



2017 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

2017 Legislative Report as requested by Minnesota statute 15.0145

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Letter from the Council Chair

Dear Legislature,

The board and staff of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs is pleased to present our 2017 legislative report. Within this report you will find highlights of the Council's work to serve the Latino community and advise the legislature and Governor's Office.

2017 was a year of tremendous growth for the Council. We had a complete board of directors for the majority of the year and our new staff provided continuity and leadership. The participation of board members has been at a recent years high. It has also helped that we have focused our attention to four areas: Education, Health, Economic Development, and Immigration. We are aware that many areas impact the Latino community, but the Council has taken a bold step to dedicate our resources to specific areas.

We were also excited to see interest from funders outside of state government inviting us to apply for grants. Not all opportunities were good fits or aligned in an efficient way, but we were happy to have applied for and received a \$50,000 grant that aligned with our education efforts. This speaks volumes to the legislative victories we had in education.

Overall it was a fast paced year but one in which we had many achievements. Many of our achievements were accomplished because of the commitment we received from our Council members and community members from across Minnesota. As you look through this report we hope you get a sense of our accomplishments, challenges, and most importantly a sense that the direction of the Council is one that will benefit all Minnesotans.

It has been an honor to serve the State of Minnesota and the Council as the Chair for the last two years.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Uriel P. Espinoza', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Uriel Perez Espinoza, 2017 Chair

Introduction

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs proudly presents its 2017 Legislative Report to the Minnesota state legislature. As our Council chair detailed in his letter, 2017 was a year where MCLA grew and provided leadership on a number of important legislative issues. Minnesota faces a number of disparity rates and demographic changes. In this environment, MCLA successfully worked with both political parties to advance legislation that will benefit all Minnesotans, in addition to Latino Minnesotans. In reading this report, the legislature will see that MCLA has successfully transformed into a state agency that provides level-headed leadership on a number of important policy areas. This report will detail MCLA’s bi-partisan legislative achievements, statewide community outreach, policy work, in-house research, and its FY2017 expenditures.

Legislative Achievements

In 2017, MCLA made an important decision to focus on four policy areas: Education, Economic Development, Health, and Immigration. This is not to say that we did not advise the legislature on many other issue areas, but with limited resources, MCLA did not want to sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity. In this section, you will see incredible improvement in MCLA’s presence, as well as our 2017 areas of focus and subsequent legislative results. Each of our four issue areas saw success with the agency’s priority bills.

Summary of Legislative Tracking

	Number of FTE’s Focused on Legislative Work	Meetings with Legislators	Bills Tracked
2015	0.5	N/A	11
2016	2	119	39
2017	4	200	117

The addition of FTE’s enabled the Council to increase research on more bills than any recent legislative session. The Council was able to hold over 200 meetings with legislators either in a 1 to 1 or group setting. The Council made it a point to connect with as many legislators as possible and provide them with a fact sheet on the Latino composition of their district and any additional information on legislation. The Council also offered to provide any information on the Minnesota Latino community they might need or want.

2017 Legislative Priority Bills

Education:

Increase Teachers of Color Act –

E-12: HF 2077 (Urdahl; Davnie) | SF 1555 (Nelson; Wiger)

Higher Education: HF 1409 (Nornes; Thiesen) | SF 1585 (Anderson, P.; Hawj)

Currently, 32% of the state's students are from communities of color or American Indian communities, yet only 4% of public school teachers reflect this diversity. Both the E-12 and Higher Education bills address the pipeline to teaching, program completion for teacher candidates, and teacher retention, amongst other provisions and funding.

Health:

Spoken Language Health Care Interpreters' Registry System –

HF 2077 (Omar; Zerwas) | SF 1555 (Wiklund; Benson)

Accurate interpretation reduces disparities in health care outcomes for patients with limited English proficiency and decreases medical cost inefficiencies in diagnoses and treatments. This bill would replace the current interpreter roster with a registry that verifies important interpreter standards.

