

Dear Members of the Press, Community Leaders, Advocates and Elected Officials:

We are pleased to submit the attached position paper titled “Strengthening Latino Families, What To Do?” for your consideration as you plan, budget, design, report stories, develop and enforce policy.

“Strengthening Latino Families” is a document created by the Latino Forum, a round table of non-profit professionals led by YoSoyM, the first social venture dedicated to celebrate and strengthen Latinas and their families in Georgia.

For close to a year, dozens of Latino serving advocates, social workers, executives and leaders have met, gathered empirical data, stories and reliable sources to create what we believe is the first document that summarizes priorities for organizations working with Latino families in Georgia.

As the future brings more diversity to our state, we encourage you to read through the document, share it and use it as a tool to make informed decisions that will positively impact not only Hispanics/Latinos, but the entire population of Georgia.

This paper, is a collaborative work of the following organizations:

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Sincerely,

[YoSoyM](#) & signing professionals

Strengthening Latin@ Families in Georgia, What To Do?

**A Position Paper Created by Professionals
Working with Latin@/Hispanic Families**



June 2016

INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, over 40 non-profit professionals and social entrepreneurs, gathered quarterly in “Latino Forums” with the objective of finding synergies and leveraging collaborations;with the ultimate goal of better serving the Hispanic/Latin@ community in Georgia.

After several meetings, it was clear to most of the group members in attendance, that Latin@s in Georgia faced mounting challenges that left unaddressed will likely weaken and impair Latin@ families and their capacity to effectively contribute to the growth and development of Georgia.

The professionals signing this document acknowledges that the current immigration situation is a pressing and unfinished issue which exacerbates the many challenges this community faces. We cannot wait for immigration reform to pass. Therefore, we request the government, state and local authorities, community leaders and the media to pay attention and assist us in improving the current situation of thousands of families in Georgia.

Since this paper is written and signed by individuals that consider themselves local community leaders in the Latin@/Hispanic community, we will use the pronouns “we” or “us” as it pertains to situations and issues that affect us personally.

Also, throughout the paper, we will use the words “Latin@“ to refer to the entire community and be inclusive of all genders and gender identification identities.

“Latin@/Hispanic” will be used interchangeably to refer to individuals that

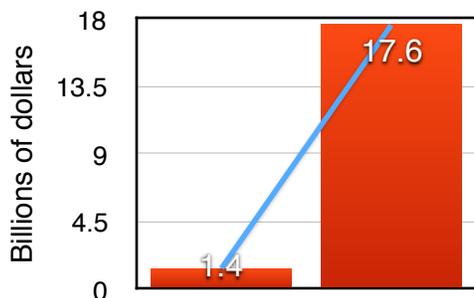
were either born in Latin America or consider themselves from that heritage, embracing its culture and values.

It is our hope, that all signing individuals and organizations represented become resources for the many civic, political and media leaders to inform their policy, reports and decisions.

Our top objectives with this document are:

- Receive recognition from elected and civic leaders of the economic contributions Latin@s have made in Georgia as well as acknowledge our enormous potential and role in the state’s future as an entrepreneurial minority.
- A holistic and comprehensive media coverage that focuses in contributions, challenges, achievements, and immigration reform.
- Have a firm decision from local governments to opt-out of enforcing Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention procedures for individuals without criminal records so families do not live in fear.
- Receive commitment from local police departments and public schools to protect our hard-working community from scams, violence against women and children and racial profiling.
- Increase funding and outreach focused on Latinas as key decision makers in strengthening families and the community in general
- Increase outreach and funding for Latin@s interested in health related careers and occupations as a way to address the immense gap

Latino Purchasing Power Growth in GA



■ Latino Purchasing power 1990-2014

between needs and culturally competent service providers.

- And most importantly, to improve the overall access to Latin@s to services and programs offered in the state.

This paper includes a summary of the history and contributions of Latin@s in the state of Georgia, along with current facts and challenges faced by families; the case for immigration reform and finally, our position and final call for action.

Throughout this document, you will also find testimonials and stories of individuals who were fortunate enough to find professionals, organizations and programs that provided culturally relevant and appropriate services. These testimonials, present examples of steps in the right direction, such as the City of Atlanta recently including in its legislation language that specifically mentions Latinos/Hispanics are welcome to apply for minority contracts

The stories included here, illustrate the enormous impact that dedicated professionals and culturally competent work brings to the lives of Latin@s in Georgia and are meant to inspire and motivate positive change.

Data included in this document was collected from various sources; some specific ones are noted in the body of the document and general sources have been added at the end of the paper. Surveying and acquiring data from Latinos in Georgia presents many challenges, including but not limited to the fear of being an easy target for deportation, issues of confidentiality, cultural, literacy and language barriers. There are also sampling challenges given that sometimes, many adults live in the same household, sometimes from different families sharing the same roof.

Given the challenges noted above, we have done our best to collect data and empirical evidence at both the national level and at the state level when available. Additionally, we have incorporated specific examples and field observations shared by some of the organizations and individuals signing this paper to offer a face and a designated voice to illustrate some of our points.

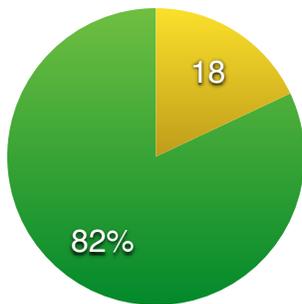
We, the creators of this document, invite and encourage all individuals that empathize with our positions and the situation of our families to sign and carry this paper forward by sharing it in their local circles of influence, to pledge action and to work towards a better Georgia that is inclusive and values all communities.

