



November 16, 2020

Chairman Roy Blunt  
Senate Rules Committee  
U.S. Senate  
305 Russell SOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar  
Senate Rules Committee  
U.S. Senate  
305 Dirksen SOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Klobuchar,

I am writing to you on behalf of Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities to express our support and commitment to expanding our nation's understanding of American history as presented on our National Mall in Washington, D.C. We are encouraged by your actions to bring the **National American Latino Museum Act** before the Rules Committee and urge you to support its approval. As you are aware, the legislation's companion bill passed the House by unanimous consent with over 290 bipartisan cosponsors on July 27, 2020.

It is important for the Senate to take advantage of this opportunity to approve the bill before the end of this legislative session. Due to the fact that an impressive bipartisan coalition of 45 cosponsors, including Senators Cornyn (TX), Capito (WV), McSally (AZ), Portman (OH), Rubio (FL), and Tillis (NC), have already signed onto the bill, it is clear that this legacy initiative has broad support and that now is the time for the Senate to take action and make this museum a reality.

Latino history is a very important aspect of the rich fabric of American history. As the largest ethnic group in the country, with significant ties to the founding of this nation dating back more than 500 years, it is critical that we have an American Latino Museum on the iconic National Mall and join the many prestigious Smithsonian institutions that welcome over 20 million tourists and residents each year to present the unique American story. Unfortunately, by its own admission in its 1994 "*Willful Neglect*" report, the Smithsonian Institution has drastically underrepresented the contributions of American Latinos in its collections. Among the 10 recommendations in that report, was the creation of a National American Latino Museum. In 2004, the campaign kicked off with the introduction of the National Museum of the American Latino Commission Act, which passed in 2008 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

Having contributed positively to every aspect of American society, including health, science, business, faith, education, the military, arts, sports, politics and more, the Latino community has proudly enriched our nation's competitiveness, culture and prosperity throughout the generations. Therefore, we find it vital that we proudly share our incredible stories and celebrate a more complete and accurate telling of American history.

It is critical for Latinos to see themselves in all aspects of our society and establishing the National American Latino Museum Act would provide a necessary step for recognition and for a greater understanding and appreciation of the contributions of the Latino population. Below is a brief summary of some impressive facts that make Hispanic-Americans critical to America:

### **Essential to United States History**

- Latinos have fought in every American war dating back to before the Revolutionary War, making significant contributions, including 60 Hispanic Medal of Honor recipients.
- The oldest city in our nation is St. Augustine, Florida - a Spanish settlement.
- The oldest capital city in the U.S. today is Santa Fe, New Mexico—a Spanish settlement.
- Before *Brown v Board of Education* there was *Mendez v Westminster*—this case regarding Mexican- American segregation in California was the precedent for the landmark Supreme Court case.

### **Population Size and Growth**

- At over 60 million people making up 18.5% of the U.S. population, Latinos are the largest diverse population segment and account for over 50% of total population growth from 2008 to 2018.
- Today, one in four children under 18 is of Hispanic/Latino descent.
- Hispanics are projected to become 30% of the population by 2060.
- 65% of all Hispanics Americans were born in the United States.

### **Thriving Business Community**

- With a total of 4.7 million Latino-owned businesses in the U.S., one in four new businesses in the U.S. are Latino-owned
- Over the past 10 years, the number of Latino business owners grew 34%, compared to 1% for all business owners in the U.S.

Casa de Esperanza was founded in 1982 in Minnesota to provide emergency shelter and support services for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Additionally, in 2009 Casa de Esperanza launched the National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities, which is a national resource center that provides training & technical assistance, research, and national policy advocacy focused on addressing and preventing gender based violence, primarily in Latino and immigrant communities. Our organization is proud to serve on the Steering Committee of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, as well as serve on the Board of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda. We serve as a bridge in efforts to support healthy families and communities across many different policy areas, to ensure that all individuals, families, and communities can thrive.

From our experience, we know that Latinos are deeply connected to and involved in community engagement initiatives and are committed to strengthening families, which are at the core of our American society. Through both our prevention work, direct services, and research efforts we

recognize the importance of moving beyond a one-size-fits all approach to instead lift up the importance of culturally responsive approaches from a strengths-based perspective in order to harness protective factors and community assets to work for positive change.

Based on our prevention work with Latino youth as peer educators, Casa de Esperanza has seen the importance of supporting the self-esteem and confidence of youth so that they can overcome adversity and make positive contributions in their own lives and that of their communities. We know that many victims feel shame and feel unseen because of the trauma and violence they have experienced, but with trauma-informed and culturally supportive services they are able to overcome the violence to become survivors and to thrive and help work toward greater prevention efforts.

The National American Latino museum would allow for rich and diverse stories to be told and highlighted, recognizing how many Latinos and Latinas have overcome adversity and have made significant contributions to society and to the growth and development of this nation. We know that when individuals get to see themselves reflected in the many positive contributions of their communities, it does wonders for their self-esteem and feelings of belonging, and is a further motivator to “seguir adelante,” to keep moving forward in succeeding and contributing to their communities and the nation.

Thank you for your support of this important legislation and for further uplifting our nation’s rich and diverse history. We stand ready to support this historic endeavor, from the bill’s ultimate authorization to the work required to open the doors to this new and enriching museum on America’s front lawn.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely yours,



Rosemarie Hidalgo, J.D.

Senior Director of Public Policy

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