access to engaging in cultural, social and educational activities (Ebstein & Fabionar, 2019).

The struggles that Latino youth face in urban, suburban and rural settings can vary. Smaller Latino communities that exist in suburbs and rural areas may be disconnected from cultural and social programs related to Latino youth. While Latino youth from urban communities lack social capital, economic status and educational opportunities.

There is a need for all Latino youth to connect and engage with peers of similar cultural backgrounds. This allows for youth to understand positionality within their community. Therefore, the Latino Youth Advisory Board that would include Latinos from all over Monroe County and surrounding areas. The board will be established to provide youth with leadership experience, a platform to express their voice and a network with peers.

**There is a need to develop cultural and language events that support Latinx youth:** There are existing organizations and agencies that focus on youth in the community, but there is a lack of representation of Latino populations. There are youth-based programs that may not have the resources and struggle to recruit, engage, and retain youth of Latino descent. To recruit and retain Latino youth there is a need for diverse staff that include language ability and representation. There are youth-based programs that lack training in cultural responsiveness and competence on Latinx youth (McGovern et al, 2020).

One of the key factors for Latino youth to engage in social action,

civic engagement, and leadership is through self-awareness.

The awareness includes celebrating culture, ethnic, and racial identity. Study shows that programs that can establish family-like values, cultural awareness, advocacy, and bilingualism have been successful with Latino youth (McGovern et al, 2020). There are studies that have found that positive racial and ethnic identity development is an important aspect for youth because it serves as a healthy way to view culture (Ebstein & Fabionar, 2019).

**Developing civic engagement opportunities including advocacy and leadership development training:** Research shows that Latino youth are disengaged from civic involvement for various reasons. The first reason is the lack of a safe space to be able to learn and engage in the political process. There are educational institutions, community settings and organizations that have not provided a safe environment for Latino youth to partake and voice their opinions on political frameworks. There are concerns that the youth are disciplined and targeted for expressing their opinions on controversial topics.

The second reason is that there is limited education, training, and knowledge provided to Latino youth on civic engagement. Young people may face barriers to this knowledge because of social capital, educational institutions, and organization. Opportunities for leadership training and civic engagement for Latino youth is limited.

The third reason is the discrimination that Latino youth have experienced and observed in political systems. Mainstream media and societal norms have shown how policies have targeted the Latino populations as “outsiders” and making youth feel “invisible” from their own communities. There are Latino youth who have expressed anxiety, fear, anger and disgust from the current political climate toward their culture. This has led youth to negative outcomes such as risky behaviors and feelings of alienation (Wray-Lake et al, 2018).

There is a need to provide Latinx youth with a safe environment to learn and engage about civic and leadership programs. Latinx youth involved in leadership and civic engagement have gained skills in public speaking, critical thinking, and intra and interpersonal relationships. Latinx youth can learn about political systems, legislative processes, and civic responsibility.

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Civic engagement promotes positive youth development by providing youth with voice and choice. Latino youth who are integrated into youth-based programs by planning, leading and implementing programs (McGovern et al., 2020). Latino youth can develop social and emotional competencies during civic engagement and leadership development. Programs can focus on social awareness, self-awareness, relationship building, responsible decision making, and self-management. Those competencies allow for youth to become self-sufficient which impact educational outcomes, career aspirations, and involvement.

### 3. Entrepreneurial and Workforce Development:

- a. Offer programs and workshops to expand professional and skill development, and boost financial literacy amongst Latino youth.
- b. Develop an entrepreneurial hub to educate, train, and coach young people through the development of small businesses.

Financial development and education are crucial for the economic growth of the Latino population within the United States. As reported in 2016, the median household net worth of Latino homes was one-eighth that of non-Latino white households (Senate Joint Economic Committee, Economic State of the Latino Community in the United States).

Historically, it is known that within the United States, systems have been facilitated that have benefited the economic mobility and the increase of wealth of non-Latino white households. These created systems have constituted an environment where inequalities of financial literacy and opportunities for economic advancement exist within communities such as the city of Rochester. As described by national trends, Latino children will live to have significantly less upward economic mobility compared to non-Latino white children due to limited advancement opportunities and little-to-no readiness for retirement, from a financial perspective, despite educational backgrounds (Senate Joint Economic Committee, Economic State of the Latino Community in the United States).

There is not enough out there that aims to help educate youth, specifically in minority communities, on the importance of planning for the future. This is notable, as it relates to building

generational wealth and is highlighted in the disparities of financial literacy between non-Latino white communities and minority communities, this topic includes how to seek and understand loans, the benefits of good credit, and understanding the different forms of banking accounts and banking institutions. Although studies show that by 2060 Latinos will constitute a quarter of the overall United States population, wealth gaps between Latino and non-Latino white populations continue to grow. Therefore, it is important to invest in the economic development and financial literacy of Latino populations. As reported by the Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners, Hispanic-owned businesses contribute over \$700 billion to the overall national economy.

Latinos in the United States account for \$2.3 trillion in economic activity. In the future, they will play an increasingly crucial role in the economy. It is important for U.S. society and future economic growth that Latinos have every opportunity to reach their economic potential (Senate Joint Economic Committee, Economic State of the Latino Community in the United States).

