

Legislative Public Hearing

State of the Latino Community of Pennsylvania

during the 2026 Pennsylvania Latino Convention in the City of Easton

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Easton City Hall

123 S 3rd St, Easton, PA 18042

SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION BY
Pennsylvania Latino Convention



SUBMITTED TO
Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus



Message to Legislators

The State of the Latino Community of Pennsylvania is not just a topic for discussion—it is a matter of statewide urgency and opportunity. Today’s hearing brings together data experts, community leaders, educators, health professionals, and economic advocates to provide legislators with a clear, evidence-based understanding of the realities facing one of the fastest-growing populations in the Commonwealth.

Your presence signals a commitment to ensuring that every community in Pennsylvania is seen, heard, and represented in the policymaking process. The testimony you will hear this morning reflects lived experiences, measurable trends, and actionable recommendations that can strengthen our schools, expand workforce readiness, improve health outcomes, and deepen civic participation across the state.

This hearing is designed to support your work. Each witness offers insight that can inform legislation, guide resource allocation, and shape long-term strategies for equitable growth. We are grateful for your engagement and for the seriousness with which you approach this responsibility.

Thank you for your leadership, your partnership, and your dedication to building a stronger, more inclusive Pennsylvania.

Purpose of the Hearing

This hearing provides state legislators with a comprehensive, data-driven overview of the social, economic, educational, and civic conditions affecting Pennsylvania’s Latino residents. Testimony will highlight statewide trends, regional disparities, and policy opportunities that can strengthen outcomes for one of the Commonwealth’s fastest-growing populations.

Key Context for Legislators

- Pennsylvania’s Latino population has grown significantly over the past decade, contributing to the state’s workforce, small-business sector, and K–12 enrollment.
- Latino communities face persistent disparities in education access, health outcomes, housing stability, and civic participation.
- Witnesses represent statewide organizations, institutions and businesses.

Witness List and Scheduled Testimony Times

10:00 AM - Opening Remarks

- **Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz** - Chair, Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus
- **Members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus and the General Assembly**

10:10 AM - Panel 1: Demographics, Population Growth, Community Trends, Civic Engagement and Statewide Policy Priorities

- **Dr. Cynthia Mota** - Councilwoman, City of Allentown – LEHIGH
- **Norman Bristol Colon** – Chairman of the Pennsylvania Latino Convention - LANCASTER

10:30 AM - Panel 2: Education and Youth Development

- **Dr. Evelyn Nunez** - President, Pennsylvania Association of Hispanic School Administrators – PHILADELPHIA
- **Yemele Ayala** – Chief of Personnel & External Relations, CHP Schools – PHILADELPHIA

10:50 AM - Panel 3: Gun Violence

- **Shaykayarira DelRio-González** – Member of the Reading School Board - BERKS

11:00 AM - Panel 4: Social Services, Health and Community Wellness

- **Raymond Santiago** – Executive Director, Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley – NORTHAMPTON
- **Heather LaRocca** – Divisional Social Services Director, The Salvation Army – PHILADELPHIA

11:20 AM - Panel 5: Housing, Economic Development & Workforce

- **Manuel Delgado, MA** – Chief Operating Officer, APM Philadelphia – PHILADELPHIA

11:30 AM - Panel 6: Young Diverse Professionals: Challenges, Realities & Opportunities

- **Jorge Palmas** – Legal Services Coordinator, Casa San Jose – ALLEGHENY
- **Angela Capeles** – CEO, Capeles Agency – LANCASTER/PHILADELPHIA
- **Jesus Torres** – Founder/President, La Promesa Foundation – ALLEGHENY

11:50 AM - Closing Statements

- **Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz** - Chair, Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus
- **Members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus and the General Assembly**

Notes for State Legislators

- Witnesses will provide data-driven testimony on statewide Latino demographic trends, education outcomes, health disparities, economic contributions, and civic engagement.
- Each panel is structured to provide legislators with actionable insights and policy recommendations.
- Time allocations are designed to ensure balanced testimony and opportunities for follow-up questions.

