



2020 Issues Platform: A Roadmap for Stronger Communities and a Stronger America

2020 UNIDOS US ANNUAL CONFERENCE EDITION



INTRODUCTION

Hispanics* have been part of the fabric of America since its founding. Today, one in every five people in our country is Latino, and the community at its core is defined by family, hard work, and service to the nation. Latinos have helped build America's cities, put food on its table, energized small business creation, and broken new ground in science, art, and civil rights. We have the highest workforce participation rate in the country and are a solid and growing share of our active-duty military personnel. A fast-growing segment of the American electorate, Latino voters participated in record numbers in the 2018 midterm election and will be a decisive factor in the 2020 presidential contest.

And as the country battles the coronavirus pandemic, Latinos—who are overrepresented among the many essential workers helping us to survive—are on the frontlines now and will play a critical role in rebuilding, once the pandemic ends. However, Latinos are also bearing a disproportionate health and economic impact from the spread of COVID-19. We need the country to respond to Latinos “in the same” way that they have responded to all of us.

The need for principled, wise leadership from our elected officials has seldom been more urgent than in this time of crisis. [The United States now has more confirmed cases than any country in the world, with over four million, and has lost more than 140,000 lives to the novel coronavirus.](#) In turn, state and local efforts to slow the spread of the virus have led to economic declines across the nation at levels last experienced during the Great Depression in the 1930s. And while Congress has enacted relief packages totaling over \$3.6 trillion, the structural inequalities fueling racial disparities in health and economic security prior to the pandemic have not been addressed and have made COVID-19 an especially destructive virus for the nation's racial and ethnic minorities.

As of July 1, Latinos make up 35% of all COVID-19 cases for which race/ethnicity data are available, even though they are only 18.5% of the total U.S. population. Moreover, a majority of the nation's Latinos live in Arizona, California, Texas, and Florida, which at the time of this publication are “hot spots” for the spread of the virus, and where its impact is compounded by pre-existing socio-economic disparities and, in most cases, poor political representation for Latinos in state governments.

Almost simultaneously, the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer has ignited national and worldwide protests, and ushered in a new phase of civic, social, and racial unrest. Americans have since been more deeply reflecting on racism in the United States, and the role that bias plays in shaping the lived experiences of

* The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. This document may also refer to this population as “Latinx” to represent the diversity of gender identities and expressions that are present in the community.

Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Whites. In the United States, systemic racial bias begins shaping the contours of our lives from birth, and leads to the type of inequality that contributes to social and economic stratification and racial division. Those shared experiences, including being a target of racial/ethnic profiling and excessive force by police, are the reason Latinos can relate to the movement to ensure that Black Lives Matter in our society. In a [Latino Justice PRLDF 2018 poll by Latino Decisions](#), nearly two-thirds of Latinos believe they experience similar treatment as Black Americans at the hands of police. The president's reactions to the moment have done more to aggravate and agitate racial tension, making it more likely than ever that racism, by proxy, will be on the ballot this fall.

At the same time, we have witnessed one of the most intense and blatant political assaults on immigrants and Latinos from the federal government and national leaders in a generation. The toxic anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies at the core of the Trump administration's politics of division reflect a nationalist political agenda that seeks to render Latinos and non-Whites invisible in society. These include: aggressive deportation and family separation tactics undermining the stability of millions of American families and U.S.-citizen children; the unconstitutional efforts to undermine the Census count of Latinos; and the failure to provide sufficient aid—and the ongoing threats to withhold aid—to our fellow Americans after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico nearly three years ago, to name a few. Latino U.S. citizens have endured having their citizenship questioned, and sometimes being detained and even deported, because of the color of their skin. Not surprisingly, discrimination and racial violence has become a concern for eight in ten Latino voters.

There is no doubt that America is in the midst of multiple crises and it will take strong political leadership and unified action from all its people—including its nearly 60 million strong Latino community—to help the country heal and recover. To that end, Latino voters want leaders who embrace the nation's diversity, have a plan to expand equal opportunity, and advance real solutions particularly in the economic, health, and immigration arenas. This second edition of the UnidosUS 2020 Platform reflects the current challenges facing Latinos and provides tangible recommendations to help our country tap the strength of one of our greatest national assets: America's diversity.