HISTORY OF THE LATIN@ POPULATION IN GEORGIA & OUR CONTRIBUTIONS

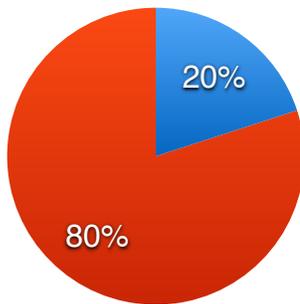
Latin@s did not settle in Georgia in significant numbers until the 1960's when the first Spanish-speaking immigrants were those fleeing the Cuban regime. Those Latin@s were mostly professionals

with knowledge of English. Latin American immigrants arriving to Georgia in the late 1970s were mostly single men doing manual labor in urban construction or migrant farming, representing a lower

82% of kids are English proficient



More than 8 in 10 Latinos believe in the rewards of hard work



socio-economic level than the earlier arrivals.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986 tightened security across the border. Instead of preventing immigration, the new act encouraged permanent settlement in the US by immigrants since it was almost impossible to travel back and forth for temporary visits back home, a practice that characterized earlier migrations.

In the 1980's, several companies recruited workers in Mexico to fill positions in the carpet weaving industry in Dalton, suburban construction and poultry processing in Gainesville.

Those Latin@s, settled in Dekalb and Fulton counties which offered affordable housing and access to public transportation.

In they years preceding the Olympic Games in 1996 provided numerous jobs and the influx of immigrant labor was encouraged by city planners who worried about completing construction projects in time for the games. During that time,

Gainesville in Hall County also experienced great growth due to the poultry industry; Dalton in Whitfield County repeated the story with the carpet industry. By 2000, Whitfield County had the highest percentage of Latin@s in the state.

"Many people believe that if it had not been for Latin@s, Atlanta would have never been able to host the Olympic Games. Without the Olympic Games, Atlanta would not have cemented its reputation as a world-class city" Gov. Roy Barnes

After the Olympic Games, with thousands of Latin@s staying and filling job vacancies, the creation of Latin@-focused businesses grew at a fast pace aiming to fulfill the needs of the new community: Stores, restaurants, and "bodegas" became part of the new growing Latin@ community in Atlanta-metro area.

Latin@s improved their situation after years of hard work in the local industries and started purchasing homes in Cobb, Gwinnett and Hall County, where hundreds of middle-class homes were built in 2006 and marketed exclusively to immigrants who had begun their career in poultry plants.

Between 2000-2010, close to 100,000 Latin@s settled in Gwinnett County. Home values increased by an average of \$11,448 in the county.

(source: <http://www.maptheimpact.org/state/georgia/>)

Between 2000 and 2013, our community experienced unprecedented growth of over 60% (the national average was less than 30%) with approximately 950,000 people in 2013 according to the American Community Survey.

While it is estimated half of the Latin@s living in Georgia do not have the necessary documents for either employment and/or residency; those

undocumented immigrants in Georgia pay \$359.8 million in state and local taxes (source: American Immigration Council, *The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latin@s, and Asians the Peach State*, updated 2015).

With Congress passing the federal DREAM Act, it is estimated that Georgia will have over \$1.07 Billion induced economic impact and create over 48,000 jobs by 2030

(source: <http://www.maptheimpact.org/state/georgia/>)

Today, it is estimated by a recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy that both native and foreign-born Hispanics in Georgia account for \$8.5 billion of the states spending power, with foreign-born Hispanics contributing \$5.2 billion of that total. They also pay \$2.9 billion in federal, state, and local taxes with \$1.4 billion going towards Social Security and \$300 million to the Medicare trust fund.

House Bill 87, passed in 2011 and other anti-immigrant legislation in the last few years have caused an approximate \$180 million in losses in the state agricultural industry.

The 2014 purchasing power of Georgia's Latin@s totaled \$17.6 billion—an increase of 1,232% since 1990.

(source: American Immigration Council, *just facts. New Americans in Georgia. The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latin@s, and Asians the Peach State*, updated 2015)

It is also important to note that while more than 80% of Latino families speak a language other than English at home (*US Census Table 5, Languages spoken at home*), 87% of all children under 18 are American citizens and more than 82% of them are English proficient (2009 data)

FACTS & CHALLENGES OF Latin@ FAMILIES IN GEORGIA.

-Political Participation:

While Latinos in Georgia are approximately 9% of the population, they represent only 2% of the registered voters. Even though this number is small, the trend is one of exponential growth. In the past 10 years, the number of voters registered has tripled. Currently, it is estimated that the Hispanic community makes up around 4% of voters in Georgia with 51% of those voters being under 40 years of age.

In the latest elections, 66% of the 29 metropolitan Atlanta counties surpassed the national Latino voter turnout rate of 48% according to GALEO (Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials) in its report “The Continued Growth of the Latino Electorate in Georgia”

It is very likely that the percentage of Latino votes in Georgia is higher in at least 1-2% given that many Latinos identify themselves as “white” in the self-identified race category.

Consider that Latinos represent an average of 23% percentage of the total population in metro counties and this percentage is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. Consider too that over 80% of all Latinos under 18 are American citizens. It is fair to say that the Latino vote and participation will have incredible influence in the state and region in general.

- Family Structure & Language:

Georgia is known as a transitional state for Latin@s with unique characteristics. In Georgia, the average age is 25 years old and most Latin@s/Hispanics live in families with children and most women (90%) live with their families.

Many of us, half; by estimates of the PewResearch Center, live in mixed-status households, meaning at least one of our family members do not have the appropriate work and residence documents that allow them to fully participate in society, working, going to a college of their choice, receiving medical services or simply driving.

82% of Latin@ families speak a language other than English at home, however, in 2009, 86.7% of children in Latin@ families were U.S. Citizens and similar number of children are English proficient.

National evidence shows almost 8 in 10 (78%) Latin@s agree that family is the basic building block of a healthy community. The top issues facing Hispanic youth and children according to their parents are high school dropout rates (63%), drugs and alcohol (62%), teen pregnancy (61%) and gang violence (58%). *(source: Barra Hispanics, Hispanic America: Faith, Values and Priorities, 2012)*

Young Latinos have high aspirations for career success. Some 89% say it is very important in their lives, compared with 80% of the full population of 18- to 25-year-olds who say the same.

