

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

AS REQUESTED BY MINNESOTA STATUTE 15.0145

The Council **advises** and **works** with the **legislature** and the **governor** towards the **implementation** of the economic, social, legal and political equality for Minnesotans of Latino heritage (*Minn. Stat. 15.0145*)



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LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



Dear State Legislature,

The unprecedented developments of 2020 have shown the importance of community voice in governance. In a year full of almost paralyzing challenges, the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA) has remained a strong and steady representative body of Latino Minnesotans and a necessary vanguard for our democracy. Amid a pandemic, economic uncertainty and public uprisings against racism, MCLA quickly mobilized support for the community and essential workers by pursuing lawmakers to implement important life-saving measures while also creating nonpartisan spaces to make communities safer and prosperous for all.



Meat packers, nurses, farmers, teachers, and small-town entrepreneurs-- Latinos are making an impact in every sector of our state. The Council is thus busy at work representing the many interests of Minnesotans of Latin American decent during some of our state's most difficult years. The following report highlights the work of the Council during this crucial and productive year, including:

- Responding to the economic and public health effects of COVID-19 by leveraging relationships with both the legislature and executive branch partners to make Latino needs visible during the crisis.
- Directly speaking to constituents by creating a vital bilingual webpage and using our social media to amplify government and non-profit messages in response to the pandemic crisis.
- During the pandemic and in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, MCLA staff successfully partnered with multisector groups of Latinos to hold townhalls with Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, bringing attention to the most urgent needs faced by Latinos of all races, including Black immigrant Latinos.
- Supporting and passing of a grant in the Bonding Bill for a regenerative agriculture project in Albert Lea, supporting the work of Latino farmers in the poultry industry.
- Partnered with the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor during Latino Heritage Month to release, for the first time, a bilingual proclamation acknowledging the contributions of Latinos, especially essential workers, to the State.
- Conducting community listening sessions and a statewide survey to hear the testimonies of six Latino communities in Greater Minnesota and the metro area, as well as drafting our legislative and policy priorities for the new biennium.
- Developing internal board capacity by setting strategic planning for the Council which will allow members to envision its work for the next five years.

All this work was safely executed, guaranteeing the wellbeing of our staff and community members, while maintaining MCLA's good financial standing and making strategic investments within our budget to fulfill our legislative mandate.

The challenges experienced in 2020 will continue to press government to work in unprecedented ways. Our state legislative and executive branches should know that they can rely on an effective body that centers the voices of Latinos in our state. Informed by data and evidence, and particularly the deep expertise and diverse experiences of our Latinx community, we look forward to building the future of our state with each of you.

Julio Zelaya
2020 MCLA Chair, CD1

INTRODUCTION



The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs presents its 2020 Legislative Report to the Minnesota State Legislature. As our Council chair detailed in his letter, 2020 was a year of extremely unexpected and unprecedented challenges, but also a year in which MCLA continued to provide leadership when the state and our constituents needed it the most. After several staff changes and transitions in 2019, the Council ends this year fully and stably staffed with no vacancies on its board, despite one board member who had to leave Minnesota in the fall. MCLA also strengthened the role of board members by aligning their service to their respective geographical locations. Working together, the Council's staff and Board members have participated in various leadership development activities that reinforced the Council's capacity to represent our communities and provide needed insight to the state.

This year will be remembered not only as the pandemic year but one where mindful, intentional, and visionary conversations were held to transform the state and live up to the promise of One Equitable Minnesota. MCLA played a role in advancing those aspirations.