THE ECONOMY: LATINOS WANT RELIEF, ACCESS TO BETTER JOBS, AND TO SHARE EQUALLY IN THE RECOVERY

Prior to the pandemic, a higher share of Latinos were in the labor market than any other segment of U.S. workers. Even though Latino unemployment dipped to a record 4% in March of this year, nearly half of Latinos were concentrated in low-wage jobs that offered few workplace benefits and left too many struggling to make ends meet. That said, hard work, economic and job opportunities have consistently been top of mind for Latino voters for years, and many believe they have not benefited from their hard work.

As the coronavirus pandemic has continued to grip the United States, it has become clear that Latinos did not have the luxury of working from home and kept working to keep our country moving. Latinos are overrepresented in “essential” occupations where they are most at risk of exposure to coronavirus infection. These jobs include those along the American food supply chain, in health care and personal care settings, and in the service industry, such as cashiers, drivers, and janitors.

Latinos have borne the brunt of the economic fallout from the pandemic. Depression-era unemployment levels are taking their toll on the newly unemployed, and Latinos are disproportionately represented among them. The April national jobs report revealed the [highest Latino unemployment rate on record](#)—18.9%—which was substantially higher than the troubling national unemployment rate of 14.7%. At the time of this writing, the Latino unemployment rate still stands at 14.5%. A recent national poll by SOMOS Health Care, MoveOn, and UnidosUS also confirmed the dire economic circumstances of Latinos: 36% of respondents said that they or someone in their household had experienced losing a job and more than two-thirds (68%) fear not being able to keep up with basic expenses, while half of households report having difficulty buying or finding necessities such as food, household supplies, or medicine.

1. Support the Unemployed and Provide Emergency Financial Relief

Prior to the pandemic, Latino unemployment rates were low, and workers struggled with longstanding structural barriers to employment, such as racial-ethnic employment discrimination. Although the national unemployment rate dropped to just 4% in early 2020, the majority of Latinos reported that they were living from paycheck to paycheck with little to no savings on hand. The jobs with higher risk of exposure to coronavirus will likely be among the last to come back, putting Latino workers at heightened risk of long-term unemployment even as they are largely left out of COVID-19 relief efforts. For example, individuals who did not have a Social Security Number or are spouses to someone who does not have a Social Security Number were prohibited from receiving the \$1,200 Economic Impact Payment through the CARES Act. According to experts, this means that 3.7 million children and 1.7 million U.S.-citizen spouses or green card holders received no payment under this new law.

Recommendations (short-term)

It’s imperative that pandemic-related unemployment benefits are extended into 2021, to ensure workers have access to basic economic support until it is safe to return to their jobs. Additional cash payments to individuals and increased payments for dependents up to the age of 24 are vital to families at this time, as is providing premium “hazard” pay to all essential workers, including those in the food supply chain.

2. Provide Recovery Support to Low-Wage Workers

Prior to the pandemic, Latino low-income workers would get relief each tax season from refundable tax credits that supplement their income and wages and help them make ends meet while boosting and stimulating economic activity in communities.

Because many Latino workers hold low-wage jobs and are raising children, each year Latino families benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit, and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. These tax credits, if enhanced and expanded, can become an even more powerful tool in efforts to support economic recovery among workers in hard-hit states.

Recommendations

- Provide investments that can make high-quality, culturally relevant child care for essential workers more accessible.
- Expand the benefits of the Earned Income Tax Credit to further support low-wage workers and make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable.
- Allow all tax filers, including those that file with an ITIN, to receive the EITC.

3. Support Workers with Health or Family Emergencies

No American worker should be forced to choose between their job and caring for their children and family members. Prior to the pandemic, Latinos were especially vulnerable, with only one-quarter of Latino workers having access to paid family leave, compared to half of White workers. Lack of workplace benefits made Latino families vulnerable to sickness and income loss in light of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Latinos. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act allowed more workers to have paid time off to care for themselves or for a loved one when sick, and these protections ought to be extended and expanded to reach more workers.