Establishing an Entrepreneurial Hub for the Latino population including programs for young people in the Rochester community where training, coaching, opportunities for receiving investments/lines of credit for businesses and financial literacy education programs are offered, will directly contribute to addressing the economic inequalities of the area. There are not many resources in the area where Latino youth can directly learn about, be coached/mentored, and seek support for entrepreneurial ventures. Oftentimes young entrepreneurs find themselves not understanding business acumen and other components of developing a business, because of the lack of resources available, limiting the potential economic advancement of the population.

There is also a lack of equity within the financial literacy between various community groups of Rochester. Financial literacy is defined as “the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial well-being”, by PBS.org (PBS.org, What is Financial Literacy?). The lack of resources for developing financial literacy in the Latino community enforces the notion of the systems existing within our societal structures that limit the economic mobility of minority communities as manifested

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (continued)

historic events and systematic oppressions.

**A community-based entity needs to be developed** where the following support services are managed and facilitated:

- Funding to create an entrepreneurial hub for micro-loans/ investments for youth
- Stipend for youth participating in career exploration
- Funding to facilitate career workshops

These services and programs will be most effective with the support and sponsorship from community businesses and political leaders. With the support of these groups, the education and opportunities provided to the Latino youth will support economic growth and offer outcomes where the community directly benefits from the provided resources. By providing support that includes direct community investing for local young entrepreneurs. This entity can be defined as an entrepreneurial hub and operate with similar components of a Community Investments Fund. These funds are designed to support low-income populations which generally lack equitable access to resources for achieving decent standards of living and building generational wealth (Cates, Rosalie Sheehy, US SIF Foundation; Options & Innovations of Community Investing; 2012).

It will also be crucial to develop relationships with organizations such as the Rochester Hispanic Business Association and local colleges and universities for support in organizing community workshops, career, and mentorship opportunities for Latino youth. Fostering these relationships between organizations will help encourage the community approach for addressing the wealth gaps in the area.

To support the reduction of wealth inequalities in the area, it is also important to educate and train the youth in financial literacy and the importance of planning for the future. Studies show that financial tools and services are essential to the economic development and growth of communities. By developing workshops and professional training programs, the education provided at this entrepreneurial hub, over time, can provide a foundation for building financial awareness within the Rochester Latino community.

### CONCLUSION

Adults are instrumental in supporting young people in developing

and using their voices. Our role is to listen to understand the issues they care about with the intention to lift their voices to offer guidance in the process towards advocacy and to provide the proper tools and resources for young people to be agents of change in their community.

### Sources:

- Erbstein, N., & Fabionar, J. O. (2019). Supporting Latinx Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs: A Research Synthesis. *Afterschool Matters*, 29, 17-27.
- McGovern, G., Raffaelli, M., Moreno Garcia, C., & Larson, R. (2020). Leaders' Cultural Responsiveness in a Rural Program Serving Latinx Youth. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 35(3), 368-394
- Means, D. R. (2019). Crucial support, vital aspirations: The college and career aspirations of rural black and latinx middle school students in a community- and youth-based leadership program. *Journal of Research in Rural Education (Online)*, 35(1), 1-14. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezp.lib.rochester.edu/10.18113/P8JRRE3501>.
- Moncloa, F., Erbstein, N., Subramaniam, A., & Carrasco, C. D. (2019). Guiding principles for reaching and engaging latinx youth in youth development programs. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(2), 46-63. <https://socialwork.du.edu/news/engaging-latinx-youth>
- Wray-Lake, L., Wells, R., Alvis, L., Delgado, S., Syvertsen, A. K., & Metzger, A. (2018). Being a Latinx adolescent under a Trump presidency: Analysis of Latinx youth's reactions to immigration politics. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 87, 192-204.
- "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States." Census Bureau QuickFacts, [www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI725219](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI725219). <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI725219> [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/b7fa806a-ab4e-4bbd-bea3-d20da43a37b9/economic-state-of-the-latino-community-in-america-final-password-protected.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b7fa806a-ab4e-4bbd-bea3-d20da43a37b9/economic-state-of-the-latino-community-in-america-final-password-protected.pdf)
- Cates, Rosalie Sheehy, US SIF Foundation; "Options & Innovations of Community Investing", 2012. [https://www.ussif.org/files/Publications/Options\\_Innovations\\_CI\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ussif.org/files/Publications/Options_Innovations_CI_2012.pdf)
- <http://www.radicalmath.org/docs/FinancialEducationLatinos.pdf>
- What Is Financial Literacy? Pbs.org, [www.pbs.org/your-life-your-money/more/what\\_is\\_financial\\_literacy.php](http://www.pbs.org/your-life-your-money/more/what_is_financial_literacy.php). [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/b7fa806a-ab4e-4bbd-bea3-d20da43a37b9/economic-state-of-the-latino-community-in-america-final-password-protected.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b7fa806a-ab4e-4bbd-bea3-d20da43a37b9/economic-state-of-the-latino-community-in-america-final-password-protected.pdf)