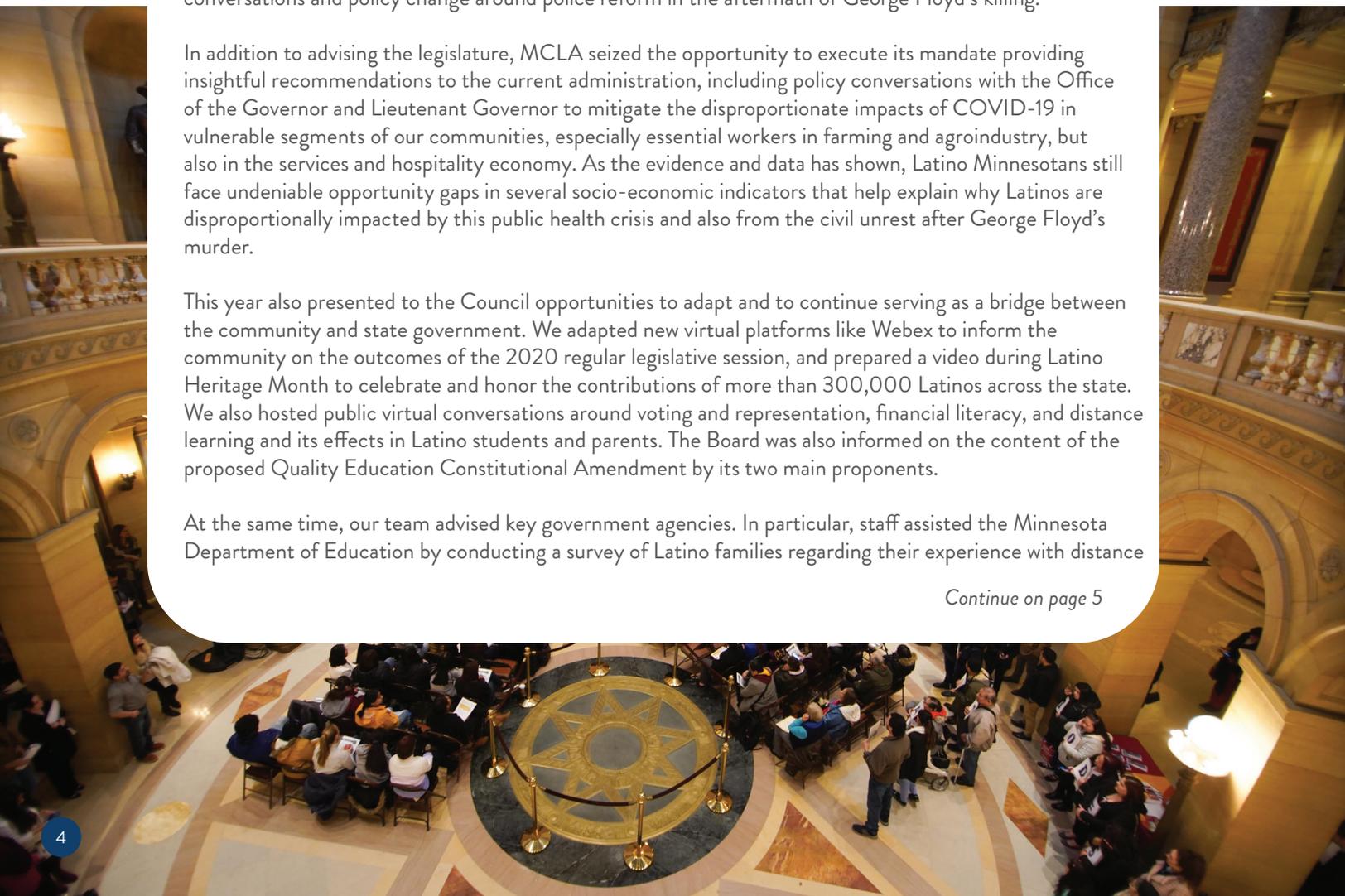
We continued to focus on our legislative work, ranging from supporting a comprehensive bill to increase teachers of color, raising awareness about quality medical interpretation and delivery of health care services for all patients, to working on new areas like regenerative agriculture, and taxes and initiatives to expand economic development opportunities for all Latinos to achieve prosperity. Out of that work, during the Fifth Special Session, the legislative staff was instrumental in successfully passing a grant for Latino farmers for the study and design of a poultry industrial park in the Bonding Bill. MCLA also helped to elevate the conversations and policy change around police reform in the aftermath of George Floyd's killing.