4. Help Keep Families in Their Homes

Prior to the pandemic, Latinos were aspiring to be homeowners, for a more secure and stable life for their families and future generations. However, the lasting effects of discrimination in our nation's housing and credit systems has kept homeownership out of reach for many Latino families. More than half of Latinos rent their homes and many were already burdened by high housing costs. Currently, with millions of Latino out of work, experiencing income loss, and failing to benefit fully from federal and state relief, many Latinos are facing the threat of eviction and eventual foreclosure in the months ahead.

Recommendations

- Continue to pause mortgage payments for homeowners who need a forbearance period and ensure they have affordable options to pay back what they owe.
- Guide states and local governments to ensure that rental assistance and eviction prevention services are provided through Community Development Financial Institutions and housing counseling providers, as well as other trusted, community-based organizations well-positioned to serve Latinos, immigrants, and other hard-to reach communities.
- Ensure homeowners have accurate information about available mortgage relief in English and in Spanish: know how to request assistance from their mortgage servicer: and can access relief.

- Provide low-cost, forgivable financing for rental housing property owners with a mortgage and less than 10 housing units, to keep tenants in place and maintain stability.
- Enact a moratorium on negative credit reporting on a broad spectrum of credit lines that continues up to six months after the national emergency concludes.
- Establish a national standard for mortgage assistance, servicing, and foreclosure mitigation programs that will be available to all homeowners.
- Establish a permanent emergency rental assistance fund, to help renters avoid eviction during this pandemic and in the future.
- Establish a federal program to support family financial capability and coaching.
- Reform credit reporting standards to avoid harm to consumers' credit standing, allow consumers access to their credit information free of charge, as well as dispute errors and inaccurate information on their credit records.

5. Support Latino Entrepreneurs

Supporting and growing Latino-owned businesses is critical for the future success of the Latino community. Unfortunately, only 12% of minority-owned businesses were able to receive funds from the Paycheck Protection Program's first round, according to a recent [survey](#) by UnidosUS and the Color of Change. Many of the small businesses surveyed have said that they believe they will need to close their doors, which will widen race-ethnic disparities in small-business ownership. Policymakers can set aside funds within the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) specifically for Community Development Financial Institutions CDFIs, Minority Development Institutions MDIs, Small Business Administration (SBA) microlenders, and SBA-Certified Development Companies CDCs. It is imperative that the SBA track data by race and ethnicity to ensure that Latino borrowers are being served. In addition, The Federal Reserve needs to put special emphasis on supporting minority-owned business through its Main Street Lending program to ensure that these funds reach Latino small businesses.

There is a myriad of economic policies that would address broader societal income and wealth disparities for Latinos and would put many more workers on a pathway to economic and social mobility. With the threat of falling further behind at hand, there is great urgency in take strides to stabilize families with emergency financial supports that they need and that are top of mind for Latino voters. Concerted efforts to create well-paying jobs with infrastructure spending and targeted workforce development programs to the Latino community will get us toward a faster economic recovery.

IMMIGRATION: LATINOS WANT ALL IMMIGRANTS TO LIVE SAFELY AND PEACEFULLY

The U.S. immigration system is long overdue for sweeping immigration reform that is modern and upholds American values of justice, fairness, and a commitment to shared prosperity and family unity. Our leaders must commit to delivering

immigration reform that simultaneously restores the rule of law by creating a roadmap to legalization and citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans, and promotes smart and accountable enforcement that improves safety, supports legal immigration channels, and prevents discrimination. We need reforms that preserve the rule of law by creating workable legal immigration channels that reunite families—strengthening our economy—and protecting workers’ rights, and strengthens the fabric of our society by adopting proactive measures that advance the successful integration of new immigrants.

1. End All Family Separation Policies

No child should live in fear of being separated from a loving parent or guardian. Today in America, [nearly six million American children](#)—an entire generation—are threatened with having a parent or loved one taken from them because of current unjust immigration policies. These policies potentially cause lifelong damage to the children, many of whom are U.S. citizens, and severely hurt Americans’ trust in the government. They must end immediately.

Recommendations

- Establish an earned path to legalization and citizenship for many longtime residents living in the United States.
- Protect longtime residents through updated and well-planned policies to protect DACA and TPS recipients, as well as parents of American children, and immediately pass the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019.
- Reject indiscriminate immigration enforcement policies like the use of expedited removal in the interior of the country, and costly and ineffective worksite enforcement actions—while committing to creating a culture of public accountability within the immigration agencies.
- Terminate harmful federal regulations threatening the health, nutrition, social and emotional, and housing needs of American children.

