



Hello, my name is Jesselly De La Cruz and I am here with the LAN Foundation. The LAN Foundation are both committed to uniting New Jersey's diverse Latino communities. We organize to research the issues impacting the Latino communities in New Jersey, develop policy proposals to address those issues, and conduct outreach among Latino communities throughout New Jersey, including lower-income and immigrant communities. We are deeply committed to a just society for everyone and oppose all forms of discrimination including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, disability, or sexual orientation.

Latino communities are disproportionately impacted by structural racism and we demand statewide efforts to address this. NJ is at a crossroads in reaching towards equity for Black and Brown communities. We thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment about our legislative budget priorities.

1. HISPANIC WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTERS & THE LATINA EQUAL PAY GAP

- Nationally, Latina women earn just 57 cents on the dollar. In New Jersey, it's 45 cents. Only California is worse than New Jersey and it's very, very close. Pay for Latinas hasn't budged since 1987, even while other women have seen gains. One reason is that Latina women are disproportionately clustered in low-wage jobs including childcare workers, house cleaners, secretaries, servers, and cooks. Some of those were among the first jobs to go during the pandemic, so it's no surprise that unemployment rose 45% for Latinas nationally in 2020 compared to 2.5% for white women.
 - The Hispanic Women's Resource Centers have been successfully working with the NJ Division on Women to help bridge the equal pay gap. We propose that funding be increased to \$1.75 million. Additional funding will expand existing workforce development services to help place Latinas in higher paying employment, raise awareness as to paid family and sick leave for survivors of domestic violence, and utilize the Promotora model



to provide culturally specific community education around mental health and gender-based violence.

- We want to take this time to lift up the urgency to pass the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights. Too many Latina immigrant women are subject to workplace abuses due to the cutting out of specific workers in labor protections. Domestic workers deserve the right to contracts that set forth their terms of employment including salary, working hours and days of rest. We envision additional state funding to educate domestic workers of their legal rights and help bridge the Latina pay gap.

2. BILINGUAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- While we applaud the Governor for highlighting mental health services in his budget, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the mental health needs of Black and Latino immigrant New Jerseyans. We also advocate for \$3 million toward bilingual mental health services and workforce development. We believe that targeted funding should establish bilingual mental health professional residencies to bridge language access gaps for Latino communities.

3. EXCLUDED NEW JERSEYANS FUND

- We applaud the efforts to invest \$53 million in the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund. However, to meet the needs of the nearly half million individuals in New Jersey that are in their third year without COVID-19 aid, the state should significantly increase the amount of funding allocated to the ENJF. Meaningful assistance means that all individuals should have access to ENJF cash payments, and the state should also provide \$600 weekly unemployment checks to individuals. The cost of this program is \$989 million.