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

*The state of Latino Civic Engagement in Monroe County is strong and evolving. Over the last two decades, Latinos have made tremendous strides in developing effective organizing and advocacy skills. As a result, Latinos have achieved greater representation in elected offices, increased Latinos registered to vote, advocated for pay equity among women, and increased representation on boards, associations, and commissions. As the Latino population grows nationally, statewide, and locally, gains in these areas will be vital to seek and achieve the policy changes needed to improve Latinos' overall quality of life in Monroe County.*

### BACKGROUND

When it comes to voting, the Latino population, nationally, is growing at a higher rate than the United States population as a whole. Yet in 2016, only about half of the nation's 60 million Latinos were eligible to vote – the smallest share of any racial or ethnic group. Fast forward to 2020, and Latinos quickly growing millennial population is coming of age. Every 30 seconds, a Latino millennial turns 18 and is eligible to vote, which resulted in over one million more eligible Latino voters from the 2016 election to the 2020 election, both presidential years (Karas, 2020; Manuel Krogstad et al., 2016; Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020).

New York State's Latino population accounts for four million of the nation's total Latinos, ranking fourth among U.S. states (Lopez & Stepler, 2016). In Monroe County, of its nearly 742,000 residents, a little more than 68,000 (9.2 percent) are Latino (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020). The largest concentration of those residents living within the boundaries of the City of Rochester at approximately 40,000, followed by the Towns of Irondequoit, Greece, and Gates (Common Ground Health, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020). Recently a report commissioned by the Center for Governmental Research, Ibero-American Action League, and La Cumbre: Latino United for Progress found that the Monroe County Latino population is becoming more suburban. However, 61 percent of Latino residents reside in the City (down from 79% percent in 1980) (Rosenberg, 2018). Monroe County has over 590,000 eligible voters. Below is the breakdown of the registered voters in Monroe County (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020).

|                          | General Population | Latinos                              |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Eligible Voters          | 590,000            |                                      |
| Registered Voters        | 488,994            | 24,219 (5% of all registered voters) |
| Registered Democrats     | 206,750            | 12,860                               |
| Registered Republicans   | 127,942            | 3,120                                |
| Registered BL (No Party) | 120,208            | 6,961                                |
| Other Party Affiliations | 34,094             | 1,278                                |

(Monroe County Board of Elections, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020)

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (continued)

Voter turnout for all eligible voters has been consistently higher in the Rochester and Monroe County region than in the state or nation. For example, in the 2020 November General Election, a Presidential election year, 78.1 percent of Monroe County residents voted, compared to 65 percent for all of New York State and 66.2 percent of the Nation (DeSilver, 2021; Monroe County Board of Elections, 2020). During the 2018 midterm elections, 65.2 percent of Monroe County's eligible voters voted, representing more than a 10 percent drop-off in turnout (Monroe County Board of Elections, 2020). This trend is similar to New York State (49 percent) and National (47 percent) turnout numbers for the 2018 midterm elections.

### Latinos in Elected Leadership

Over the past 20 years, Latinos in Monroe County have made strides in attaining elected leadership. Over this period, four Latinos have won election to the Rochester City School Board, four Latinos have won election to Rochester City Council, and four Latinos have served in the Monroe County Legislature, with three winning full terms. In the Town of Gates, a Latino won election to Town Council while Latinos have also won seats to School Boards in Honeoye Falls-Lima and West Irondequoit Central School Districts. In addition, while not an elected position, a Latino has served as deputy mayor of the City of Rochester and acting mayor. It will be necessary for Latinos to build upon this momentum in the coming years.

### Latinos on Boards of Directors and Commissions

In 2018, La Cumbre, in partnership with the United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, analyzed the make-up of Boards, Authorities, and Commissions of top companies in Monroe County. What the research uncovered was that these bodies had minimal to no Latino representation. Even more alarming, a letter co-signed by then At-Large City Councilwoman and Co-Founder of La Cumbre Jackie Ortiz and United Way President and CEO Fran Weisberg highlighting these gaps in representation and offering help was only responded to by a few. These findings are immensely concerning and underscore how much more work our community must do to represent Latinos better. These decision-making bodies are the source of influence, advocacy, policy formulation, and funding allocations critical to our community. Diverse membership ensures that the insight,

review, and considerations of these bodies account for all aspects of our community. The following list is of particular interest to the Latino community;

### Boards/Commissions Of Major Interest To The Latino/A/X Community

- University of Rochester Medical Center
- Rochester Regional Health
- Pathstone Corporation
- Hillside Family of Agencies
- Monroe Community College
- Finger Lakes Economic Development Council
- ESL Federal Credit Union
- United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- Greater Rochester Enterprise