2. Restore Trust in Immigration Law Enforcement

Because of the Trump administration’s current tactics, both immigrants and American citizens fear and distrust the forces that are supposed to help and protect them.

In addition, indiscriminate enforcement practices have contributed to an immense backlog of immigration court cases, and it continues to grow, leaving families’ fates in the balance for indeterminate lengths of time. Increasing the number of immigration judges and prioritizing resources and immigration court dockets consistent with sensible enforcement priorities are necessary and immediate first steps. However, our outdated immigration laws need to be completely modernized to ensure the lasting changes needed, and a culture of transparency and accountability within ICE and CBP needs to be created.

Recommendations

- Ensure that immigration enforcement practices do not frustrate public safety or lead to abuses by targeting immigrants indiscriminately.
- Authorize relief to U.S. citizens who are unfairly targeted, arrested, and imprisoned by immigration enforcement authorities.
- Adopt a statute of limitations on old transgressions and enhance due process and anti-racial profiling protections in enforcement practices.
- Remove the obstacles that the Trump administration has put in place to make it harder, costlier, and more time consuming for immigrants to apply for green cards and citizenship.
- Allow individuals with American children and spouses who meet the requirements for cancellation of removal to proactively apply for provisional status. Further, make relief under that provision more accessible while working with Congress, and to reinstitute Section 245(i) on the Immigration and Nationality Act.

3. Weave New Americans into the Fabric of the Nation

As we see in the news constantly, the journey many people take to reach American soil can be long, dangerous, and traumatizing. People who have shown commitment to contributing to the country should not be left alone to navigate their new home. To make sure all immigrants have an equal opportunity to contribute to American society and culture, we need brand new policies that promote their integration into the mainstream.

Recommendations

- Make sure that new Americans and mixed-status families are included fully in future coronavirus relief legislation.
- Pass the *New Americans Success Act of 2019* and establish a National Office of New Americans within the Executive Office of the White House with a strong mandate to create and implement a coherent immigrant integration strategy across federal agencies.
- The Office of New Americans should establish a “Race to the Top” grant program that encourages best practice models in the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of immigrants.

HEALTH: LATINOS WANT TO BE HEALTHY AND THRIVE

Our health is our most important asset and is influenced by various factors, including where we live, work, learn, and play. Ensuring Latinos have the building blocks to good health, such as affordable, quality health coverage, good nutrition, and positive social and emotional support has never been more important and will better position our community and our country to be healthy and reach its full potential.

Prior to 2016, progress had been made on many fronts in efforts to narrow racial and ethnic health disparities. For example, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) brought health coverage to four million Latino adults and more than half a million Latino children. However, this progress is in jeopardy. Between 2016 and 2019, Americans witnessed relentless political attacks on the nation's health care system by congressional lawmakers more interested in tearing down President Obama's legacy than helping Americans care for themselves and protect the health and well-being of their children and families. Further, anti-immigrant fervor in the Trump administration created a fearful environment for families with immigrant parents worried that using public benefits as a safety net could trigger their deportation and end up separating them from their U.S.-born children. Meanwhile, in recent years, [historic coverage](#) gains for Latino children have begun to go in the wrong direction.

This was the situation for families in March when a national health emergency was declared, and it has only worsened since. Latinos comprise 18.3% of the total U.S. population, yet based on recent CDC data, they make up around 30% of those diagnosed with COVID-19 and [more than 17% of all U.S. COVID-19 deaths](#). Tragically, the data also show that more than half of all confirmed cases among children are Latino. Not surprisingly, health care has quickly risen in the polls and intensified among Latino voters as a top concern.

1. Improve Access, Participation, and Enhance the Quality of Health Coverage for Families

During a worldwide health pandemic, there is no sensible reason to exclude workers, children, or families from health coverage. Yet, millions of Latinos are shut out of health coverage because of their immigration status and have few quality, affordable options available. After four rounds of congressional response, lawmakers have not removed health coverage barriers for immigrants, including those that harm their U.S.-born children. Currently, workers being furloughed or now jobless are losing the health coverage they had and undoubtedly the gaps and health disparities for American children will rise without policy interventions. Latino children, 95% of whom are U.S.-born, will be most deeply impacted by inaction.

