



March 4, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support Latinos’ Well-Being Throughout the FY2021 Appropriations Process

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

Today, there are an estimated 60 million Latinos who call the United States home. Beyond their large and growing population, Latinos have built communities from coast to coast, started new businesses at a rate higher than any other ethnic group, fought for lasting social and economic progress, and contributed to the success of all Americans. In other words, Latinos are an integral part of our country’s past, present, and future.

While Latinos have made significant progress in achieving their full potential, they continue to face significant economic, educational, and health challenges. Today, Latinos suffer from a disproportionate wage and wealth gap, have less access to a quality education, and experience bigger obstacles to health care coverage. Latinos have also endured the brunt of the administration’s cruel anti-immigrant campaign that has ripped families apart and fueled fear and hatred towards their communities. This reality is unacceptable.

Like all Americans, Latinos have a fundamental right to live in security, with dignity and have full, fair, and equitable access to the federal government’s investments in the wellbeing and prosperity of our nation. On behalf of UnidosUS—the nation’s largest Hispanic advocacy and civil rights organization (formerly National Council of La Raza)—I strongly urge you to ensure that these

values are reflected in any appropriations legislation that is considered. As UnidosUS and its network of Affiliates engage lawmakers on specific Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 appropriations requests, we believe it is important that you are aware of the key priorities underlying our engagement over the next few weeks. These are described below and will also be shared with the House and Senate Appropriations Committees concurrently.

Support Economic Empowerment and Housing Opportunities for Latino Communities. Latinos across the country consistently identify economic security as a key concern. Indeed, this is supported by recent surveys we have conducted on the Latino community. As the nation's six million Latinos between the ages of 18 and 24 begin their wealth-building journey, they should be empowered to earn a decent wage, secure homeownership, and strengthen their financial footing. That is why UnidosUS supports robust funding for Community Development Financial Institutions, which promote economic growth in distressed communities. We also support robust funding for the HOME Investment Partnership program, which helps provide much-needed housing for low-income families, and for the Housing Counseling program, which helps ensure that all eligible Americans—especially individuals with modest incomes—can access affordable homeownership opportunities. Finally, UnidosUS supports robust funding for the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division, which helps prevent abuses against workers through its enforcement of the federal minimum wage, overtime pay, and other basic protections.

Deepen Investments in Latino Students. Within the next decade, Latinos will be one out of every three students in the United States. Even though Latino children are the fastest-growing segment of the child population, they continue to face significant challenges obtaining the resources that they need to achieve a quality education. Failure to address these educational shortcomings will be to the detriment of all Americans. As such, we urge robust funding for educational programs that invest in the next generation of students. This includes the English Language Acquisition program, which helps learners attain English proficiency meet high academic standards. UnidosUS also supports robust funding for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), which help disadvantaged students prepare for, enroll in, and complete college; and for Head Start, which provides early childhood education, health, and nutrition programs.

Protect Medicaid and SNAP. Medicaid is an essential part of our nation's health care safety net, providing quality, affordable health coverage and care for more

than 70 million Americans—including 18 million Latinos. Unfortunately, earlier this year the administration announced the “Healthy Adult Opportunity” initiative that, if adopted at the state level, would lead to medical coverage loss, weaker protections, and lower quality of health care for many participating in the Medicaid program. In another attack on health, the administration’s SNAP Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents rule would create unneeded, harmful barriers to participation for Latinos who are at an increased risk of nonparticipation in SNAP even though they qualify. Today, more than 40 million Americans, including 10 million low-income Latinos, struggle to put food on the table; this rule would make the problem with nutrition even worse. UnidosUS urges Congress to prohibit the use of funds from implementing either of these rules.

Protect DACA and TPS Holders from Deportation. While the federal courts have temporarily stopped the administration from eliminating DACA and TPS protections for more than one million people, only congressional action can provide the permanent relief they need. Unacceptably, at least one high-ranking Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) official is on the record indicating that the agency would deport DREAMers in the event of an adverse DACA outcome. Congress must prohibit the use of funds to detain, remove, refer for removal, initiate removal proceedings against, or deny work authorization to those with DACA and TPS protections.

Hold Immigration Enforcement Agencies to Account. Record high funding levels for immigration enforcement has placed Latino and immigrant communities across the nation at significant risks of being separated from a loved one. Indeed, today nearly six million American children (most Latino) live with a parent or other family member at risk of deportation. Making matters worse is ICE’s poor track record complying with Congress’s demands for meaningful oversight and accountability over its activities. Since FY2017, the Trump administration has routinely exceeded appropriated funding levels for immigration detention and enforcement while seeking to usurp funds from other parts of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to carry out its wasteful and indiscriminate enforcement agenda. UnidosUS strongly urges Congress to pass an appropriation bill that (a) imposes limits on DHS’s transfer and reprogramming authorities to curb the recent practice and pattern of irresponsible and harmful spending on immigration enforcement; (b) ensures DHS effectively prioritizes its interior enforcement resources on serious public safety and national security threats; and (c) requires timely public reporting of arrest, detention, and removal metrics.

Curb Regulatory Abuses Harming American Children in Mixed-Status Homes. In the past year, the administration has promulgated a basket of policies designed to block low-income, predominantly Latino immigrants from the legal avenues of entry into our nation. In so doing, our own research is confirming the deleterious spillover effect on American children in several arenas. The administration's agenda in this regard has been headlined by the recently implemented DHS public charge rule, but also includes other insidious policies. These include, but are not limited to, a U.S. Department of State public charge companion rule, U.S. Housing and Urban Development rule on mixed status households, and proposed naturalization fee hikes by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. To eliminate discrimination in our immigration system and reduce the harm it inflicts on children of mixed-status families and society, UnidosUS calls on Congress to disallow funding for these measures.

Prohibit Family Separation Policies and Protect America's Humanitarian Traditions. The administration's cruel "zero tolerance" family separation policy afflicts devastating harm on thousands of migrants seeking refuge in the United States. Last September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reaffirmed that migrant children who are separated from their parents experience deeper mental traumas than children who are not separated; they exhibit more fear, feelings of abandonment, and post-traumatic stress symptoms than their unseparated peers. What's more, this administration has taken significant steps to undercut asylum and other humanitarian protections headlined by its "Remain in Mexico" policy. UnidosUS urges Congress to fight for our humanitarian traditions by restoring the integrity of our asylum system, and eschewing funding for the wasteful and unnecessary border wall.

Sincerely,



Eric Rodriguez
UnidosUS
Senior Vice President, Policy and Advocacy