### 5-STAR career pathways and opportunities.

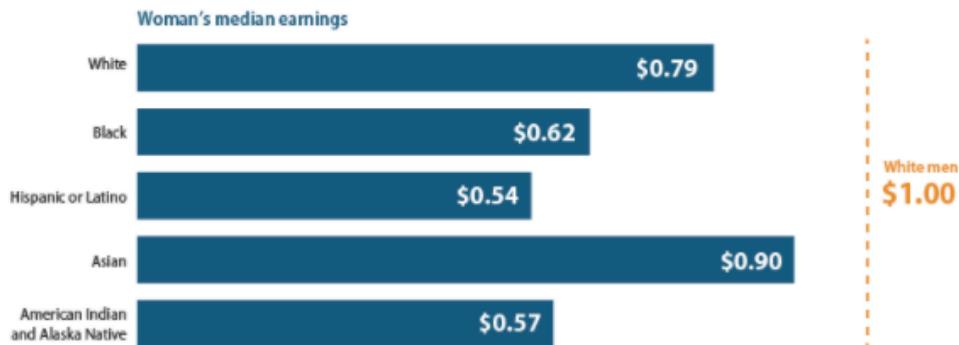
- M&T Bank
- SUNY Brockport/REOC
- RGRTA
- COMIDA
- Facilities Modernization
- RMAPI
- Systems Integration and Subcommittees
- Reimagine Rochester
- Rochester Housing Authority

### Pay Equity

Latinas are the lowest paid population in the U.S. According to a report from the Center for American Progress (March 24, 2020), in 2018, the average salary for full-time Latina workers was .54 cents for every dollar earned by non-Latino white males. In comparison to women of other groups, Latinas also ranked the lowest in wages. See Figure 1 on next page.

Additionally, according to LeanIn.com, Latinas are less likely to be promoted, adding to the wage disparity. To address these concerns, in 2018, La Cumbre formed the Latina Pay Equity Coalition. Every year, in recognition of Latina Pay Equity advocacy day, a rally is held in conjunction with advocacy and education events throughout

**FIGURE 1**  
**The gender wage gap is more significant for most women of color**  
 Comparing 2018 median earnings of full-time, year-round workers by race/ethnicity and sex



(Bleiweis, 2020)

Monroe County. As a result of this advocacy, employers have begun to compile data specifically regarding women's pay equity in Monroe County. The University of Rochester, the largest employer in the Greater Rochester region and the sixth-largest employer in New York State, has joined La Cumbre and other groups to address this issue within their organization. In 2020 in collaboration with County Executive Adam Bello, Monroe County, through executive order, implemented a pay equity verification as a part of their human resources processing for hiring contractors.

To address these important issues, we present the community and leaders the following recommendations that we will need assistance in achieving;

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Government Leadership Recommendations

Across all - Federal / State / County / City governments:

#### 1. Representation for the Latino community must be equitable and proportionate to the Latino population.

- Develop a process to appoint Latino community representatives to executive employment opportunities, paid boards, volunteer boards, task forces, and commissions.
- We expect your support for individuals appointed to government employment (including firewall protection) against politically motivated retribution without due cause.

#### 2. Be intentional and committed to providing the Latino community with information strongly endorsed by the Latino community.

- Assign current employees, especially Latino employees, within

your circle of influence to participate in direct recruitment efforts in the Latino community.

- Demand that agencies create positions dedicated to recruitment and community outreach.

#### 3. Champion meaningful and consistent engagement with the Latino community to help create educational and professional development programs that increase Latino participation in emerging opportunities.

- Require government agencies, businesses, and other collaborative partners to develop new programs that specifically create pathways for Latino individuals.
- Targeting within, inquire with local government agencies and business partners about creating opportunities for "future Latino leaders" within their organizations.
- Mandate that local partners ensure executive-level or other high-level leadership positions prioritize hiring bilingual and multicultural candidates (appointments vs. civil service).

#### 4. Support mandated annual "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" training for all government entities.

- Create a community advisory board to support awareness and action by leaders in the community.
- Mandate training addresses explicitly issues with implicit bias in law enforcement to help provide better service to diverse communities.

### Pay Equity Recommendations

**Federal:** Business, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals should join the Latina Equal Pay Movement to advocate for federal regulations/laws that mandate equality in pay and career

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (continued)

promotions for Latinas.

**New York:** Businesses, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals should join Latina Equal Pay Movements by advocating for equality of pay and advancement for state-funded institutions

**Monroe County:** Businesses, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals should join local events that advocate for equality of pay and career advancement for Latinas and work with the County Executive and Legislature to close the wage gap.

### **City of Rochester:**

- Businesses, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals should get involved with La Cumbre's Latina Pay Equity Coalition to bring awareness to this issue, advocate for equality, and support changes that will close the wage/career gaps.
- Businesses, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals continue to work and support CBO's that champion equality for Latinas, such as Latinas Unidas, Ibero, etc.
- Businesses, organizations, elected leaders, and individuals should be a resource for Latinas, groups, organizations, businesses that want to close the equity gap for Latinas.
- Everyone should support Latina Equal Pay Day and other pay equity events annually until this problem is solved.

### **Civic Engagement Recommendations**

#### **National:**

- Advocate for less restrictive laws that suppress the Latinx Vote.
- Promote the removal of restrictive ID requirements and flexibility around registration deadlines.
- Advocate that the Senate pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would reinstate federal oversight of voting laws in states with a history of racial discrimination.
- Advocate that the Senate pass the Securing America's Federal Elections (SAFE) Act which would mandate paper ballots, routine, post-election risk-limiting audits, and federal cybersecurity standards for election systems.