Latinos believe in the rewards of hard work. More than eight-in-ten—including 80% of Latino youths and 86% of Latinos ages 26 and older—say that most people can get ahead in life if they work hard.

Maria, from Acworth

"Thanks to Strengthening Families, a program of Ser Familia in 7 weeks we have healed and had rebuilt our family. My husband didn't attend any of the sessions, because he thought this was not for him, but he was observing what I did and he listened to me all of this time. Today was the program graduation, afterwards he thanked me for coming to class and for teaching him with patience and dedication that we can be a better family. Thank you!"

(As told to Belisa Urbina, Executive Director of Ser Familia. Belisa adds: The son stood up at the graduation ceremony and thanked the presenters while crying: "thank you because now I know my dad is really interested in me" (November 2015)



(Source: Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America. Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends 2013)

-Workforce

In spite of the lack of appropriate documents, the American Immigration Council, estimates approximately 325,000 of unauthorized working immigrants comprise 7% of Georgia's workforce *(2012 data from the American Immigration Council, New Americans in Georgia).*

According to the American Express 2015 Women-Owned Business Survey, Georgia has seen the most growth in Latina-owned businesses. Yet there are still great hurdles to jump with limited access to capital for individuals without collateral and a credit history.

The 2012 National Women's Business Council reported that more than 90% of Latina-owned businesses were a one-woman operation.

Latin@s in Georgia are responsible for over \$8.5 billion of the state's spending power and contributing \$2.9 billion in federal, state and local

taxes. An entrepreneurial, vibrant, and young community, Latinos represent the largest share of minority entrepreneurs.

According to American Demographics, 40% of all minority entrepreneurs are Hispanic.

To address how some of the current barriers in accessing services and understanding the in and outs of the system may affect our youth as our future workforce; Caminar Latino ran an informal focus group with participants of their leadership program. The following summary showcases their findings and comments

The top issues were: EDUCATION, HEALTH and POVERTY.

Specific comments on challenges below:

- Lack of financial education (literacy, taxes, credit, banks)
- Higher education challenges: Access, transportation and cost as well as understanding the difference between technical colleges, 4 year schools, etc
- Lack of encouragement and information about SAT, AP/Honor classes
- Lack of bilingual assistance for parents resulting in a switch in power roles (all youth had acted as interpreters for their parents and taken advantage of that language barrier)
- Lack of support from counselors as there are too many students in schools
- Majority stated that they had been raised with the belief that the only time you sought medical attention was when there was a serious problem or when you had to fulfill medical requirements for school
- One youth stated that he had lost feeling on side of his face recently but since it went away after a while he did not follow up with a doctor -The youth also stated the cost of medical attention served as a deterrent and there was a lot of confusion around how to navigate the Open Market and who was eligible
- Mental health and its stigma attached to receiving support for mental health challenges. Youth mentioned services at Caminar Latino felt different than receiving mental health therapy
- Pregnancy and Employment Rights were each cited once. One of the most interesting findings was that while this was a group of youth who had all experienced domestic violence in their homes only one youth cited Domestic Violence as one of the 3 main challenges. One reason for this could be that for some of the youth it had been years since the violence had occurred in their homes. The youth also stated that while they did not see gangs as a big issue it would be good to check with the adolescent group (12-15 years) to see if this may be more of an issue for this group.

Answers by 12 Latinos aged 15-25 part of the Latino Leaders program at Caminar Latino. All youth had been victims of Domestic Violence at some point in their lives. The informal focus group aimed to understand the impact of their current situation and possible repercussions in the future. All students, shared their input to Jessica Nunan, Executive Director of Caminar Latino who led the exercise.

-Health

Access

Access in this document is defined not only as the ability and opportunity to receive health care, it also refers to motivation and cultural and social barriers that Latin@s face to receive health services. Access is therefore defined in terms of utilization dependent on affordability, physical accessibility and acceptability of services and not merely adequate supply.

Of all the health concerns listed by Latin@ families, access to services is the most immediate and consistently ranks as a “top issue” for the community.

Latinos in general but Latinas specifically, have routinely the highest uninsured rate of any other group in the U.S. (source: *Hispanic immigrants more likely to lack health insurance than U.S.-born, Pew Research Center, 2014*)

Latin@s are less likely than other groups to favorably rate their quality of treatment or receive appropriate and timely treatment. The reasons for these disparities include the cost of treatment, legal status, lack of insurance, and lack of interpreters.

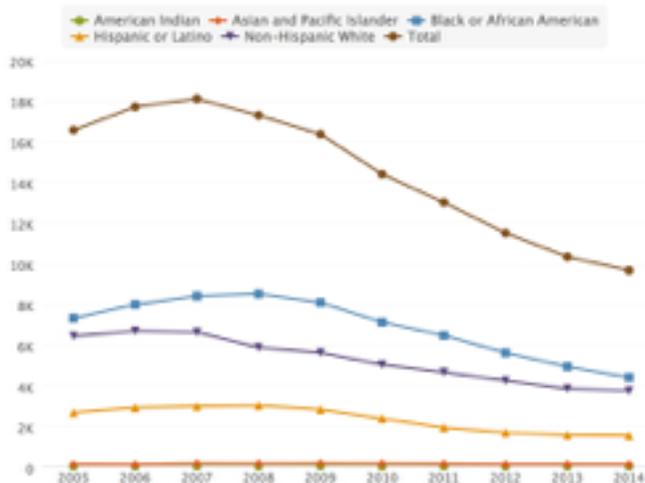
In addition to the aforementioned systemic barriers, many beliefs that are prevalent in the Latin@ community also affect their access to healthcare. Often, Latin@s fear the cost of health care, long waiting times, potential for deportation, and discrimination that they associate with

Teen Births By Race And Ethnicity

Year(s): 10 selected | Race: All | Data Type: Number

Data Provided by: National KIDS COUNT

Georgia



accessing healthcare” (source: Bohon, S. A., Macpherson, H., & Atilas, J. H. (2005). Educational barriers for new Latin@s in Georgia. *Journal of Latin@s and Education*, 4(1), 43. doi:10.1207/s1532771xjle0401_4)

As an example, Ser Familia Inc., offered free breast exams in October of 2015 for uninsured Latina women 20 out of 26 participants had not had a comprehensive gynecological exam in over 10 years nor had a full comprehension understanding about the importance of conducting breast exams to detect breast cancer.