Economic Development:

Wage Theft Prevention Act –

HF 1391 (Mahoney; Baker) | SF 1329 (Champion)

Over 39,000 Minnesota workers suffer from wage theft every year, equaling a total of over \$11.9 million in back wages. The wage theft prevention bill calls for greater efforts to prevent wage theft, additional funding to investigate wage theft complaints, and stricter penalties for employers who engage in wage theft.

Immigration:

Real ID –

HF 3 (Smith) | SF 166 (Pratt)

The REAL ID bill conforms Minnesota's driver's licenses or identification cards to federal standards. MCLA respectfully worked with a number of legislators to remove bill language that prevented immigrant driver's licenses.

2017 Legislative Results

Bill	Results
Increase Teachers of Color Act	A number of provisions that MCLA drafted were included in the final Higher Education and E-12 Omnibus bills along with respective funding increases. Combined, these initiatives comprehensively address the shortage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota’s schools.
Spoken Language Health Care Interpreters’ Registry System	Collaborated with other Ethnic Councils and multiple stakeholders in order to receive a hearing in the Senate Health and Human Services Finance & Policy Committee.
Wage Theft Prevention Act	Worked with the Dept. of Labor and Industry and other relevant stakeholders to receive a hearing in the Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy Committee. \$1 million dollars was awarded to the Dept. of Labor and Industry to add additional Wage & Hour Investigators.
Real ID	MCLA respectfully worked with bill authors to address the provisions related to immigrant driver’s licenses. These provisions were considered and reflected within the final bill’s passage.

Although there were priority bills in each designated issue area, the Council worked and advised on a number of additional bills. For example, MCLA supported removing the skills test in Tier 3 of the new E-12 tiered teacher licenses system. MCLA also provided testimony to support the Department of Human Services’ safety network policy and services for low income families, children, and vulnerable individuals. With respect to economic development, MCLA supported over \$4 million dollars in funding and programming for Minnesota non-profits that work within diverse and immigrant communities in order to improve their economic development outcomes. In immigration, MCLA has worked with a variety of stakeholders on a bill to regulate the H-2A visa program. These examples continue to show the leadership MCLA has brought to the capitol in order to properly advise the legislature and governor’s office on policy.

Community Engagement, Board Meetings, Listening Sessions

It is MCLA’s responsibility to engage with community members to accurately and effectively represent Latino voices in the legislative and policy-making process. MCLA therefore relies on community outreach to help shape its legislative agenda so that it is representative of the Latino people of the state. The estimated 270,000 Latinos in Minnesota come from diverse backgrounds and geographic locations. MCLA exists to represent all Latinos in Minnesota.

MCLA utilized a variety of community outreach methods in 2017. The Council’s bilingual social media efforts have been launched and the Council has seen an increase of over 1,500 followers combined in Facebook and Twitter throughout 2017. Social media has become the Council’s most used platform to communicate with its constituency. The Council also launched a new website that is user friendly and better allows Minnesotans to connect with MCLA and its staff. Below is a summary of MCLA’s social media improvements.

Legislative and Policy Updates	2015	2016	2017
Social Media posts	19	69	130
# of people reached	500 est.	6,200 est.	12,000 est.
Updates @ Community Meetings	8	27	100
# of people reached	136 est.	1,100 est.	3,000 est.

The Council additionally saw great success with its legislative-focused events. This year’s iteration of *Minnesotanos Day at the Capitol* saw participation from over 300 community members and nine Latino-based organizations. On this day, they heard a variety of speakers in the Capitol rotunda, as well as having a number of productive meetings with legislators.

The other successful event was MCLA’s community leadership meeting, where the Council presented a first draft of its 2018 legislative agenda in addition to providing a legislative update. Over 100 prominent Latino community leaders from the public and private sectors participated in this event. This was an incredible turnout, and reinforces MCLA’s valued work within the community and its ability to act as a bridge between the Latino community and the Minnesota State Capitol.

2017 was also a year where MCLA made a concerted effort to expand its reach in Greater Minnesota. Subsequently, MCLA held a record number of board meetings in greater Minnesota, as well as conducting comprehensive statewide outreach in cities and towns with high Latino populations. The Council presented or participated in over 100 community meetings, forums or panels across the state. The Council estimates presenting to over 3,000 people in 2017.