#### **New York State:**

- Support legislation in the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate (A.10942 (Gottfried)/S.8902 (Hoylman)) that would authorize Boards of Elections to establish absentee

ballot drop-off locations.

- Support the creation and passage of legislation that would automatically pre-register 16 and 17 year-olds to vote.

#### **Monroe County:**

- Create a survey and outreach tool to pinpoint what barriers prevent Latinos from registering to vote or going to vote.
- Create a robust translator program for Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, or Vision-impaired so that each polling site has resources for those in need.
- Establish a connection with each university in Monroe County, both public and private, to organize and facilitate voter registration efforts on college campuses.
- Work with political science classes at college campuses to guest lecture and recruit volunteers to assist with voter registration efforts.
- Establish a connection with high schools in Monroe County, both public and private, to organize and facilitate 16 and 17 year-olds pre-registration efforts.
- Work with the Monroe County Democratic and Republican committees to host and coordinate voter registration events.

#### **City of Rochester:**

- Focus efforts to increase turnout in local elections (in off presidential voting years especially).
- Enhance dual language education efforts around navigating local government and elections, especially regarding early and absentee voting.

## CONCLUSION

While the state of Latino Civic Engagement in Monroe County is strong and evolving, much work remains. We must continue to increase Latino voter registration and ensure they exercise their voice and vote. Local elections are often decided by just a few hundred votes, as was again exemplified in the Monroe County Court and 24th Legislative District County Legislature elections this year. Latinos' votes matter and could be the deciding voices on elections that impact essential policy areas like housing, local taxes, education, transportation, access to social services, and local policing policies. To improve access for Latinos to decision-making tables, we must continue to advocate for seats on boards, associations, and commissions and hold these decision-making bodies accountable for their continued lack of

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (continued)

representation. Building off of significant success as the start of Monroe County's Pay Equity Movement, Latinos can and should learn from past practices to better organize, mobilize, and advocate on behalf of our community.

### Sources

Bleiweis, R. (2020, March 24). Quick Facts About the Gender Wage Gap [Research Center]. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/03/24/482141/quick-facts-gender-wage-gap/>

Common Ground Health. (2019, April 9). Latino Population | Common Ground Health. <https://www.commongroundhealth.org/insights/library/latino-population>

DeSilver, D. (2021, January 28). Turnout soared in 2020 as nearly two-thirds of eligible U.S. voters cast ballots for president. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/turnout-soared-in-2020-as-nearly-two-thirds-of-eligible-u-s-voters-cast-ballots-for-president/>

Karas, T. (2020, February 4). Every 30 seconds, a young Latino in the US turns 18. Their votes count more than ever. The World from PRX. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-01-30/every-30-seconds-young-latino-us-turns-18-their-votes-count-more-ever>

Lopez, M. H., & Stepler, R. (2016, September 8). Ranking the Latino population in the states. Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2016/09/08/4-ranking-the-latino-population-in-the-states/>

Manuel Krogstad, J., Lopez, M. H., Lopez, G., Passel, J. S., & Patten, E. (2016, January 19). Millennials Make Up Almost Half of Latino Eligible Voters in 2016. Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2016/01/19/millennials-make-up-almost-half-of-latino-eligible-voters-in-2016/>

Monroe County Board of Elections. (2020). Monroe County Board of Elections 2020 General Election Turnout Report [Voter Turnout Report]. <https://www.monroecounty.gov/files/GE20%20Turnout.pdf>

Noe-Bustamante, L., Budiman, A., & Hugo Lopez, M. (2020, January 31). Where Latinos have the most eligible voters in the 2020 election. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/01/31/where-latinos-have->

[the-most-eligible-voters-in-the-2020-election/](#)

Rosenberg, E. (2018). Profile of the Hispanic/Latino Community in Monroe County (p. 22) [Non-Profit Profile]. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Monroe County, New York. (2020). <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/dashboard/monroecountynewyork/RHI725219#RHI725219>

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Economic Development goals for the Latino community in Monroe County will draw on private, state, federal and county financial resources and technical assistance, in order to support representation within businesses, developers, units of local government and major county facilities in economic development activities.*

### BACKGROUND

Monroe County's Hispanic or Latino population has more than doubled since 1980. The population's growth since 2010 (13%) was greater than at the state (7%) or national level (9%). The largest growth in population occurred between 2000 and 2010, when Monroe County's Hispanic or Latino population increased by almost 15,000 people. From 2010 to 2012-16, the population added over 6,800 individuals. Note that these figures do not include the estimated 3,400 or more Puerto Ricans who came to Rochester following the damage wreaked by Hurricane Maria on the island in September 2017. The growth rate of the Latino population in Monroe County between 2000 and 2012-16 of 56 percent greatly exceeds the county's total population growth rate, which was less than 2 percent.

Hispanic business leadership itself has grown in part to meet the needs of the growth in Western New York. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well within the Hispanic community, which has been an economic engine for the United States and Western New York, creating thousands of jobs for the local economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced uncertainty with regard to economic development, but also opens the door to new opportunities. Below, we include our recommendations to improve economic development in Monroe County for the Latino community, which will strengthen the community as a whole.