The example is supported by the experience of different health professionals that do not see their patients routinely schedule exams (source: *Latinas Avoid The Doctor, Mundo Hispanico*, Linda Perez, 2011)

Latinas & Maternal Child Health

Maternal child health & women’s health is one of the priorities for many local foundations and the state.

Many efforts have been made to understand the underlying cultural and social components related to key health issues of Latinas in Georgia and to

address gaps and access to services; some, have been moderately successful, such as the implementation of the HPV vaccine, the training of health promoters (promotoras de salud) as well as the increase in points of access to SNAP benefits.

While Latinas have better maternity outcomes compared to whites or blacks, however the longer Hispanic children stay in the US, the more obese they become and the more health problems they develop (source: *Status of Latin@ Health in Georgia, 2012, HHCGA*)

Many can pinpoint these issues to the limited opportunities for an active lifestyle and barriers to access fresh food.

The 2014 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics shows, 80% of Latin@ neighborhoods lack recreational facilities.

Latinas in general have great love and appreciation for children. It is safe to say that children are often considered a blessing in most families. In Georgia, Latinas have high fertility rates with their peak during teenage years (as opposed to early 20’s for black women and the late 20’s for white women) (source: *Georgia Latin@ Health Report 2012, Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia*)

As a family-centered community, many teenagers stay with their families raising their children together and in time, many decide to finish their schooling and pursue their professional development.

Prevention of teenage pregnancies programs have been relatively successful with the percentage of pregnancies going down for the first time in years in 2015. These efforts are important since data shows that “teenage mothers are nearly twice as likely to have a repeat pregnancy

within 2 years if they experienced abuse three months after delivery”

Futures Without Violence, Partner Violence, Reproductive Coercion, and Unintended Pregnancy. Information provided by Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV)

Latinas are also NOT more likely to be sexually active than whites or blacks but are less likely to use contraception due to many barriers such as birth control, expensive copays and traditional values and misinformation.

While Latinas usually try to stay healthy by eating more traditional foods and home cooked meals and seem to be proactive to take their children to a health professional, they often don't go themselves. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 50% of women aged 18 to 34, including Latinas, said there had been a time when the cost of a prescription contraceptive prevented consistent use.

Of all racial groups, Latinos report the lowest rate of birth control use during their first sexual encounters. When asked whether they used any birth control method the last time they had sex, only 36 percent of Latinas said yes, while 72 percent of non-Hispanic whites reported that they used birth control. However, research shows that there is a correlation between higher levels of acculturation and higher use of birth control.

In general, fifty-six percent of pregnancies among Latinas are unintended, (vs. 1 in 3 in other groups) and nearly four in 10 of these pregnancies end in abortion (*Finer and Zolna, 2014*).

Additionally, high-rates of sexually transmitted diseases in pregnant teenagers suggest that prevention efforts

in sexual and reproductive health are particularly important for this population.

Georgia Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data for 2010 show that only 60 percent of Hispanic women initiate prenatal visits in the first trimester compared to 88 percent of whites and 70 percent of blacks. Similarly, only 74 percent of new Hispanic mothers reported receiving postpartum care, which is significantly lower than whites (92%) or blacks (88%) (*CDC, 2010*).

It is important to note that childbirth is a very important milestone in a Hispanic woman's life. Many times, postpartum care is given by relatives and friends at home.

STD's and HIV

STD's have a higher prevalence among Latin@s in Georgia. Georgia Hispanics have a rate 3 times higher than whites in Chlamydial infections and women rates are 3 times higher than of men.

While data for Georgia is not available for HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) and cervical cancer, national data shows that Latinas have higher rates of cervical cancer than women in other racial or ethnic groups.

HIV infections in Georgia appear to be lower than the national average for Hispanics. (*source: Georgia Latin@ Health Report 2012, Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia*).

Nationally, Latinos are disproportionately affected by HIV. 7 in 10 new HIV diagnoses among Hispanics/Latinos occur in gay and bisexual men and less than half of Hispanics/Latinos with HIV are

receiving medicines to treat their infection.
(source: *HIV among Latinos, CDC*)

Behavioral Health

Behavioral health is a significant problem due to stigma and lack of culturally competent services to a fast growing population. Some local organizations like Ser Familia, CETPA and Mercy Care are working to expand their services to include comprehensive culturally and language competent counselors and behavioral health professionals, yet barriers to treatment for behavioral health issues exist in the state, particularly for individuals without insurance and with low English proficiency.

In addition, the barrier for Latin@s who do seek behavioral help is the lack of linguistic proficient (Spanish) and culturally specific services. For example, a search with the criteria of domestic violence and Spanish in Psychology Today yield 53 results for behavioral health providers in the State of Georgia; with only 33 within the Atlanta Metro Area.

To understand the significance of this number, it is imperative to understand that although the therapist's (LPC) profile illustrates Spanish, it does not mean they are culturally proficient. They might also provide services through an interpreter and not be bilingual themselves.

While very limited data is available specifically for Georgia, national surveys by the Office of Minority Health, Department of Health and Human Services show that suicide attempts for Hispanic girls, grades 9-12, were 70% higher than for White girls in the same age group, in 2011.

Non-Hispanic Whites received mental

health treatment 2 times more often than Hispanics, in 2008 (national statistic).