In addition to advising the legislature, MCLA seized the opportunity to execute its mandate providing insightful recommendations to the current administration, including policy conversations with the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 in vulnerable segments of our communities, especially essential workers in farming and agroindustry, but also in the services and hospitality economy. As the evidence and data has shown, Latino Minnesotans still face undeniable opportunity gaps in several socio-economic indicators that help explain why Latinos are disproportionately impacted by this public health crisis and also from the civil unrest after George Floyd's murder.

This year also presented to the Council opportunities to adapt and to continue serving as a bridge between the community and state government. We adapted new virtual platforms like Webex to inform the community on the outcomes of the 2020 regular legislative session, and prepared a video during Latino Heritage Month to celebrate and honor the contributions of more than 300,000 Latinos across the state. We also hosted public virtual conversations around voting and representation, financial literacy, and distance learning and its effects in Latino students and parents. The Board was also informed on the content of the proposed Quality Education Constitutional Amendment by its two main proponents.

At the same time, our team advised key government agencies. In particular, staff assisted the Minnesota Department of Education by conducting a survey of Latino families regarding their experience with distance

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INTRODUCTION



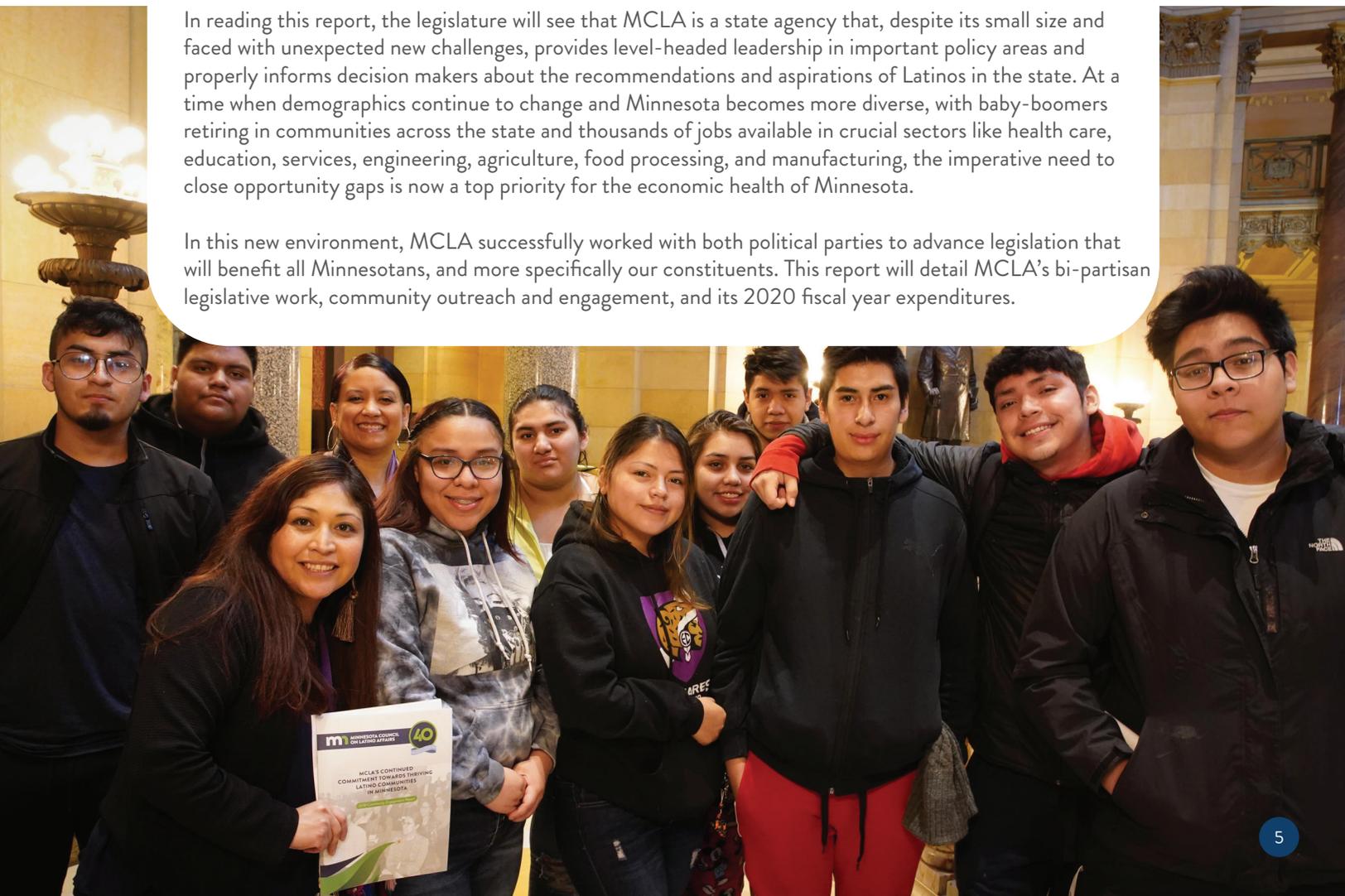
learning. We also contributed on multiple occasions to a wide array of state agencies (MDH, DEED, and DOLI) with recommendations gleaned from our outreach to our constituents about the need to effectively offer user-friendly and vital information in Spanish to protect vulnerable communities and stop the spread of the virus.