Further, one of the most important ways we can keep families safe and healthy during a pandemic is by communicating accurate, timely, and relevant information. For the Latino community access to information that is culturally relevant and available to those who speak a language other than English is crucial. For example, more than 25 million Americans are not fluent in English, and their health care will be limited if they can't find a doctor who speaks their language, or if they can't fully understand their prescribed treatment.

Recommendations

- Specify that under any coverage expansion, everyone living in the United States is eligible for quality, affordable coverage, regardless of immigration status, including immigrant children and DACA recipients.

- Expand eligibility for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to all children living in the United States who are income-eligible, regardless of immigration status.
- Enhance existing tax credits for more low-income earners to open coverage up to many who remain uninsured.
- Account for all family members when determining both eligibility and level of cost-sharing assistance, regardless of their immigration status.
- Ensure culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate care for all consumers, and that people of all ages and ethnic groups have equitable access to culturally competent, in-language provider networks regardless of where they live or what language they speak.
- Protect public health by expanding free access to COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines, regardless of coverage or immigration status.

2. Increase Access to Nutrition Supports for Children and their Families

No one should go hungry in America, especially children. Yet, prior to the pandemic more than [14 million American](#) households were considered food insecure, and Latino households comprised a large share of the total. The disparity for Latino children is especially troublesome with 16.8% living in a food-insecure household compared to 10.4% of White, Non-Hispanic children. Food insecurity is largely attributable to broader income and economic inequality among American families and another instance where the effects are racialized. Federal nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) play a critical role in closing gaps in hunger and improving the health and economic security of our communities—and should not be threatened with cuts or onerous requirements. SNAP serves nearly 40 million Americans, including nearly 10 million low-income Latinos.

Amid the pandemic, there are families facing food insecurity for the first time, increasingly worried about putting food on the table. According to a recent poll by Lake Research for SOMOS, Latino Decisions, and UnidosUS, 50% of Latino households reported having difficulty accessing basic necessities, including food, two months into the pandemic. Further, immigrant families who have been under relentless attack and scrutiny by the Trump administration are fearful of accessing food assistance. The failure of policymakers to act to change this is likely to contribute to dramatic rise in hunger across America, with U.S.-born Latino kids leading the trend.

Recommendations

- Feed people who are hungry by increasing the maximum SNAP benefit by 15% and doubling the minimum SNAP benefit to \$30 per month.
- Eliminate discriminatory eligibility restrictions for SNAP, such as the five-year waiting period currently imposed on lawful permanent resident adults.

- Target investments in culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate outreach and enrollment efforts to the Latino community.
- Robust funding is needed during a pandemic for other nutrition programs that experience greater demand during an economic downturn, including Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP), child nutrition programs impacted by school closures, food banks, and nutrition programs for the elderly.

3. Enhance Federal Investments in Mental Health for Children and Caregivers

All children should feel loved, safe, and valued. Unfortunately, for too many of America's children, including Latino children, this is not the reality. Whether it is the effects of discrimination, toxic stress, fear, and anxiety from immigration enforcement, or some other form of trauma, various forces are threatening our children's physical and emotional well-being and their ability to thrive in the future.

The current pandemic coupled with events over the past few years have served to exacerbate existing gaps in our nation's mental health infrastructure while further demonstrating the need for a more comprehensive and robust approach that is equitable, culturally responsive, and healing-centered.

Recommendations

- Scale culturally responsive strategies that build on the assets of Latino families and communities to support positive social and emotional well-being.
- Invest in and promote research that explores the unique needs and circumstances of Latino children and their social and emotional well-being.
- Invest in and expand the mental health workforce to meet the growing and diverse needs of Latino children and those who care for them.