#### Economic Development Definition:

Economic development can be summarized as "a process of creating and utilizing physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region." Economic Development includes public and private sector roles, as well as public/private partnerships).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Public Economic Development

Government provides many programs that help spur economic development. Data collected by the Census and/or by other means can help inform public (as well as private) economic development efforts. Thus, regular data collection for economic development activities (of information regarding economic data, including metrics showing economic needs and economic strengths) is of utmost importance. (See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mayrarodriguezvalladares/2019/02/11/hispanics-not-trump-are-the-biggest-engine-of-u-s-economic-growth/#40ab19636e5e>)

In addition to data collection to inform economic development needs, there should be representation from the Latino community on economic development entities. "By involving a wide cross-section of people with direct knowledge of the economic needs of their communities, the regional councils have built sustaining and sustained change in the full diversity of upstate communities." <https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2018-09/DRAFT-2018-FLREDC-Annual-Report.pdf>

An increase in benefits available for business development should also be considered, including:

- Ensuring programs such as the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) are accessible for Latino-owned organizations/businesses. This should include the technical and legal support to ensure Hispanic business owners are able to obtain the loans and forgiveness due to the financial situation.
  - Free or affordable healthcare for entrepreneurs so they can focus full time on creating their businesses.
  - Reduction of regulations, disability insurance and fees for businesses.
  - Make minority-owned (e.g., MWBE) certification faster, easier and cheaper.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued)

- Make minority contracting a requirement and raise the percentage to 25%
- Rochester (City): more job training programs and grants for existing businesses.
- Education programs that will promote economic development, for example, access, resources, funding and recruitment to Vocational & Trade Schools; STEM Schools; Rochester Colleges & Universities.
- Instruction & Assistance around Business Plan preparation for Businesses (in particular "startups")
- Provide/widely promote a central clearinghouse regarding business programs/resources for business owners. Available resources include: NYS Small Business Development Center <https://www.nyssbdc.org/>

Other ideas in terms of special programs that can be part of any level of government include the following:

- 1) Creation of the Hispanic business incubation center that will focus on Latinos interested in creating their own business. This can be part of any of the current incubation initiatives that we have in town.
- 2) Development and implementation of the annual Latino America and Rochester business opportunities. This can have the objective to enhance and open opportunities to do business in Latin America or attract people from Latin America to invest in Rochester.
- 3) An annual event where we can have the presentation of Latino food and restaurant businesses and other businesses that can build more relationships between countries and companies.
- 4) The City of Rochester should have a more aggressive sister city program with countries from Latin America and in this agreements incorporate business initiatives that will help to find opportunities of business between Rochester and other cities in Latin American countries.
- 5) Develop a tourist exchange program with Latin American countries that will enhance the great opportunities of tourism development in Rochester with Latino tourist operator companies. This program would create jobs and opportunities to have income coming to Rochester from visitors from Latino American countries.
- 6) Develop partnerships with universities in Latin America to

promote student exchange in developing new technologies and innovation. This would create significant opportunities to bring the interest of more international students to Rochester and create jobs for Latino businesses.

### Private Economic Development/Business Development

Private industry plays a central role in spurring economic development. There are many ways that businesses can help grow the local economy.

Three main features of private economic development efforts are:

- 1) Incubation (building Hispanic businesses) (note this can have a government component);
- 2) Consolidation (focus on Hispanic businesses/business opportunities just for Latino businesses); and
- 3) Connections (inter-regional and intra-regional) Hispanic business directory.

Within these three pillars, many programs, partnerships, and goals can be developed, including:

- An option for lenders to provide alternative credit options, providing startups in certain regions with loans at reasonable rates (see RASE Commission report, available at [rocrase.com](http://rocrase.com)). Connecting providers of such loans to Latino businesses to help them with their cash flow situation.
- Dedicated training program in Spanish for business owners to help them to develop and utilize growth opportunities.
- Individuals can learn to build their long-term financial security by buying and staying in their homes, taking control of decisions affecting their apartment buildings, and starting or expanding their small businesses (see <https://www.ledcmetro.org/about>).
- Community organizations can help build connections between and among existing economic development groups, localities and area businesses (see <https://rochesterbeacon.com/2019/05/30/a-cooperative-model/>).

### Public/Private Partnerships (Public Bank)

Economically depressed ZIP codes in the City of Rochester are facing many large obstacles on the road to recovery. One of them being lack of financial capital and business consulting to invest in new startup and established businesses. Traditional

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued)

lending institutions have been leaving ZIP codes in most need in the last 10+ years. Even with those traditional financial institutions, Latinos often experience cold hard denials for even the simplest and small loans due to industry risk, credit worthiness or lack of collateral. In this section of the report, we will be highlighting alternative forms of financing already available in the City of Rochester (such as REDCO, Ibero Investors, Pathstone, CDFI Credit Unions, etc.) and highlighting a recent proposal by city council to consider a Rochester Public Bank.