Greater Minnesota Cities Visited by the Council

2015	2016	2017
Rochester – 1 FTE	Rochester – 1 FTE until June 2016	Rochester
Austin	Albert Lea	Long Prairie x2
Willmar	Willmar x2	Willmar x3
Worthington	St. Cloud x2	Northfield x3
	Duluth x2	Mankato x5
	Mankato x2	St. Cloud
		Worthington
		Marshall x2
		St. James x2

The end of page 8 to page 10 show the recommendations from MCLA’s 2017 Greater Minnesota Outreach Research Report. In total, MCLA visited seven cities (Willmar, Worthington, Marshall, Long Prairie, Northfield, Mankato, and St. James) and met with over 170 community members, elected officials, and administrators from local health clinics, schools, and workforce centers in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing Latino Minnesotans.

Policy Recommendations

Economic Development

Entrepreneurial Assistance: Despite an eagerness to own their own businesses, many Latinos in Minnesota struggle with starting a business. They may also face barriers in accessing bank loans that will help them in this process.

Recommendations:

- 1) Recommend that more funding be allocated for the Department of Employment and Economic Development’s (DEED) Emerging Entrepreneur Loan Program.
- 2) Encourage policy changes to state grants that disadvantage new or small nonprofits.

Affordable Housing: Housing is a major challenge for Latinos in rural Minnesota due to an overall housing shortage in the state and a particular lack of affordable housing. The situation is worsened for those who do not have a social security number, who may also face poor housing conditions due to predatory landlords that take advantage of their undocumented immigration status.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support a bonding bill that has significant allocations to housing development.
- 2) Advocate measures that increase Latino homeownership.

Social Security Number Limitations: Lack of a social security number affects undocumented Latino immigrants by limiting them to low-paying work that provides no opportunity for upward mobility. These jobs often have long hours and difficult conditions which limit workers from accessing other resources.

Recommendations:

- 1) Advocate for innovative policy changes to allow for the use of an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in lieu of a Social Security Number.
- 2) Support legislation to strengthen policies to prevent Wage Theft.

Health

Health Insurance and Health Care Costs: Latino communities in rural Minnesota have difficulty accessing health care due to health insurance barriers and unaffordable health care costs, in addition to difficulties navigating complicated health care systems. These challenges may be greater for undocumented immigrants.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support local initiatives aimed at allowing more individuals to opt for health insurance regardless of immigration status.
- 2) Continue advocating for the Affordable Care Act and reforms that will not dismantle recent progress.
- 3) Support MNsure and culturally relevant MNsure Navigators to help individuals and family members access health insurance.

Language Barriers and Interpreters: Language barriers are prominent for Latino community members whether they speak Spanish or another language. It is critical that community members have access to quality interpreters who understand both medical terminology and the nuances of speakers' first language.

Recommendations:

- 1) Continue advocating for bill HF2030/SF1708 "Spoken language health care interpreters registry" that will replace the current interpreters' roster.

Sense of Belonging: A sense of belonging is an important determinant of health and one that is often lacking for Latino community members as they encounter structural and overt racism. The communities visited often lack support networks and infrastructure to welcome newly arriving immigrants.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support community health clinics and multicultural centers with state grants.
- 2) Support Equity Policies and/or Health in All Policies.
- 3) Support structures that allow Latino representation on the City Council and other public boards that can function as a liaison between Latinos and government.

Education

Student Support by Educators: There is a shortage of Latino, bilingual, or cross-culturally competent educators in Minnesota schools, which affects Latino students as they do not have teachers with whom they can communicate or who can serve as role models or advocate for their interests. Although Latino and bilingual teachers are lacking, some schools in the communities visited have cultural or family liaisons that support students holistically as they progress through their education.

Recommendations:

- 1) Continue advocating for measures to increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers.
- 2) Advocate for greater cross-cultural competence and trauma-informed practice in educators, staff, and administration.
- 3) Show support for cultural liaisons and community navigators.