EDUCATION: LATINOS WANT EQUAL ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION

Approximately one in three Latino households lack high-speed internet and 17% of Latino households lack a computer; Latino kids are at a great disadvantage in a moment when online and distance learning is vital. Having an equal opportunity to succeed begins with equal access to a quality education. Latino parents know this well and value their children's education as a top priority. Though high school graduation and college-entry rates for Latinos have grown over the past few decades, inequality between Latinos and other Americans remains, and achievement gaps are persistent. Moreover, since 2016, the federal role in ensuring equal access to quality education for all Americans has been diminished, and the nation's commitment to educational equality for historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities has waned. Within the next decade, Latino youth will account for one-third of all students. Our success as a nation depends on their success as future business leaders, creators, philanthropists, parents, workers, lawmakers, and taxpayers. If we can ensure schools

are receiving resources to support the students with the highest needs and are held accountable for the success of all students, our vision of a strong, diverse America will be achieved within a generation.

1. Let All Students Start on an Even Playing Field

Some young children enjoy the luxury of being prepared for kindergarten thanks to early childhood education programs. For various reasons, young Latinos often begin school less ready to learn than their White classmates. Latinos have the lowest enrollment rates in early childhood programs and begin their school lives at a disadvantage. In order to close the achievement gap, our policies should be directed toward ensuring that all kindergarteners enter their first day of school ready to learn on an even playing field. This will require even more diligence in a mostly online environment.

Recommendations

- Increase funding for Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and Head Start programs to serve more eligible children.
- Expand eligibility guidelines to reach families at 150% of the poverty line.
- Provide a national scholarship program to increase the number of Hispanic ECE teachers with a Bachelor's degree.

2. Give Latino Students from Diverse Communities an Equal Chance to Succeed Academically

A child's ZIP code should not determine their future, and we are committed to making sure all schools are providing quality education across the country. Latino students tend to be concentrated in areas with schools that receive fewer resources, have lower graduation rates, and have fewer teachers who look like them. As a result, average math and reading test scores are lower for Latino students than White students. To give each student the attention and care they need to succeed, funds and resources must be invested equitably to ensure high-need students are met with higher levels of service.

At a time when [structural racism is being addressed around the country](#), it is especially important to acknowledge the ways in which we have failed Latino and immigrant students, and what we can do to give them the opportunities they deserve.

Recommendations

- Provide emergency funding to support K-12 education and state and local governments, which will prevent teacher layoffs and cuts to public education.
- Expedite enforcement of financial transparency measures in the Every Student Succeeds Act to ensure resource equity and incentivize weighted per-pupil formula in states, which allocates more funding for high-need students.

- Ensure all Latino students are proficient and on track to be college- and career-ready by ninth grade.
- Preserve and strengthen assessment data that helps uncover achievement gaps between historically underserved groups of students and their more privileged peers.
- Invest in parent engagement programs designed to reach parents who traditionally are not connected to the schools.
- Increase grants to states to help English learners attain English proficiency and better integrate into the school system.
- Diversify teacher workforce to represent more Latinos and reward dual language educators.

3. Higher Education: Improve College Completion for Latino Students

Latinos value higher education and are attending college and university in record numbers. But due to the legacy of housing segregation that influences the availability of quality early childhood education programs and quality public K-12 education in low-income neighborhoods, too many Latinos graduate high school and are not college-ready. Though more Latinos are attending college, too many are not earning degrees, either because they lack the necessary academic or culturally relevant support or because financial barriers get in the way. The current crisis has undoubtedly disrupted the educational path that many Latino students have been on. The students best equipped for distance learning, those with the means and support to succeed in this environment, are most likely to stay on course, while those with fewer resources and supports may fall further behind. Immigrant students and children with immigrant parents are among those most likely to be hardest hit by the pandemic and economic crises. These students face significant pressure to help support families economically and are also more likely to be left out from recovery relief and aid. For instance, while the CARES Act provided \$6 billion in [emergency aid to help college students meet school-related expenses](#), this has remained out-of-reach for undocumented students, adding another obstacle to college completion.

Recommendations

- Provide first-generation, DACA, TPS, and undocumented students with culturally competent academic and nonacademic support services such as cultural resource centers, DREAMer resource centers, mentors, and mental health providers.
- Institute grant programs to cover students' unplanned, small-dollar financial emergency needs, including for technology, security deposits, car breakdowns, emergency travel costs, health expenses, and unexpected student fees, among others.
- Strengthen and expand the public loan forgiveness program.