Local financial institutions have been consolidating their branch footprint in the Rochester area for some time, in particular within the inner-city sections of the City of Rochester. Just six years ago, the Rochester Business Journal had published a recent depository evaluation of local financial institutions with M&T Bank and Chase Bank at the top. In the middle of the article, it highlighted how the banks were pivoting with technology to reduce brick and mortar branches from 29 to 27 for M&T Bank, 22 to 20 for Five Star Bank, and 18-16 for Bank of America [1]. Today the branch counts are half at best or a third at worst [2]. Only a handful of branches are left in the lower income corners of the City. The remaining branches are either in the downtown district, the outskirts of the City, or the southwest quadrant of the City. Access to a financial institution is just one aspect, being approved is the bigger obstacle.

Underwriting a loan, the way a loan is being considered for approval or denial is mainly based on credit, capital, collateral, cash flow, and character. Subprime credit, when your creditworthiness is not at par due to collections and late payments (in some cases, your credit score being damaged as a minor by someone with access to your Social Security number) or serious derogatory marks such as repossession of a vehicle or foreclosure on a house, tend to be the biggest obstacle for accessing traditional capital for personal or business use.

Another obstacle is lack of consistent cash flow, such as part time work or not enough work history in the same industry. Yet another is a too high ratio of debt to income (minimum payments are too high compared to your average income). A special obstacle seen in rougher ZIP codes is only having sources

of income that are not considered permanent or legitimate for a loan application (think of workers comp insurance or some disability income or child support/alimony). Lastly, not having a banking relationship altogether is also an issue. Most banks look into ChexSystems, a nationwide system where banks and credit unions run a “background check” on a new customer or member to see account abuse history. If your name is on this list, you may not be able to open an account or a membership, which is required by some institutions to even consider a loan in the first place. Not that lenders should ignore past mistakes that have put a potential borrower in the subprime category but, we must create other options for lending if you are interested in starting a business or need access to capital to grow.

The Rochester Economic Development Company (REDCO) is a spin-off of the City of Rochester trying to engage and promote entrepreneurship through micro-lending and providing connections around the area [3]. Last year in 2020 REDCO issued grants to various local organizations they call SEO cohorts in an effort to propel more of an entrepreneurial atmosphere within communities in the city that need it the most. Some of these organizations include but are not limited to: Urban League of Rochester, Ibero-American Action League, Walker Legacy Foundation, The Commissary Downtown Kitchen Incubator, and Greater Works. Since this report is about Hispanic/Latino economic development status and suggestions, Ibero is working on a vision for the Northeast Quadrant and how it can have an economic impact in different Commercial Corridor Communities such as North Clinton Avenue [4].

Through seed funding from REDCO, Ibero-American Investors Corporation, a subsidiary of Ibero-American Action League, envisions a business share space near or at La Marketa called Ibero Business Center. The vision of this business share space is to be an all-encompassing business incubator for minority and women-owned businesses in the North Clinton and Joseph Avenue communities. With the backing of the Ibero Investors micro-lending program and its partnership with the Urban League’s Entrepreneur Assistance Program (EAP), this physical building will have the loan officer, business trainer/consultant, and other professionals on staff to provide all the needed human capital to get a start-up off the ground and into

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued)

a job maker in the community. Imagine when you walk into a branch today, you have your bankers and tellers: you place your request for a business loan but after being asked how your business is incorporated (legal and tax questions), whether you have a business plan (vision and plan for profitability), how your personal credit and income are doing (personal finance literacy), and your collateral (personal assets you're willing to put in the line) you get a denial with nowhere to go but perhaps a referral to a volunteer agency that doesn't even speak your language. The Ibero Business Center, a business incubator for entrepreneurs (i.e. a reimagined financial institution), will have in staff not just the lender considering your business idea, but the consultant that will walk you through the painstaking part of building a business plan and marketing plan. The legal expert will walk you through the legal paperwork of incorporation, tax considerations and business insurance. The loan will then be approved and all in your preferred language, whether Spanish or English; if you are saving in cost as many businesses are with business space, you can use the shared space to meet with clients, your employees or simply get a place to concentrate. After a period of 12 to 18 months you will be well on your way toward breaking even when 50 percent of the businesses in that same time period fail. While banks are leaving struggling communities behind, organizations like Ibero Investors are envisioning a way for a financial institution to be more present in the communities and become partners in the success of business ownership and job creators.

The second option for gathering funding is a public bank. In July 24, 2020, an article by City News cited that the City of Rochester city council members are considering a bill for chartering a public bank for city residents. [5] Funding of this financial institution would come from the city's own deposits currently allocated in commercial banks. This financial institution would specifically allow local city residents to open accounts and have access to micro lending, help with mortgage lending in poverty-stricken areas of the city and aid in financial literacy for its customers just like a credit union would. The main difference is that the funding to get a public bank would come straight from the city deposits to get it started rather than soliciting funding from the state, a federal agency, or private investors to start a private financial institution such as a credit union. The public

bank could also act as cosigner with local financial institutions allowing more borrowing, just as the FHA does for retail mortgages and the SBA does for small business lending. [6] [7] It also has the benefit of bringing in a new source of income for the municipality, optimistically, helping keep city property and sales tax low at-large. This government reimagined bank began in North Dakota and the idea is spreading through California and now the New York State Assembly. The possibilities are endless since the City of Rochester could in essence create a business incubator bank of their own, just like Ibero Investors is planning in the North Clinton Business Corridor.