Student Support by Parents: Parental involvement in Latino children's education may be limited for a variety of reasons. Many community members believe that language barriers are lessening as interpreters are more readily available; however, parents may still be hindered by lack of system understanding and the economic demands of providing for their families.

Recommendations:

- 1) Address language needs of the Latino community.
- 2) Expand multigenerational approaches.

Access to Higher Education and Opportunity Gap Barriers: Latino youths' transition to colleges and universities is particularly inhibited by lack of system knowledge and financial barriers, as well as other barriers to higher education completion. Funding for and limits on English Language Learner (ELL) programming, limitations to extracurricular opportunities, lack of transportation, and limited opportunities to enroll children in preschool programs were important topics to community members. These challenges may contribute to the opportunity gap between Latino students and the majority culture students, impacting them well into the future.

Recommendations:

- 1) Improve college access for Latino youth.
- 2) Advocate for more funding in ELL programs.
- 3) Maintain and increase public school funding and targeted funds.
- 4) Improve childcare and pre-kindergarten access.

Immigration

Political Representation: Latino residents are a growing demographic but often lack political representation in these rural communities. Especially in the context of anti-Latino discourse occurring at the national level, it is important that Latino community members see themselves represented in local leadership that will make their voices heard.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support the creation of a Governor's Commission on New Minnesotans.
- 2) Increase citizenship by supporting the Citizenship Opportunity Act. Citizenship would give new Minnesotans access to higher wage employment in addition to becoming eligible to vote.
- 3) Increase resources and accessibility to new Minnesotans.

Transportation: Transportation is a common barrier to Latino community members in these areas of Minnesota since public transit is limited, and Latinos who are undocumented immigrants are unable to attain a driver's license. Transportation barriers affect Latino community members' ability to arrive at their workplaces, schools, medical appointments, and more.

Recommendations:

- 1) Extend reliable public transportation routes to and from employment hubs, especially during shift changes at local manufacturing plants.
- 2) Increase public transportation services between municipalities.

Access to Driver's Licenses and Municipal Identification Cards: Community members are deeply affected by and concerned with the inability to access driver's licenses, and they and local authority figures alike agreed that supporting this issue is critical because it is also a public safety concern.

Recommendations:

- 1) Promote safe roads and highways by permitting access to driver's licenses to all who meet the requirements regardless of immigration status.
- 2) Introduction of Municipal Identification Cards that can prove identity and residence in the card-issuing municipality as a tool to encourage more inclusive participation.

Policy Work: Coalition and Executive Branch Support

Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC): By statute, MCLA (along with the other Ethnic Councils and appointed community members from diverse communities) sits on the CECLC at the Department of Human Services. The CECLC develops community-supported policy recommendations that work to achieve health and human services equity for cultural and ethnic communities. MCLA attends monthly CECLC meetings. In 2017, the Council met with different state agencies and non-state organizations to share DHS' equity policy. Currently, through the CECLC, MCLA has started a conversation with MNSure and METS to assess the translation of Minnesota Health Care program applications and notices into languages other than English as an ongoing METS priority.

Puerto Rican Resettlement (Coalición de Boricuas en Minnesota): Formed immediately after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017, by a group of Puerto Ricans living in Minnesota, as well as other concerned individuals. The Coalition involves a number of non-governmental and legislative leaders. The Coalition is developing action steps for state government to take in order to assist with Puerto Rican resettlement efforts.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Stakeholder Engagement: MCLA has participated in the design phase of the Minnesota State Plan required by the new federal ESSA. MCLA attended various committee meetings at MDE to provide input and was a part of the stakeholder engagement design team led by the Assistant Commissioner and helped facilitate a community conversation in Spanish. The Council also provided input on drafting new English Language Learner (ELL) entry and exit forms.

MN Multilingual Equity Network: A joint initiative between the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership and the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, the *English Language Learner-Every Student Succeeds Act Initiative* was launched in 2016. The initiative aims “to create and coordinate conversations within and between advocacy organizations and the students, families, and communities that are the most impacted by the EL policies and practices of Minnesota school districts.” MCLA joined in late 2016 and attends stakeholder meetings, provides input, and elevates the group's recommendations when appropriate to MDE and other stakeholders.