Feelings of loneliness, sadness, hopelessness and worthless were all higher for Hispanics compared to all other races both among individuals over and under 18 years old.

Diego Martinez, from Banker

"I call Gainesville my hometown, even though I was born in Mexico. I am the first in my family to earn a high school diploma and pursue a college degree at University of North Georgia. After 2 years, I was diagnosed with HIV. I was 19 years old. I met with a counselor and it turned out to be the one of the best decisions in my life. I could relate to my counselor not only because she spoke Spanish but also because our shared cultural background allowed us to reach a comfort level that I could open to her. I believe there is widespread proliferation of HIV in Spanish speaking communities because there is lack of culturally appropriate education efforts. I strongly believe that having access to mental health counselors and other public health services in Spanish is vital to reduce the spread of HIV in the Hispanic community. My story should be a testament to the effectiveness of these services. In retrospect, I don't believe I would have continued to pursue a college degree if I had never met with my counselor. One may never know what would've happened to me if I had chosen the alternative, but it is safe to say that I made the right choice"

(As told to Coti Perez, one of the signing individuals)



Domestic Violence

It is believed that approximately 1 in 3 Latinas at some point in their life will experience Domestic Violence (DV)

Breiding, Smith, Basile, Walters, Chen, & Merrick, 2014

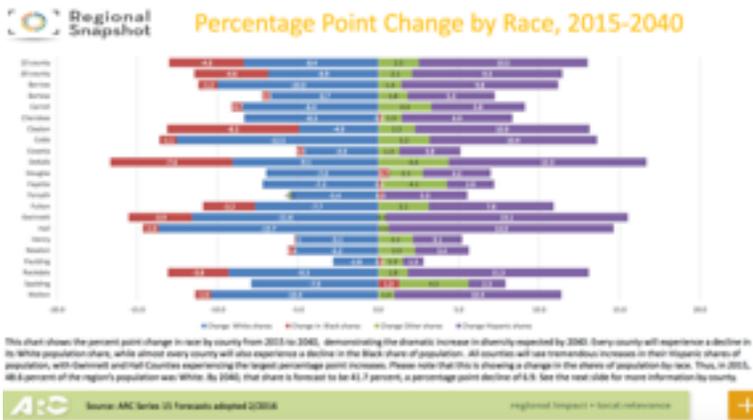
Based on 2013 census numbers from Metro Atlanta, of the 173,900 Latinas 18 years and older, approximately 58,000 Latinas in the Atlanta metro area, may be affected by or at risk for experiencing DV.

Adolescent girls in abusive relationships are approximately 5 times more likely to become pregnant than girls in non-abusive relationships

Futures Without Violence, Partner Violence, Reproductive Coercion, and Unintended Pregnancy. Information provided by Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV)

In addition to the thousands of Latinas at risk of experiencing DV, tens of thousands of Latin@ children witness and/or are at risk of experiencing abuse as a result of the domestic violence occurring in their home.

In an analysis done by the Atlanta Regional Commission that examined the racial and age makeup in the 20-county Atlanta region based on 2010 Census data, it was found that between 2000 and 2010 Hispanics had the largest increase in the youngest age cohort, adding more than 79,000 children under 10. In addition, in the 10-29 age cohort Hispanics has the second largest increase (+77,000) only after African Americans.



Based on these statistics, the changing face of Atlanta's children includes an increasing number of Latin@ youth, many of whom are vulnerable and at risk of suffering the traumatizing impact of domestic violence and potential separation from family.

*(**) DV Data and narrative provided by Caminar Latin@*

Organizations like Caminar Latino and PADV are leading the way in designing and managing programs for DV survivors, increase awareness of the issue and in the case of Caminar Latino, providing comprehensive services for the entire family, starting at 6 months.

Ser Familia has expanded services to incorporate Domestic Violence programming that focuses on trainings and advocacy on behalf of families suffering from this pattern.

Dear Caminar Latino Team,

I am writing this e mail to express my gratitude and to give thanks to all of you. I received the permanent resident card this month, and it was an unexpected surprise after a long process in which you all supported me, respected me and helped me in many many ways.

You opened your doors to me, accepted me without any judgment, and put yourself to work, sharing all your resources and even finding new resources on the go.

With you, I learned so much and received useful tools that helped me throughout this difficult process of recognizing and taking responsibility of being within a circle of violence and how to step out, stand up and move forward into the path of self respect, healthy independence and recovery.

Domestic violence does not discriminate gender, social economical level, academic degrees, nationalities, age or race. This could happen to anyone.

Two words were central words for me when I was accepted as a client by you back in 2014: guilt and fear. Now I can say that the two words that are central in my life are: responsibility and hope.

I think that my case is showing that justice can be obtained with hard work, and I believe that your organization as many others that are working for justice, health and dignity deserve more attention and more support, because every day, more and more people are suffering abuse and different kinds of violence. And they need help.

Thank you, GUSTAVO

Occupational Health

1 in 4 working Hispanics is employed in natural resources, construction and maintenance, this overwhelmingly male

occupational sector employs 2 in 5 Hispanic men in the state.

Chronic Obstructed Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the fourth leading cause of death in the US; it is notable that Hispanics are more likely than any other racial or ethnic groups to be exposed to occupational respiratory hazards.

One study in 2012, identified eye and musculoskeletal problems, including back pain and hypertension as an increasing trend over a three-year period (source: *Frequently Reported Health Conditions among Migrant Farmworkers in Southern Georgia* by John S. Luque, Carlos Reyes-Ortiz, Prasen Marella, Angel Bowers, Lisa Anderson, Viral Panchal, Simone M. Charles, Georgia Southern University, 2012)

A survey of 405 agricultural workers in Georgia found that 77% lacked heat safety training, 34% had no access to regular rest breaks, and 27% lacked access to shade. (source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). Heat-related deaths among crop workers – United States, 1992-2006. Morbidity and Mortality Week Report, 57(24):649-653*)

Male agricultural workers who are separated from their families may be more vulnerable to depression, alcoholism, and substance abuse. In the eastern United States, mental health research with agricultural workers has demonstrated that increased time spent in the United States leads to an increased risk of depression.