Not all reimagined financial institutions are coming from non-government organizations and state and local municipalities. Private entities such as local credit unions have been working on meeting the needs of niche populations in need since the Great Depression in the 1930s. A credit union is a non-profit financial institution owned by its members. In order to be eligible for membership in a credit union there has to be a common bond that ties all members together. [8] For example, historically, credit unions were based around farming communities so the common bond would be all members have to be a farmer or in a farm household, or related to a farmer or live geographically in a mostly farming community. The credit union, like a bank, would offer share accounts for savings, check writing capabilities, etc. With the member base pooled funds, the institution can then issue loans at a low interest rate to its members. For example, a local credit union in the northeast quadrant of the City of Rochester its membership qualifications are to live, work, study, or worship in the Northeast Quadrant, the 14621 Community, etc. The pooled funds from savings will fuel micro loans to these members in the form of mortgages for home buying, business loans and personal loans specifically for the betterment of the same community for example buying a house or starting a business in North Clinton. A credit union like the one we see successfully see operating in the South Wedge community, Genesee Co-Op FCU [9], could also work in a northeast business corridor of the City of Rochester. According to the CEO of Genesee Co-Op FCU, Melissa Vazquez, the credit union often considers alternative ways to underwrite a loan to help the member in front of them achieve their personal financial goal. Often going against unheard of practices by traditional financial

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued)

institutions yet obtaining a 90 percent repayment rate in their outstanding loan portfolio. It is worth noting that Genesee Co-Op is designated as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) by the US Treasury Department and acts primarily in the interest of developing its member base by giving them more flexibility with risk taking [10].

### Sources

- [1] M&T stays on top: Bank's local deposits climb to over \$4 billion | Rochester Business Journal (rbj.net)
- [2] Banks in Rochester, NY (bankbranchlocator.com)
- [3] Home Page - www.redcoroc.com
- [4] City of Rochester | Commercial Corridor Study
- [5] <https://www.rochestercitynewspaper.com/rochester/council-advocates-push-for-a-publicly-owned-bank-of-rochester/Content?oid=12050187>
- [6] [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/fhahistory](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/fhahistory)
- [7] <https://www.sba.gov/>
- [8] <https://www.ncua.gov/about-ncua/historical-timeline>
- [9] <https://www.genesee.coop/>
- [10] NYS CDFIs | NYS CDFI Coalition

# LATINX LEADERS **ROUNDTABLE**

## MISSION

The Latinx Leaders Roundtable (Roundtable) is a group of leaders in the Rochester community that has a deep focus on advocacy, leveraging our collective power, resources, and creating a united voice. We exist to convene, lead, and represent Latinx interests and advancement efforts at a policy and systems level. We will do this by engaging Latinx leadership in an inclusive and collaborative approach to advocate for the rights of Latinx individuals and represent our communities' concerns.

## VISION

We create meaningful policy changes, and ensure adequate/equitable direct services for Latinx individuals. We are seen and heard at the various decision making tables of our community. The systemic barriers that negatively impact the Latinx community have been eliminated, and our needs are intentionally prioritized.

## What is a Latinx Leader?

A Latinx Leader is a person involved in their community, who enjoys working with people, yet does not back off when the work gets hard and people get difficult. They are able to be challenging while being respectful. They are sometimes recognized by the community, yet can also be a behind the scene advocate, an unsung hero. A Latinx Leader is a credible messenger that knows Latinxs' struggles in all aspects of life, beyond education, employment, health and housing. They exhibit these characteristics:

### Skills & Abilities

- Ability to build strong trusting and reliable relationships throughout the community
- Ability to mobilize community members, execute on community initiatives, bring people together with diverse perspectives, personalities and opinions.
- Ability to inspire, influence and motivate others towards change and put their personal agendas aside for the greater good
- Courageous in taking on community issues, finding solutions and engaging others in advancing our community
- Be a strong collaborator, their dedication is progress, not obstruction.

- Is encouraging and respectful
- Has knowledge of Latinx History and Greater Rochester Latinx History

### Experience

- Prior active participation in community organizing or leading projects organizations or other areas of responsibility impacting the Latinx community
- Bicultural perspective on issues Latinxs are facing in our area
- Working with low income families, poor communities
- Understanding the not for profit agency's struggles
- Understanding of different for profit sectors (marketing, business, etc.)

### Language/communication capabilities

- Strong communication skills
- Ability to listen and gain perspective on different views, beliefs and opinions
- Be non-confrontational but with a strong ability to communicate needs clearly
- Spanish fluency at a Business Conversational level, a plus
- Sense of humor, patience, and ability to work on a team

## GET INVOLVED

For more information or to get involved with our group, please visit [www.RochesterLatinx.org](http://www.RochesterLatinx.org)



**LATINX LEADERS** ROUNDTABLE

817 East Main St  
Rochester, New York 14605

[www.RochesterLatinx.org](http://www.RochesterLatinx.org)