Implementation of programs to increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers: Following the successful passage of various provisions from the Increase Teachers of Color Act of 2017 (SF1555/HF2077) and the higher education bill (SF1585/HF1409) addressing this issue, MCLA provided implementation input to MDE and the Office of Higher Education.

All Kids Count Act: MCLA partook in stakeholder conversations in the drafting of amendments to the All Kids Count Act of 2016. In the 2017 session, various changes were made to the Act. The Council has followed the Act into the implementation phase, attending stakeholder meetings at MDE and with other interested stakeholders. MCLA has also provided several recommendations on the draft documents to be utilized in its implementation, including the race/ethnicity/heritage self-identification form, the letter to districts, and Q&A documents.

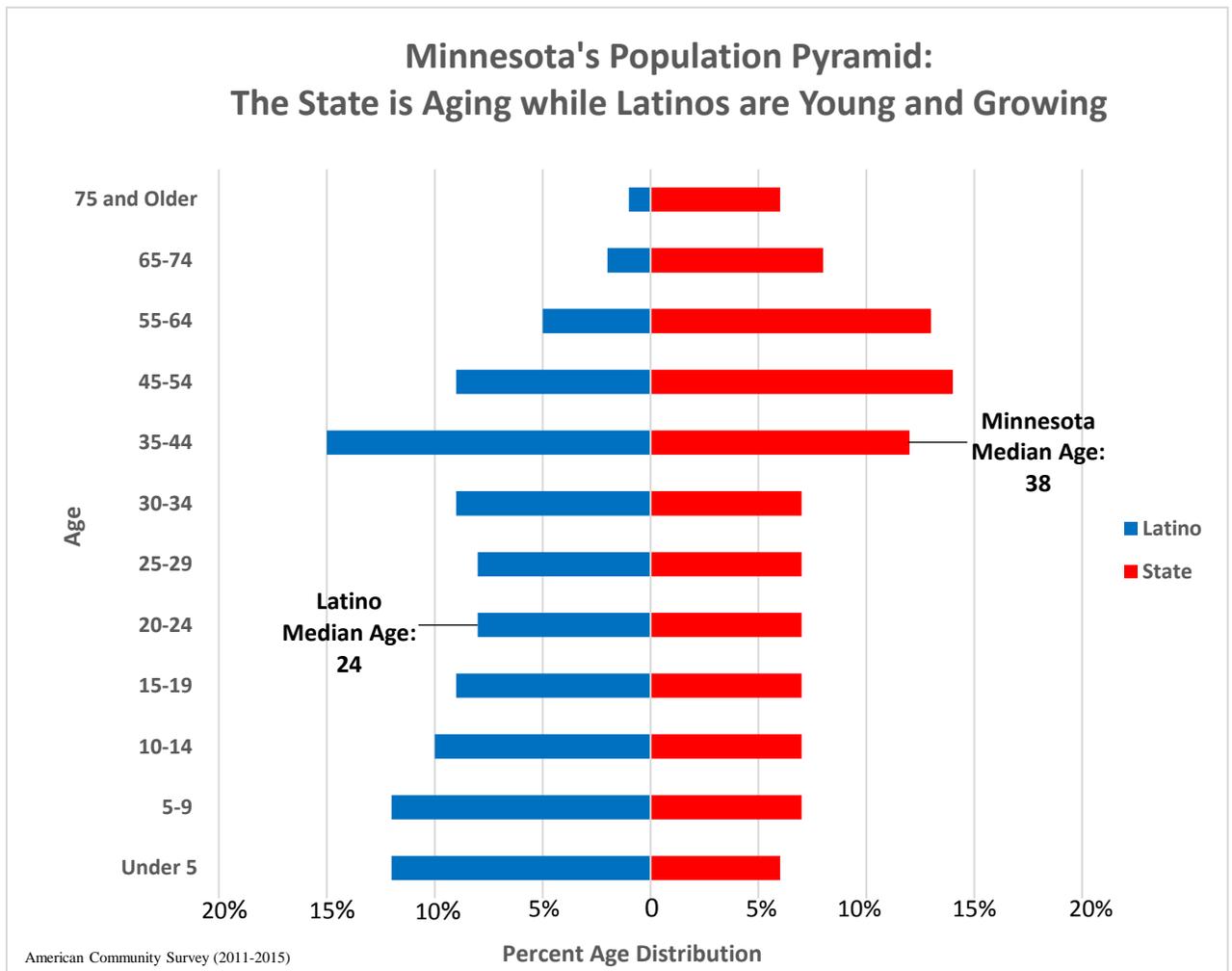
Comité Central (COCE): At the end of the 2017 legislative session, several Latino based community organizations, along with labor, and other organizations were concerned that the needs of New Minnesotans were not considered or reflected in the outcomes of the legislative session. MCLA has provided state government navigation support, updates, and recommendations on legislation and policy.

