



Latino Affairs
Commission

Annual Report

2025

Dear Fellow Ohioans,

On behalf of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission (OCHLA), we are honored to present our Annual Report and to reflect on another year of service, progress, and partnership on behalf of Ohio's Latino community.

Latinos are an essential and rapidly growing part of Ohio's social, cultural, and economic fabric. Across the state and throughout the nation, the Latino community contributes immeasurably as entrepreneurs, workers, educators, health professionals, public servants, artists, and civic leaders. Ohio is home to more than half a million Hispanic/Latino residents and over 30,000 Latino-owned businesses, including 3,000 businesses with paid employees.¹ These Latino-owned businesses have created nearly 30,000 jobs and anchor local economies from urban centers to small rural communities.²

Latino-owned businesses are creating jobs at record rates, and Latino workers are strengthening key industries across manufacturing, services, health care, and agriculture. Their presence continues to expand Ohio's workforce and stimulate economic opportunities in every region of the state, reinforcing community resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to service.

Nationally, Latinos are also a driving force of the United States economy and a cornerstone of population growth. In 2023, the U.S. Latino economy reached \$4 trillion in GDP, making it one of the fastest-growing economic cohorts in the world and equivalent to the fifth-largest economy globally if measured independently.³

Latinos accounted for a disproportionate share of U.S. economic growth—contributing nearly 30% of national GDP expansion despite representing roughly one-fifth of the population—and Latino consumers wield over \$4 trillion in purchasing power.⁴ These figures reflect not only the sheer size of the Latino economy but its central role in fueling growth across sectors such as business ownership, labor force participation, education, and consumer markets.

Investing in the Latino community is a strategic imperative for the future growth and competitiveness of Ohio and the nation. When the Latino community thrives, Ohio thrives!

Throughout this year, the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission has remained committed to advising state leadership, amplifying community voices, fostering partnerships, and advancing policies that support the well-being and success of Latinos across Ohio. This Annual Report highlights the progress made possible through collaboration with state agencies, community organizations, advocates, and partners who share a vision of a prosperous Ohio.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our commissioners, staff, partners, and community members for their dedication and trust. Together, we will continue working to ensure that the contributions of Ohio's Latino community are recognized, valued, and supported—today and for generations to come.

With appreciation and commitment,



Giovanna Alvarez
Executive Director



Manuel Lopez Ramirez
Board Chair

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**Latino Affairs
Commission**

Our Mission

ADVISE State government on issues affecting Hispanic/Latino Ohioans.

CONNECT the Hispanic/Latino communities across Ohio.

BUILD the capacity of community organizations so they may better serve this fast-growing population.

Our Philosophy

BUILD cooperation and understanding between Hispanic/Latino Ohioans and government by providing resources and informing state leaders on issues impacting the community.

COLLABORATE with the community to promote engagement, education, and unity to ensure Hispanic/Latino Ohioans are part of the fabric of our state.

PARTNER with state agencies to ensure Hispanic/Latino Ohioans have access to culturally relevant programs and services.

IDENTIFY matters impacting the Hispanic/Latino community and align our initiatives with efforts that seek to empower and integrate them in the United States.

PLAN the work of the Commission based upon the outlined strategic priorities that meet the needs of the Hispanic/Latino Community.

ENCOURAGE new ideas and support acceptance of differing ideas and beliefs.



Board of Commissioners



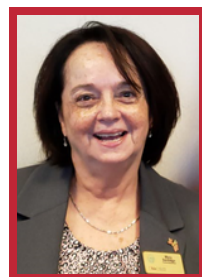
**Manuel Lopez
Ramirez**
Chair



**Gregory Guzman,
Ph.D.**
Secretary



**José Feliciano,
Jr.**



Mary Santiago



**María Sylvia
Martinez**



**Rev. Juan
Rivera**



**Breann Gonzalez
Almos**



**Edgar Vidales,
J.D.**



Jaclyn Rohaly



Roland Molina

OCHLA Staff



Giovanna Alvarez
Executive Director



**Pamela Espinosa
de los Monteros**
Community Liasion



Dianeth Miele
Administrative Professional



Jessica Sutton
Public Policy Officer

2025

by the Numbers

40,918

Website page views

159,146

Social Media Impressions – connecting
with the Hispanic/Latino community
in Ohio across all platforms

598

Organizations registered in OLANet,
a virtual directory of Hispanic/Latino
serving organizations

\$32,391

In-kind value of 946 volunteer hours

\$325,000

Latino Mental Health Navigator grant
funding distributed

309

Jobs Promoted

Latino Mental Health Navigator Program

In alignment with the Governor's priorities, OCHLA partnered with the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health for the fifth time to administer the Latino Mental Health Navigator (LMHN) Program. We have successfully increased the LMHN Program's statewide reach, addressing significant behavioral health needs among youth, families, and individuals with limited access to services.

With support from the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, LMHN programs continued within seven nonprofit organizations: HOLA (Ashtabula), OCCHA (Youngstown), Proyecto Raices (Akron), Our Lady of Guadalupe Center (Columbus), Su Casa (Cincinnati), Del Pueblo (Springfield), and El Puente (Dayton).

From December 2024 to June 2025, the LMHN Program directly served **16,108** clients, providing education, referrals, and community outreach. This included **7,676** referrals to mental health providers for clients who likely would not have accessed care otherwise.

OCHLA and the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health will continue this partnership with a new grant period beginning in January 2026. We are committed to supporting this initiative through continued technical assistance, collaboration facilitation, and knowledge sharing among program sites.