In addition, MCLA staff participated on various community organization calls to continue to learn of the concerns and experiences of community members as a result of the coronavirus pandemic emergency and the effectiveness of various policy responses. We connected staff at various community organizations with information and resources provided by the State of Minnesota.

Amidst this tumultuous context, this year was also extremely important for the participation and representation of our communities in two consequential processes: the 2020 Census count, and the Presidential Elections. It is still too early to know to what extent families and individuals participated in both civic endeavors. We would hope that the obstacles faced by communities of color to respond to the Census in the middle of the pandemic will not result in a significant undercount of Latino Minnesotans. Dozens of organizations, including MCLA, brought attention to the importance of this civic duty and actively distributed information to the community to stifle the historical undercounting of Latinos. On the other hand, with the record high electoral turnout across the nation, we would expect that the so called “sleeping giant”, meaning Latino voters, also saw an increased participation in the elections this year in Minnesota. During this cycle, we were encouraged to see more Latino political representation on school boards, in municipal government, and the re-election of Latino and Latina legislators from both political parties.

In reading this report, the legislature will see that MCLA is a state agency that, despite its small size and faced with unexpected new challenges, provides level-headed leadership in important policy areas and properly informs decision makers about the recommendations and aspirations of Latinos in the state. At a time when demographics continue to change and Minnesota becomes more diverse, with baby-boomers retiring in communities across the state and thousands of jobs available in crucial sectors like health care, education, services, engineering, agriculture, food processing, and manufacturing, the imperative need to close opportunity gaps is now a top priority for the economic health of Minnesota.

In this new environment, MCLA successfully worked with both political parties to advance legislation that will benefit all Minnesotans, and more specifically our constituents. This report will detail MCLA’s bi-partisan legislative work, community outreach and engagement, and its 2020 fiscal year expenditures.



MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



As a small-staffed and efficient state agency, MCLA prioritizes its work through a three-pronged approach: 1) Advise the state legislature, the Governor and Lieutenant's office, and executive branch agencies on the policy priorities of Minnesota's Latino community, 2) Connect the Latino community and the State of Minnesota, and 3) Influence public policy while adding value to state government.

1. ADVISE

The primary purpose of MCLA is to provide non-partisan, fact-based analysis, and advise to state government. Whether it is through our in-house research, direct meetings with legislators, testifying during hearings, or holding policy-focused events, MCLA works to ensure that it properly advises the State of Minnesota on the Latino community.