Wage Theft Coalition: This coalition is comprised of a variety public agencies, community organizations, and small business owners. The aim of the coalition is to end wage theft in Minnesota. MCLA played a pivotal role in the coalition by advising on bill language (HF 1391/SF1329), building bi-partisan political support, and working closely with the Department of Labor and Industry.

Governor's Workforce Diversity Board: Comprised of a number of state agency representatives, non-profit partners, and private sector leaders, the GWDB's aim is to determine recommendations to decrease disparities in education and economic development. MCLA is a sitting member on the Equity Task Force and regularly advises the board on the unique economic and education disparities that impact the Minnesota Latino community.

Demographics

Demographic changes to all regions of Minnesota are impacting everything from education spending to workforce development. In order to properly advise the legislature and governor’s office on policy, MCLA holds an unwavering commitment to provide up-to-date, factual, and non-partisan data. Many legislators have appreciated our ability to provide in-house data on demographics and in a number of policy areas. Below is an example of the research the Council conducts. The graph shows a population pyramid that compares Latino Minnesotans to state averages. As you will see, Minnesota is aging, while the Latino population is young and growing rapidly.



2017 FY Expenditures

Account Class and Description	Current Budget (\$)
Full Time – Salary	345,000
Space Rental and Utilities	19,900
Central IT Services	19,900
Instate Travel	18,000
Other Operating Costs	17,400
Overtime	15,000
Other Employee Cost	12,000
Professional Technical Services	9,000
Communications	5,000
Printing and Advertising	4,000
Employee Development	4,000
Out of State Travel	3,000
Supplies	2,600
Repairs to Equipment	2,000
Equipment	1,000
Total	477,000

Board Members



Julio Zelaya
 Congressional District 1
 Appointed: June 2017/Expires: January 2021



Francisco González
 Secretary, Congressional District 2
 Appointed: September 2015/ Expires: January 2019



Uriel Perez Espinoza
 Chair, Congressional District 3
 Appointed: May 2014/ Expires: January 2018



Kandace Creel Falcón
 Treasurer, Congressional District 7
 Appointed: March 2014/Expires: January 2018



Angelica Klebsch
 Vice Chair, Congressional District 4
 Appointed: June 2016/Expires: January 2020



Maria Regan Gonzalez
 Congressional District 5
 Appointed: June 2017/Expires January 2021



Monica Segura-Schwartz
 Congressional District 6
 Appointed: September 2015/ Expires: January 2019



Sandra Filardo
 At-Large Board Member
 Appointed: June 2016/Expires: January 2020



Ruben Vasquez
 At-Large Board Member
 Appointed: June 2016/Expires: January 2020



Leticia Guadarrama
 At-Large Board Member
 Appointed: September 2015/ Expires: January 2019



Senator Carla Nelson
 District 26
 Appointed: March 2013



Senator Patricia Torres Ray
 District 63
 Appointed: March 2013



Representative Jon Koznick
 District 58A
 Appointed: March 2014



Representative Tim Mahoney
 District 67A
 Appointed: November 2015

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