To conclude this section, we would like to point out that due to Georgia's differences in demographics, health care services look different depending on geographical location, acculturation and financial resources. While Latin@s in areas closer to cities/urban areas may have more access to health care, those living in rural

areas still go back to remedies used back in their home countries. (source: *Bohon, S. A., Macpherson, H., & Atilas, J. H. (2005). Educational barriers for new Latin@s in Georgia. Journal of Latin@s and Education, 4(1), 43. doi:10.1207/s1532771xjle0401_4*)

-Education:

Early Learning

Research shows that children who are exposed to diverse early learning activities from birth to five years old develop cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills and knowledge necessary to create a solid foundation to be successful at school and in life. Other studies have shown the long-term impact of high-quality early learning programs such as higher achievement test scores, lower rates of grade retention, fewer referrals for special education services, and a decreased likelihood of involvement in the juvenile or adult justice system. (Source: *Georgia Partnership For Excellence In Education (2015) TOP TEN ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2015. Issue 6: Early Learning- Challenge Accepted! (Edition 11)*)

Georgia has been a leader in Pre-K programs at national level, through its Georgia Pre-k Program funded by the Georgia Lottery in 2013. It is estimated that about 16 % of total enrollment in these programs was Hispanic; which matches the general make up of Hispanic children in schools, 13% in 2013. (Source: *National Institute for Early Education Research (2013) The State of Preschool 2013 Georgia.*)

These numbers show very much needed improvement in the state, considering that in general, children from low income families and Latino are less exposed to early learning experiences which can negatively affect their readiness for school leaving these children behind when they

start school. *(Source: Georgia Partnership For Excellence In Education (2015) TOP TEN ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2015. Issue 9: Equity in Education – Access and Opportunity (Edition 11)*

Education is a challenge for Latin@s in the state, from limited access to institutions of choice for higher education (a directive from the Board of Regents in 2011 banned access to the top colleges in the state to undocumented students) to high-rates of high-school drop-outs, many due to the imperative need to work and provide for their families or take care of a sick or elderly relative.

“Students leave school because circumstances accumulate in ways that push school further and further down their list of priorities. The reasons they cite for dropping out are the breaking point, the end of the story rather than the whole story. Early attention from every available adult – extended family members, school professionals, youth workers, religious leaders, neighbors, and others to specific events such as the death of a family member, parent incarceration, changing schools, or homelessness could slow the rate at which a cluster of events pushes or pulls a student out of school” *(source: Don’t*

Call them Drop-outs -A Report from America’s Promise Alliance and its Center for Promise at Tufts University)

Data repeatedly indicates that Hispanic students do not succeed in school as often as their White counterparts. Two measures of success in the Georgia K-12 system are third grade reading and eighth grade mathematics performance on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) indicate Hispanic students have not historically “exceeded” CRCT standards at a competitive rate compared to the state average or White students. In 2013, Hispanics “exceeded” third grade reading CRCT standards 29 percent less

than White students (only a 1 percent shift from 2007).⁴ Hispanics “exceeded” eighth grade mathematics CRCT standards 18 percent less than White students in 2013 (a 3 percent narrower gap than 2007)

Additionally, what the College Board defines as an “equity” gap has emerged for Hispanic Advanced Placement (AP) test takers in Georgia for the first time in a decade. In 2012-2013 Hispanic students graduated at a rate about 9 percent less than Georgian students overall.

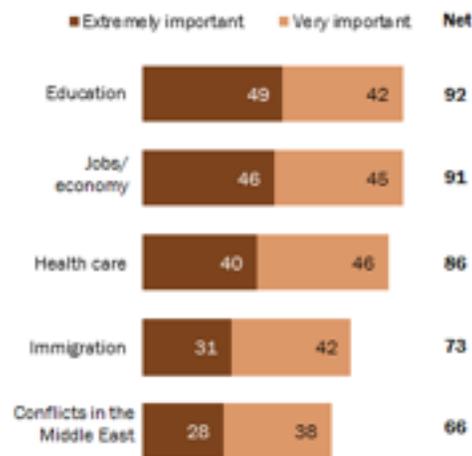
In spite of the challenges, 9 out of 10 Hispanics value highly the notion of education and higher education.

(source: Promising Practices for Engaging Hispanic/Latino Students in Georgia 2014, REACHES (Research, Engagement, and Communities for Hispanic/Latino Education Students)

Education, is in fact one of the consistent key topics for Latinos in addition to jobs and the economy and health.

Top Issues for Latino Registered Voters

% of Latino registered voters saying issue is extremely or very important to them personally



Note: “Somewhat important” and “Not too important” responses not shown. Volunteered responses of “Don’t know” and “Refused” not shown. Figures may not total to net due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center 2014 National Survey of Latinos, Sep 11-Oct 9, 2014 (n=733 registered voters)

Ana, from Gwinnett County

We have a female Hispanic student who started our youth program when she was 16 years of age. She had already become a mother and her daughter was one year old at the time she enrolled. She was very bright and made excellent grades in school and was a consistent honor roll student. She is fluent in 3 languages (Spanish, English and French). She graduated from Meadow Creek High School in 2014.

While she was accepted to 2 reputable universities, she decided to attend a community college at the persuasion of her unexperienced parents. Because of their lack of knowledge and likely fears her choice was one that did not capitalize in her strengths, hard work and skills.

She is still attending college and is currently employed by QuikTrip as a Clerk.