- Suspend student loan payments under the CARES Act from September 30, 2020 to September 30, 2021 and provide up to \$10,000 in debt relief to federal student loan borrowers with the greatest need.
- Amend eligibility for higher education emergency relief grants under the CARES Act to include all college students regardless of immigration status.

RACIAL JUSTICE

The killing of George Floyd in May has brought much-needed widespread public attention to the effects of racial discrimination and bias that exists within American institutions. The American systems of law and order have long been recognized as infected by racial animus and bias against Black and Latino people. The practice of racial profiling, excessive surveillance of Black and Brown communities, excessive use of police force on Black and Brown people, and the disproportionate killing of unarmed people of color at the hands of police has always received great attention within these communities. Furthermore, the lack of transparency by police departments and public accountability that has followed these cases over the decades has compounded the harm to families and communities who cannot receive any justice from the legal system for unlawful acts by police. In recent years however, these recurring instances of police abuse driven by racial bias have escaped these cities and communities through video footage that has been shared widely, raising the possibility of broader systemic change in police accountability.

In January 2018, LatinoJustice PRLDEF commissioned a [poll](#) of the Latinx community surveying experiences with and opinions about the criminal justice system. That study found that nearly two-thirds of Latinos (64%) believed that they experience similar treatment at the hands of police as Blacks, with higher proportions of Mexicans, Afro-Latinos, and Latinos directly stopped, arrested, or believing that's the case. A 2016 [qualitative study](#) conducted by Dr. Patricia Foxen, PhD at UnidosUS sought to document Latino attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge of policing in Chicago and Washington, DC; which found, among other highlights, that participants felt afraid of crime in their neighborhoods, but also felt equally afraid of calling the police.

Recommendations

- Improve criminal justice reporting and data collection practices in order to get a full picture of departmental practices, policies, and relationships with communities, allowing stakeholders to collaborate in analyzing, evaluating, and responding to ineffective policies and practices. Departmental transparency increases legitimacy and accountability in law enforcement and policing.
- Foster police accountability by consistently enforcing departmental standards of conduct and holding every officer accountable for their actions.

- Allocate resources to systems-involved people and communities, thus reinvesting in those disproportionately impacted by the justice system and rebuilding our communities with histories of heightened police presence.
- End private detention, which incentivizes the exploitation of criminal punishment for profit and perpetuates rates of over-incarceration and over-sentencing.

CONCLUSION

The nation has been upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exposed the cracks in our society's foundation caused by deep and historic health and economic disparities, as well as institutional racism. The latest [SOMOS/UnidosUS poll](#) shows the most important issues Latino voters believe Congress and the president should address are COVID response and health care costs, wages and jobs, and discrimination and immigrant rights.

It is often during times of great hardship and crises when we see both the best and worst of our society. Most Latinos in the United States, whether fifth-generation Americans or newly arrived immigrants, whether poor or well-off, whether Black or White, are no strangers to adversity. They are some of our most resilient neighbors, coworkers, and friends. It is no wonder that so many are on the front lines currently in efforts to combat the spread of the virus, from health care workers and human needs providers, to those keeping the food supply chain going. Hispanic-led and Hispanic-serving community-based organizations are a lifeline to hundreds of thousands of families in desperate situations and with few options for care and relief. Many heroes are emerging and rising to the challenge.

The flip side to this coin is the deplorable leadership we have witnessed from the White House and those state executives who seek to mimic and mirror it, rather than show the type of moral and effective leadership that the moment demands. Politicians who seek to blame workers on the frontlines for getting sick, rather than take responsibility for their inadequate or incompetent response to protect the very workers America depends on. And congressional members who have wielded the immigration status of one family member as an excuse to block millions of families from accessing relief, which undermines the public health response to control the pandemic and deepens the structural damage to the economy.

The Latino community is young and resilient. It has made America stronger and will continue to well into the future. Latinos today are being vocal about their concerns, visible in their advocacy, and active in socio-political changemaking efforts. They want and expect accountability from elected officials, and polls consistently show that Latinos believe the government should have a role in taking care of people. They will seek political leadership that reflects those values, respects their concerns, mirrors their optimism and hope for the future, and unifies communities under a shared agenda that lifts us all up equitably. A political platform that speaks to these themes will have the very best chance of garnering Latino support in the years to come.