Felipe Illescas, Senior Legislative and Policy Director, testifying in support of a Regenerative Agriculture Bill

2. CONNECT

MCLA finds a variety of ways to connect Minnesota Latinos and state government. The agency prioritizes any appropriate opportunity to directly connect Latino community members to their state legislators or to a state agency. The lived experiences, stories, and perspectives of Latino members are insightful and powerful.

2020 Minnesotanos Day at the Capitol

The Latino day at the Capitol was held at the beginning of March and focused on Latino contributions to the

state and civic engagement. With the Census and the elections this year, being counted, visible, and present in the policy making process was a key message for our communities. Guest speakers included Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, Secretary of State, Steve Simon, and Maria Regan-Gonzalez, Mayor of Richfield, the first Latina mayor in the state. Other legislators included Senator Patricia Torres Ray, Senator Carla Nelson and Representative Alice Mann. Approximately 200 persons attended the event and 40 meetings with legislators were scheduled for community members.



2020 Census Information and Community Outreach

MCLA's legislative team participated in various community events to raise awareness about the Census in Latino communities. This included the Minneapolis Community Connections program. The team explained how the Census data helps our agency inform, educate, and advise public policy with the legislature and other state agencies. The Council engaged in education and outreach efforts with our communities, in partnership with other Latino organizations, to serve as an information hub and educate the community about the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census. MCLA also worked with the City of Duluth to pass an ordinance allowing Census workers to access buildings to secure complete counts of residents.

MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

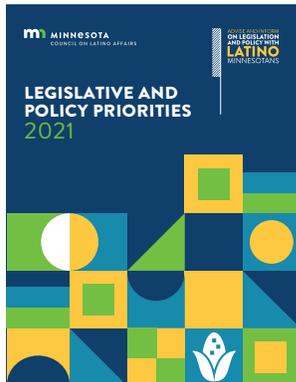


3. INFLUENCE

Whether it is providing non-partisan research and analysis, or advising a state legislator on Latinos who live and work in their district, MCLA works hard to create a space for dialogue to help influence and shape policy by providing timely expertise that adds value to state government and makes the state a more prosperous and inclusive place for every resident.

Townhalls with Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan

MCLA co-convened with LatinoLEAD two virtual community meetings with the Office of the Governor to support funding and policy changes (including translating into Spanish key information and resources) to assist Latino communities in need during the pandemic and in the aftermath of George Floyd's death.



Report on MCLA's 2020 Greater Minnesota Community Engagement and Statewide Priorities Survey: "Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19: Testimonies of Survival, Resilience, and Action".

Throughout the summer, MCLA staff took a hybrid approach to facilitating engagement sessions, by utilizing online conference platforms for the Albert Lea, Duluth, Long Prairie and Northfield communities, while Austin and Cold Spring events were in-person and in adherence to CDC social distancing guidelines. To supplement qualitative findings and capture more Latinx voices in its findings, MCLA conducted an online survey that was shared with its large network across the state.

2020 Legislative Recaps MCLA released two bilingual legislative reports that assessed the 2020 regular legislative session, highlighting some positive outcomes for the community, and stressing pending changes moving forward.

Chatting with MCLA Series

MCLA launched a series of virtual public conversations to keep the community up to date with a variety of developments during and after the legislative session. These include:

- 2020 Legislative Summary and Implications for the Latino Community
- Panel on Businesses and Commercial Insurance
- Distance Learning: How COVID-19 has impacted Latino students
- The Political Muscle of Latinos: A Conversation on Democracy, Participation and Representation in Minnesota

Latino Heritage Month: Latinx in Focus

MCLA worked with the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor to draft the Latino Heritage Month Proclamation and translate it into Spanish. In addition, we filmed a short video as a Council's tribute and recognition to the invaluable contributions, sacrifice, and hard work of Latinos across the state during these challenging times, and to celebrate the leadership and work of dozens of Latino organizations, and hundreds of Latinos in the community with whom we have worked in the last decade. We also created a series of infographics with demographics focused on Latinx communities.