Story shared by Jacinto J Hall, Site Manager,
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc

Fernanda, Atlanta

When I was 10 years old, my father accepted a job opportunity in Georgia. All my life, I had dreamt of pursuing higher education and the career I would build. After my sophomore year, when my peers spoke about ACT and SAT and nor I or my parents had no idea what those were, I looked for help at school but unfortunately, I never received the proper guidance from school counselors or teachers and soon realized that it would be up to me to obtain the necessary resources. During my high school graduation in 2010 I realized that my school along with its staff had limited itself to educate me but had failed to insure that I had the proper tools to pursue a career.

Today, after having graduated from Georgia State University as magna cum laude, I thank those "outside resources" that I was able to obtain (media, friends and even strangers) they were key for me to obtain scholarships and reach the path of higher education at my first choice university.

Fernanda is a now, a professional counselor signing this paper.

Low-income and minority parents often do not thoroughly understand how the school system works or have access to important social networks which are an essential part of how many parents promote their children's academic achievement.

Hispanic/Latino parents are generally very supportive of their children's educational aspirations (and their support is highly valuable), but those unfamiliar with securing success in the American education system are unable to provide technical guidance.

For foreign-born Adult Latin@s, educational attainment is low.

Less than 30% of Georgia Hispanics have attended college in 2010 and 44% do not have a high school diploma.

In recent years, we have seen a surge in the arrival of professionals from Latin America, especially from countries in South America and Puerto Rico which may improve those numbers.

In general, there is a disconnect between percentage of Latinos enrolled in school at some level and teachers. In 2011-2012, national data shows 82% of all teachers in the country were non-Hispanic white (8% were black and 7% Hispanic), creating a cultural divide with students and parents.

(source: U.S. School Enrollment Hits Majority-Minority Milestone, Education Week, August 2014)

Recently, an important push towards dual-language immersion programs and the incorporation of enrichment activities in many school districts, provide a great opportunity for both families and teachers to find a meeting place in which knowledge is exchange both ways in a more equitable manner.

Poverty:

Poverty in Hispanics under 17 reaches 41%, while poverty in Hispanics 18-64 reaches 28% in Georgia (*source: Demographic profile of Hispanics in Georgia 2011, Pew Research Center*)

For low-income Latina-headed families, an already vulnerable segment, their largest single expenditure is rent. We spend over 30 percent of our income on housing costs.

Latin@s in Georgia and Immigration Reform

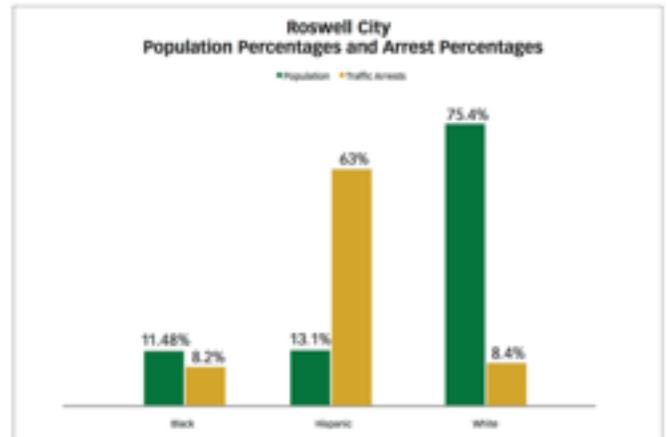
Many essential tools to become active and healthy contributors to the state economic development are unavailable to undocumented Hispanics due to an unfriendly immigration policy and the lack of a path to authorize legal residency in the country.

This is a critical issue that affects thousands of Latin@ families and their ability to be independent.

A perfect example is transportation. Latin@s without legal residence papers are unable to acquire a drivers' license. The impact of this law aimed in part at keeping undocumented immigrants off the road goes far beyond limiting access to work, education and services in general. It is separating families and placing a huge financial burden affecting in Latinos and people of color in general.

A report released by [GLAHR](#) and the Advancement Project analyzed arrest data from 3 areas for individuals driving without a license or on a suspended or revoked license from June 2011 to June 2015. In all three

locations, the researchers found that blacks and Latinos were disproportionately affected by the laws, and that the high cost of penalties was exacerbating poverty in the struggling communities.



MANUFACTURING FELONIES How Driving Became a Felony for People of Color in Georgia, Advancement project and GLAHR

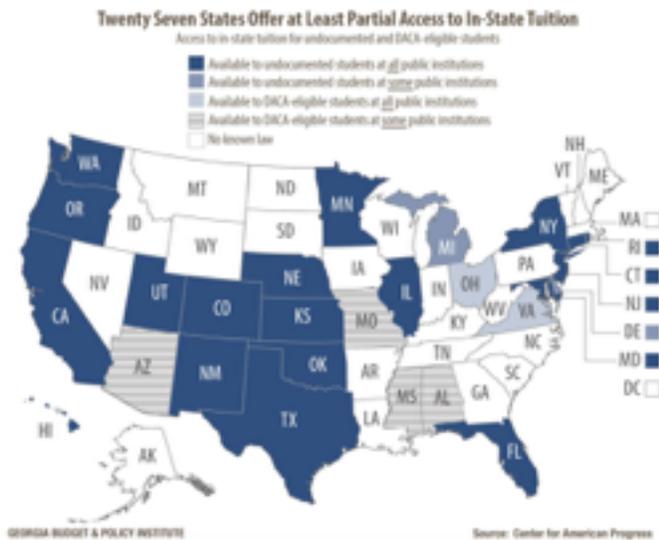
Same goes for access to the best state colleges, Under the University System Board of Regents' policy 4.1.6, students who are not lawfully in the United States are barred from enrolling in competitive admission schools—UGA, Georgia Tech and Georgia State in Atlanta, Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville and Georgia Regents University in Augusta. Even valedictorians are banned and Latin@s with Deferred-Action are required to pay out-of-state-tuition.

It is estimated that Georgia is now missing out on about \$10 million in tax revenue per year by disqualifying academically-eligible Georgians from discounted in-state tuition rates.