Contact for Additional Information:
Pennsylvania Latino Convention Leadership
Email: nbclatino@gmail.com
Phone: (717) 725-1619

PENNSYLVANIA LATINO COMMUNITY OUTLOOK 2026

by Pennsylvania Latino Convention

Population & Growth

- **1.3 million** Latinos in Pennsylvania
- **10%** of the state's total population
- Latinos continue to drive a **major share of statewide population growth**
- **Largest subgroup:** Puerto Ricans remain more than 50% of PA's Latino population

Age & Demographics

- **Median age in PA:** 40.9
- **Median age for Latinos:** mid-20s — the **youngest demographic** in the Commonwealth
- Latino youth population continues to grow, reshaping schools and workforce pipelines

Civic Power

- **53%** of Latinos in PA are eligible voters
- **600,000+** potential Latino voters statewide
- Latino electorate is one of the **fastest-growing voting blocs** in Pennsylvania

Education

- **195,000+ Latino students** enrolled in K–12
- Represents **about 10%** of all PA students
- Enrollment continues to rise, especially in urban and suburban districts

Income & Economy

- Latino workers continue to face **lower median earnings** than the statewide average
- Wage gaps persist across industries, highlighting the need for equitable workforce pathways
- Latino entrepreneurship is growing rapidly, contributing to local economies

Housing

- **About 40% Latino homeownership rate**
- Below the statewide average, reflecting affordability and lending-access barriers
- Latino households are a major driver of **first-time homebuyer demand**

Health & Well-Being

- **18% to 20% of Hispanic and Latino adults in Pennsylvania are uninsured**, which is more than double the overall state uninsured rate of 7%.
- Latino uninsured rates remain **higher than the state average**
- Youth poverty among Latino children remains a **critical policy concern**

STATE OF LATINAS IN PENNSYLVANIA

by Pennsylvania Latino Convention

Overview

Latina women in Pennsylvania are experiencing significant growth, rising influence, and measurable progress, but they continue to face persistent inequities in income, health, education, and representation. The most reliable data available paints a picture of both advancement and ongoing structural barriers.

Latina women are one of the fastest-growing and most influential demographic groups in Pennsylvania. Their contributions span the economy, education, entrepreneurship, culture, and civic life. Despite significant progress, Latina women continue to face systemic inequities that limit access to opportunity, wealth, and representation.

Population & Demographics

- Pennsylvania is home to 1.3 million Latinos, with Latina women representing a rapidly growing share of the population.
- Latinas are among the youngest demographic groups, strengthening the state's future workforce and leadership pipeline.
- Growth is concentrated in regions such as Lehigh Valley, Philadelphia, Reading, Lancaster, York, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh.

Economic Status

- Latina workforce participation continues to rise, contributing significantly to Pennsylvania's economic growth.
- National data shows Latinas report improved economic conditions, yet still face a persistent wage gap compared to white men and women.
- Latina entrepreneurs are among the fastest-growing groups of business owners, though they face barriers to capital, credit, and procurement opportunities.

Education

- Latina educational attainment has increased steadily over the past two decades.
- More Latinas are completing high school, enrolling in college, and entering professional fields.
- Pennsylvania's growing Latino youth population is reshaping the state's future talent pool.

Health & Well-Being

- Latina women experience disparities in chronic disease, maternal health, mental health access, and insurance coverage.
- Social determinants—housing, income, transportation, and language access—continue to influence health outcomes.
- Culturally competent care remains a critical statewide need.

Civic Engagement & Leadership

- Latina civic participation is rising, with increased voter engagement and community leadership.
- Despite progress, Latinas remain underrepresented in:
 - Elected office
 - Executive leadership roles
 - State boards and commissions
 - Institutional decision-making positions

Entrepreneurship & Small Business

- Latina-owned businesses are expanding across Pennsylvania, especially in retail, food services, consulting, beauty, health, and creative industries.
- Access to capital, mentorship, and business development resources remains a key challenge.

Key Challenges

- Wage inequality
- Limited access to capital and financial services
- Underrepresentation in leadership
- Health disparities
- Barriers in higher education affordability and completion
- Systemic discrimination and bias

Key Strengths & Opportunities

- Rapid population and workforce growth
- Strong entrepreneurial spirit
- Cultural and linguistic assets
- Expanding leadership networks
- Rising civic engagement
- Multi-generational community resilience

Why This Matters for Pennsylvania

Latina women are essential to the Commonwealth's economic vitality, cultural richness, and civic future. Investing in their success strengthens Pennsylvania's workforce, communities, and long-term prosperity.