2020 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



EDUCATION

Increase Teachers of Color Act of 2020 (ITCA of 2020): Support coalition efforts to ensure passage of policy amendments that were not included in the final Education and Higher Education omnibus bills of 2019. The bill amendments continue to promote system change to help close opportunity and achievement gaps by strengthening existing programs and proposing new efforts to attract, prepare, and retain an increased percentage of teachers of color and American Indian Teachers. Provisions also seek to establish a state goal and biennial accountability report.

Addressing needs of new K-12 families: Advise the Minnesota Department of Education on the creation and funding of new positions, through the schools' Achievement and Integration funding, to address the needs of new Latino families being relocated to Minnesota.

Academic Data Disaggregation: Support efforts on data disaggregation for improved targeting of resources by better capturing the academic progress and needs of each unique heritage group amongst Latino Minnesotans.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Regenerative Agriculture: Co-lead efforts for new Regenerative Agriculture initiatives that promote workforce development, more sustainable agricultural practices, and better opportunities for minority farmers. Additionally, support passing a resolution where the state legislature recognizes Regenerative Agriculture as an innovative practice of agriculture.

Consumer Protection: Strengthen policies that protect Latino consumers from irresponsible practices that prey on underrepresented and vulnerable Minnesotans.

Workforce Development: In partnership with the Department of Employment and Economic Development, ensure that Latinos seeking to join the labor workforce have access to state programs such as Career Force and Apprenticeship opportunities, among others, that can enhance their path to success.

Post-Conviction Relief (PCR): Criminal records hinder potential job opportunities for individuals looking at providing a meaningful life to their families, affecting people of color disproportionately. The Council will work alongside the PCR Coalition to pass legislation that allows applicable Minnesotans to appeal and obtain relief from wrongful and unconstitutional convictions past the current two-year deadline.

2020 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



TAXES

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN): A significant percentage of Latinos contribute nearly \$200 million in state and local taxes. The Council seeks to ensure that state revenue programs are accessible to all taxpayers and will lead efforts for innovative policy changes related to the use of ITINs to increase the equitable participation and benefits of taxpayers.

Veterans: Ensure that Latino Veterans have access to all applicable tax benefits in Minnesota.

HEALTH

Spoken Language Health Care Interpreters – Registry System: MCLA will continue supporting a new Registry System for Spoken Language Health Care Interpreters to replace the current roster at MDH (HF1400/SF875). The bill creates a statewide baseline with minimum interpreting requirements to secure quality interpretation, reduce health disparities, guarantee optimal health outcomes and patients’ safety for Limited English Proficiency communities. The Registry would include three interpreting categories acknowledging levels of skills and competencies.

IMMIGRATION

The Council acknowledges that much of the immigration policy comes from the federal government but impacts local communities. The Council will support humane and non-discriminatory immigration policies that seek to properly integrate New Americans to Minnesota consistent with the state’s values of inclusion, entrepreneurship, and innovation. The Council will support protecting DACA holders, a recent court decision prohibiting extending the requirements deemed as “public charge”, and favor laws that help families remain united.



Samantha N. Diaz, Legislative and Policy Director, testifying in support of the 2020 Increase Teachers of Color Act

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



■ LEGISLATION DRAFTED AND/OR COLLABORATED WITH

5 pieces of legislation

■ **1** BILL FOR A GRANT FOR THE PLANNING OF AN INDUSTRIAL POULTRY PARK SUCCESSFULLY PASSED IN THE BONDING BILL

(5th Special Session)

■ LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY/ POSITION STATEMENTS

15 position statements or committee testimonies

■ MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS, LEGISLATIVE AIDS AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES

200

■ 2020 GREATER MINNESOTA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND STATEWIDE PRIORITIES SURVEY REPORT:

“Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19: Testimonies of Survival, Resilience, and Action”
(Bilingual publication released in November 2020)

■ COMMUNITY FORUMS AND LISTENING SESSIONS

16 public presentations **6** listening sessions

■ MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENTS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