The state can add more than 5,000 potential college graduates if Georgia's DACA-eligible high school graduates enjoyed better access to Georgia's colleges and universities. That can deliver about \$9.4 million in new tax annual

revenue for Georgia's State and local governments

Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, Georgia's Workforce Development, Economy Damaged by Barriers to Higher Education for Undocumented Students



Our Position Regarding Latin@ Families in Georgia

The signers of this document, based on the revision of empirical evidence and experiential knowledge working with Latin@s every day, state the following position:

Our position as Latin@ professionals working with the Latin@/Hispanic community in Georgia is that we, as a community, cannot wait for immigration reform to pass to address the many challenges Latin@ families face.

We strongly encourage all media, civic, political and community leaders to:

1. *Recognize and promote the tremendous contributions of Latin@s to Georgia's economy and our enormous potential and role in*

the state in its future, as an entrepreneurial minority.

2. *A holistic and comprehensive media coverage that focuses in contributions, challenges, achievements and issues in addition to immigration reform with a wide variety of sources working and living within the Latin@ community in Georgia.*
3. *A firm decision from local governments to opt-out of enforcing ICE detention procedures for individuals without criminal records so families do not live in fear and instead work towards building and strengthening their self-sufficiency in the state.*
4. *Commitment from local police departments and the public schools to protect our hard-working community from scams, violence against women and children and racial profiling by identifying and assisting families that may have had the traditional parenting roles affected as a consequence of immigration (children become translators and figures of authority, negatively affecting normal family life-cycle transitions)*
5. *Funding and development of "Immigrant Competencies" that will inform and train service providers, judges, elected officials, education professionals and others in the gaps of information and framework that exist in Georgia as a transitional state with many caregivers and providers of information being immigrants.*
6. *Increase funding and outreach focused on Latinas as key players in*

strengthening families and the community. The alarming trend among children of Latin@ immigrants having more children outside marriage than their parents did, most of them in their teenage years should be acknowledged and become a priority for all organizations in the state. Research shows that young women who see themselves headed for college and a career are much less likely to participate in early childbearing than those without a specific goal.

7. *Increase outreach and funding for Latin@s interested in health related careers and occupations. There is an immense gap between needs and culturally competent service providers, especially when it comes to behavioral health. Consider that the growing mental health issues are fueled by poverty, lack of educational resources and discrimination as stressors.*
8. *Prioritize the hiring of Bilingual (Spanish-English) speaker professionals in all local governments and service organizations. All immigrants understand the importance of learning English, however if we can't drive or access public transportation to where classes are taught and our priorities are to put food in the table by working several minimum wage jobs, secure a shelter and make sure children stay in school; mastering English can take several years.*
9. *Prioritize and fund after-school programs with Spanish speakers that provide assistance and access to nutritious food to Latin@ children.*

Limited education and language proficiency in parents offer a great challenge to help students with their homework and ongoing learning.

10. *Recognize that one of the greatest problems facing Latin@ families in Georgia are inter-personal relationships and mental health issues driven by acculturation and marginalization of the community. These topics greatly impact all aspects of development in our families and daily affect performance for both children and adults.*

FINAL CALL FOR ACTION

In spite of all the barriers and challenges detailed in this document that make families very vulnerable to scams and limited information and resources; let's recognize that Latinos are family oriented and centered. Good friends are considered part of the extended family and this fact allows for the community to come together and support each other in moments of great need. It is not uncommon for families to host friends at their home for extended stays and in general help support community members with pressing necessities.

This community support, covers some specific needs that otherwise would be more visible to the population at large, (i.e. housing and the lack of culturally appropriate childcare for families, etc).

Families that support each other, are just a sample of a strong, resilient, courageous, creative and resourceful community that does the best it can with the limited resources available. A community that works incredibly hard to learn to navigate an unknown and complicated system; a community that

does not give up and continues to find ways to better themselves and all of those around.

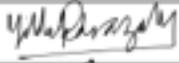
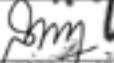
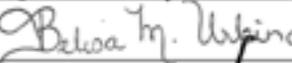
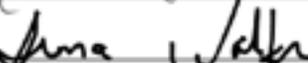
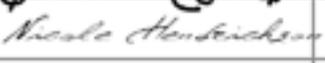
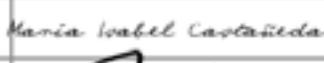
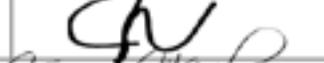
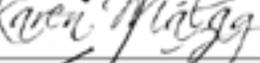
It is in this light, that we urge cities, counties, media, local and state decision makers to open the conversation to include more voices, our voices, the ones working with Latin@s on the ground, every day, when making decisions.

It is our hope that this document and its stories, inspire the reader to make a conscious and responsible decision to recognize, acknowledge and work towards helping our community-at-large grow healthier, stronger and more united.



SIGNATURES

Signed and supported by:

Name	Signature	Industry	Affiliation if any
Gilda (Gigi) Pedraza		Latino professional	YoSoyM
Maria Peck		Entrepreneurship	ACE WBC
Myrna Garcí D		Education	
Cynthia Roman-Hernandez		Social Services	Latin American Association
Leonardo Martinez		Social Services	Latino LinQ
Mayira Bunting		Individual	
Juliana Ramirez		Lifting Latina Voices	Feminist Women's Health Center
Belisa M. Urbina		Social & Mental Health Services	Ser Familia, Inc.
Irma Walker		Social Services	
Nicole Hendrickson		Government	Gwinnett County
María Isabel Castañeda		Healthcare	
Karen Malaga		Entrepreneurship & Finances	
Omar Rodriguez Vila		Education	Georgia Tech
Sally Nieves-Williams		Community Health	YWCA of Greater Atlanta
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Emanuel Rivero		Clearpoint Financial Counseling	
Julle Colon Koriakin			YMCA
Coti Pérez		Health & Prevention	CETPA
Judith Martinez		Media & Journalism	YoSoyM

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