Program Activities:

Mental health **education outreach**

Referrals to mental health service providers

Promoting coping strategies and **reducing stigma**

Bridging cultural gaps between providers and Hispanic/Latino Communities

Mapping local resources and **building relationships** with service providers

Providing supplemental support for clients awaiting care



OCHLA Community Reports

OCHLA released the report “[Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Services for Hispanics and Latinos: Integrated Care and Community-Based Interventions](#).” The publication, developed in collaboration with experts from Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago and The Ohio State University, highlights differences in accessing behavioral health and proposes evidence-based strategies to advance services for Hispanic/Latino Ohioans.

The report emphasizes integrated care models—such as the Collaborative Care Model and the Primary Care Behavioral Health Model—which merge mental and physical health services to provide coordinated, person-centered care. These models have demonstrated positive outcomes including increased access, improved quality of care, and reduced stigma surrounding mental health within Latino communities.

The report concludes with policy recommendations that call for greater structural support for integrated care, expanded funding for community-based organizations, and investment in the behavioral health workforce to ensure sustainable mental health care for Ohio’s Hispanic/Latino population.





Legislative Visit Day

Legislative Visit Day is a public event where community members across Ohio can connect with their state representatives to discuss issues that matter most to them. This year we had 83 participants in attendance, including community leaders, business and health professionals, educators, and college students. OCHLA coordinated meetings throughout the day between event participants and legislators experienced in the areas of workforce development, health, mental health, business, and other key topics. The majority of constituents who participated in this event met with two or more members of the General Assembly to discuss issues that are of importance to the Hispanic/Latino community.

Behavioral Health and Education Summit

OCHLA hosted the Behavioral Health and Education Summit on April 28th, 2025. The event brought together approximately 100–120 participants from across Ohio to explore strategies for improving behavioral health and educational outcomes within the Hispanic/Latino community. The day-long summit featured interactive panels, networking sessions, and expert-led presentations such as “Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Services for Hispanics/Latinos,” “Enhancing Educational opportunities for Hispanic/Latino students,” and “Latino Mental Health Navigator – Client Stories and Successful Outcomes.”

The summit provided an essential platform for collaboration among behavioral health professionals, educators, and community leaders—strengthening efforts to advance culturally responsive care and education for Ohio’s Latino community.





Connecting with Ohioans

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATIONS

During Hispanic Heritage Month the OCHLA team participated in different activities to recognize members of the Latino community who meaningfully contribute to our state. In keeping with our tradition, we recognized the Cincinnati Reds' Latino players during Fiesta Rojos. In addition, we offered presentations at universities, participated at events at the Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and contributed to Governor DeWine's Hispanic Heritage Month celebration. This was an event treasured by the Hispanic/Latino Community who appreciated it as a demonstration of support and recognition for our contributions to Ohio.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS FOR NONPROFITS

We offered an inaugural Grantsmanship Training course for 25 nonprofit leaders strategically serving in different parts of the state. This two-day training on capacity development was offered by the Center for Grantsmanship, a private training and resource organization for nonprofit, academic, and government agencies around the globe.



How to Engage with the Legislative Process

Visit the Secretary of State's "[Find My District](#)" tool to identify your state and federal representatives.

Sign up to track bills by creating a free account on the [My Ohio Legislature website](#).

Read [The Ohio Bar's Complete Guide](#) on how to give written or in-person testimony on bills.⁵

Watch live streams and recordings of legislative committees and session on [The Ohio Channel](#).

Contact our Public Policy Officer, **Jessica Sutton** for assistance to:

- Prepare written or in-person testimony on a bill of interest
- Answer questions on relevant bills
- Set up appointments with your legislators.

Jessica.Sutton@ochla.ohio.gov

Civic Engagement 101 Trainings

In an effort to educate community members about civic engagement, the state legislative process, and tips for advocacy while meeting with legislators, OCHLA offered "Civic Engagement 101 Training." Four Civic Engagement Trainings were held with 62 participants registering in total. In addition, legislative updates have continued to occur in community networking meetings and through our public policy newsletters.



Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan Awards

The Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan Award (DHO), originally the Hispanic Service Award, was established by OCHLA in 1980. This award was created to fulfill OCHLA's mandate to "secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments of Hispanic/Latino people of this state." Later, OCHLA also began honoring Latino service members through the Latino Military Service of Distinction Award and community partners through the Nuestra Familia Award.

In 2025, OCHLA selected six Distinguished Hispanic Ohioans, two Latino Military Service of Distinction Award recipients, and four "Nuestra Familia" Award recipients. OCHLA ran a social media campaign during the month of November that recognized and celebrated the specific accomplishments of each awardee.

We will host a formal recognition luncheon for the 2025 awardees during our Hispanic Legislative Visit Day, scheduled for April 2, 2026, at the Ohio Statehouse.



Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan Awardees



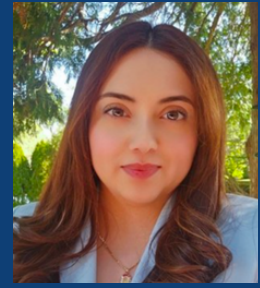
**Taylor Balderas-
Burciaga**



Michael G. Florez



**Maria De La
Garza**



Jazline Gomez



Richard K. Levitz



Christina Vera

Latino Military Service of Distinction Awardees



Antonio Baez



Lt. Col. Amal Nazzall

Nuestra Familia Awardees



Dan Hanson



**Springfield
Promise**



Bryan Wright



Joshua Duslak



Latino Affairs Commission

Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs

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