



Chair Wilkin and honorable members of the Sunset Review Committee, I am Giovanna Alvarez and I have the pleasure of serving you as Executive Director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission. On behalf of OCHLA’s Board of Commissioners and 505,000 Hispanic/Latino Ohioans, it is my honor to stand before you to offer testimony regarding the critical need and performance of the agency I serve.

Manuel Lopez Ramirez  
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Dan Molina  
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Michael Florez  
Cincinnati

Gregory Guzmán, Ph.D.  
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V. Anthony Simms-Howell  
Cincinnati

The Hispanic/Latino population in Ohio is young and vibrant and currently comprises over 517,000 individuals or 4.4% of Ohio’s total population. The vast majority were born in the United States and are or will be eligible to vote. We live in all 88 counties, and we represent one of Ohio’s fastest growing workforce populations. Our median age is 26.9 years old and there are over 120,422 Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. There are nearly 2,200 Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses providing employment to 26,500 Ohioans with an annual payroll of more than \$1.0 billion dollars that contribute to creating jobs, income, and tax revenue for the state.

Ohio is home to 20,000 Latinos who have proudly served in our nation’s Armed Forces.

We also play an important role in Ohio’s agriculture industry and contribute as migrant, and seasonal workers, thus meeting a need when Ohio is experiencing an unprecedented agricultural labor shortage.

Our small, but mighty team regularly participates in ten different Latino networking groups across the State to interact with over 300 leaders on a regular basis. The Commission’s virtual hub of directories is a one stop solution to constituents, local, state government, and those in the public and private sectors wanting to connect with Latinos in Ohio. Commission staff served in 18 different task forces and advisory roles to provide our expertise on matters related to Latinos, government services, and outreach strategy, as reported in our most recent annual report.

Furthermore, the Commission regularly partners with state agencies and serves on several advisory groups. We work closely with the Ohio Department of Development, the Ohio Small Business Enterprise, the Department of Health, Department of Education and Workforce, the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation, and every Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in the State!

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Our work continues to increase, as the size and percentage of Ohio's Latino population continues to grow at unprecedented rates!





In keeping with the Governor's top priorities, our commission has prioritized mental health programming. For the past 5 fiscal years, OCHLA partnered with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and secured a grants in the amount of over \$2 million dollars, thus impacting positively the mental health and well-being of the community at large!

Last year, Kent State University collaborated with the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission for the Latino Affairs Summit, uniting over 500 advocates, government officials, students, and educators, across the State!

Additionally, in April, the commission organized a Hispanic Legislative Day Visit with support from 17 community partners across local, state, and federal levels. The event welcomed over 250 attendees who engaged with their legislators!

Now, more than ever, Ohio Latinos look to the Commission to provide a connection to their Legislators and increase their civic engagement.

With your encouragement, our Commission will continue to support organizations that serve the Latino community and will continue our mandate to connect our constituents.

The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission can assist the State of Ohio in remaining a competitive state in the national landscape attracting and engaging a new and growing workforce, a pipeline of workers for traditional Ohio jobs in the agricultural field, and a pipeline of workers for the jobs of the future in STEM related careers, business creation, and sustainability.

Together we can keep Ohio growing and thriving!

Chair Wilkin, and distinguished members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

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