200 virtual meetings and phone communications

■ CONSTITUENTS REACHED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

25,000 constituents reached through communications, including 4 e-newsletters

COALITION WORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

- The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota
- Distance Learning Advisory Group
- Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (DHS)
- Minnesota Healthy Partnership (MDH)
- Regenerative Agriculture Alliance
- Hennepin County Public Health Community Conversations
- POST Board Police-Community Relations Advisory Council
- Tax Legislative Table
- Minnesota State Task Force to reform law enforcement education programs
- Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB)
- COVID healthcare coverage for the immigrant community
- Research Partnership with Ethnic Councils and the Center for Rural Policy and Development
- Community Resiliency and Recovery Workgroup (COVID-19 Interagency Group)

A COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND LEGISLATION



In order to credibly fulfill its mission, MCLA has developed its 2021-2022 legislative agenda through a process of community-led outreach. During the summer and fall, MCLA conducted listening sessions to hear the priorities of the Latino community. In addition, this year we conducted a statewide survey to complement the outreach in Greater Minnesota.

Due to the pandemic, MCLA staff took a hybrid approach to facilitating engagement sessions, by utilizing online conference platforms for the Albert Lea, Duluth, Long Prairie and Northfield communities, while Austin and Cold Spring events were in-person and in adherence to CDC social distancing guidelines. To supplement qualitative findings and capture more Latinx voices in its findings, MCLA conducted an online survey that was shared with its large network across the state.

The testimonies shared during MCLA's visits mirrored countless national studies and reports regarding the degree to which COVID-19 has disproportionately affected Latino Minnesotans and the underlying inequities that prevail in the access to resources and information to respond to a public health crisis. The urgent need for access to equitable healthcare, relief funding for undocumented workers and mixed status families, and workplace safety for low wage workers highlighted the dire conditions for many Minnesota Latinos.

An underlying and consistently identified contributor to much of the challenging issues experienced by the state's Latino community is the disconnect and sentiment of isolation from government institutions at the local, state, and federal levels. The effects of the pandemic also resulted in gaps to access technology and guidance as students transitioned to distance learning.

Some policy recommendations included in the report are geared towards improving the quality of life of Latino Minnesotans, eliminating systemic barriers in education and paths to financial stability, and ushering in reciprocity for the contributions they continue to make in our local economies and across the state. These recommendations will inform MCLA's legislative and policy agenda for the upcoming 2021 Legislative Session.

In sum, key findings from the conversations conducted statewide include the palpable and demonstrable resilience throughout Latinx communities and the active role of women and parents organizing through affinity networks to respond to the crisis in the face of salient inadequacies of federal aid and essential bilingual and bicultural communications.

These stories and testimonies will inform our legislative and policy agenda in the upcoming biennium.



Listening Session in Austin, Minnesota

FY20 EXPENDITURES



General Fund **\$519,000**

Expenditures

Full Time	\$267,548.84
Part Time - Seasonal	\$17,101.26
Overtime	\$1,426.78
Other Employee Cost	\$2,130.33
Space Rental and Utilities	\$19,846.60
Printing and Advertising	\$160.00
Professional Technical Services	\$15,470.25
Communications	\$1,950.72
In State Travel	\$3,659.27
Out of State Travel	\$0.00
Employee Development	\$1,145.00
Central MNIT Services	\$16,569.80
Agency Specific MNIT Services	\$1,255.41
Supplies	\$346.33
Equipment	\$626.17
Repairs and Equipment	\$716.26
Other Operating Costs	\$2,504.74
Total	\$352,457.76



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Administrative Assistant

We want to thank our three **2020 Policy Fellows** Marleny Huerta-Apanco, Aaron Sepúlveda, and Natalya Arevalo, as well as our **Summer Intern** Anthony Huerta-Apanco, for supporting our work this year.

THANK YOU!



m MINNESOTA
COUNCIL ON LATINO AFFAIRS



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